

Ambassador Solutions

# Cultivating Culture and Community

Portal Optimization Series – Article 2

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## Article 2: Portal Optimization Series – Cultivating Culture and Community

We all understand that being a great organization is more than earning a profit. But when the chips are down, we start to see conflicts between building a high performance culture and our drive to improve the bottom line.

I introduced **Ambassador's Portal Optimization Model (APOM)** in the previous article. Now, we are going to explore the 'Cultivating Culture and Community' component of the model. I will first explain why 'Culture and Community' is important to your business. I will then explain how your portals can be used to help build a high performing culture and sense of community within your organization.

### Why Is It Important?

#### *Culture*

Research shows that financially stronger companies--defined as those with an ROI of 30 percent or higher--are also strong in key, measurable aspects of corporate culture. On the other hand, financially weaker companies--those with an ROI of 9 percent or lower--score low on those same measurements of culture.

One of the key drivers behind building a high performing culture is finding and retaining the right people while keeping them energetic and motivated to succeed. This article is not about how to find the right people (although portals can help with that as well). Rather, let's assume you have the right people onboard. Now we need to make sure that we give them the right tools and incentives to achieve strong performance.

So how can portals (intranets and extranets) help build a strong sense of culture that we need? Portals can create new ways to build culture as well as improve existing aspects of your current culture.



The following table explores how portals can help build a winning culture:

What Employees Need To Stay Motivated	How Portals Can Help	Portal Applications and Tools That Can Help
<b>Career growth opportunities</b>	Using an internal job board portal that can send targeted jobs based on the employees' career development plan and performance review processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Job Board</li> <li>• Learning Management System</li> <li>• Employee Performance Review &amp; Career Development System</li> </ul>
<b>Money, rewards, and recognition</b>	Using a learning management system to improve employee's skill-set, making them more valuable to the company and earning more money as a result. Additionally, companies can build a rewards and recognition system that provides employees with the monetary rewards and organizational recognition they need to stay motivated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Management System</li> <li>• Employee Performance Review &amp; Career Development System</li> <li>• Rewards &amp; Recognition System</li> <li>• Internal e-Cards Tool for appreciation and thanks</li> <li>• Employee On-boarding System</li> </ul>
<b>Good work/personal life balance</b>	Here we are referring to one of the major promises that good technology offers, 'Doing more work in less time'. This will be discussed in later issues as we explore the two other components of APOM ('Information Dissemination' and 'Operations & Decision Support').	These applications and tools will be explained in the two other components of APOM ('Information Dissemination' and 'Operations & Decision Support').
<b>Great employee benefits</b> (paid education, good insurance, discounted daycare, retirement packages, etc.)	A good intranet will provide advanced self-serviced capabilities so that employees can easily manage their 'Perks'. If executed properly, employees will feel valued because their company has invested in making these perks easy to utilize. (We can all cite examples of how frustrating it is to manage our employee benefits.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive Benefits Management System</li> </ul>
<b>Strong sense of belonging</b> (enjoying who they work with, the ability to help achieve a personal mission, and making a difference in society)	Oh how important this is. The key to making our employees feel like they belong is paramount to building a successful culture. The solution is to make it easy for employees to participate in 'extra-curricular' activities. Participation is both taking action in existing opportunities as well as being able to suggest new opportunities. Additionally, portals use fun and exciting ways to "get to know" and interact with colleagues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee picture/interview of the month</li> <li>• Ask an Executive Electronic Form</li> <li>• Management Blogs</li> <li>• New Employee Gallery</li> <li>• Employee Polls/Surveys</li> <li>• Quote of the day</li> <li>• Industry fact of the day</li> <li>• Personal tip of the day</li> <li>• Classified ads for personal items</li> <li>• Time zone and related weather clock of other company locations</li> <li>• Company Events Calendar</li> <li>• Company Sponsored Volunteer Opportunities Management System</li> <li>• Rewards &amp; Recognition System</li> <li>• Internal e-Cards Tool for appreciation and thanks</li> </ul>

## Community

Who is responsible for keeping your customers happy at your organization? Who is responsible for keeping the relationship strong with business partners, suppliers, and vendors for your organization? Chances are that nearly 100% of your employees interact with one or more of these external groups. As we focus on building a winning culture, we must also build a strong brand while equipping our employees to best serve each of these external groups.

Ambassador calls these external groups of customers, business partners, suppliers, and vendors the organization's "Community". If implemented correctly, portals (intranets and extranets) can help to both create and support strong relationships with the 'Community'.

The following table examines how portals can address common concerns with the 'Community':

Common 'Community' Concerns	How Portals Can Help
<b>Brand Recognition</b> ('What message are we communicating?' and 'How will they remember us?')	<i>Best-of-breed portal platforms all for a custom visual composition ("look and feel"). It is important to make sure that both your internal intranet and external extranet meet your branding standards. Not only will a custom visual composition convey the right message, but good design also improves the user experience.</i>
<b>Competitive Differentiators</b> ('What makes them want to do business with us?')	<i>Feature rich and intuitive extranets can increase the likelihood of a customer, business partner, supplier or vendor choosing you versus your competitor. The tools that your 'Community' is looking at include (covered in more detail in the two other component of APOM, Information Dissemination' and 'Operations &amp; Decision Support'):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Project management (tracking, updates, reports, etc.)</i></li> <li>- <i>Process and forms automation</i></li> <li>- <i>Target information delivered based on group or roles (e.g. documentation, transaction history, reports, events, contact info, etc.)</i></li> <li>- <i>Dashboards with key performance indicators to track performance</i></li> </ul>
<b>Retention</b> ('What makes them want to stay?')	<i>We have found that being highly transparent and providing advanced service to your 'Community' greatly improves satisfaction. Both of these can be accomplished through the use of an extranet.</i>

## How Can My Organization Make This Real?

Every organization has unique needs and different priorities for the 'Culture and Community' features I explained in this article. The most important lesson learned I can share is to plan, plan, plan. I know we hear this all of the time, but it is vitally important that you first put a roadmap in place and also determine how decisions and actions will be governed to manage change.

Make sure to identify at least one key sponsor that can sell the value and be a voice of change to the organization. You will also need to identify a core team of stakeholders and subject matter experts that can provide the input and prioritize the needs of the organization. Once the correct personnel have agreed to participate, the business analysis must begin. Your goal should not be to create detailed business and system requirements, but rather develop the goals and scope. Once this is created, you will need to use numerous factors to prioritize the scope into an implementation roadmap.

Ambassador strongly recommends smaller delivery releases. Each release must deliver significant value. It can be difficult to prioritize the goals and scope into a complete implementation roadmap if you have not already chosen the portal platform technology. The complexity and cost of both the development and implementation for various features can range quite drastically depending on the technology. There is no perfect portal platform, but some are much stronger than others for building 'Culture and Community'.

Prior to implementation, it is important to develop your organization's portal governance plan. The governance plan is a staff model, set of processes, and set of metrics used to manage improvements, maintenance, and change of the portal.

### **Governance Need**

- To establish clear decision-making authority and escalation procedures
- To ensure timely decision-making
- To avoid portal, community, and content sprawl
- To ensure the portal strategy is aligned with the business imperatives
- To enable business stakeholder to influence portal strategy
- To ensure a consistent, high-quality user experience
- To avert too much influence by a single group or stakeholder