

Measuring the Success of Online Communities

Bill Johnston

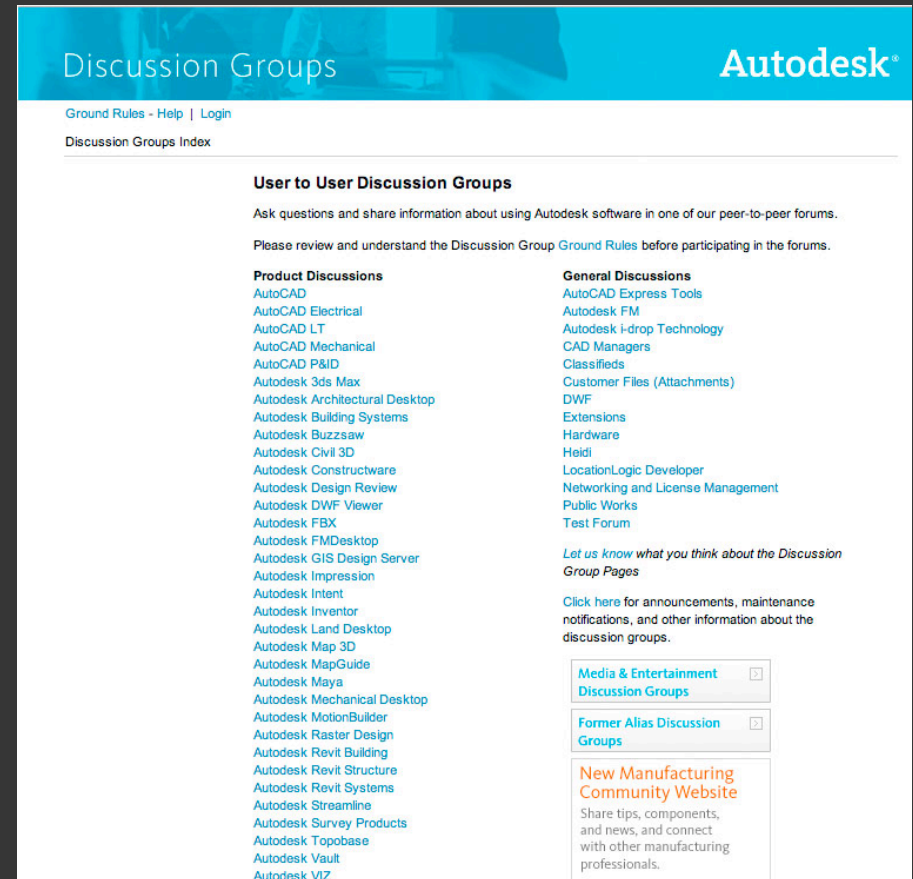
Director of Community & Research

- **My Background**
- **Project Examples**
 - **Discussion Groups**
 - **AREA**
- **A note on using metrics to justify incremental investment**

- **My point of view has formed from building and participating in Online Communities over the last 10 years.**
- **This is an emergent topic. We don't understand all of the questions yet, and certainly don't have all of the answers.**
- **Metrics are contextual. Your organization's culture, strategy and business practices will play a large role in shaping your definition of "success".**

Discussion Groups

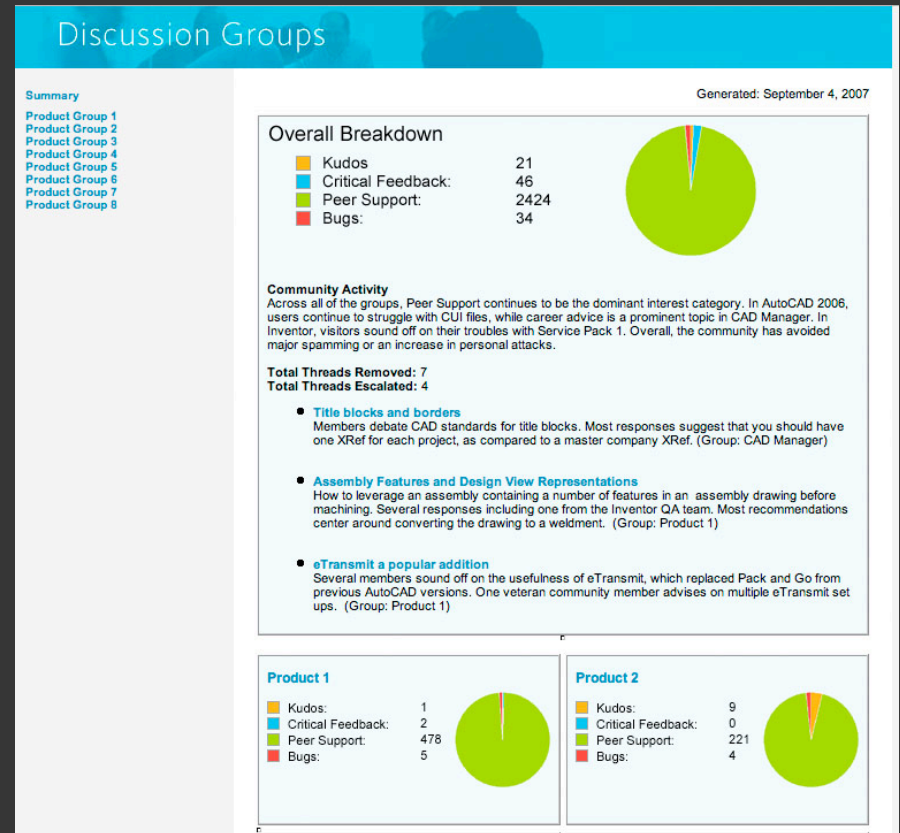
- “Inherited” the program from Support
- Technology was failing, participation was down, UX was terrible
- Started by benchmarking issues with a satisfaction survey, user interviews and usability studies
- Project initiated to move platforms, redesign, and change internal policy



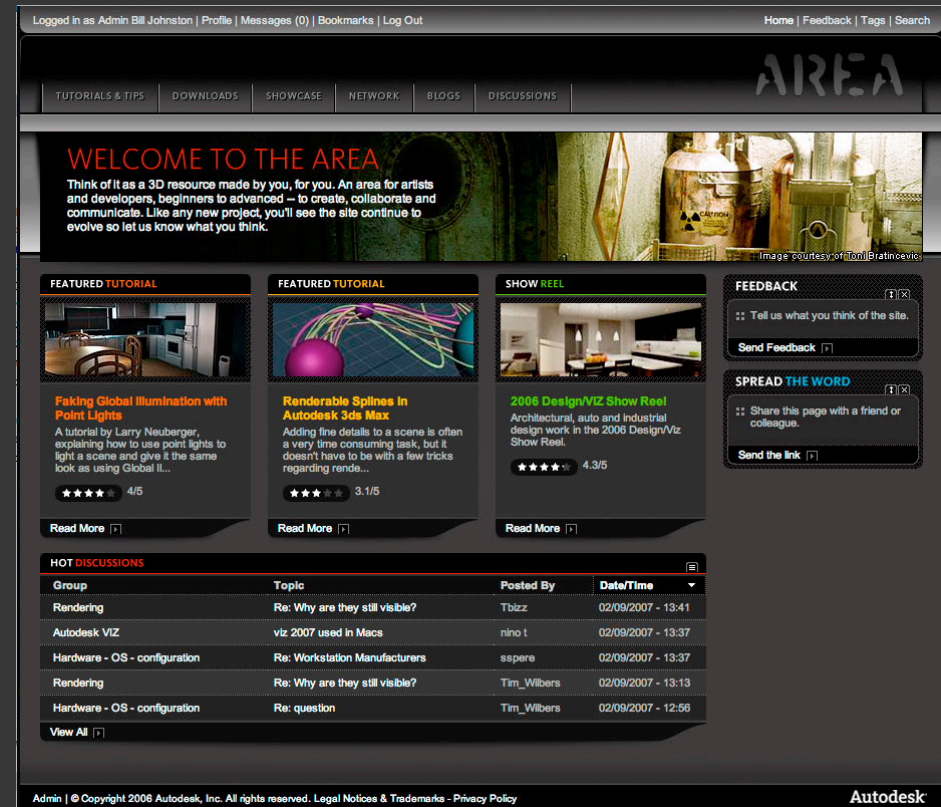
The screenshot shows the Autodesk Discussion Groups website. The header includes "Discussion Groups" and the Autodesk logo. Below the header, there are links for "Ground Rules - Help | Login" and "Discussion Groups Index". The main content area is titled "User to User Discussion Groups" and includes a brief introduction: "Ask questions and share information about using Autodesk software in one of our peer-to-peer forums. Please review and understand the Discussion Group Ground Rules before participating in the forums." The page is organized into two columns of discussion groups. The left column, titled "Product Discussions", lists various software-specific forums such as AutoCAD, AutoCAD Electrical, AutoCAD LT, AutoCAD Mechanical, AutoCAD P&ID, Autodesk 3ds Max, Autodesk Architectural Desktop, Autodesk Building Systems, Autodesk Buzzsaw, Autodesk Civil 3D, Autodesk Constructware, Autodesk Design Review, Autodesk DWF Viewer, Autodesk FBX, Autodesk FMDesktop, Autodesk GIS Design Server, Autodesk Impression, Autodesk Intent, Autodesk Inventor, Autodesk Land Desktop, Autodesk Map 3D, Autodesk MapGuide, Autodesk Maya, Autodesk Mechanical Desktop, Autodesk MotionBuilder, Autodesk Raster Design, Autodesk Revit Building, Autodesk Revit Structure, Autodesk Revit Systems, Autodesk Streamline, Autodesk Survey Products, Autodesk Topobase, Autodesk Vault, and Autodesk VIZ. The right column, titled "General Discussions", lists broader topics like AutoCAD Express Tools, Autodesk FM, Autodesk i-drop Technology, CAD Managers, Classifieds, Customer Files (Attachments), DWF, Extensions, Hardware, Heidi, LocationLogic Developer, Networking and License Management, Public Works, and Test Forum. Below the lists, there are three sections: "Let us know what you think about the Discussion Group Pages" with a link to announcements and maintenance notifications; "Media & Entertainment Discussion Groups"; "Former Alias Discussion Groups"; and "New Manufacturing Community Website" with a sub-header "Share tips, components, and news, and connect with other manufacturing professionals."

Discussion Groups

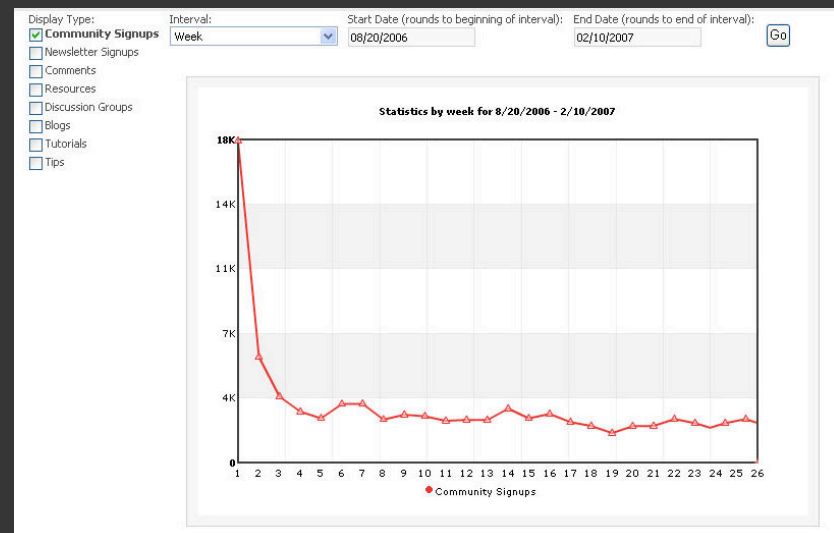
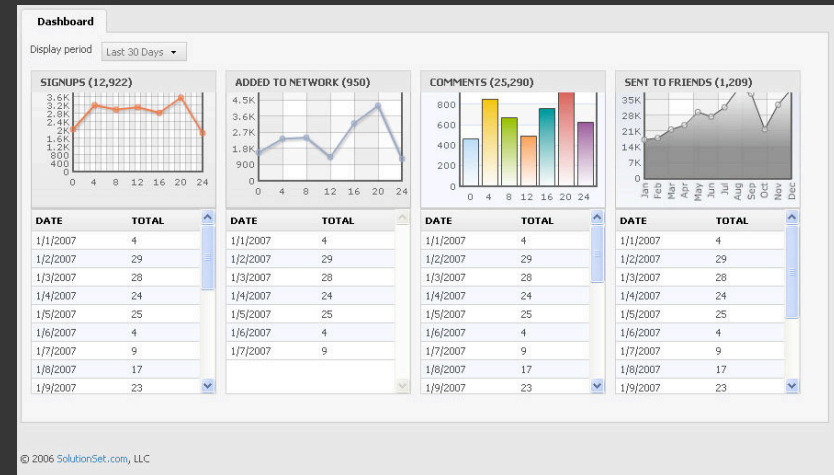
- **Metrics Collected:**
 - Satisfaction survey conducted biannually
 - HBX instrumented on site (Quantitative)
 - Monthly Dashboard Produced (Qualitative)
- **Results:**
 - Satisfaction vetted against Brand Tracker proves Higher Loyalty
 - Membership doubled in less than 2 years
- **Note:** Graphs are FPO and do not reflect actual metrics



- Community intended to create affinity for **Autodesk** among 3D artists & animators using **Max** and **Maya**
- With Purchase of Alias, Autodesk's intentions were in question in the community
- Started with user research of "Rockstars"
- Continued with formal usability as IA, features and design developed



- **Metrics Collected:**
 - Ongoing Usability
 - HBX instrumented
 - Dashboard
 - Membership Signups
 - Referrals
 - Activity (posts, comments, tagging)
 - Networks (groups, members, messages)
 - Tag Clouds
- **Results:**
 - Anecdotal: eased backlash of acquisition, established common ground (Blogosphere / PR)
 - Dramatic membership growth
 - Participation / Engagement
 - Leads (Product Trials)
- **Note: Graphs are FPO and do not reflect actual metrics**



Using Metrics to Justify Incremental Investments

- **As we were able to communicate value based on metrics, we got to do larger projects**
- **Discussion Groups (2003)**
 - **Justified cost by comparing to other marketing programs**
- **Blogs (2004)**
 - **Compared cost / reach of blogs with that of the Autodesk.com sites**
- **Community Destinations (2005 - 2006)**
 - **Compared cost vs. failed community attempt in 2000**

Key Findings: Quantifying ROI

- **Q 15 : What metrics do you use to demonstrate the value (ROI) of the community back to your management?**
- **Page Views:**
 - This is not an insightful metrics for most communities, but it is essential to understand page views for ad-driven communities in order to establish CPM rates.
- **Registrations:**
 - Membership of a community, which some tie to “awareness”.
- **Satisfaction:**
 - Satisfaction with the community as well as with the host organization.
- **Downloads / Trials / Lead Generation:**
 - Software companies and communities with a premium (paid) layer can compare this metric with other marketing activities and channels.
- **Cost Savings:**
 - Cost displacement or reduction as a by-product of community activity. This could be call deflection for support communities, or R&D benefits for product teams.
- **Content that ties back to “Mission”:**
 - This is particularly relevant for non-profits, who generally have a very clearly defined mission. Showing examples of content and activity that support an organization’s mission help justify the return on the community investment by demonstrating effect.
- **Direct Revenue:**
 - Perhaps the ultimate metric? Showing direct revenue from a community, and comparing revenue (and donations) from members and non-members is becoming possible because of better metrics packages and more careful instrumentation of community sites

For more information



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See you at the Community 2.0 conference!