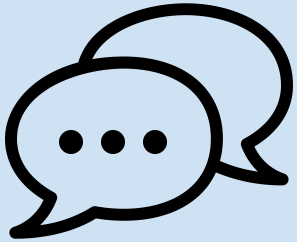


Are You Excluding Potential Customers?

10 Strategies You Need to Create Inclusive Content and Communities



from [*The Responsible Communication Style Guide*](#)
on Kickstarter today!

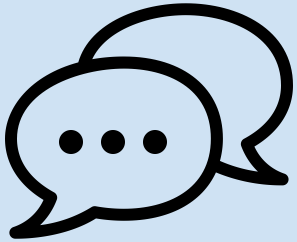


Startups have two engines that propel that hockey-stick growth we all like to see: **content** and **community**. When you're on the marketing team at any startup, your main goals are to bring in new users and convince them to stick around.

But the content and communities produced by most startups have a problem: **they exclude many potential customers, because the average marketing team doesn't have a good way to connect with diverse audiences.**

Think about it.

- When's the last time you wrote a blog post about the accessibility features of the app you're marketing? Do you know what that app sounds like when accessed through a screen reader?
- Do you always check the calendar before scheduling your user conference, to make sure you don't just avoid Easter and Christmas, but also Ramadan and Yom Kippur?
- How did you respond when a user reached out to ask why your app collects information about gender? Even if you've made a point of not using radio buttons for gender to provide non-binary options, do you have a good reason for collecting that information at all?



These questions may seem minor. As long as you have continued growth, making your marketing efforts inclusive can feel unnecessary. **But the numbers don't lie.**

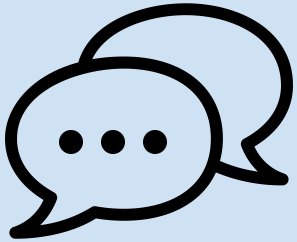
- Roughly $\frac{1}{5}$ of U.S. residents have some sort of disability, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Around 30 percent of U.S. residents aren't Christian.
- At least 1.4 million people in the U.S. identify as transgender.

Discounting the importance of inclusivity means limiting yourself to perhaps **85 million potential customers out of 308 million U.S. residents.** (Want to go outside of U.S. borders? You don't have a choice about being inclusive.) Eighty-five million people may sound like a lot, but that's just the starting pool that your marketing funnel will whittle down.

The only ways to get more users is to add more people to your sales funnel and to keep them in the funnel longer.

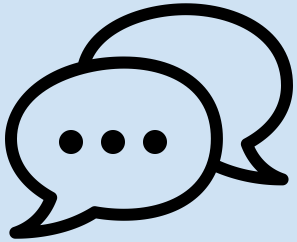
You can't afford to dismiss over two-thirds of your prospective users.

And you don't have to: making your product and company more appealing to diverse audiences is an attainable goal. **You can make your content and community more appealing to diverse audiences with a few key changes.**

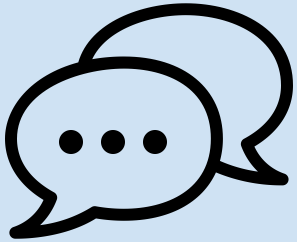


10 Ways to Quickly Improve Your Inclusivity

1. Challenge your own implicit biases. We all subconsciously rank people based on factors we don't ever pay attention to (like the way a hiring manager will automatically treat resumes differently, just based on the name at the top).
2. Use inclusive language. Start out with small tweaks to your content, like removing claims that the product is "so easy even your mother can figure it out." A lot of moms are programmers, engineers, and even astronauts.
3. Make sure you're listening to people from a variety of backgrounds. Check both your professional and personal social media accounts to see if you're following people of color, folks covering accessibility, and generally people with a different worldview than your own.
4. Try out your own product with users from different backgrounds and with different needs. If you've never watched someone use your app with an assistive device, you don't know what questions they have.
5. Use your marketing to amplify new voices. Whether you're promoting content on a particular hashtag or writing up new apps built on top of your API, focus first on people who you haven't already covered.



6. Moderate your communities. Your audience assumes you agree with any statement that you don't remove, so if someone is posting racist slurs or other offensive language, you need to remove it or disassociate your company as quickly as possible.
7. Improve your security and discuss it openly, so that your users feel safe (as well as comfortable giving you more information). Online harassment is an on-going issue, which leads people to avoid sites and platforms where they feel unsafe.
8. Discuss inclusivity with other teams in your company. Setting an inclusive tone with your external communications has to be matched internally. Documentation, chats, and other communications have a tendency to become public, which means they need to match your overall brand.
9. Prioritize hiring folks with different backgrounds. Just having a diverse team has been demonstrated to increase sales through multiple studies.
10. Keep educating yourself. Just as you read up on the newest social media platform, make time to learn about diversity and inclusivity.



Case Study: Facebook, Google, and Other Platforms with 'True Names' Policies

Many platforms require users to sign up with their legal names, often with no discussion on how that information will be used. Facebook has some particularly strong policies covering true names, routinely removing users who sign up with anything that Facebook doesn't consider a real name, including people transitioning to a new identity, performers listing only their stage names, and people avoiding abusers. Both high profile users and everyday users routinely abandon these platforms when they feel unsafe or unwelcome.

The coverage these platforms receive for these policies is consistently negative, routinely associating these platforms with problems ranging from domestic violence to terrorism, such as this passage:

But Lily's ex might never have been able to find her profile in the first place if Facebook hadn't asked her to display her "authentic name" in order to reopen her account, which had been suspended in December of last year over her use of a pseudonym. — [Samantha Allen for The Daily Beast](#)

That sort of press is damaging for even the largest of companies, so why even risk it at organizations smaller than Google or Facebook?



You Need an Inclusive Approach to Content and Communities

Inclusivity needs to be **baked in**, not sprinkled on top after you've finished a blog post, a talk, or a new feature. You need the tools and infrastructure to make this part of your work automatic.

The Responsible Communication Style Guide is the first tool you should add to your toolbox. This style guide focuses on creating **consistent, inclusive work across all the content you produce**, as well as including resources for how to specifically talk about topics like race and gender in technology.

Based on best practices for media creators of all types, the team behind *The Responsible Communication Style Guide* even offers onsite training to help you bring the rest of your team (or company) up to speed.

Back [The Responsible Communication Style Guide](#) today on Kickstarter to reserve your copy.

The Responsible Communication Style Guide's editor, Thursday Bram, is available for questions at thursday@thursdaybram.com



Sources and Credits

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