

When Is The Right Time To Start A Discussion Forum?

By Andres Munoz

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Summary: So much is said about online forums and all the traffic it can bring. However, not all sites are suitable for online forums and furthermore the success of an online forum depends on several key factors.

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By now I'm certain that a great number of you have participated in online forums and exchange ideas on just about everything (business, search engine optimization, marketing or doll making). Online communities or discussion forums come in all different flavors and styles. There are some forums that receive tremendous traffic and it seems that everyone is post questions and receiving free advice.

I've been asked several times by newbies when is it appropriate to start an online forum. It's difficult to answer that question but all forums must have 2 basic requirements already stamped out:

- 1) Focus on a particular niche subject
- 2) Very high traffic - at least 3,000 unique visitors per day.

Lets discuss "forum subject" in order for a forum to succeed you must give visitors a reason to join. You must offer real value and you can easily accomplish this task by zeroing in on a particular subject for example "CGI Programming." This forum would focus solely on CGI programming and only attract those that

are seeking help in writing or understanding CGI.

Any forum that is too broad in scope will never succeed so research what subject you want to showcase. It's best to showcase a subject that you, yourself have a passion for. It will be better maintained and your enthusiasm will show through.

The second aspect of a forum is traffic. If you are just starting a new website don't even try to start or build a forum. It will take a while for you to average 3,000 unique visitors per day - every day. There is no negotiation, either you have high traffic or not. If a visitor sees too few posts and even worse they're old you will quickly lose that visitor only to never come back. Once you have the traffic then can you plan a forum to the site.

I must be very honest about online forums you will need about 10 - 100 participant to make it worthwhile. About 85% will be lurkers or those who just read and never post a question. About 10% actively participate and the remaining 5% are real chatterboxes. That 5% really get into the discussion and answer every ones questions. It's those 5% that really make the forum come alive and make the best posts and answers.

To make you forum even more dynamic offer the most prolific members a title such as moderator and give them some responsibility and moderate the forum.

It's also very wise to have moderators because discussion forums can quickly degenerate into flaming matches where 2 or more members begin to verbally abuse each other. Moderators help keep the discussion on topic and avoid any problems.

Finally give your members some extra added value. Offer a free membership and give members free bonuses either eBooks or other useful resources. Your members will appreciate your commitment and respond in kind with livelier discussion topics.

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About the author:

Andres Munoz is the author of "The Mail Order Starter's Guide," where he reveals some of the most closely guarded wholesale and drop ship sources for FREE. The information you'll take away simply isn't available elsewhere unless you want to pay for it. To subscribe visit: <http://www.mybusiness-resource.com/> and receive this powerful eBook.

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