



# JIM HARSHAW JR.

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## *Revealing Failure as the Path to Success*

### **Success Through Failure Podcast**

Action Plan Episode #229

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Jono Bacon is a leading community strategist, speaker, author, and podcaster and founder of Jono Bacon Consulting. He has served as director of community at GitHub, Canonical, XPRIZE, and other companies. His clients include Huawei, Microsoft, Intel, Google, Sony Mobile, Deutsche Bank, Santander, and others. He is the author of the critically-acclaimed *The Art of Community* and his newest book, *People Powered*. He's a columnist for *Forbes* and founder of the Community Leadership Summit and Open Collaboration Conferences.

### **Quotes**

"In order to be resilient, it's necessary to be part of a community." - Jim Harshaw

"Many businesses have succeeded because they build a following around what they're doing."

"All of the answers to anything when you're an entrepreneur, whether it's how your product runs, whether your business is going to be useful, all of those answers exist in the head of your audience. You just need to pull them out in a way that you can act on them."

"Human beings are incentivizable creatures."

### **About Defining Community 09:55 - 11:34**

"At its base level, a community is a group of people who come together, shared by a common interest or mission. So that could be employees in an organization working together in an internal community. It could be people work together for example, on an open-source project. It could be people coming together for an activism purpose, whether it's a political party or a social issue, something around those lines."

Or it could just be people hanging out and having out with each other. It could be Star Trek fans hanging out in a forum. It's all of these different pieces.

I tend to think there are three types of community. I presented this in *People Powered*. The first is what I call consumer, where people just come together to hang out with each other and enjoy an interest together. That's usually on a forum or some kind of communication channel. Second is what I call champion, where people produce material that supports that community and it is added to a stockpile. So it can be people creating videos or writing documentation and content. It could be people organizing local events or providing support. The third model is where people work together on the same thing. It could be working on an open-source project or building apps for an app store or plugin for a platform. It could be people building 3D objects for a video game.

The strategy used for the three models will be slightly different. What threads the three of them is the same psychology. We're people and there's a lot of consistency in how people tend to think and operate."

### **About Importance Of Community 15:29 - 17:40**

"One of the reasons why this is incredibly powerful is because this is not just the future of how businesses are going to operate, but this is the future of how society is going to operate. We are intrinsically social creatures. We like spending time with each other. One of the things I talked about at the beginning of *People Powered* is that I'm a firm believer that to really do something well, you need to understand the first principles about what's driving that.

The first principle that drives a community is that people fundamentally seek out meaning. They want to do meaningful work or they want to be involved in something that's meaningful. Number two is that people want to feel a sense of belonging. This is a psychological component. When you feel like you belong somewhere, whether it's in your family or your company, a local community, whatever it might be, where you will be missed if you left, then it builds remarkable levels of retention. If you build an environment where people feel that sense of mission and belonging, then it's incredible what they will do to be a part of that. That's essentially what communities are really good at. A community has a shared sense of communal value. You do something in the community and it builds that sense of belonging, it builds your social capital, and it builds that retention.

The reason why I think this is valuable, let's say someone's listening here is an entrepreneur or they've got a side hustle, for example, communities have been a very powerful tool for building a much closer relationship with your customers and your users and building that retention, but also what's known as the 'referral halo.' If someone experiences something that's really good - for example, I had someone come over a few weeks ago and power wash the front of our house. The guy did an amazing job. I would refer him to anybody. So if people join a community and they have a good experience, they refer it. Retention builds referrals. For entrepreneurs, this is a great way to break into a new market."

### **About Processes To Creating A Community 18:57 -22:50**

"I've been building communities for about 20 years now. Like anybody, I've made innumerable mistakes. I've carved out a methodology that I've designed over the years and this is how I summarize it.

1. The first thing you need to do is identify what is the mission of your community. What are you out there to do? It's got to be inspirational. It's got to make the hair on the back of someone's necks stand on end. Remember, people want meaning. They want to feel like they're doing meaningful work.

2. The second thing then is to design a value proposition. Everything in the world, in my mind, starts and ends with value. There are two types of values in a community; the value for your organization that you want to generate such as if you're a company, we want our customers to provide support for other customers. We want them to organize events. We want them to produce materials about our products. But then there's the value for the individual. Why should they take time away from their family and friends and PS4 to come and do this? That could be because they're building their skills or there are career opportunities that they're looking into. They're solving problems that relate to them specifically. You've got to start with the value for the individual first because then you're going to design something that people intrinsically want to join. If you're only focused on the value for the organization, you'll build a community that's frankly quite boring.

3. What are the personas we want to attract to generate that value? There are different types of community participation. What do you want people to do, essentially? Do you want them to organize events? Do you want them to produce technology? Do you want them to create documentation? Do you want them to provide support? Do you want them to translate things? Just a couple of examples. You can't do all of those so pick the things most valuable to you and design the

persona. How are these people incentivized? How are they motivated? Where do you think they're going to exist within your industry? What do they read? What website do they follow? What social media accounts do they follow? That's going to give you a sense of how do we design the value relevant to that persona. By defining where they exist, that gives us a sense of where we can find them to pull them in.

4. Now, what we do is we design an on-ramp to make it as easy as possible to consume that value in that community. So this is really critical. What a lot of community managers do is they go out and they do a ton of promotions. They speak at events. They write blog posts. They do social media. What happens is someone comes into your community, they're interested, they come to the front door and it's a complicated means of getting started. They've got all these documentations vaguely scattered over the place. Some of the tools don't work. It's just confusing. So you have to make the on-boarding is really simple and easy. One of the reasons why for example in video games, the first level of every game is a tutorial, to give people a sense of how to pick up the game. Otherwise, people are confused and they won't play the game."

### **Attracting People To Join The Community 23:12 - 25:00**

1. Mentoring
2. Heavily rewarding your members when they do something
3. Try and get someone to participate - mostly regularly - for 66 days. It takes 66 days scientifically to build a habit.
4. Drop little incentives to keep people interested and engaged.

### **Action Item 35:15 - 37:08**

"Start with asking 'What is the value we could potentially bring?' Look at other communities, maybe in your space and see if they have succeeded there. Even if you don't see any communities, it doesn't mean you can't build one. There's always a first person or first organization. What I would recommend honestly is just make a plan. Make a simple plan. It could be setting up a forum, or doing a little bit of social media. Just start doing something. And then follow the progress and see how you do, and evaluate based on how you progress.

The other thing I would recommend people do in short-term is to have a series of what I refer to as executive assessment and it's broken down into two pieces.

1. One is sitting down with your colleagues, friends or family and just talking them through what's your thought process on this community and getting other people's perspectives and opinions. That will help to guide it.

2. Do it with yourself. I do this all the time when I'm driving. I'll have a meeting with my brain. We all go through moments of, 'Am I doing a good job? Did I make the right decision?' I remember a year ago thinking, 'I don't think I'm offering enough value for my clients. I think I could do so much more.' The other side of the debate in my brain is, 'Okay, let's look at the client list. Each of your clients is on average with you for 16 months. So they're clearly deriving value. Can you do more? Of course. What are the simple things you can do?' You just knock yourself around a little bit."

### **Blueprint For Success**

<http://jimharshawjr.com/blueprint>

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