

A photograph of two women with dark hair blowing kisses towards the camera. The woman on the left has curly hair and is wearing a black top. The woman on the right has straight hair and is wearing a red top. The background is a solid pink color.

Community
Building

Best Corporate Branding Agency UK - *Business Excellence Awards 2020*

BRANDABLE & Co.

We're on a mission to make business more human
because being human is good for business

HOW TO BUILD AN ENGAGED COMMUNITY & NETWORK

It's hard to understand the power and magic of community until you are part of one. There are several communities that we recommend over on the Support page (within the resources section of our website) and [Found & Flourish](#) is up there with the best of them. Brandable & Co. founder, Sallee Poinsette-Nash, has run an extensive series of Personal Brand Masterclasses for this dynamic female founder community, so who better to call in for our Community Building Guide than founder, [Lara Sheldrake](#). Lara has grown the Found & Flourish online membership, media & events platform from 1, to over 10,000 female founders & aspiring entrepreneurs, and she's kindly agreed to share some of her community building wisdom with us. Take it away Lara...

Before we get into it, let's look at what a community is.

Definition: community (*noun*)

- the condition of sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common.
- ...and I'd like to add that it's a group of like-minded people who share similar values

Tip: Never underestimate the importance of aligned values (as these will get you far in business and in life). If you don't know them, spend some time exploring and establishing them before deciding on the type of community you want to build and nurture.

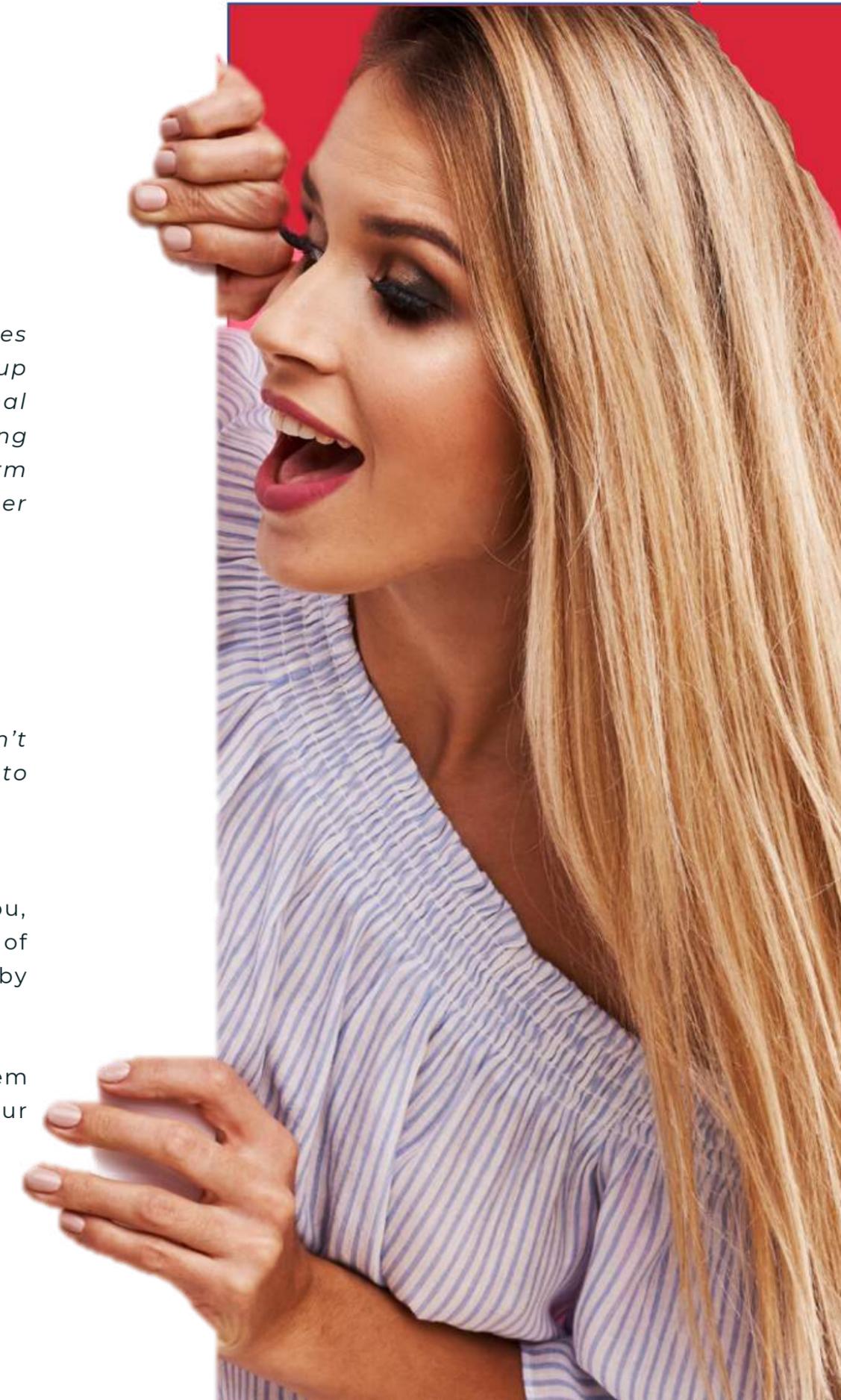
So why build a community?

When you have a community of people who are aligned with your values, who listen to you and want to hear from you, who work with you and buy from you, then you have built yourself an engaged audience, and this is the utopia of business. Joe Pulizzi, the author of Content Inc. says, "I believe the absolute best way to start a business today is not by launching a product, but by creating a system to attract and build an audience"

Whether you are at the idea phase, you're in a career or you're looking to scale your business, by creating a system which allows you to build an engaged audience, you are creating a framework which will allow you to develop your offering around your community's needs and wants.

Let's get started...

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THE 6 STEPS TO CREATE AND GROW AN ENGAGED COMMUNITY?

1. **DEFINE** - *Know who you are and what your values and purpose are*
2. **CONNECT** - *Decide where and how are you will connect with your audience*
3. **CREATE** - *Deliver value by creating content that speaks to your audience and provides solutions*
4. **PARTICIPATE** - *Be part of the conversation, listen to what people need & create solutions that solve a problem*
5. **TAKE ACTION** - *Encourage your community to take action, read, share, follow, sign up and buy*
6. **NURTURE** - *Listen to people, ask for feedback, learn how to improve your services or product, and continue to support your community and their development*

Let's dive in...

1. **DEFINE** - Know who you are, and what your values and purpose are

Before you can build a community around your brand, you should know what that brand is. Do you have a mission statement? Do you know what your values are? Can you clearly define what your purpose is? Consider these pillars:

- Purpose - why do you exist?
- Mission - what do you do?
- Vision - where do you want to go?
- Values - what are the guiding principles that shape your career or business?

2. **CONNECT** - Decide where and how are you will connect with your audience

You'll need to consider where you are connecting with your community. Is it online, offline, or both?

Here are a list of platforms that you might want consider:

- Events
- Newsletter
- Social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn etc.
- Slack
- Email
- Forums
- WhatsApp
- Membership platform/plugin

“To build a community is to spark powerful human currents, moving enthusiastically and creatively in the right direction”

#communitybuilding

AN ENGAGED AUDIENCE IS THE UTOPIA OF BUSINESS

3. CREATE - Deliver value by creating content that speaks to your audience and provides solutions

- What is it that you do well?
- What problems are you solving?

You can create content in the form of social media posts, newsletters, blogs or events but whatever it is, **create!** It's through creating your own content, in your own unique way, that you will attract your ideal audience.

David Hieatt, author of 'DO/OPEN: how a simple newsletter can transform your business', suggests "like attracts like". So, if you start talking about the thing you're really good at, let's say it's being a marketing expert, then other people within the marketing community will find you. It is important not to assume that everyone knows what you do, so explain with passion and keep your message consistent. Remember, before you publish your content ask yourself if it supports your mission and values. If, like me, your mission is to empower women in business, then make sure your content delivers on this promise.

4. PARTICIPATE - Be part of the conversation, listen to what people need & create solutions that solve a problem

People love to be empowered, informed and educated with the knowledge that you have worked so incredibly hard to obtain, so share it. Be a part of the conversation, listen to your community, find out what they need then show up by providing real value.



“Join the conversation as an expert, not a salesperson. Add value”

Rebecca Mackay-Miller
Founder, BLOC + ROSE



ENCOURAGE YOUR COMMUNITY TO TAKE ACTION

5. TAKE ACTION - Encourage your community to take action, read, share, follow, sign up and buy

- Tell your audience what you want them to do. Do you want them to buy from you? Sign up to your newsletter? Download your eBook? Subscribe to your podcast?

Whatever it is, be clear. Unless people are told, they won't be aware of it. Remember that you are adding value to these people's lives and businesses, and without you clearly stating how your community can take action, they won't know. So always give them a clear call to action (CTA) and do it with passion. As Sallee Poinsette-Nash, Founder of Brandable & Co. says, "selling is nothing more than a transfer of enthusiasm" (There's a '[Selling Yourself](#)' Brandable & Co. guide that you may find useful).

You will reach a point when you can start sharing the feedback you receive from others, effectively letting your community do the selling for you. Social proof is a big one - this is where you let your community do the talking. If you want to find out more about how social proof can work for you, read an article on the Brandable & Co blog called: [3 Surprisingly Easy Examples of How To Social Proof Your Personal Brand](#).

6. NURTURE - Listen to people, ask for feedback, learn how to improve your services or product, and continue to support your community and their development

The final step is to treat your community like you treat your best friend. Here are some ways that I like to nurture my community:

- Ask for feedback
- Listen
- Check in with them
- Go above and beyond what they expect from me
- Provide quality insights and resources
- Curate high value content
- Introduce them to one another
- Be human

MY TOP 3 COMMUNITY BUILDING TAKEAWAYS

1. **KNOW** your purpose and your why, make sure you articulate this in your messaging, check in with this often
2. **GO** above and beyond and provide value at every stage, remember the problem you are solving
3. **BE** human and authentic to you and remember like attracts like!

It's important to set realistic expectations at the start of this ever-evolving journey. Like most things in business, a community isn't going to be an overnight success or have thousands of members on day one. People will only become members of a community when the community aligns with their needs, when they trust that it will bring them value, and when they know how to participate. The most successful communities often start as small email lists, Facebook groups or events before later growing into something more significant.

As you build your community, you will learn more about its value, and your members will become ambassadors and champions (remember the social proof point!) of the benefits they gain from being part of it. Starting small takes patience and effort, you'll need to do things that don't scale, but the rewards priceless and the effort will always pay off in the long-term.



"Treat your community like you
treat your best friend"

Lara Sheldrake
Founder, Found & Flourish

MEET THE EXPERT:

Lara Sheldrake

 @foundflourish

 www.foundflourish.co.uk

We'd like to say a big **THANK YOU** to Lara for sharing her community building wisdom with us. We first met Lara when we collaborated with Found & Flourish in 2019 to deliver a personal brand masterclass series for the community and have since enjoyed being part of this supportive group of female founders. The community reflects Lara's vision, character and energy and if you're a woman in business or an aspiring entrepreneur, we'd highly recommend joining their membership waitlist and signing up to their monthly newsletter - it's one of the best we've seen!

Lara is on a mission to empower women to found & flourish in business. She does this providing online training, workshops, events, community and a range of coaching services. She's a speaker, community builder and entrepreneur – combining a background in sales and strategy with her passion for community and empowering women. Working with early stage startups to household brands for over a decade, Lara set up Found & Flourish in 2018 to be able to offer a place of solidarity, community and resources to others. Lara regularly speaks on panels, podcasts and in the media; challenging the status quo, championing women and talking about how we can harness the power of community to close the opportunity gap for future female leaders and entrepreneurs.

Found & Flourish is a female founders and aspiring entrepreneurs' online membership, media & events platform, with over 10,000 women within their network. They run on average 40 events a year and provide services, resources and community to support the women at every stage of their entrepreneurial journey.

You can connect with Lara via her website larasheldrake.com or to join the Found & Flourish membership waitlist or to sign up to their monthly newsletter, head to foundflourish.co.uk

For more information on the services F&F provide please reach out to lara@foundflourish.co.uk

Business is tough, we're right here with you.

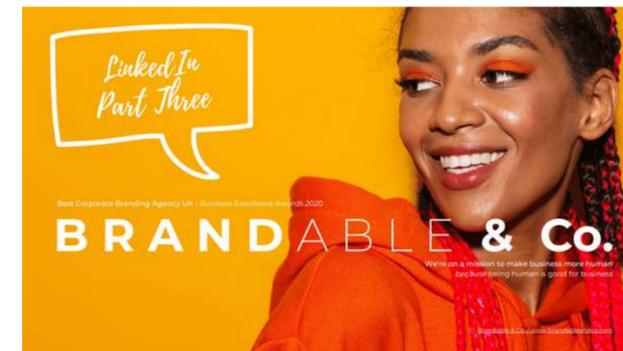
**FOUND &
FLOURISH**

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