

Inside the SharePoint Community



Strategies for Building Your Personal Brand

Christian Buckley
Forward by Mark Miller



***“Community
isn’t a
tangible
thing, it’s a
mental state.”***



Forward by Mark Miller

Founder and Editor, EndUserSharePoint.com

Chief Community Officer and SharePoint Evangelist, Global 360

Founding Member, NothingButSharePoint.com

As a SharePoint Community builder, I am still amazed at the depth and breadth of participation within the community. Whether it’s on FaceBook, LinkedIn, Twitter, SharePointOverFlow, SharePoint Saturday, or any other community talking about SharePoint, there is always a core of volunteers driving the community from a myriad of angles, making content available to all levels of users. People who have been in the technology industry for years tell me they have never seen anything like it.

Christian Buckley is an evangelist for SharePoint. “Strategies for Building Your Personal Brand” is a roadmap he created from his extensive experience, not just from within the SharePoint Community, but others he has participated in and helped build. He provides you with a solid set of tools to begin your participation and contribution to the community.

How do you become more engaged within the SharePoint Community? How do you raise your visibility so you can become one of the core participants? Community isn’t a tangible thing, it’s a mental state. It resides at multiple levels: local, district, regional, state, country. But first it has to reside within you.

More than building your own personal brand, what Christian shows in this book is how to become a participant in any community, how to play a vital role as influencer and a leader. Use this book as a roadmap to take your first steps into your chosen community and continue building your influence until you too become an evangelist, a community leader who people look to for inspiration and guidance.

Good luck on your new journey. I look forward to seeing you and learning from you as I watch your progress along the way.

Getting Involved

At the close of a SharePoint event in Seattle earlier this fall, I was talking with a few presenters and attendees about the great interaction inside and outside of the sessions. It was the first SharePoint event for the attendees, and they were pleasantly surprised to see the extensive dialog between speakers and attendees. Of course, for those of us who regularly attend SharePoint events around the country, this is a common occurrence. The SharePoint community is one of the most connected, talkative crowds in technology: we congregate, we blog, we tweet, we connect.

But the question that pops up again and again is 'How can I get more involved?' There is no secret handshake, no official rulebook. There are, in fact, many different paths into the SharePoint community and ways to develop your personal brand. First and foremost you need to have hands on experience with the technology. You can be an end user, an administrator, or a developer—all perspectives are needed. From there, it really just depends on your experience, your passions, and the time you are willing (and able) to donate to the cause.

This ebook is an outline for how you can get more involved in the events, social media, and content of the SharePoint community. Each suggestion has a checkbox, so you can better track what you're already doing and focus on areas for improvement. Find what fits, and get started today!

Christian Buckley ([@buckleyplanet](https://twitter.com/buckleyplanet))

October 2010

Strategy 1: Events

They come in all shapes and sizes. They're hosted by Microsoft, software vendors, consulting companies, and user groups. All of them are looking for attendees, but many of them are also looking for volunteers. It all begins with you taking that first step and introducing yourself. Here are some ideas for how you can get more involved in SharePoint events:

- ☐ **Share your experiences with anyone who will listen.**

The quickest way to get involved is to talk about what you're experiencing. Think you don't have something to share? Arguably, what the community is lacking the most in content is more from the end user perspective. Those stories of the initial pains you're going through trying to figure out "this whole SharePoint thing" is exactly what other people want to hear about.

- ☐ **Join (or start) a company user group.**

If there is a group meeting at lunch every third Tuesday in your lunchroom, join it. If there is not yet a group meeting at your company, start something. It can be as informal as two people having lunch at a regular time, talking about SharePoint. Post a flyer in the break room inviting others to participate. Don't think you need to be a software architect with 10+ years experience to start a user group. Get the ball rolling, and start sharing common experiences.

[Jim Bob Howard](#) took this advice and started a user group at his company to help him understand what people are experiencing so that he can better manage SharePoint. In his own words:

I've begun the preliminary step of starting a users group within my company. I'm "The SharePoint Guy" here, so leading such a group will (a) let me know how the company IS using it; (b) show me how they WANT to use it; and (c) generate some projects to move its adoption forward. I'm looking forward to it. I created a couple of flyers, created a subsite on our portal, and will be posting an announcement in the near future. Thanks for the great idea!

☐ **Join (or start) a local/regional user group.**

The benefit of this, of course, is cross-company collaboration, learning about what is working – and what is not working – with peers and experts within your community. If a group does not exist, there is help available, including guidance from Microsoft and many of the leading SharePoint sponsors. The fastest route is to reach out to leaders from other cities, and get their recommendations on where to begin. You can find listings for existing user groups on sites such as [SharePointSearch.com](#), [SharePointVillage.com](#), [SharePointCommunity.com](#), [SharePointPros.org](#), and [SharePointUserGroup.com](#). And if you go this route and decide to start an SharePoint User Group (SPUG), remember that Microsoft wants to help you be successful. Reach out to your local Microsoft office for advice and resources (and possibly funding).

□ **Start your own community.**

[Sadie Van Buren](#) made a great point over on [EndUserSharePoint.com](#) that you don't need to conform to any existing model of user group — create a group that meets your business or industry needs and open it up to participants. Her comment:

Perhaps you live in an area where there's no SharePoint Saturday or user group within a reasonable distance; or perhaps you're a member of a special-interest group that needs some representation (I'm thinking of the IT folks from the not-for-profit orgs I've worked with over the years who have unique needs and ask similar questions, and would really benefit from being able to connect with each other).

Starting a group with a specific focus is an excellent suggestion — it could be something industry-specific, such as health care, or role-specific, such as project management. You might get others onboard more quickly if they know it is context of their business area. Thanks for the suggestion Sadie!

□ **Join your regional technology organizations.**

Coming from Northern California, I joined the Software Development Forum ([SDForum.org](#)) and started participating in local user groups, panel events, and technology forums – and eventually led me to co-found the East Bay Innovation Group ([eBig.org](#)) to bring similar events and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) to the San Francisco East Bay. I also participated in events by [SVASE](#), [Bay.Net](#) user group, Stanford and Berkeley universities, and local VC and angel groups. Most major metropolitan areas generally have these kinds of groups, providing resources and

☐ **Sign up to help at a local SharePoint Saturday.**

There is never too much help at a [SharePoint Saturday](#) (SPS). They need people to greet attendees, to help with registration, to stuff attendee bags, to help the flow of people in-between sessions, to coordinate meals and AV during the event, and to promote upcoming events. Getting involved with a SharePoint Saturday is one of the best ways to get plugged into the broader SharePoint community and meet many of the “movers and shakers” within your community. Inevitably, involvement in SharePoint Saturday leads to other opportunities.

☐ **Volunteer to co-host or help coordinate a SharePoint Saturday.**

Before putting together your own event, I highly recommend helping out with a planned SharePoint Saturday. Get a feel for the event, the issues, the priorities. The goal of SPS is to let the community drive. Personally, I am interested in seeing more SPS events on the west coast, and so I stepped up and helped coordinate events in [Los Angeles](#) and the [San Francisco East Bay](#) (San Ramon), and to some extent Vancouver BC, and will be helping with future events in Sacramento, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Redmond Washington (home of Microsoft) and other western cities. In most cases, I am working with people who had volunteered for previous events, and who are now stepping up to lead in their communities.

If your plan is to put together something in your own town, you may be interested in this article on [what it takes to pull together a SharePoint Saturday event](#).

- **Attend (or host) a SharePoint.**

[SharePint](#) was started a few years back as yet another excuse for SharePoint users to get together and socialize, but has become the de facto networking event that follows every conference or gathering. Think of them as [MeetUp](#) for the SharePoint crowd. Want to chat with your favorite conference presenter and SharePoint Most Valuable Professional (MVP)? You'll likely find them at the SharePint following the conference. But you don't need a conference to host a SharePint. In most cities, 2 or more people constitute a riot. The same goes for a SharePint.

- **Bring a friend, a co-worker, a family member, your boss.**

Find it difficult attending new things alone? Bring someone. Reach out to co-workers about your interests, and bring them along to the user group or technology breakfast event. A healthy habit, no matter how seasoned you are in the SharePoint community, is to constantly look for opportunities to bring others into the fold. SharePoint Saturdays are becoming a prominent fixture in the community, and yet it's amazing to hear over and over again that people have no idea what these are, and how to get involved. Spread the word. Become the go-to person for details on local SharePoint events.

- **Introduce yourself to someone new – every time you attend.**

Another great community-building habit is to take that painful step forward and introduce yourself to someone you don't know. Whether attending a SharePint, a conference, or a user group, make the effort to find and introduce yourself to someone you have never met. It is a healthy habit that will better plug you into the community, and help others to feel more comfortable. And it never hurts to make a new friend.

- **Attend a regional SharePoint vendor conference.**

A number of training companies, consulting firms, and Independent Software Vendors (ISVs) host regional and industry-specific SharePoint events that bring together local and national speakers. Some of the better known conferences include [SPTechCon](#) (held in San Francisco and Boston), [SharePoint Connections](#), and [Best Practices Conference](#) (and the UK version – [SharePoint Evolutions](#)). Some other examples of events include [SharePointPalooza](#), [SharePointFest](#), and [ShareFest](#) (for Life Sciences).

- **Attend a virtual event.**

Having a conference in your own town is ideal: no hotel and travel expenses, no extended downtime – but obviously not always feasible. Thankfully, the quality of virtual events and caliber of speakers participating is very high. SharePoint Saturday has hosted a few, [SharePoint Live](#) has been successful, and some of the larger ISVs have adopted the model, as well. Keep watching for these events through Twitter and the community calendars.

- **Attend a Code Camp.**

Looking for a technical deep dive? Try one of the many regional code camps, offered by some of the leading training firms and independent SharePoint experts. A great resource for upcoming events is [CodeCampJunkie.com](#), but most community calendars or your local SPUG should also inform you on what activities are approaching.

- ☐ **Attend an Ask the Experts panel event.**

In most cases, an Ask the Experts session is just an extension of your SPUG, sometimes with outside speakers and MVPs. In any event, these sessions are a great way to ask specific questions. These smaller events afford you with a great presenter-to-attendee ratio. That means more personal attention.

- ☐ **Attend the larger Microsoft events.**

The larger Microsoft conferences provide a wealth of information from product and marketing teams, MVPs, and Microsoft Certified Masters (MCM). They are a great opportunity to immerse yourself in the latest product information and solutions being provided by vendors, as well. The big ones to watch for here in the US are Microsoft's [SharePoint Conference](#), followed by [TechEd](#). There are international versions of each, so watch for them in your home countries.

- ☐ **Create your own SharePoint event.**

Maybe you have a background in events, or have access to individuals on your team or from partner organizations that can help you pull together an event. It could be as simple as a breakfast or lunchtime gathering where people share their experiences. You can find your friendly neighborhood experts and invite them to attend and present. It might be a half-day event with multiple speakers and a couple partners to present on specific topic or to address concerns within a certain vertical (such as health care providers, or HR solutions, etc). While you should not jump feet first into creating an event without prior experience or adequate help, it is a fantastic way to make contacts and plug yourself into the broader SharePoint community.

Strategy 2: Social Media

In the past decade, we have seen massive waves of change over the way teams and organizations connect, collaborate, and meet commitments. At the core of this change has been the social computing revolution. There are few holdouts who still believe these tools to be a fad. The next generation of office workers expects there to be a social layer to enterprise applications. And just about every business is adapting to this change.

The SharePoint community has fully embraced this wave. Here are some ways that you can get plugged in:

- ☐ **Bookmark [NothingButSharePoint.com](#).**

This portal is an aggregation of some of the most popular blogs in the SharePoint community, with [Joel Oleson](#), [Jeremy Thake](#), [Mark Miller](#) and many other joining forces to provide comprehensive content for developers, IT pros, and end users. There is still tremendous value in other portals, but NBSP is a great place to start.

- ☐ **Bookmark your SharePoint community calendars.**

There are a couple efforts to build or consolidate the global community calendars, but this is an uphill battle as SharePoint communities pop up around the world. My advice is to locate the regional calendars that make the most sense to you. Hopefully your local user group has something posted, but sites like NothingButSharePoint.com (the calendar can currently be found [here](#)) are a great resource for regional, national and international events.

☐ **Start using Twitter.**

This is the fastest way to get involved in the SharePoint dialog. The community is heavily plugged in to Twitter. Search on hash tags for #SPS #SharePoint #join2010 and various other topics to quickly find and follow people within the community. Another quick method to find friends and make connections is to follow lists created by members of the community – they’ve done the work on who you should follow, so all you need to do is follow the list and you’ll be following everyone that is listed.

On that note, <blatant_self_promotion> you can find me on Twitter [@buckleyplanet](#) </blatant_self_promotion>

☐ **Join groups on Facebook.**

Really.....who isn’t on [Facebook](#)? Where Twitter allows you to jump into the SharePoint stream quickly, Facebook allows you to add depth to the conversation (though sometimes not too much depth) and see the faces behind the Twitter tags. Facebook is a great way to connect and develop personal and professional relationships with the people you meet at the user groups and conferences.

□ **Join groups on LinkedIn.**

LinkedIn is expanding rapidly with groups, events and forums, providing yet another way to connect – in a more secure and business-focused manner. LinkedIn is to business what Facebook is to personal networks. I am a big fan of LinkedIn because of the layers of trust, and the ability to identify potential connections through known connections. It's a great way to find others in your company interested in SharePoint, and to build lasting business relationships.

In addition to joining (or starting) your local user group listing, you might considering joining the following groups. This is just a sampling, and in no particular order:

- ◇ All Things SharePoint User Group
- ◇ SharePoint Magazine User Group
- ◇ Microsoft Office SharePoint Server – 2007, 2010
- ◇ SharePoint – Enterprise Solutions Architects
- ◇ SharePoint 2007 – 2010
- ◇ SharePoint 2010 Network
- ◇ SharePoint Nation
- ◇ SharePoint Ninjas
- ◇ SharePoint Reviews
- ◇ SharePoint University
- ◇ SharePoint Users Group
- ◇ SharePoint Speakers (thanks to [@jbhoward](#))

□ **Participate in the online forums.**

The primary resource here is the Microsoft [MSDN \(TechNet\) forums](#), which include product and service discussions, questions and comments around specific independent software vendors (ISV) and strategic integrators (SI), and just about anything else SharePoint-related. You can find forums that are sponsored by a number of vendors or community vendors, but MSDN should be your starting place. Three other sites you should consider are [CodePlex](#) (which includes free and fee-based software solutions from the community), [Bamboo Nation](#) (a great vendor-sponsored community site) and [SharePointReviews.com](#) (product overviews, reviews, and community feedback).

You may not be ready to start answering questions from other end users, but you can learn a lot from the forums – and may find yourself sharing your experiences sooner than you think. The primary benefit to the forums is your ability to find in-depth details on just about any aspect of SharePoint. Hitting a roadblock? Find answers – or commiserate with others on the lack of a solution. J

□ **Plug into any available RSS feeds.**

As you start finding bloggers and online content resources, be sure to sign up for their feeds. The new Outlook 2010 is particularly good at tracking RSS feeds and content. To get you started, you can find my feed [here](#), or you can sign up for my corporate feed on the [Axceler blog](#).

□ **Take a look at 'Stump the Panel' on EUSP.**

As pointed out by Jay from SharePointMechanic.com, one of your best online resources for quick answers to SharePoint problems is the Stump the Panel forums at NothingButSharePoint.com. Search through these archives to find answers to some of your most common headaches before spending hours trying to find information on Bing (or that Google thing). STP is also a great way to identify experts with whom you want to connect, either by reading through the numerous posts, or by selecting 'Members' at the top right, and filtering your view based on Rank or number of Posts.

Looking to cut your teeth on some SharePoint issues yourself, and start to make a name for yourself? Select 'View unanswered posts' at the top left, and start solving the problems of your peers.

□ **Participate in SharePoint Discussions on Yahoo Groups.**

Another great online resource identified by [Jay](#), SharePoint Discussions is a moderated forum created by SharePoint training company Mindsharp. Their forum overview:

This moderated (spam free, solicitation free) discussion group is dedicated to the implementation, administration, alteration, and use of SharePoint (all versions). This group is frequently monitored by thousands of experienced SharePoint people including nearly a dozen SharePoint MVPs. The group averages between 400-600 messages each month. Come join us to learn, post questions, and interact with your peers!

☐ **Email the experts.**

The SharePoint community is the most approachable technical communities I have worked with in my 20+ years in technology. Have a question? Reach out to the experts. Well-known industry experts like Joel Oleson, Dux Raymond Sy, and Michael Noel are always happy to hear from the community, and unless they're sitting on a flight (without wi-fi) will typically get back to you right away. And if they don't know the answer, they know someone who will. Likewise, feel free to drop me a line at cbuck@axceler.com

☐ **Take an online class.**

Don't have the budget or time to take an in-person course or attend a major SharePoint conference? Online options are growing rapidly, and the costs are coming down. Many local schools and community colleges are also expanding their curriculum to include SharePoint, so make yourself familiar with the options available to you.

☐ **Get certified.**

Another great way to get the recognition you deserve is to make it official – get yourself certified. While the release of SharePoint 2010 created several new certifications, the majority of SharePoint customers are still using 2007, and these certifications are just as valuable. Do what makes sense for your career and job description, but a certification may be a quick adrenalin boost to your professional profile. [Click here](#) to go to the Microsoft site and learn more about the various certifications, training classes, and resources. [According to [Jay](#), it looks like there is a certification exam for end users associated with the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) 2010 path that is [in development](#).

3

Strategy 3: Content

The community needs to hear your unique perspective, learn from your successes (and failures), and understand your industry best practices. Sure, creating content can be a fabulous way to build up your personal brand and build out your portfolio, but it also adds to the digital library of the collective unconscious and helps others leverage your learning.

If you can write, here are some ways that you can show your skills:

- ☐ **Create a blog.**

Catalog your experiences. You never know who you may be helping. As your reputation grows, it's always great to be able to go back and point to previous posts to share as case studies or to prove out a point about a current problem. The best blogs typically contain a mixture of corporate, subject matter expert, and personal voices within the content. Lean too heavily on the corporate voice, and people will identify you as a marketing vehicle for your company. My advice is a 20/40/40 mixture of corporate/sme/personal. I'd like to think that I provide a good balance of these three voices. You can check out my blog at <http://buckleyplanet.net> and let me know if you agree,

- ☐ **Read other blogs, and comment.**

As you write to your own blog, follow other leading blogs. Find people who share your area of expertise, who focus on the same vertical, or who live within your community. Cross-link, create link lists/blog rolls, and refer to others in your own posts. Some blogs you might consider are [Bill Baer](#), [Joel Oleson](#), [Todd Klindt](#), [Jeremy Thake](#), [Andrew Connell](#), [Fabian Williams](#), and the [SharePoint Product Team](#) blog, among others.

❑ **Submit an article to the major SharePoint websites and magazines.**

Focus on real-world examples and case studies. Write about your own experiences, and solutions you played a part in creating. Expand on content you created as part of your blogging effort. Remember to cite proper references, but definitely point to other leading content and experts.

The quickest path to getting published is to be familiar with what others are writing about, and create a few abstracts around your content that have a unique perspective. Add to the conversation, just don't repeat what has already been written. Send your abstracts to the various publishers, and be prepared to make changes based on their feedback. Some of the entities you may want to contact include:

- ◇ [BZ Media LLC](#)
- ◇ [Penton Media](#)
- ◇ [CMS Wire](#)
- ◇ [SharePoint Magazine](#)
- ◇ [SharePoint eZine](#)
- ◇ [MSDN Magazine](#)
- ◇ [TechNet Magazine](#)

❑ **Use trackbacks to relevant industry articles.**

People won't just randomly find your content—they'll come because you're participating in a broader conversation. Trackbacks are a great way to build inbound links to your site and give people a path to your doorstep.

☐ **Present at a regional event or conference.**

Once you have content in hand, you may be interested in presenting that content – possibly with a technical demonstration – at an upcoming event. As with getting an article published, start by creating several detailed abstracts, watch for the call for speakers. Most events lock down their speakers (especially new speakers who do not have extensive presenting experience) well ahead of time so that they can promote their event, so you need to hit this window. Having the right topic is critical, but the larger the event, the more weight the event team will give to prior experience. Start small by presenting at your user group, move up to a SharePoint Saturday, and then move up to the big events.

☐ **Write a whitepaper, or provide input to a whitepaper.**

As your technical expertise grows, there may be opportunities to share more in-depth experiences around specific solutions, products, and/or services. You may decide to tackle a topic on your own, partner with others within the community, or make yourself available to partner ISVs or SIs who seek to produce content around their solutions. Different than blogs or articles in the technical depth, whitepapers are generally not viewed as marketing pieces (though some are definitely more marketing fluff than others), and are viewed as a resume-worthy technical contribution. Think of a whitepaper as a chapter from a technical book.

- ☐ **Create a page for About.com or Squidoo.**

There's a bit of legwork involved with getting something published on [About.com](#), but the site continues to be a trusted resource for content and expertise – landing somewhere between Wikipedia and the typical user guide. Find the right About.com subject expert, send your proposal or abstract, and provide some compelling content. On the other hand, [Squidoo](#) allows anyone to be the expert. Simply sign up, add your content, and start promoting your site. Created by marketing mastermind Seth Godin, Squidoo allows you to make money off of your content through advertising and direct links to sites like Amazon and eBay. It's not for everyone, but hey – it's an option.

- ☐ **Write an ebook.**

For those who are more marketing-savvy, you may want to share a best practice in this usually light and reader-friendly format. As with a whitepaper, these are generally more content-intensive than your longer blog posting or magazine article, but have a more casual tone than the whitepaper. An ebook is a great way to share a process or outline a tool in a brief, entertaining way. Like a whitepaper, an ebook is a great way – with the right content – to establish yourself in the SharePoint community.

- ☐ **Publish a newsletter.**

You may not have the time or the content for an ebook, but a newsletter format may be a great way to promote your various blog posts and articles, upcoming events, webcasts, and other activities you're involved in. Sometimes an email blast is not comprehensive enough to communicate everything you want to share. Keep it short, provide value, and make sure it has a call to action for your readers.

□ **Write a book.**

This is no small task, but if you have the expertise, a detailed outline, and can make the time – a book is a fantastic way to document and share your experience with the world. Some words of advice: know what content is already out there, and have a different spin or story. Know your readers, and have a compelling reason for them to purchase your book.

Don't write a book because you hope to make a bunch of money off of it, because it's just not reality. One of my favorite authors of all time, Orson Scott Card (science fiction) had written a dozen books and won a number of international awards – and still maintained his day job as a technical writer (for Atari) because he was unable to make ends meet as an author alone. Books are great for demonstrating thought leadership, but not great as a primary income. Plus, you only get paid twice a year.

Once you have your detailed outline and unique value proposition defined, put together a book proposal that includes a summary, your outline, one or two completed chapters (rough drafts), details on your target readers, and a basic marketing overview of how you will promote your book. Send out copies of this package to the various SharePoint publishers, including O'Reilly, Pearson, Wiley, and others, and follow up by phone on a regular basis. More fruitful is a recommendation from an existing author to their publishers. Reach out to your SharePoint community connections.

Christian's advice on starting with a blog is spot on. A lot less pressure and it can be an ideal way to gauge what topics or style that your audience wants to read.

Johnathan Lightfoot, [TechForce blog](#)

- ☐ **Create a template, workflow or web part and share it.**

On the technical track, a quick path into the hearts and minds of the SharePoint community is to develop something – and then give it away for free (or cheap). It might be something as simple as a unique site template, or as complex as an industry-specific business process management solution. There is a growing list of sites available to share free tools, but you might begin with [Codeplex](#) and [SharePointReviews.com](#)

- ☐ **Host a webinar.**

Take your content, your series of blog content, or your latest SharePoint Saturday presentation and create a version for a [webinar](#). Promote the event to your fellow user group members, to your Twitter followers, and get it listed on one or more of the community calendars. Record the event and make it available on-demand. This is just one more tool for you to promote your expertise, your product or service, or to develop a name for yourself in the SharePoint community.

- ☐ **Create a podcast.**

Give people alternate ways to consume your content. Have something to share? Record it, make it available on your website, your blog, or through a community site. A great example of a successful podcast is [Michael Gannotti](#).

Strategy 4: Mix It Up

Some suggestions just don't fit into the nicely organized categories of content, events, or social media. Some of these ideas are hybrids—a mashup of the other sections, while others are subsets of several of these previous strategies. What they all have in common is that they will help you to promote your personal brand.

- **Create your personal metadata strategy.**

In the SharePoint space, we preach the need for thoughtfully crafted and dutifully managed metadata strategies for our customers and our organizations, but shouldn't this same advice apply to your personal brands? I suppose it depends on how deep you want to go into SEO optimization, website ranking, and other web 2.0 measurements, but think about the keywords that are core to your profile and the work that you do. Just as you cut and paste your short bio to the end of an article, have a list of keywords ready to use, as well.

- **Get a free website or blog evaluation.**

If you're not familiar with the tool, I highly recommend that you take a look at HubSpot's free website evaluation tool—[WebsiteGrader](#). This invaluable tool gives you a quick analysis of where you need to improve your website or blog. It looks at content, indexed pages, readability, metadata, images, page structure, domain status, MOZ rank, crawl date, inbound links, bookmarks, traffic rank, and conversion links to help your site better perform.

☐ **Create a user adoption strategy.**

This is a big topic, in and of itself. Creating [a plan](#) involves combining events, content and social. Microsoft and various SharePoint [industry veterans](#) have provided [guidance](#) on the topic for SharePoint, but just as this ebook has application outside of the SharePoint space, these user adoption strategies have application to your own community branding efforts. The point is to develop a similar plan for your content. Some research links include Microsoft's [case study library](#), Lee Reed's [SlideShare](#), and [Michael Sampson's book User Adoption Strategies: Shifting Second Wave People to New Collaboration Technology \(2010\)](#)

☐ **Brand your content.**

Make it easy for people to find you, and to know its you when they come across something you've created. Create a consistent look and feel, a common theme across your various deliverables so that people come to know what to expect from your work. This is your personal product, so take some time to figure out the right packaging (which may be an obvious *lack* of packaging, depending on your brand).

☐ **Create a viral video.**

Take something uninteresting (but valuable, like a 'How To' guide or some other best practice) and put an interesting story around it. Or do [something funny](#). Or interview a well-known community member, expert, or SharePoint MVP. As with the podcast, give people an alternative to the blogs and articles. Then go an add your video to FaceBook, your blog, your company site, and to YouTube with a solid description and tags for search engine optimization, and then Tweet your followers with the news.

- ☐ **Hire a virtual assistant.**

One strategy that I am personally considering is hiring a [virtual assistant](#) to help with all of the little tasks around SEO optimization, such as social bookmarking (see next page). This is a low-cost way to help you market, allowing you to focus your time on the big ticket items, like content creation.

- ☐ **Use free press releases.**

This is one of the most valuable tools in your arsenal as a way of building your brand. It requires writing skills and something actionable for readers (a link, a giveaway, something of value to bring people to your site), and has a direct impact on inbound links, search rankings, and other internet measurements. Sites to become familiar with include [OnlinePRnews.com](#), [Free-Press-Release.com](#), [PRlog.org](#), [i-Newswire.com](#), [PR.com](#), [24-7pressrelease.com](#), and [eCommwire.com](#) among others.

- ☐ **Create things people want to share.**

Sounds generic, right? I mean, duh. But what I mean is to change up the form factor. Create a piece of content that makes sense for your message, like a bumper sticker, a mug, an origami piece that unfolds to share a key message. These are items that people want to keep around, place on their desk or shelf, and keeps your brand visible.

- ☐ **Create branded bling.**

Have some fun with your [personal brand](#). Create a t-shirt, a mug, a bumper sticker — anything that can help you promote your idea, your content, your company. And have fun with it. Make it memorable so people actually want it.

□ **Use social bookmarking.**

As described in Wikipedia, "[social bookmarking](#) is a method to organize, store, manage and search for bookmarks of resources online. Unlike file sharing, the resources themselves aren't shared, merely bookmarks that reference them."

Examples include:

[Delicious](#)

[Digg](#)

[FriendFeed](#)

[Reddit](#)

[StumbleUpon](#)

[Yahoo Buzz](#)

[Google Buzz](#)

[Google Bookmarks](#)

[Mixx](#)

[Faves](#)

[Boomarking](#)

[Diigo](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Plurk](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Plaxo](#)

[Blinklist](#)

[Clipmarks](#)

[Sphinn](#)

A horizontal banner at the top of the page showing a blue sky with white, fluffy clouds.

Take Action

The purpose of this ebook is to provide you with ideas, to get you thinking, and to take action. I'm sure you can come up with additional ways to get involved in the SharePoint community, but hopefully these suggestions give you some food for thought on where to get started.

The hardest part is taking that first step.

At its core, [community development](#) is really as simple as 1, 2, 3: you need to get involved, invite others, and keep learning. That's exactly what the SharePoint community needs each of us to do. So get started, and I'll see you at the next event!



Feedback?

Christian Buckley is Director of Product Evangelism for Axceler, where he drives partner and community development. He previously worked at Microsoft on the enterprise hosted SharePoint platform team (now part of BPOS), and also managed an engineering team in advertising operations. Prior to Microsoft, Christian was managing director of a regional consulting firm in the San Francisco East Bay, participated in several startups, and worked with some of the world's largest hi-tech and manufacturing firms to deploy collaboration and supply chain solutions. He is co-author of three books on configuration management and defect tracking solutions.



Email: cbuck@axceler.com

Blog: buckleyplanet.com

Cell: 425.246.2823

Twitter: [@buckleyplanet](https://twitter.com/buckleyplanet)

LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/christianbuckley

Axceler Corporate Headquarters

600 Unicorn Park Drive
Woburn, MA 01801
866.499.7092

Axceler Seattle Office

520 Pike Street, Ste 1405
Seattle, WA 98101
206.357.9443

Axceler LA Office

999 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Ste 525
El Segundo, CA 90245
424.217.8901

Axceler London Office

7 Swallow Place
London, W1B 2AG, UK
+44 (0) 20 7850 0199