



The Mirror's Edge brand does have an owned online community, but this so-called "community" has no aspects of a typical online forum. This [link](#) leads to the community where Vincent Vukovic is the community manager. The page has news updates relating to the game, dates of upcoming events, information about the background of the game, and links to the brand's Facebook, Google+, and Twitter pages, but there is no option for users to post questions or read comments. In fact, there is no way to even become a member of this community.

According to the Lithium's Online Community's "The Heart of Social Strategy" report, "Online communities are places where brands can offer engaging social customer experiences—not just opportunities to like or follow—but to participate, to interact with other social customers like themselves, to solve problems, share ideas, and trumpet their enthusiasm for the brands and products they love." For this reason, even though Mirror's Edge has named the page "The Mirror's Edge Catalyst Community," it could easily be argued that Mirror's Edge does not actually have an owned online community.

It is important that brands maintain an owned online brand because such a presence allows a brand to completely control the brand experience, including all of the interactions between customers and all of the data provided by users. It can be hard to differentiate one brand from another on controlled social media outlets and it is also impossible to fully encompass the brand experience on, for instance, a Facebook page. Without an owned online presence and by only utilizing social media as an online forum for customers, the brand experiences become disjointed for users and may be inconsistent from experience to experience. An owned online presence is almost an established "canon" brand experience that users can use as the ultimatum for any questions or concerns they may have and serves as a way to officially represent the brand.

Before developing such a community, Mirror's Edge should determine the type of online community it would want to provide. Among the options of social support, social marketing, social commerce, and ideation – according to the Lithium report – it makes the most sense for Mirror's Edge to focus on the first three of these four.

Allowing customers to respond to one another's posts and provide information about Mirror's Edge independently to answer questions or concerns users might have, Mirror's Edge will increase customer satisfaction and lower its own cost of support. There is the risk of users providing inaccurate information, but it is better to allow and encourage this liberty than to restrict users from responding to and answering the questions of others on the community. The less control and grip Mirror's Edge places on the community, the stronger of an identity it will develop and the more invested users will be in the experience of interacting online with the community.

This community will also serve as a social commerce opportunity for the Mirror's Edge brand. Various products can be promoted on the page and the ability for users to review and comment on these products could be an option as well. By allowing customers to review franchised gear, the comic series, and the game itself, Mirror's Edge can gain a better understanding of where its hits and misses are and work to improve upon its future offerings. Customers would also be able to interact with one another in a meaningful way through reviews, which would improve the sense of community and improve the customer lifetime cycle.

Most importantly, an owned online community could serve as a social marketing opportunity for the brand with which customers could be encouraged to share their passion for the brand and the brand's products. Mirror's Edge is doing an excellent job of encouraging such interactions on its social media presences through the sharing of fan art and cosplays. There is actually a section on the brand's current "community" called "Fan Appreciation" where Vukovic writes:

"If you're following us on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram you've probably seen that we've promoted our fans beautiful creations – fan art, real-life videos and Faith cosplay. Looking back at the first Mirror's Edge and this vibrant community, we want to continue to celebrate your passion for the game, so please continue to share your creations with us!"

It would be far more efficient and comprehensive, however, to simply have an entire page on a new, owned community site where all fan work could be posted, shared, and archived. This would create a real community feel as opposed to the current reality where shared art gets lost in a daily flood of Facebook posts and Tweets. Having such a page would build brand awareness, increase word-of-mouth marketing, and would build a stronger community for the brand.

One of the biggest challenging of implementing such an online community, however, would be maintaining the health of the community. While generating its own owned online community, Mirror's Edge should be sure to focus on the elements of utility, relevance, health, and reach. The brand would need to work not only to market the community to constantly grow its members and encourage traffic to the forum, but would need to provide useful content that users could not get elsewhere in order to ensure consumer retention. It would not be difficult to maintain an interactive or lively community, given the nature of the product and how many avid fans participate in the generation of fan art and cosplays, but providing meaningful content would be essential for this community to thrive.

One of the best tools Mirror's Edge could provide on this page in order to meet this need for meaningful content would be an avenue for users to share their experiences in-game, whether that be Easter eggs they discover, funny glitches they experience, secret pathways they have discovered, new techniques for using the main character's abilities to traverse through the City of

Glass, or – most importantly – a way for users to share strategies on completing the game’s tough set of time trials. These time trials truly test a player’s abilities and it is currently difficult to research strategies for matching some of the best times set by players across the globe. By providing an avenue for users to post videos and other content relating to helping one another with time trial strategies, traffic to the community would be heavy and consistent, community engagement would be high, the content provided would be both relevant and useful, and the forum would be both highly interactive and lively.

If Mirror’s Edge were to implement such an owned online community in its brand strategy, it should also work to carefully track traffic on the page and monitor the return on investment experienced by the management of such a page. Ultimately, it is important that any effort to build the brand translates into an increase in sales revenues and customer satisfaction. If either of these two elements were to drop as an apparent result of this owned online community, then new strategies would need to be adopted to modify and improve the community to better meet its members’ needs as well as EA’s corporate goals. An online community would be a challenge to build and manage, but is also a great opportunity that Mirror’s Edge should undertake and is one that could have a positive impact on the overall brand experience.