



COMMUNITY GUIDES

The Community Building Toolkit

Tools and Templates for Building Authentic Community Around Your Work

Community-Centered · Experience-Backed · Purpose-Driven

A Note From Geezell

I did not build the Retired and Realizing community from a business plan. I built it from a comment. I posted something true on TikTok one night, not sure what I was even doing on the app, and someone commented something that made me put my phone down and take a breath — because I could not believe someone else knew exactly what I meant.

That is how this whole thing started. Not from a funnel. From a moment of somebody recognizing themselves in something I said.

You already know how to build a community. You spent 20-plus years inside one of the tightest, most loyal, most "nobody has to explain it" communities that exists. The work family. The shift. The people who could finish your sentence about an incident that would take forty-five minutes to explain to anyone who was not there.

You are not starting from zero. You are starting from **everything you already know about what real community feels like** — and this toolkit is me handing you the templates so you do not have to build it from scratch, the way I did.

You don't need a huge following to build real community. You need ten people who feel completely seen, before you ever need ten thousand.

The Four Building Blocks of Community

Every community that has ever made someone feel like they finally found their people is built on the same four things. I did not invent these. I lived them for 26-plus years in public service, and I am just naming what was already true.

1. Recognition — Before Information

The first thing anyone should feel in your space is: **someone here actually gets it**. Not "here is a tip." Not "here is a resource." Recognition first. Always. People do not join a community to be taught. They join to be seen. The teaching comes after.

2. Reciprocity — Give Before You Ask

Be the helper who asks for nothing. Show up in your own space with real, useful, generous content and conversation before you ever ask your people for anything — a purchase, a share, a follow. Trust is built in the giving. It is spent the moment you ask too soon.

3. Ritual — Something They Can Count On

Communities that last have a rhythm. A weekly question. A Wednesday check-in. A monthly theme. It does not have to be complicated — it has to be **consistent**. Consistency is what turns a group of strangers into "my people."

4. Protection — Guard the Room

A safe room is a designed room, not an accidental one. You protect your community by being clear early about what it is for, what it is not for, and by never letting a member's story be dismissed, argued with, or minimized in front of everyone else. This is the one people notice most, and the one that costs you the most if you skip it.

Ready-to-Use Templates

Copy, paste, and adjust these in your own voice. They are starting points, not scripts — the goal is that they sound like **you**, not like a template.

Template: The Welcome Post

Welcome, [Name] — so glad you're here.

This is a space for [who this is for / what you all share]. No judgment, no explaining required, no selling to each other.

Drop a comment and tell us: where are you in your journey right now, and what brought you here today? We want to know you.

Template: The Weekly Engagement Prompt Bank

Rotate through these. A community that is asked good questions becomes a community that talks to each other, not just to you.

- What is one thing about this chapter of your life that surprised you?
- What did you do this week just because it felt good — no other reason?
- What is something you used to think you'd "never" do, and now you're doing it?
- Who is someone in your life who truly gets what you lived? Tell us about them.
- What is one small win from this week that nobody outside this group would understand the size of?
- If you could tell your first-week-retired self one thing, what would it be?
- What's a tool, app, or habit that made this week 1% easier?
- What does 'your time is yours' look like for you this week, specifically?

Template: Acknowledging a Vulnerable Share

When someone opens up in the comments, generic replies ("thank you for sharing!") read as hollow. Be specific instead.

[Name], thank you for putting words to that — the part about [specific detail they shared] is exactly the kind of thing nobody says out loud, and you just made someone else in this thread feel less alone. That matters. I see you.

Template: Community Guidelines (Adapt to Your Space)

- This is a space to share, not to vent without a path forward.
- We do not argue with, dismiss, or minimize anyone's story here.
- No selling, no pitching, no recruiting in the comments or the group.
- This is not a political space. It transcends all of that.
- What is shared here in confidence, stays here.

Template: The "We Miss You" Re-Engagement Message

Hey [Name] — haven't seen you around the last couple weeks and wanted to check in, no pressure at all. Just know your seat is still here whenever you're ready. Hope you're doing well.

Your First 90 Days

If you are building a community from zero right now, here is the roadmap I would hand my own self starting over.

Days 1–30: Show Up Before You Ask For Anything

- Pick ONE platform to start (a Facebook Group is the easiest first home).
- Write your welcome post and your 3–5 guidelines before you invite a single person.
- Personally invite 10–20 people who already know, like, or trust you.
- Post something real from your own life at least 2–3 times a week. Recognition before information.

Days 31–60: Build the Ritual

- Introduce one recurring weekly moment — a question, a live check-in, a themed post.
- Reply to every single comment within the first hour. This is not optional. This is the whole job at this stage.
- Start acknowledging members by name, publicly, for what they contribute.

Days 61–90: Protect and Expand

- Address anything off-brand or unsafe immediately and privately — protection builds trust faster than growth does.
- Ask your most engaged members what they need more of. Let them help shape what comes next.
- Only now — after real trust exists — consider your first invitation to something paid, if that's part of your path.

Mistakes That Cost You Trust

- Asking for something (a sale, a follow, a share) before you have given consistently.
- Letting a vulnerable comment sit unanswered for days.
- Copying someone else's voice instead of building in your own.

- Trying to serve everyone instead of being specific about who this is for.
- Disappearing for weeks and expecting the same energy when you come back.

Worksheet: Define Your Community

Grab a pen. This is the exercise I wish someone had handed me before I posted that first TikTok.

Who is this for, specifically? (Not "everyone." Be specific.)

What do they need to feel the moment they arrive?

What is the one thing your space gives them that they cannot get anywhere else?

What ritual will you commit to, every single week, without fail?

What will you never allow in this space?

Come Home to the Community

You do not have to figure this out by trial and error the way I did. If you want to see these building blocks in action — a real community, protected, consistent, built on recognition first — come sit inside the Retired and Realizing community for a while before you go build your own. Watch how it feels. Borrow what works. That is exactly what it is there for.

Join the Retired and Realizing Facebook Group:
<https://www.facebook.com/share/g/1EWFR1xcnZ/>