Creating Engaging Communities

Using a full featured, private social network to meet the needs of a small, sophisticated association

The Alliance of Cambridge Advisors (ACA) provides mentoring and proprietary knowledge and tools to over 150 financial advisors to help them develop and grow their financial practices. To continue to provide and expand the high level of membership services that ACA members received, ACA needed an innovative solution to allow their members to collaborate and build communities around practice areas. Their current social networking product did not meet all of ACA's requirements and was doubling in price upon renewal.

Learn how ACA used Higher Logic's Connected Community™ private social networking application to:

- **Grow membership services**
- **Keep costs in line with staff expectations**
- **Provide a single, integrated community solution**

THE CHALLENGE: Increasing membership benefits

Members enjoyed basic community functions and services from ACA's prior solution. It was critical for ACA to continue offering these services while enhancing staff and member collaboration. However, ACA's current solution was static and had not provided new feature enhancements; plus an expected substantial cost increase put ACA's annual fiscal budget in jeopardy.

In addition to finding a new community solution, ACA was concurrently searching for a new association management system (AMS). It was essential that the new community solution integrate with their new AMS to allow efficient data exchange and therefore reduce data entry and data duplication.

Customer Profile

ACA alliance of cambridge advisors

- Members include 157 financial advisors using the ACA System™ of holistic financial planning
- Provides members with the tools and mentoring needed to create and grow their ideal financial advisory practice
- Incorporated in Michigan, but staff and volunteers work remotely

Visit **www.acaplanners.org** to learn more

THE SOLUTION: Professional social networking using Higher Logic's Connected Community

ACA needed a community solution that was well-rounded, cost-effective and integrated with their new AMS. They chose Higher Logic's **Connected Community** solution to serve their members. **Connected Community** offered pre-built integration with their new Avectra netFORUM Pro™ AMS which meant:

- **Increased data accuracy** with direct data transfer

- **Single sign on capabilities** for both members and staff

- **Integrated look and feel** between the community website and their main site

- **Time savings** for staff and members since information is pre-populated from the AMS

- **Attractive pricing** and fee structure for their solution

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" I define success as organic collaboration among our members; 95% of our members interact with the on-line community at least three times/week; 95% of our members state that they have the tools and the infrastructure now to share knowledge with one another. That is what true communities are all about. "

Cathy Stegmaier
Executive Director, ACA

THE BENEFITS: Increasing member satisfaction and engagement

ACA Members are benefitting from their new on-line community by:

- **Sharing and storing** files throughout ACA's general membership
- **Registering** for the ACA Annual Conference through their community portal
- **Connecting** to form new ad-hoc groups based on common interests

Increased Member Engagement

ACA's implementation strategy for members had a dual focus — transition from their outdated collaboration tool and promote their Connected Community's new features. Members adapted to their new community and are enjoying many new features that allow for easier collaboration and member interaction — anytime, anywhere.

The "daily digest" discussion group feature allows them to easily receive and reply to postings. Members also enjoy how quickly they can create groups and committees with other members. The community portal home page allows them to stay current with real time information on association announcements, events and blogs.

Early adoption was essential since ACA is a small organization, comprised of both employees and volunteers, and they expected high member engagement. Their objective was to have 100% of their members using the community site.

> "Our new community site is great! It is a big improvement over the prior social network. The overall community site is much richer in content and easier to use.
>
> Bill Cuthbertson,
> ACA Member and Board Member

Meets Today's Needs and Builds for the Future

ACA's initial goal was to ensure their current members were comfortable with the new features and functionality. Now, they plan to expand their community offerings by providing customizable web templates for members. With Connected Community's Microsite feature, members can create their own free web brochure for their companies. Members will also be able to customize their web presence and track engagement metrics.

Additionally, ACA expects to generate non-dues revenue through the sale of banner ads on their community site. With this tangible advertising ROI on their social media solution, they plan to "mobilize their members" using Higher Logic's **M²** Mobile Membership smartphone app. Members could stay in touch with the community using their mobile devices.

The rollout and successful adoption of the new social tools has had a significant positive impact within ACA's membership. ACA has been able to realize their vision of building a true social network for holistic financial advisors that provides information and connections to members and non-members alike.

About Higher Logic:

Higher Logic provides innovative professional social networking and mobile solutions for associations and nonprofits seeking to increase member retention and generate non-dues revenue. The **Connected Community** application suite empowers members to share best practices and collaborate — anytime, anywhere. Offer a new dimension of value to constituents with **Connected Community's** prebuilt integration to leading association management systems and the **M² Mobile Membership™** smartphone app.