



### AT A GLANCE

The Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants (MSCPA) is the state's premiere professional organization with more than 11,000 members in public accounting, industry and business, government, and education.

AMS: 

#### KEY STATS

**798** discussion threads

**2,458** discussion posts

**493** members have contributed to The Hub

**41%** of members have logged in at least once

**\$12,000-\$14,000**  
yearly advertising revenue

## Massachusetts Society of CPA's Online Community is Members' #1 Benefit

### PROBLEM

Before MSCPA created its online community, The Hub, members had little chance to interact, outside of events, committee meetings, and emails between known colleagues and friends.

### SOLUTION

MSCPA heard other state societies had success with online communities. It decided to partner with Higher Logic to build its own community where members could connect with one another in a secure location.

### BENEFITS

MSCPA's private community jumpstarted organic engagement among members. Members now connect and start conversations in discussion forums and enjoy weekly e-newsletters from the community. Advertising through the community and e-newsletters has increased annual revenue by up to \$14,000.



MSCPA now consistently hears from members that the community is the “number one member benefit.”

## Moving from Traditional Communication to Online Member Engagement

A few years ago, MSCPA communicated with its members solely through traditional methods like emails and events. Members connected with one another in the same ways, emailing friends and colleagues or meeting up at events.

MSCPA thought about improving engagement using an online community to increase interaction and connect members directly, but wasn't sure its members would feel comfortable with the software.

To make sure an online community was right for their members, the staff paid attention to other state societies and took note of their success with online communities.

“We watched them over the years. After speaking with them and hearing it was going well, we decided to give it a try,” said Kara Kieran, MSCPA's director of member engagement.

MSCPA partnered with Higher Logic to launch its private, members-only community, The Hub, in June 2016.

## Organic Conversation Jumps Despite Technology and Privacy Concerns

MSCPA marketed the community in its print magazine and reminded members of its launch through website and email. Still, staff started the community with low to moderate expectations.

“CPAs can be more cautious when trying new technology,” said Kara. “There were also some privacy concerns. Even though the forum is private and open only to vetted members.”

Kara and her team prepared seed questions to help encourage their members to start contributing, but it turned out they didn't need most of them. **MSCPA's members surprised everyone by embracing The Hub wholeheartedly.**

“People started asking questions on their own and things took over. We didn't need to use many of our seed questions at all,” said Kara.

As members engaged, the community gained traction. But MSCPA staff still anticipated a quieter time ahead as tax season crept up. Members proved them wrong again.

Engagement ramped up during tax season, especially between February and June. Members used the online community to ask questions about their practice and how to handle tax or software issues.

“We anticipated tax season would be a quieter time. We thought people would be busy and wouldn't have as much time to participate, but members thought The Hub was a great tax resource.”



People started asking questions on their own and things took over. We didn't need to use many of our seed questions at all.”



- Kara Kieran  
Director of Member  
Engagement,  
MSCPA



**It's amazing for our members to be connecting and seeing the member benefits they may not have known about before."**

- Kara Kieran

### **ADVOCACY**

Advocacy is a great benefit we often can't get members to appreciate until they're in a position where they need it, and we can show them.

-Kara

## MSCPA and Members Discover Unexpected Benefits

Members' conversations even prompted action from MSCPA. Community discussions about tax software problems caught the attention of MSCPA's Government Affairs Director, Zach Donah. The conversations highlighted issues between CPAs and the Department of Revenue (DOR), including technical issues and software glitches that MSCPA wasn't aware of, so it stepped in to help.

"We saw people asking things like 'Is this normal?' or 'Are you experiencing this too?' when talking about software. Our government affairs director saw the discussion and stepped in as liaison," said Kara.

Zach took the issues to the DOR and worked with them to find resolutions. MSCPA then posted updates and information in the community to keep members in the loop and let them know that a solution was on the way.

This was a new benefit for many members.

"People didn't realize we could help them in these ways until they were posting on the community and actively saw that we were responding and assisting them," said Kara. "Advocacy is a great benefit we often can't get members to appreciate until they're in a position where they need it, and we can show them."

The community provided the avenue MSCPA needed to advocate for its members, highlighting a little-known benefit of their association. Members are now seeing additional value from their membership because of the community.

## How Community Connects Sole Practitioners, Active Participants, and Lurkers

The community has been especially popular with small and sole practitioners, who are traditionally one of MSCPA's at-risk membership groups. Since they're not part of a large firm, these members are more isolated than other accounting professionals and lack the resources of their peers. In the past, this has made it difficult for sole and small practitioners to engage and find value in their membership.

With the community, they can connect to other experts in the same way they would with direct colleagues to ask questions and get advice. They can build their network in the same way members at large institutions can.

MSCPA now consistently hears from members that the community is the "number one member benefit."

Members' favorite part of the community? Being able to ask questions! Even if they're not actively participating, MSCPA found members were reading the daily digest regularly. MSCPA now knows many of its members prefer this form of passive participation and get value just by reading conversations and emails instead of posting.



→ Check out MSCPA's online community [advertising kit](#)

## Community Advertising Increases Non-Dues Revenue by \$14,000

MSCPA's daily digests and weekly community e-newsletter are popular with both lurkers and active contributors. All 11,000 members receive the weekly e-newsletter, where MSCPA sells advertising space.

Kristin Wells, MSCPA's events and business development manager, ramped up the advertising program just a few months after the community launched. She created a comprehensive media kit with community statistics and ad mockups to help partners see value and visualize what their ads would look like.

Ads are offered for the daily digest emails, weekly e-newsletters, and discussion pages. To keep the community from becoming a marketing channel, ads are offered only in sidebars and top banners, and only one ad space is available in each weekly newsletter.

MSCPA's first ad ran in December 2016. In 2017, MSCPA's ad space was 75 percent booked, **bringing in nearly \$14,000 in revenue.**

**“The success with advertising has been huge for us,” said Kristin. “It frees us up to do other things.”**

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### ABOUT HIGHER LOGIC

Higher Logic is an industry leader in cloud-based engagement platforms. Our data-driven approach gives organizations an expanded suite of engagement capabilities, including online communities and marketing automation. From the initial web visit to renewal and ongoing engagement, we help you track and manage interactions along each stage of the digital customer experience. Organizations worldwide use Higher Logic to bring people all together, by giving their community a home where they can interact, share ideas, answer questions, and stay connected. Everything we do - the tools and features in our software, our services, partnerships, best practices - drives our ultimate goal of making your organization successful.