



AARC Works to Advance Health Care Through Its Online Community

Q&A with The American Association for Respiratory Care



The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) is an association for respiratory care and allied health professionals interested in cardiopulmonary care. It's also the only professional organization supporting respiratory care in the United States. AARC is a long-time Higher Logic client, and we recently checked in with its community team: **Asha Desai, project manager and HOD liaison, and Amanda Feil, membership development manager.** Read the highlights from our chat on how AARC's online community has impacted its members over the years.

Higher Logic: Give us a quick snapshot of your community, AARConnect.

Asha and Amanda: We launched AARConnect in May, 2010 — the association has 50,000 members and about one quarter are currently active in the online community. There are about 2,500 unique logins every month.

HL: What convinced AARC to start an online community?

A & A: Before launching AARConnect, AARC used a bulletin board and LSoft listserv platform to communicate member benefits. It felt cumbersome and not user-friendly — admins couldn't embed videos, had to manage member lists manually, and there were minimal security options for the bulletin. The emails and digests weren't engaging for members, since it lacked options for segmentation and design.

AT A GLANCE:

The American Association
for Respiratory Care (AARC)

- Founded in 1947
- Headquarters in Irving, Texas
- Members: 52,000+ worldwide
- Website: aarc.org
- AARConnect: connect.aarc.org
- Public social media: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube



AARC chose Higher Logic for its robust features, options for libraries and microsites, as well as an easy-to-use platform that was well-suited to limited staff resources. The functionality and flexibility our users got from Higher Logic's community platform was night and day.

HL: How's member interaction going?

A & A: AARConnect's Help Line is open to post any type of question, and member answers are almost instantaneous. AARC's old bulletin board functioned in a similar way, so that has helped boost participation — members are familiar with it. The community also has specialty section memberships. Experts in certain fields weigh in on section-specific discussion topics.

Additionally, AARConnect is where a lot of staff-committee work gets done — within discussions and groups in the community. Many committees only meet in person once or twice per year, but now they can move forward on objectives within the community.

We recently hosted a leadership workshop for AARC's state leaders — some of these members have been around forever, but AARConnect and its robust features were still new to a few of them. We are working to spread our message in different ways and have those leaders turn into community advocates.

HL: How has the community helped your members' professions and the industry?

A & A: We are a medical association — a large percentage is aging out of the field right now, so we are top-heavy on retirement age members and trying to pull in more Millennials. A primary issue is coaxing our older members into the internet environment — they are not spending a lot of time on computers during work hours, and even if they are, it's limited to hospitals and medical facilities with strict, HIPPA-compliance rules. For this and a variety of other reasons, many of our members just aren't tech savvy. We've done a lot of tech education around the Higher Logic platform — blogging, adding resources to the library, and networking based on schools and credentials. We're continually guiding them to be more comfortable and interactive.

The overall structure of AARConnect means the world to our members. Members constantly share policies and ideas now. One community group started sharing one case story every month to help improve their own skills (while still careful to be compliant). The purpose is to educate and help members provide better patient care. For example, one member will post an anonymous test result and ask, "What do you think is the diagnosis here?" Members didn't expect this type of feedback channel in

FEATURE:

AARConnect's Help Line

Have questions or want to discuss an issue? AARConnect's Help Line is the place to be. Members can post questions and receive instantaneous help and resources. Experts in certain fields weigh in on section-specific discussion topics. Currently there are 7,500+ discussions and over 260 files shared.

connect.aarc.org/helpline

“Our members are continually teaching and being respectful of each other. It's helping all members provide better care and think outside of the box.”

AUTOMATION IN ACTION:

The "We Miss You" Rule



Our "We Miss You" rule has a 30% conversion rate!

Automation rules are making a big difference in engagement growth.

the beginning, but the conversations are thriving. Different opinions and theories on procedures pop up every day, with members continually teaching and being respectful of each other. It's helping all members provide better care and think outside of the box.

So member discussions are turning into solutions for challenges healthcare professionals face every day. For example, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) brought a lot of new regulations to hospitals — most are penalized for patient readmissions, and members discussed how to handle that issue regarding chronic conditions and hospital reimbursements. A discussion about budget cuts helped one member who was planning on setting up a pulmonary rehab facility. The rehab had to share gym space with a physical therapy office — the member reached out for advice. Other members stepped in to talk about their own experiences and explain how it's a good option when dealing with limited resources.

HL: Anything new in your community that you're really excited about?

A & A: One great thing about the Higher Logic platform is it's easy for organic interactions to occur — we don't have full-time staff resources to devote to the community. Automation rules have helped. We began using them in August 2015, and our "We Miss You" rule has a 30% conversion rate! These emails are already making a big difference in engagement growth. Amanda actually receives a lot of personal replies from the automated emails, expressing thanks or asking follow-up questions.

Thankfully, the community has always been a reliable, dependable tool for organic activity — it's easy for members to engage despite not having dedicated community management. In AARC's case, we spread the community management wealth so a group of staff all work together to complete smaller tasks. It's a testament to our members and the Higher Logic platform that they're engaged in spite of limited staff time. And now a huge part of that is automation rules.

Client Profile | The American Association for Respiratory Care

The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) is the leading national and international professional association for respiratory care. The AARC encourages and promotes professional excellence, advances the science and practice of respiratory care, and serves as an advocate for patients and their families, the public, the profession and the respiratory therapist. AARConnect is AARC's online member community.

ABOUT HIGHER LOGIC

Higher Logic is an industry leader in cloud-based community platforms, with over 25 million engaged members in more than 200,000 communities. Organizations worldwide use Higher Logic to bring like-minded people all together, by giving their community a home where they can meet, share ideas, answer questions and stay connected.

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FEATURE:

AARConnect's Blogs

AARC community members love to share and discuss knowledge and news about their professional industry. The blog is the perfect resource for such ponderings. Plus, education is a focus for AARC.

connect.aarc.org/blogs