



## Breaking Down Barriers: Communities as Collaboration Tools

The North American Spine Society improved online communications for the field of spine care

### CLIENT PROFILE | NASS

The North American Spine Society (NASS) is a global multidisciplinary medical society that utilizes education, research and advocacy to foster the highest quality, ethical, value and evidence based spine care for patients.

NASS has been a Protech customer for over ten years. About four years ago, it realized a need for additional communications tools to enable committees to talk with each other online. It started the search for a resource that would easily allow members to engage beyond the physical and technological barriers it was currently experiencing as a global, multidisciplinary organization.

### THE NASS GOAL

NASS knew it wanted to consolidate efforts and find additional mechanisms to improve member engagement and increase global participation. The overarching goal was to break down barriers in medicine, culture and the spine care community as a whole to help retain, attract and engage its members. There was also a recognized need to keep the brand and overall web presentation cohesive and not distracting across all technology platforms—the visual and operational functions must work in tandem.

### LAUNCHING SPINE CONNECT WITH HIGHER LOGIC

NASS chose Higher Logic, an industry leader in cloud-based community platforms, to help it build an online community for the spine care field to collaborate, share research and case studies and ultimately transcend global boundaries. Higher Logic easily integrates with Protech and offers pre-built integrations:

- Ensuring data is transferred and not duplicated between systems
- Providing a single sign-on for both systems for members
- Saving staff and members' time by automatically creating member profiles and communities
- Decreasing implementation time

SpineConnect launched in September 2014, with all members subscribed to an open forum.

### AT A GLANCE:

#### The North American Spine Society (NASS)

- Headquartered in Burr Ridge, Illinois
- A global multidisciplinary medical society that utilizes education, research and advocacy to foster the highest quality, ethical, value- and evidence-based spine care for patients
- NASS has 8,400 members in 72 countries
- Community site: SpineConnect, connect.spine.org
- Website: www.spine.org
- AMS: Protech Associates
- Public social media: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn



Watch the SpineConnect Member Welcome Video to learn how to navigate the community. (Source: YouTube)

## CASE DISCUSSIONS BECOME INTEGRAL

Since launching six months ago, NASS has seen a significant, positive impact on its member engagement, which it's confident will continue driving members back to the organization's community and resources. Networking now is more accessible, helping connect people who may never have known each other with similar interests and past experiences, adding real value and moving discussions forward.

In particular, the case discussion threads have seen remarkable success:

- 3,000 members logged in
- 711 discussion posts
- 189 individual threads
- 258 unique authors

The case discussion threads are more than a chatting tool for physicians—it's a useful Q&A arena for real cases. A lot of members wanted and needed a place to network with colleagues, discuss what is happening within their practices and exchange ideas. It goes beyond convention for communicating within the spine care community.

The community also helps NASS collect better member and engagement data, which leads right back into its CRM system using Protech's Link integration. With members regularly updating their profiles and information within the community, NASS can easily track the activity and now proactively reach out and offer better resources and assistance.

## AWARD-WINNING RESPONSIVE DESIGN

NASS was focused on choosing a technology that was both effective for its members in the medical profession and optimized for users on different devices around the world. SpineConnect launched on Higher Logic's responsive design codebase. The look and feel uses Bootstrap, an open-source framework designed to optimize the user's experience across all devices. NASS' clean, user-friendly design extends to both the company website and new community. The community was awarded Best New Community Design at the 2014 HUG Super Forum, an annual Higher Logic event bringing clients and staff together to network, collaborate and recognize top communities for their achievements.

## TAKING SPINE CONNECT INTO THE FUTURE

NASS' global success getting members to engage on SpineConnect solidifies its plans to continue recruiting industry experts and members to be more active within the community. Future goals include opening up specialty interest group communities, launching a "Find a Specialist" directory, implementing a spine fellowship program (using Higher Logic's Mentor Match module), and bringing the society's various programs into one, cohesive community space.

### 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 energized.



“The community discussion on SpineConnect is probably the best and most helpful dialogue available to our profession today.”

~ Dr. Kim J. Garges, MD  
Nassau Spine Institute  
SpineConnect Member