# Kevin Wolf

Dear Kevin,

**Online Communities for Small Associations are Affordable and Provide High-Value**

Online communities – Web pages for an organization's members to exchange ideas, ask questions, and collaborate on projects – are popular extensions of an association's online presence. The communities promote member engagement and foster a sense of community among members.

Question and answer sections provide a valuable knowledge-base for the organization. These exchanges between members are saved and searchable by new members and members who are researching issues within their own company.

Community participants are encouraged to engage with other members on common topics and issues. And as critical new issues surface due to business or legislative changes, online communities can quickly respond and react.

In today's association marketplace, many online community solutions require a dedicated Community Manager. Others are priced well beyond the reach of small associations.

Fortunately, there are solutions that can and do provide onine communities at an affordable price without diminishing function or features. The Potomac Digitek team has partnered with an online community provider called Forumbee and the result is an affordable, feature-rich solution that works well without the burden of a person dedicated to the management task.
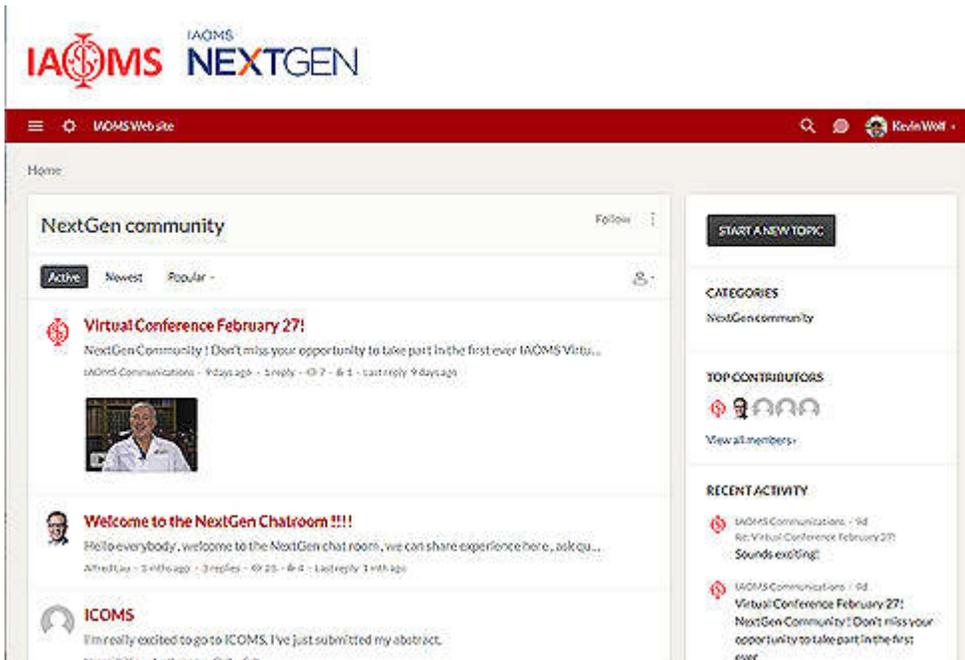
Users have quick access to all categories from the home page for the
**International Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons** ' Community, and
can see the latest posts and recent contributors as well.

Here are a few insights from current PODI/Forumbee users.

The **National Business Group on Health** (NBGH) has two active online communities, one aimed at U.S.-based Member Employers and another for Global Member Employers.  In the U.S. Member Employer community, active discussions center around nine categories such as Caregiving Support and Healthcare Policy and Regulations.  Specific topics, driven by community members, emerge within these categories.  For example, Parking Spaces for Expectant Mothers and Third Shift Child Care are two active topics within the Caregiving Support category.

Any of the 1,126 participating NBGH members may post a question in any category they are authorized to participate in.  All members are encouraged to respond and for NBGH, 393 of 420 discussions have replies.  *A 94% response rate represents an active and engaged community!*

The **Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association** uses its community in a different way.  It has 320 topics organized into only 3 categories.  With just 400 members participating, the community pages average 32 views per day during a typical week.   That's strong interaction within this small community!

**National Association of Professional Background Screeners** uses its community for members to exchange ideas on topics like Industry Practices and Technology.  A separate category has been created for Young Professionals to connect to others in the industry.

If you are looking for a great way to increase member engagement or to strengthen your association's sense of community, consider providing an online community.

**Highlights of the PODI/Forumbee Online Community solution:**

- **Branded** : Your organization's logo and color scheme represented throughout the community.
- **Integrated login** (aka Single Sign-On): No need to login again! Once a member logs in on the main site, their credentials are recognized and provide access to the community.

- **Roles** (User, Moderator, Admin) are defined in your back-office and are passed to the community via the Single Sign-On login process.
- **Access Control** is defined in your back-office at the Category level and is assigned during SSO login.
- **Minimal Administration** : The community is limited to members only. Exchanges and discussions are business-like and need little supervision.
- **Affordable** : One-time setup fee plus monthly subscription fee.
- **Reporting** : Real-time reports are available on member participation, topics and category activity, popular topics and phrases, and much more.
- **Import Tools** : Ability to import from most existing community platforms; allowing you to salvage valuable content from your old, non-functioning, or expensive platform.

**GDPR Update**

The rollout of the European Union's guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information of individuals within the European Union is now almost a year old.  No one quite knew what was going to happen when the March 25, 2018, implementation date arrived.

EU companies and even U.S.-based companies with strong business ties to individuals in the EU implemented GDPR protections by the deadline and business continued without a problem.

But the new GDPR guidelines are not to be taken lightly. Violations can trigger heavy fines as those filed recently against Google.

CNIL, the French data protection watchdog, issued its first GDPR fine — $57 million — claiming that Google failed to comply with GDPR rules by not fully disclosing to users how their personal information is collected and what happens to it. Google also did not properly obtain users' consent for the purpose of showing them personalized ads because their wording was purposely too broad and too obscure.

The fallout, even for U.S.-based web users, is a growing focus on how personal information is collected and used and the importance of clearly and concisely informing users.

If you are concerned about your site's GDPR compliance, Potomac Digitek can help!  Contact your account executive for more information.

**Potomac Digitek's 25th Anniversary Celebration**

Remember when the Internet was new and mysterious? Here's an excerpt from our November 1997 newsletter about presentations Potomac Digitek hosted at the American Staffing Association's meeting:

> In addition to the Internet Lab, Paul Finkel hosted two "Internet 101" sessions and one "Internet 201" session for attendees. The popularity of Paul's presentations at the 1996 conference prompted meeting planners to triple the size of the room for the 1997 sessions. Even so, Paul still managed to draw standing-room-only crowds at each of his 1997 presentations.

# Other News and Notes

The new **National Association of Chemical Distributors** web site launched this month with a brand new look and an upgrade to the Mura 7 CMS interface! Site visitors will also benefit from a new searchable publications manager making it much easier to locate specific documents and files.

The **Wood Machinery Manufacturers of America** web site is sporting a refreshed design that focuses on their upcoming meetings.

The **Hearing Industries Association** launched their new site *Hear Well Stay Vital* just in time for World Hearing Day on March 4th.

The **National Business Group on Health** just launched a new website in support of its rebranded Healthy Lifestyle Awards program, now known as " *Best Employers: Excellence in Health & Well-being* " . The award program recognizes large employers with exceptional commitment to improving their employees' overall well-being, productivity and quality of life.