

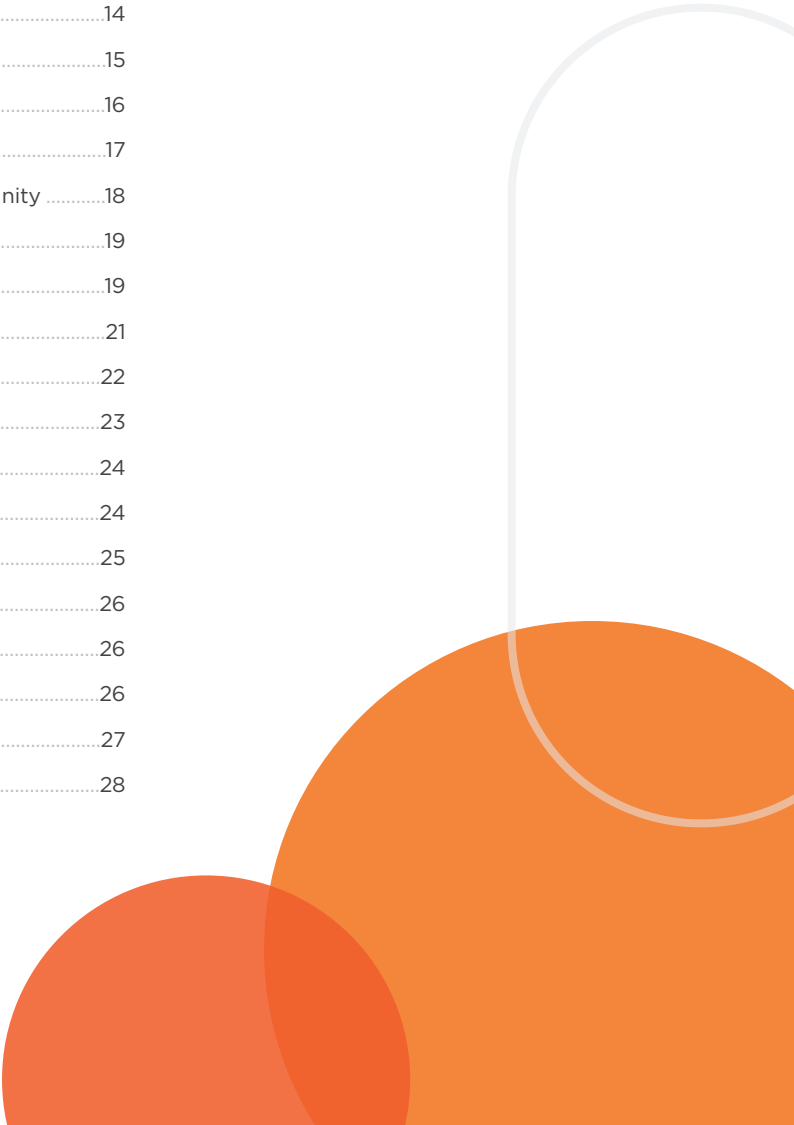


THE 2024
Association Community
Benchmark Report



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In an increasingly digital era, and with many professionals working remotely across the globe, online communities are key to keeping people connected.

While events are great, the reality is they only happen a few times a year and not all your members attend. **With an online community, you're able to reach members year-round** and cultivate a collaborative space for networking, resources, and learning.

That's more important than ever. **The top reason members join an association is networking¹** and the **top two reasons members don't renew is a lack of engagement and a perceived lack of value²**.

Your online community is perfectly suited to address these member needs! And associations that approach their online community as a channel not JUST for peer-to-peer networking, but also as **a hub through which they can connect members with their benefits** and industry opportunities see even better member engagement.

Making your community a central hub for your initiatives - like volunteering, mentoring, resources, and more - makes it easier for members to find what they're looking for, gives them more reasons to log in and engage, and reinforces your community as a source of member value.

¹ [MGI 2024 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report](#)

² [Higher Logic 2023 Association Member Experience Report](#) and [MGI 2024 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report](#)

All this not only drives the success of the community and individual projects but also **strengthens the overall collaborative culture and vitality of your association's membership**. Your association is a place where people from your industry can feel understood and supported - by their peers and your organization - and the online community provides a real-time environment to experience that sense of belonging.

The data in this report supports this; there is higher member engagement when associations take a holistic approach to their community.

Organizations that incorporate **mentoring and volunteering programs and job boards in their community** and/or **provide personalized experiences to chapters, groups, and for events** see more community logins, more discussion activity, and more contributors.

SO WHAT CAN YOU LEARN FROM THIS REPORT?

Higher Logic's 2024 Association Community Benchmark Report collects **anonymized data from ~1,500 associations and nonprofits in the United States, Canada, and the Asia-Pacific region** who use Higher Logic Community (Original), Higher Logic Thrive Community, or Higher Logic Thrive Platform (Community + Marketing).

Tracking your community's performance and comparing to benchmarks from your industry can help you monitor community health, see if your strategies are working, and get ideas for tactics that may help you improve.

This report will help you analyze how your community performance compares to similar organizations and provide you with insights to aid your strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and the refinement of your engagement strategies.

TLDR SUMMARY

If you only have a few minutes between meetings to speed read this report, or you're someone who prefers the "SparkNotes" to the full novel, we've got you. This "Too Long; Didn't Read" summary gives you the quick version - like the watching the movie trailer before the full film.



On average, **15% of community users** are subscribed to at least one community and log in or participate in a discussion at least once in any 120-day period.



On average, **506 unique community users log in each month**, with **14% of those users actively contributing** to discussions.



The average open rates for community digest emails were: **43% for the Daily Digest and 59% for both the Daily and Weekly Consolidated Digests** (surpassing the 38% average email open rate from our latest Association Email Benchmark Report).



On average, communities see **162 discussion activities** (including both new threads and replies) each month. For discussion activity, **March and September were the most active months**, and December and January were the least active for communities in our data set.



Customers using Higher Logic Thrive Communities have **73% more average monthly logins, 88% more average monthly discussion activity, and 77% more average monthly unique contributors** than customers using Higher Logic Community (Original).

On average, organizations that take a holistic approach to community, making it a one-stop shop for multiple initiatives, see higher community engagement:



Organizations that incorporate their **mentoring and volunteering programs** in their community see 124% more community logins, 50% more discussion activity, and 53% more contributors.



Organizations that **incorporate a job board into their community** see 88% more community logins, 84% more discussion activity, and 87% more unique contributors.



Organizations that use their community to **provide personalized experiences to chapters, groups, and for events** see 116% more community logins, 70% more discussion activity, and 65% more contributors.



Organizations that **integrate their marketing automation software** with their community see 49% higher average community logins and 250% more average monthly discussion activity.

DEFINITIONS

Throughout this report, we explore metrics related to the following:

- **Community Members, Community Users, and Community User Accounts** are used synonymously throughout this report to refer to the number of community user accounts an organization has.
- **Users with Activity** in this report refers to contacts who logged in within a 120-day period.
- **Users Subscribed to At Least One Community, or Users In At Least One Community** refers to users who have signed up for at least one of their organization's communities within the community platform. Some organizations may have only one community discussion in their community, but others may have several subcommunities.
- **Monthly Unique Logins** refers to unique community users who logged in within a given month (if one person logs in 20 times, they only count once against this metric).
- **Monthly Unique Contributors** refers to unique community users who either started or replied to a discussion within a given month, either when logged into the community or via the community email digest.
- **Discussion Activity** includes new discussion threads, replies to discussion threads, and replies to sender (original poster).
- **Age of Community or Time on Community** is determined by the time since customer launch.
- **Annual Revenue Numbers** are approximate and represent the total annual revenue of the organizations we pulled data from, NOT revenue specifically from the community or membership dues.

Benchmark Data

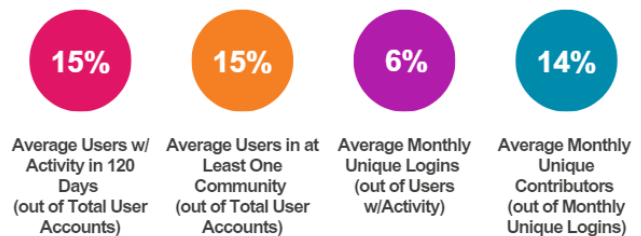
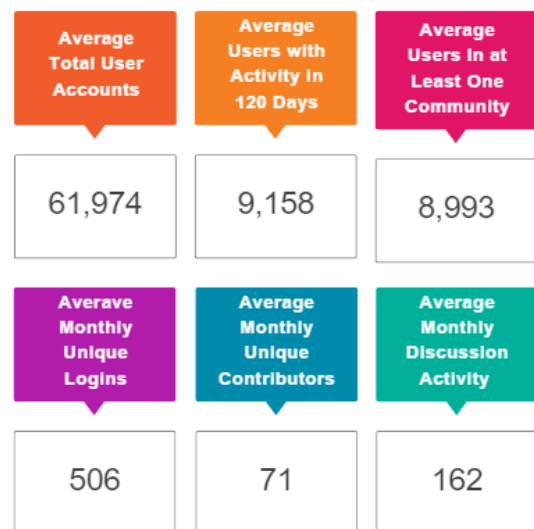
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Users, Logins, and Contributors

For communities in our data set, we found that on average, about **15% of the total number of community user accounts are subscribed to at least one community. The same percentage are active within the span of 120 days** (whether just logging in or actively participating). This doesn't necessarily include users who might only view community digests via email (see the Community Digest Open Rate section of the report for current open rates).

Digging a little deeper into community engagement and **activity on a monthly basis**, communities in our data set had an average of **506 unique users logging in each month**, with **14% of those users actively contributing** to discussions (71 users).

June 2023-2024



THREE THINGS TO NOTE

1. The fact that the average number of users with activity in 120 days (4 months) is much larger (9,158 community users) than the number of average monthly unique logins (506 community users) suggests that **different members log in each month** - so while you may have a smaller percentage of community users logging in during any given month, you're engaging a wider percentage over time.
2. It's also important to also recognize how many community users engage with your community via the community email digest, even if they're not logging in each month. **The average open rate for community digest emails was between 43-59%** (which we discuss in the next section of the report) - so half your members are gaining value through the community every day or week!

For this reason, **it's really impactful to autosubscribe users to your main community digest when you populate your community** (even if you choose to leave other communities as opt-in or locked down for certain users). This helps users easily start engaging - they can even respond to discussions via email if they don't have time to log into the community. They can also control and personalize the community notifications they receive by leveraging your consolidated daily and weekly digests, or Smart Newsletter.

3. It's likely that many organizations do not deactivate users for inactivity, nor is that necessary for many organizations (for example, organizations may grant community access to all individuals with an active membership). As such, the average number of community user accounts may be high - so it's helpful to consider this number alongside average logins, digest open rates, and activity for added context.

Don't discount the users who aren't logging in or contributing, though. As we'll explore in the Community Digest section of this report, many of your community users may be primarily consuming community content via email. We also typically see three types of [community personas](#) in the community, all of whom are valuable:

- 1. Consumers:** the lurkers and learners who absorb content without actively participating. They read posts, watch videos, download resources, and follow discussions. Their engagement is subtle, but they wouldn't be logging in if they weren't getting value from your community.
- 2. Contributors:** the backbone of your community. They comment, ask questions, and share their experiences. They keep the conversations flowing.
- 3. Creators:** the ones who generate original content. They write original posts, answer questions and upload content. Their passion fuels the community's growth.

All of these personas can and should be nurtured and supported with curated content, engaging discussion prompts, and regular acknowledgement.

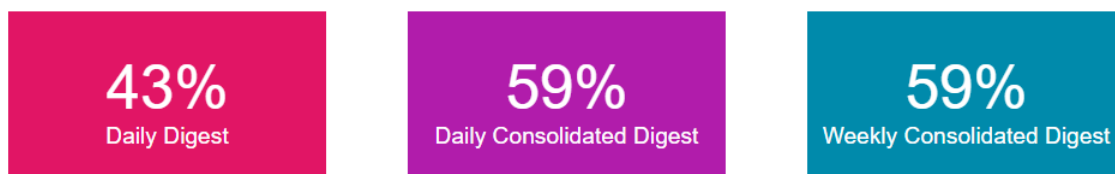
[Check out tips from a community advisor for engaging all your personas](#) →

Community Digest Open Rate

Your community digest is probably the most popular email your members receive!

The average email open rate in our most recent [Association Email Benchmark Report](#) was 38%. **With an average open rate of 43%**, even your basic community digest (sent out automatically in Higher Logic communities) surpasses that by 5 percentage points. And the open rates only get better the more personalized the digest, with **both the Daily and Weekly Consolidated Digests showing an average open rate of 59%**.

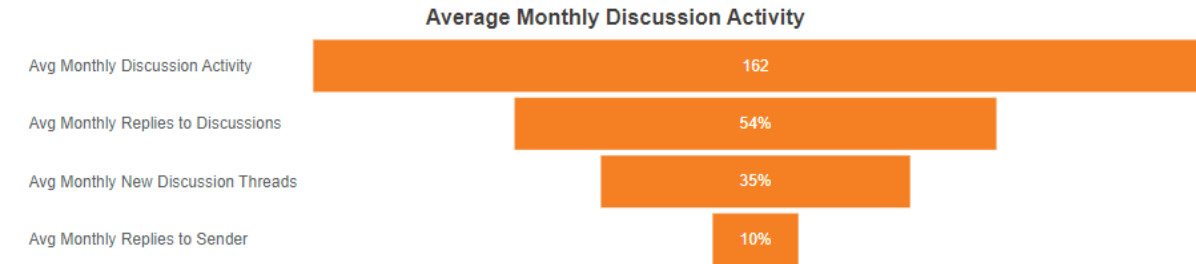
Average Community Digest Open Rates



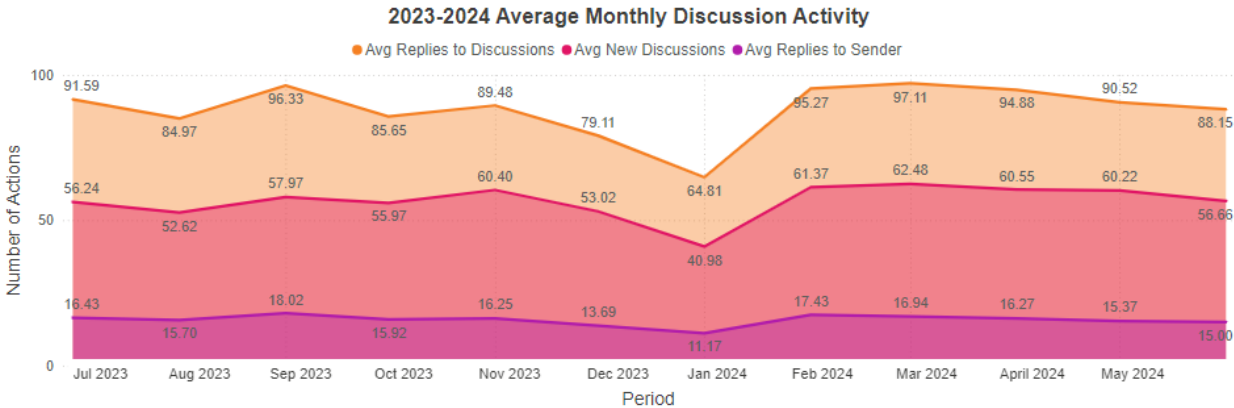
That's a lot of engagement – even if your members aren't logging into the community regularly, many of them are engaging with your community and your association EVERY DAY via your community digest.

Monthly Discussion Activity

On average, communities in our data set saw **162 discussion activities per month** in 2023-2024: 54% were replies to discussions, 35% were new discussion threads, and 10% were replies to the sender (original poster).

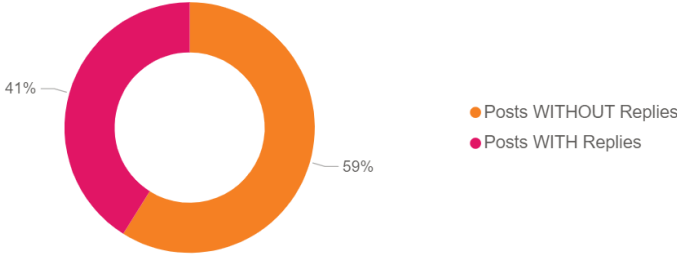


For discussion activity, **March and September were the most active months**, and December and January were the least active.



On average, **59% of discussion posts go unanswered**, so it may make sense for community managers to dedicate time to regularly pulling a report of unanswered threads and reaching out to staff or subject matter experts to encourage them to respond. Your members will feel a lot more engaged if they feel like they're being heard.

Average Number of Community Discussions With and Without Replies



Community Resource Library

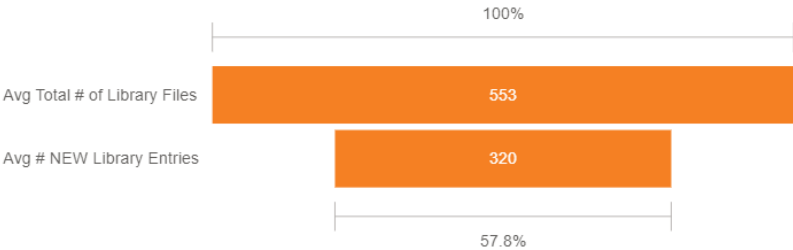
Don't forget that hosting resources in your online community is also a great way to encourage community and member engagement.

On average, Higher Logic communities saw members **downloading resource library entries 3,048 times** last year. And community resource libraries grew a lot too - with associations increasing the number or entries in their resource libraries by 58% over the last year.

Higher Logic Thrive Community's updated resource library has a fresh, easy to navigate design that makes resource libraries an even more powerful member benefit - staff can easily organize, and members can easily find what they're looking for!

Average Number of Community Resource Library Entries

3048
Average Number of Resource Library Downloads



Think about adding your webinar and event recordings, program materials, and other organizational resources to your online community to make them easy to find and give members a reason to log in and check out what your community is all about.

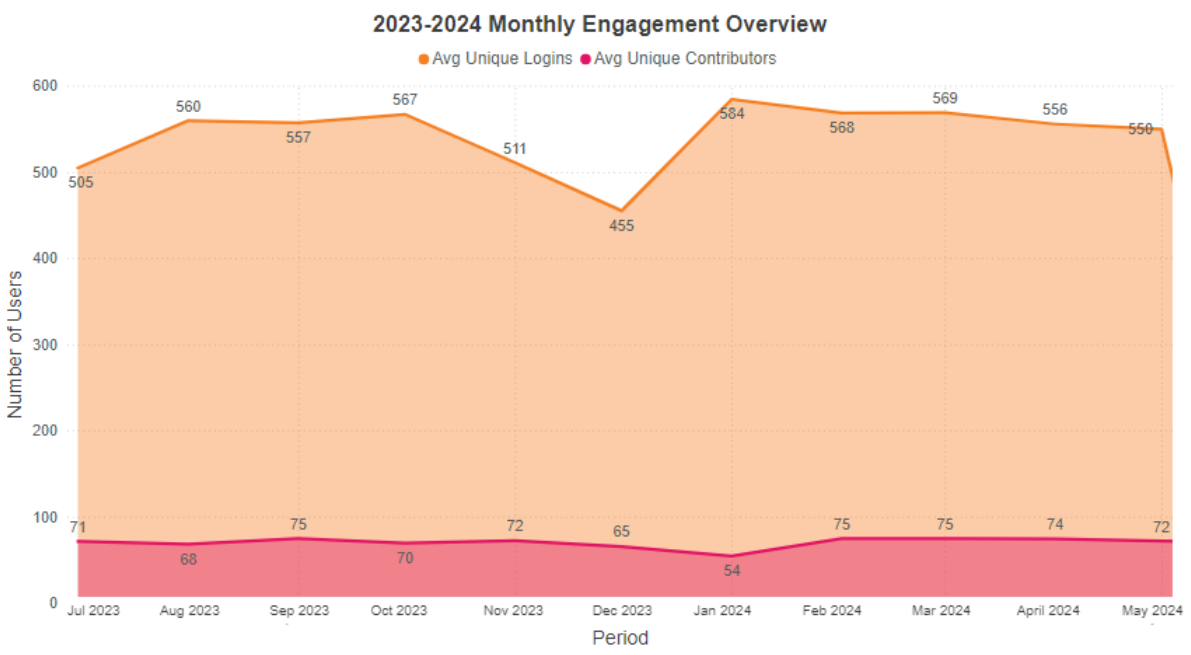
Higher Logic's [AI enhancements](#), Bulk Upload and AI Suggested Tags, make it easier than ever to populate and organize your community library.

- **Bulk Upload:** Simplify content management by effortlessly uploading and organizing your multiple community content entries.
- **AI Suggested Tags:** Let AI suggest relevant tags for better discoverability and engagement in your community.

[Learn more and sign up to gain access](#) →

Community Engagement Trends

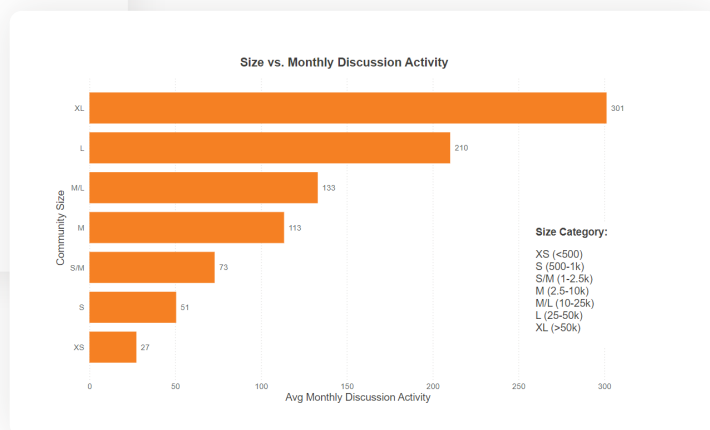
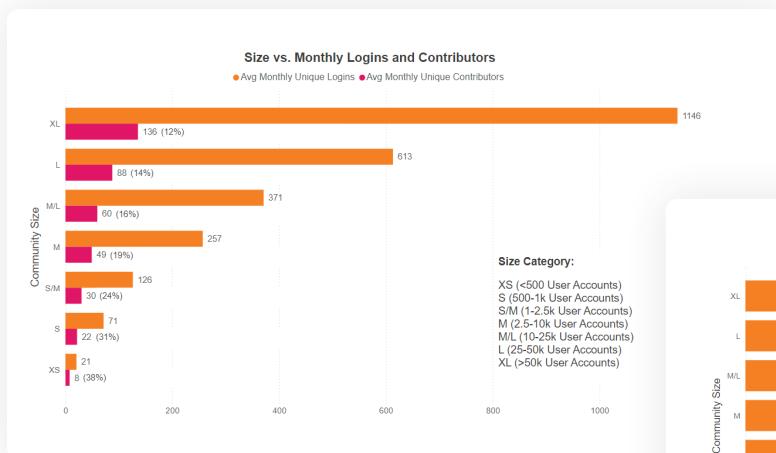
Community logins and community contributors have remained pretty steady throughout 2023 and 2024, with an understandable dip in activity in December 2023, when many association members are out of the office for the holidays



COMPARISONS

Community Size vs. Community Engagement

Larger communities obviously have more monthly logins and discussion activity, but a lower percentage of those logging in are contributing.



Keep in mind, a community doesn't have to be large to be successful – the ideal size of your community will primarily depend on your audience and who you want your community to serve. For example:

- If you build a community to serve your membership, and you have 5,000 members, then having 5,000 user accounts in your community would be a success!
- If you run a community open to an audience of industry professionals that you estimate to be around 50k, having 40k in your community would be great to see.
- If you run communities for specific committees, even a community as small as 30 people could be highly engaged and successful.

It's about who you want to reach and how engaged they are. If your audience is 5,000 people, you'll never have a community of 50,000 – nor would you want to because that would mean you had a lot of irrelevant community members who probably wouldn't engage.

Instead, think about comparing your total number of community user accounts, to accounts with activity, logins, and discussion activity. How are your numbers changing over time? Are you seeing a higher percentage of users engaging? Are there specific discussion threads or library entries that are getting a lot of attention and indicating that specific topics are highly interesting to your members?

Your online community data offers a wealth of information and insight. Set a reminder to check the following:

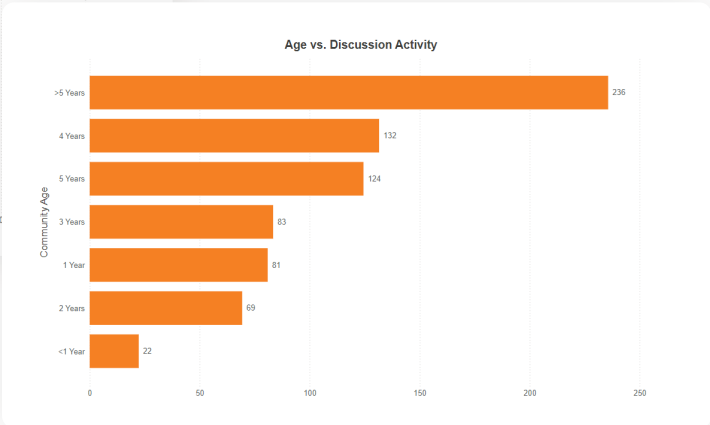
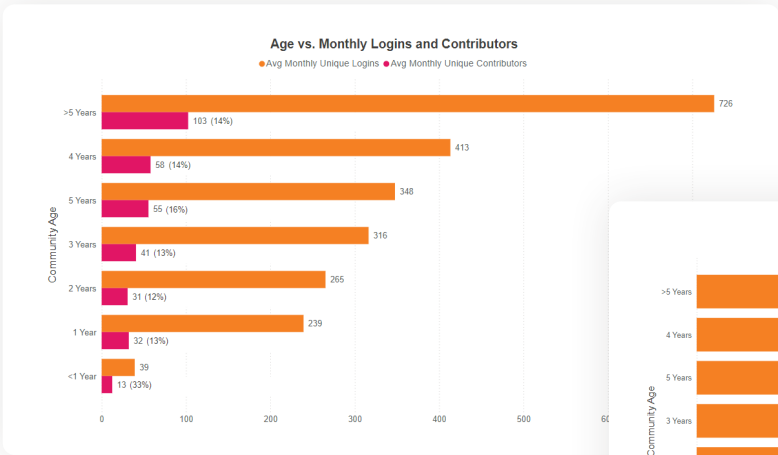
- **Monthly:** Total posts, replies, and logins.
- **Quarterly:** Unique contributors, search terms, and popular content.
- **Annually:** Review overall performance and audit your strategy

[Check out more tips from a community advisor](#) →

Community Age vs. Community Engagement

Organizations that invest in an online community see amplified impacts the longer they spend cultivating their communities. The longer an organization has a community and invests in its success, the larger it becomes.

Our data showed the number of monthly unique logins, monthly discussion activity, and monthly unique contributors is higher for organizations that have been using their communities longer, with the percentage of monthly contributors staying roughly the same (about 12-16%).



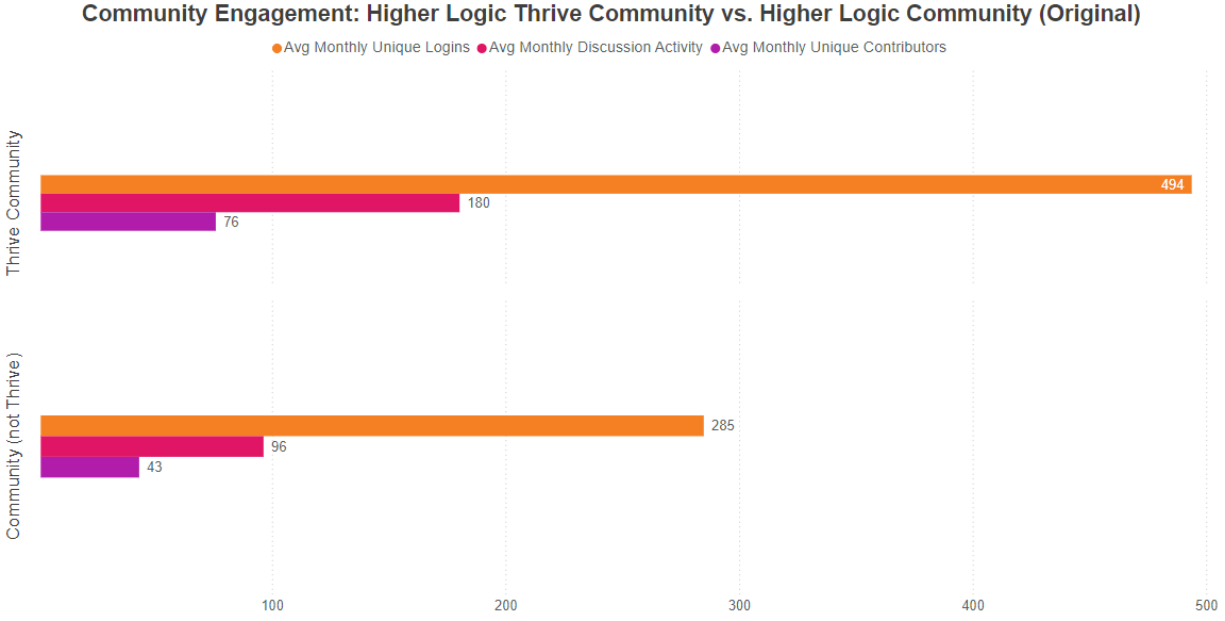
Upgrading to Higher Logic Thrive

Higher Logic is committed to improving association outcomes by equipping you with the latest technology. With Higher Logic Thrive Community, we took the best of what made Higher Logic Community (Original) so powerful and made it even better, with an engaging, social-media style feed, a logged-out homepage that’s perfect for promoting membership with nonmembers, and even more tools to make engaging members easy.

Our customers who’ve upgraded have seen an [increase in community activity and logins](#) - and some have used the opportunity to

generate new excitement ([see how ASIS International did it](#)), improve their resource library ([see how NRPA did it](#)), and overall leverage the power of one cohesive platform ([see how SHAPE America did it](#))!

You can see the difference in the data: customers using Higher Logic Thrive Communities have **73% more average monthly logins, 88% more average monthly discussion activity, and 77% more average monthly unique contributors.**



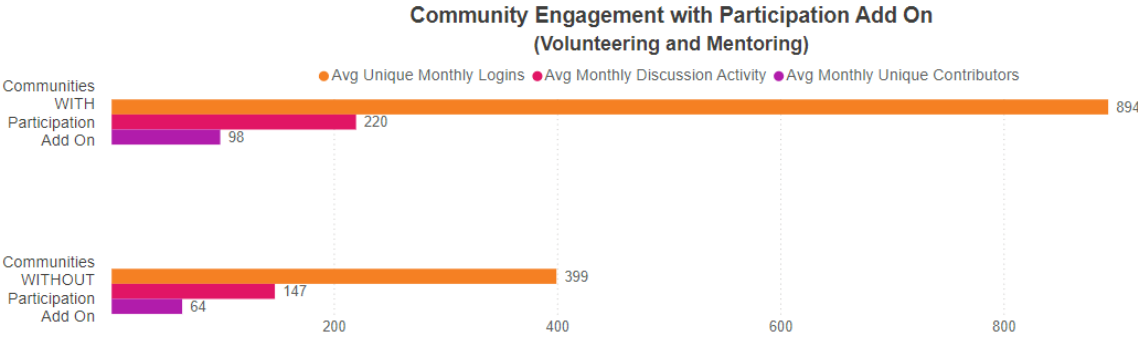
Check out our Higher Logic Thrive Community Lookbook to see how some of our customers are using Higher Logic Thrive Community to engage their members. [Explore the lookbook](#) →

Adding Volunteering and Mentoring to Your Community

As you probably know, [mentoring programs](#) and [volunteer programs](#) can generate a huge positive impact for your members and serve as a source of member value for your association.

Not only do these initiatives create feel-good opportunities for members to give back in their field, they also represent key career advancement pathways and an opportunity for members to become more deeply connected with their peers. In other words, **mentoring and volunteering programs fit really nicely with your community** - and we see that in the data!

Organizations using Higher Logic's [Participation add on](#) (which includes Volunteer Manager and Mentor Match - tools for building and managing mentoring and volunteering programs) see higher average community engagement, with **124% more unique monthly logins, 50% more monthly discussion activity, and 53% more monthly unique contributors** than communities NOT using these tools.

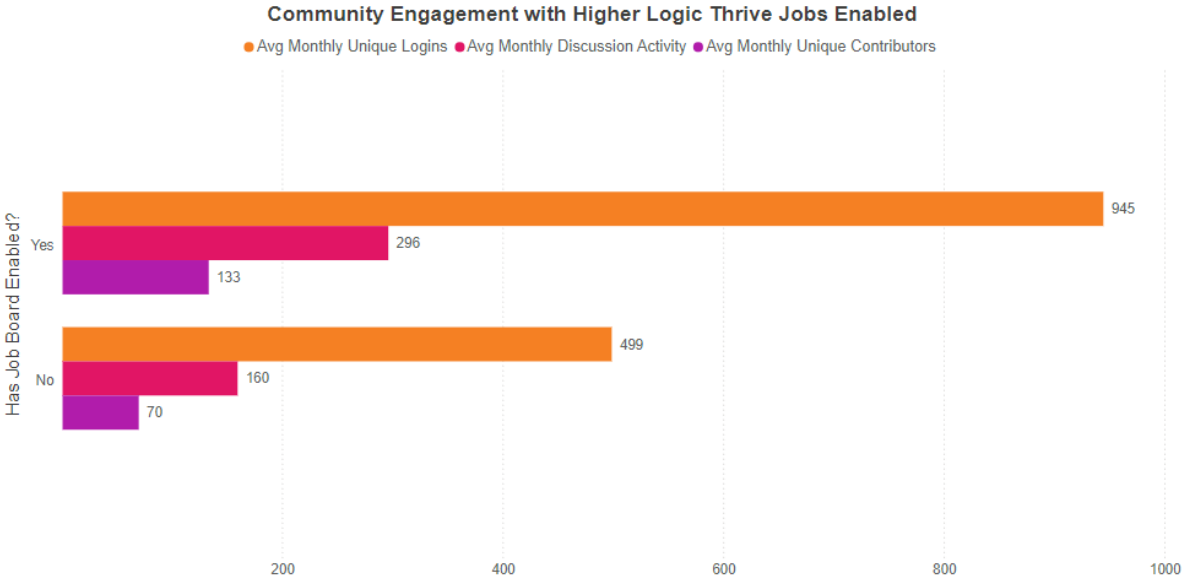


Enabling a Job Board in Your Community

Your members are uniquely qualified for the work they do, and their membership demonstrates their commitment to their field. Many are also looking for professional development and growth opportunities. That’s why [hosting a job board](#) in your online community can have such a positive impact on community and member engagement.

Higher Logic Thrive Jobs is included in Higher Logic Thrive Community – and our customers who’ve enable their job board, which streams relevant career opportunities right into the feed of the Higher Logic Thrive Community, see **88% more average monthly unique logins, 84% more average monthly discussion activity, and 87% more average monthly unique contributors.**

Surfacing employment opportunities - tailored to the interests of each member based on their community profile - makes membership feel that much more personal. Members are also more likely to log into the community more frequently to see new job postings.



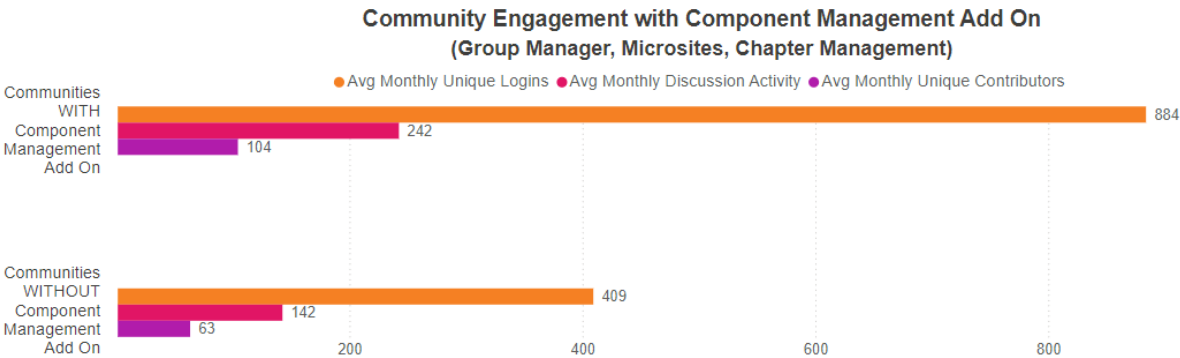
Managing Microsites, Chapters, and Groups with Community

For organizations that need to manage chapters, multiple web microsites (like event microsites), and different groups (like committees), an online community can be a powerful one-stop shop.

That’s why Higher Logic offers our [Component Management add on](#), to help associations empower volunteer group/chapter leaders to thrive, customize the online experience for different member segments, and manage microsites at the organization level when promoting events.

Members within specific segments don’t have to go searching for everything your association has to offer because everything is one place. And you can embrace volunteer leader enthusiasm, while avoiding a mis-matched brand nightmare, with the ability to create and share prepopulated templates with chapter and other group leaders.

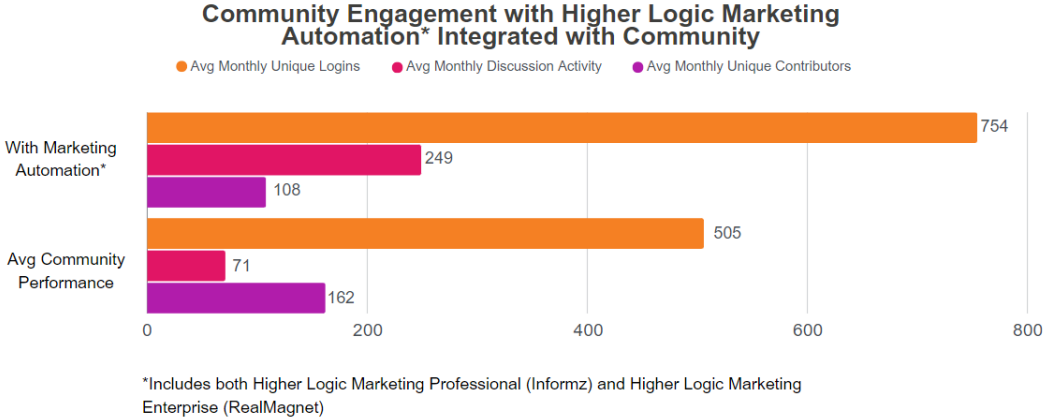
It’s no wonder, then, that our customers using Component Management see higher engagement levels on their communities: **116% more unique monthly logins, 70% more monthly discussion activity, and 65% more monthly unique contributors.**



Integrating Email with Your Community

One of the reasons we created [Higher Logic Thrive Platform](#) – which combines Higher Logic Thrive Community with Higher Logic Thrive Marketing – is because we’ve seen how impactful it is when associations have a cohesive and integrated community and marketing strategy.

Customers using our marketing automation tools alongside their online community see **49% higher average monthly unique logins and 250% more average monthly discussion activity** than the overall average community performance.



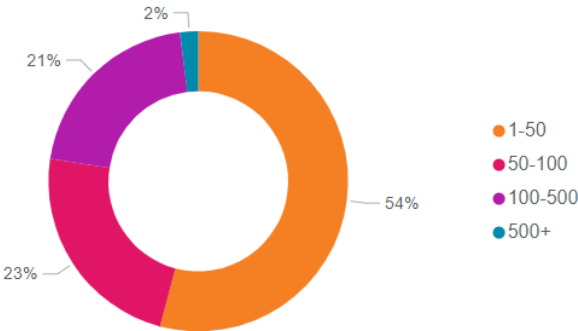
Using Automation Rules

Higher Logic’s community [automation rules](#) are a versatile tool that allow you to set up logic-based rules to trigger actions. They can be used to automatically send email reminders or segment community members based on things like actions they’ve taken (or not taken) and categories they fall into.

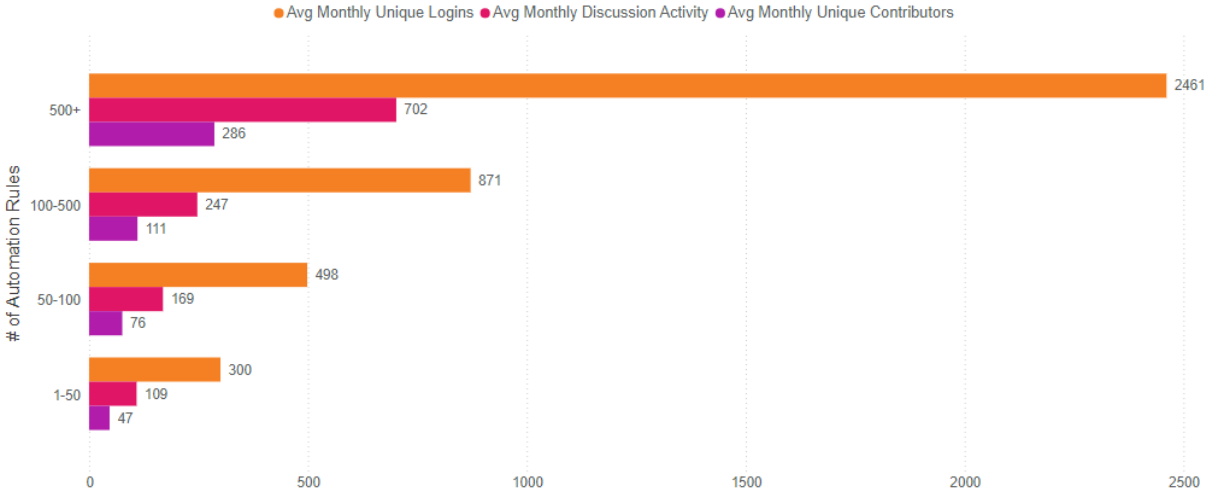
In many ways, automation rules work as “virtual community assistants” that allow you to automate tedious and time-consuming actions that need to be performed across your site on a daily, weekly, and/or monthly basis. You can set up all sorts of rules to help you personalize your member experience and better engage different member segments based on the things that matter to them.

We've built 100 standard automaton rules into Higher Logic Thrive Community to help you get started, which customers can turn on if/when they're ready. Customers can also create and iterate on their own rules as much as they want, automating as many tasks as they'd like to engage their members!

Number of Automation Rules



Community Engagement Using Automation Rules



The more you use automation rules to personalize your members' experience, the higher engagement you'll see. But keep in mind, you don't need automation rules just for the sake of automation rules - they are a tool to help you engage your members in different ways without adding to your manual effort.

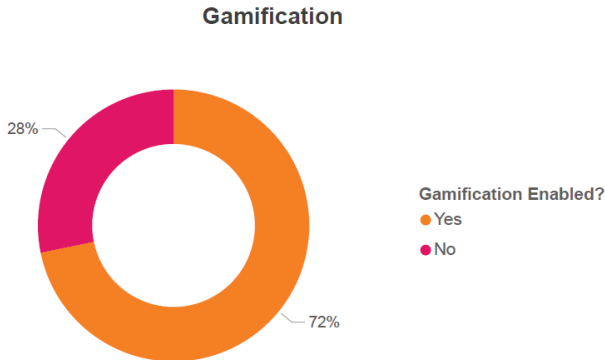
FOR EXAMPLE:

- Use automation rules to assign community members to different security groups based on your own custom requirements.
- Use automation to track activity and automatically assign badges or ribbons at certain thresholds of engagement points.
- Automate an email reminder that encourages users to complete their profile.
- Bring users back into the community by setting up an automation rule for users who usually post but haven't posted in the last certain number of days.

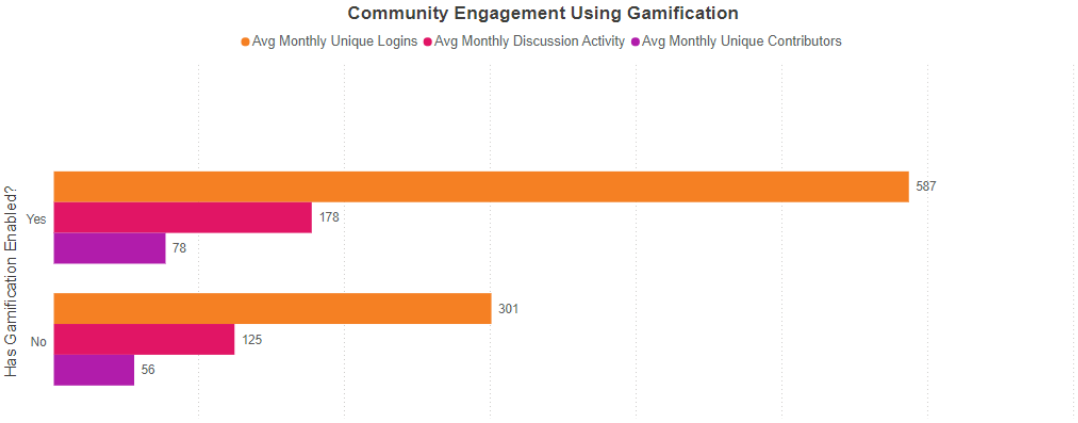
Explore some of the ways our Advisors recommend using automation rules!

Using Gamification

Gamification can help you bolster member engagement within your online community - that's why Higher Logic Thrive Community comes with built in Gamification tools. The majority of our customers have our gamification tools enabled.



And communities using Gamification see **95% more average monthly unique logins, 42% more average monthly discussion activity, and 39% more monthly unique contributors.**

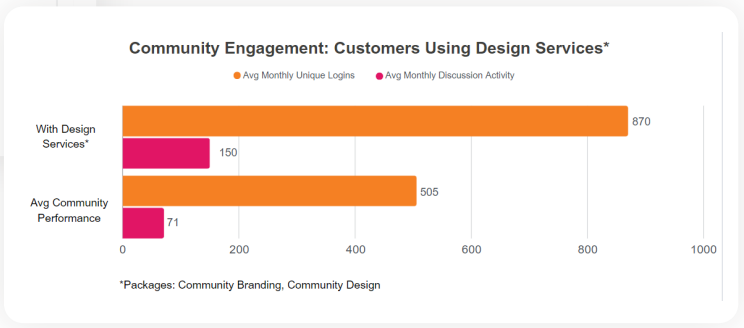
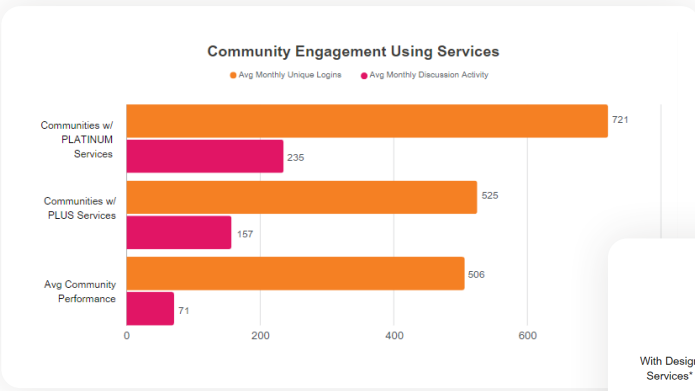


Getting Help from Higher Logic Services

Customers can choose to complement their Higher Logic Thrive Community, Platform, or Marketing software with ongoing support from expert Higher Logic Advisors through [Higher Logic Services](#).

- With a Plus Services package, our Advisors use their deep expertise to partner with you on implementing engagement best practices and guide you in creating a roadmap to achieve your goals, including strategic planning, light design assistance, and tactical execution.
- With a Platinum Services package, Higher Logic Advisors dig in with a project focus, getting hands-on to help you achieve specific goals by leveraging your Community or Platform software, in the areas of onboarding and launch, expansion, and engagement.
- We also offer several tiers of [Design](#) support, including a Community Branding (for customers who need help applying branding to their community), Community Design (for customers with specific design needs looking to incorporate more customized elements), and Website Design Suite (for small orgs that want to create a one-stop shop incorporating a simple website and community).

Customers who leverage these services see higher average monthly unique logins and average monthly discussion activity.



Having a strong community strategy ensures continuous member engagement and helps you foster a sense of belonging and value, enhancing member retention and attracting new members.

And it's a prime time to create that deep connection with both existing and potential members: many associations are starting to bounce back after several tough years – only 21% associations reported membership declines (the lowest percentage in 16 years) and 51% reported increases in new member acquisitions over the last year ([MGI 2024 Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report](#)).

If you're looking to improve community engagement, think about how you can employ tools like gamification and automation, or explore new ways to incorporate your other membership programs – like mentoring, volunteering, and job boards – into your community! The more reasons you give your members to log in and engage, the more likely they are to recognize value from your association. The more you connect your technology systems (e.g. AMS, Community, Marketing, and other software) the more member behavior data you'll be able to monitor and use to understand what members want and create deeply personalized member experiences - in the community and beyond!

Higher Logic Thrive Community is the leading association community software. It's easy to use and makes deep member engagement a reality, with built-in tools for polling, resource libraries, events, analytics, gamification, and more. **Higher Logic Thrive Platform** combines community and marketing into one integrated solution, helping you embrace intuitive automations that eliminate manual work. Associations can also choose from add ons like [Credentialing](#), [Submissions and Review](#), [Participation](#) (Mentoring and Volunteering), [Jobs](#), and [Component Management](#) to Create the perfect digital ecosystem for their association.

Our **Higher Logic Services** packages, meanwhile, connect you with dedicated industry expert Advisors to help you achieve your association's specific goals. Free up staff time, get things done without adding to payroll, and quickly maximize the ROI of your Higher Logic investment.

Learn how we can help you provide a modern, personalized member experience, strengthen member retention, and gain valuable insights – all while improving staff efficiency.

BOOK A DEMO

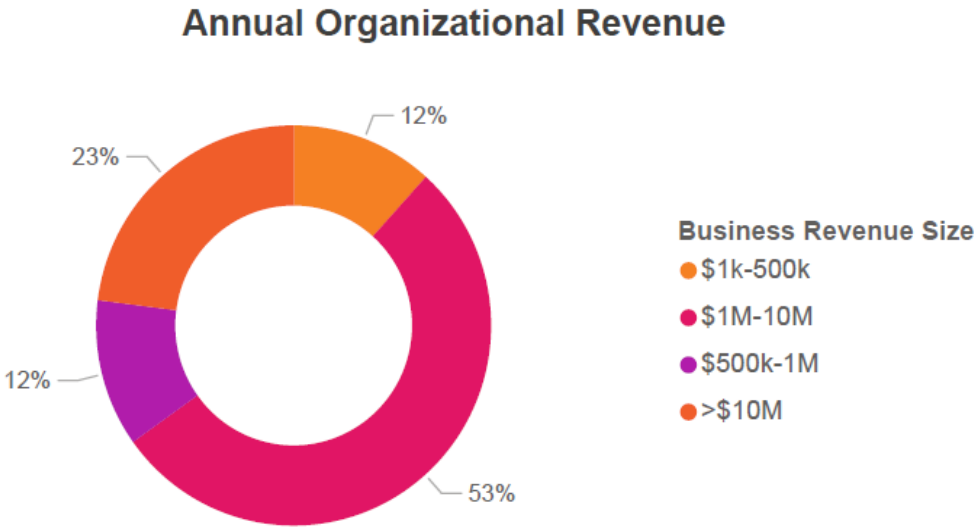
Appendix: our data set

Higher Logic has almost 3,000 customers in the United States, Canada, and the Asia-Pacific region. This report is based on anonymized data **specifically from ~1,500 association and nonprofit customers** who use Higher Logic Community, Higher Logic Thrive Community, or Higher Logic Thrive Platform.

The following section outlines some defining characteristics of the customer data set we analyzed for this report.

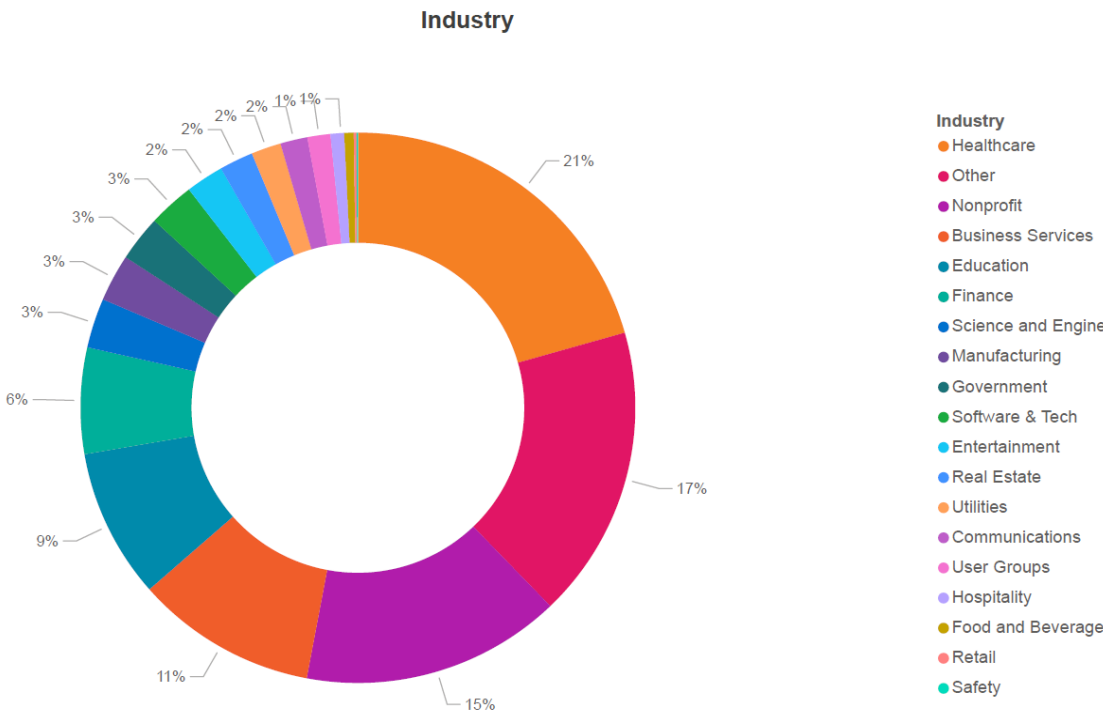
Organizational Revenue

Our community customers represent varied annual revenue brackets, with most landing in the \$1M-10M revenue category.



Industries

We have community customers from a wide variety of industries, with **our biggest defined cohorts being Healthcare and Nonprofits.**

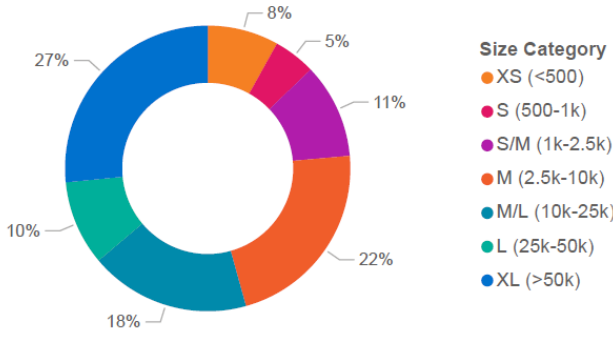


COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Community Size

Communities come in all sizes. In 2023-2024, the largest percentages of our customers had Extra Large (>50k) or Medium (2.5k-10k) communities.

Community Size (by User Accounts)

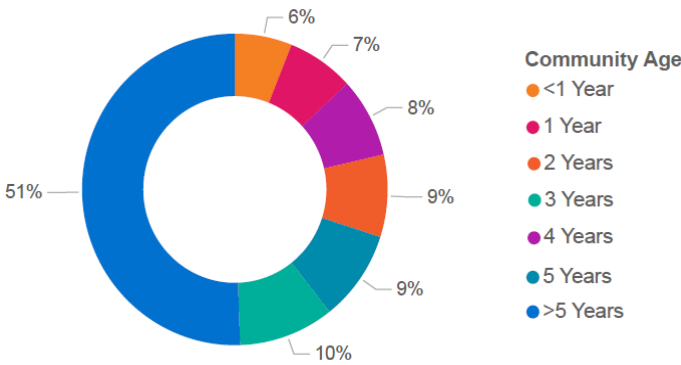


Community Age

The average age of communities in our data set was 5.3 years. Over half of our customers have communities over 5 years old, with the rest falling throughout the 1-5-year range.

5.3 Years
Average Community Age

Time on Community



Community Administrators

53

Average Number Community Admin Accounts

Within our data set, organizations had an average of 53 community user accounts with admin permissions. These are likely association staff and group leaders.

9

Average Number Community Super Admin Accounts

Organizations had an average of 9 community user accounts with super admin permissions. These may be association staff who are more involved in running the community like community managers or IT.

Having staff dedicated to managing your community and fostering engagement is important to ensuring your community's success. But **how many staff manage your community and how much time they dedicate to the community will differ** depending on your organization - if you don't have 53 staff working on your community (or even 53 people TOTAL working at your organization), that's okay!

Some organizations have a dedicated community manager, and some share responsibility for the community across several departments. The important part is making sure you [have buy-in](#) and a plan - staff throughout your association should understand how the community can help achieve the organization's goals and mission.

We have tips in our [Community Manager Toolkit](#) to help you get the job done, even if community isn't your full time job.

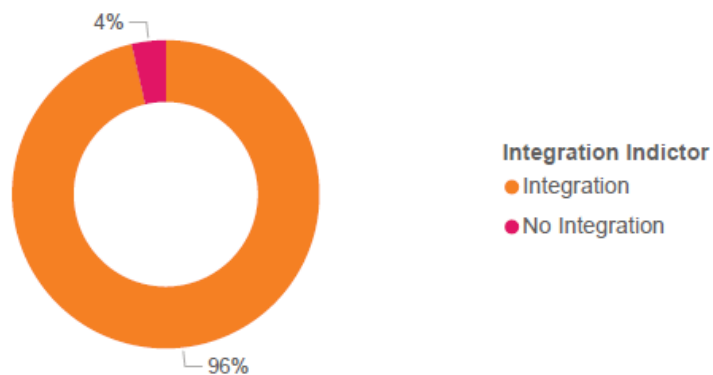
Higher Logic also offers [Services](#) packages where you can get dedicated help from our expert advisors.

Community Integration

Higher Logic's community and marketing software is designed to seamlessly integrate with your existing technology to help you get the most out of your member engagement solutions. We can easily connect your community to association management systems (AMS) like NimbleAMS and YourMembership, learning management systems (LMS) like BlueSky and CommPartners, Mobile Apps like Results Direct, and a [ton of other solutions](#).

Most of our customers integrate their community with at least one other system or solution.

Community Integrated with At Least One Other System



Plus, we've partnered with the following industry leaders to power some of our [Higher Logic Thrive Add-Ons](#)!

- Higher Logic Thrive Jobs (included with Higher Logic Thrive Community and powered by Web Scribble)
- Higher Logic Thrive Submissions and Review (powered by OpenWater by ASI)
- Higher Logic Thrive Credentialing (powered by Cloud Generation)

