

Institute of Physics Increases Member Engagement with MyIOP Community

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About the Institute of Physics

The Institute of Physics is a scientific charity devoted to increasing the practice, understanding and application of physics. The UK-based organisation has a worldwide membership of over 36,000 and is a leading communicator of physics-related science to all audiences, from specialists through to government and the general public.

Business Challenge

“Organisations like ours are really in the communities business,” recalls John Brindley, director of membership and business at IOP. “With 30% of our membership currently aged under 25, the decision to provide our members with the tools to engage with each other online within our own closed environment was simply a recognition on our part that we would look increasingly old-fashioned if we did not do so.” IOP was one of the first in its industry on the web but this had always been on a broadcast communications basis. “It was a natural progression for us to develop online communication channels for our members in this way. We knew that we would also run the risk of losing members to generic social networking platforms like LinkedIn and other environments if we did not enable this ourselves,” said Brindley.

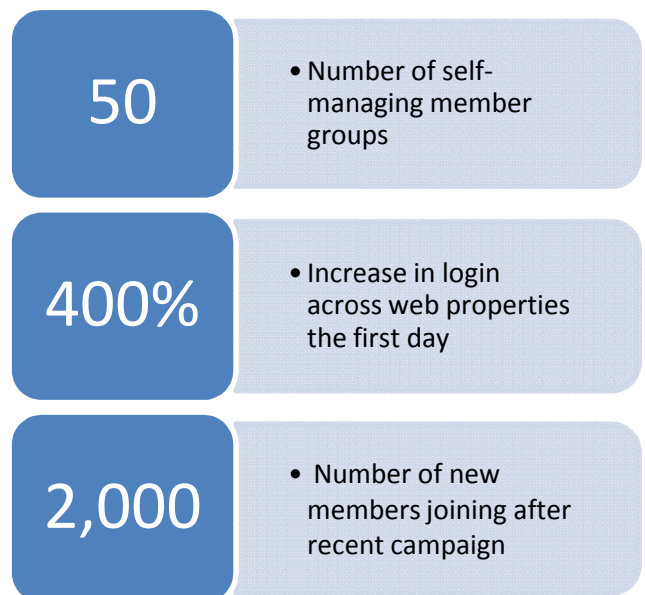
Platform Selection and Implementation

“We selected Small World Labs following a managed procurement process, on the basis that their software provided all the functionality we felt our members would expect to see, offered as SaaS (software as a service), delivered on a reasonable timescale and at an appropriate price,” continued Brindley.

IOP spent time preparing its members for the launch of the new platform to educate them on its coming capabilities, such as making contacts online, sharing files and data, engaging in discussions, operating their existing groups, and also continuing to access relevant IOP information from within that environment.

“The ability to pre-populate the community platform with existing member data was something we were particularly keen on, to ensure that it was as easy as possible for members to use from day one,” said the director. “Whilst achieving this integration involved extra time and effort to the project, our IT staff were able to import this information easily using the Small World Labs API (application programming interface).”

Highlights



Community Approach

IOP has roughly 50 member groups covering a wide range of subjects, with each group's programme of activity reflecting its members' particular needs and interests, and with quite rigidly defined substructures. Many of these groups' committees need to share documents, distribute newsletters and communicate with members about events. Through the development of an online community platform, IOP saw an opportunity for members to manage these communications themselves rather than depend on centralised resources. "We felt we would also be able to reduce printed document production and distribution costs in this area and facilitate broader consultation and collaboration through the community platform," said Brindley.

In addition, IOP saw an opportunity to engage cost effectively with younger members. "One of the most significant benefits has obviously been the increase in engagement with and between younger members, particularly undergraduates. Earlier this year we launched a 'free, online only' 16-19 membership drive, marketed through school and college teachers, which would have frankly been inconceivable if we hadn't been able to offer the kind of online engagement opportunities that this age group takes for granted in the other online environments they spend time in," described Brindley.

"We've been delighted with the really excellent levels of response and activity, with eleven new topic areas for this group already established within the community and older members contributing advice and guidance to these new and very young members," continued the director. "This campaign has proved to be an extremely cost-effective exercise and I am confident that our investment generally in Small World Labs has been well justified

and the MyIOP platform will continue to evolve as members find more and more uses for it."

Benefits

- **Fast Engagement** – Pre-populating the platform with member information and integrating it with the existing website accelerated early successes.
- **New Members** – A recent drive to recruit 16-19 year old school and college students studying chemistry has resulted in 2,000 new younger members signing up.
- **Faster Feedback** – Feedback loops with members are faster and tighter with more opportunity to consult with members on organizational strategy and public policy.
- **Relevant Information** - Community members can easily find recent activity and content that is relevant to them, including subject and geographically defined groups.
- **Positive Response** – Feedback from members has been positive and the community has become a central part of their online experience.

About Small World Labs

Small World Labs is an experienced provider of enterprise social networking solutions that enable organizations to better understand, engage, and serve their constituents. Small World Labs provides both technology and community building expertise in helping its clients create successful online social and professional networks.

To learn more about how Small World Labs can help your business or organization contact us at:



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