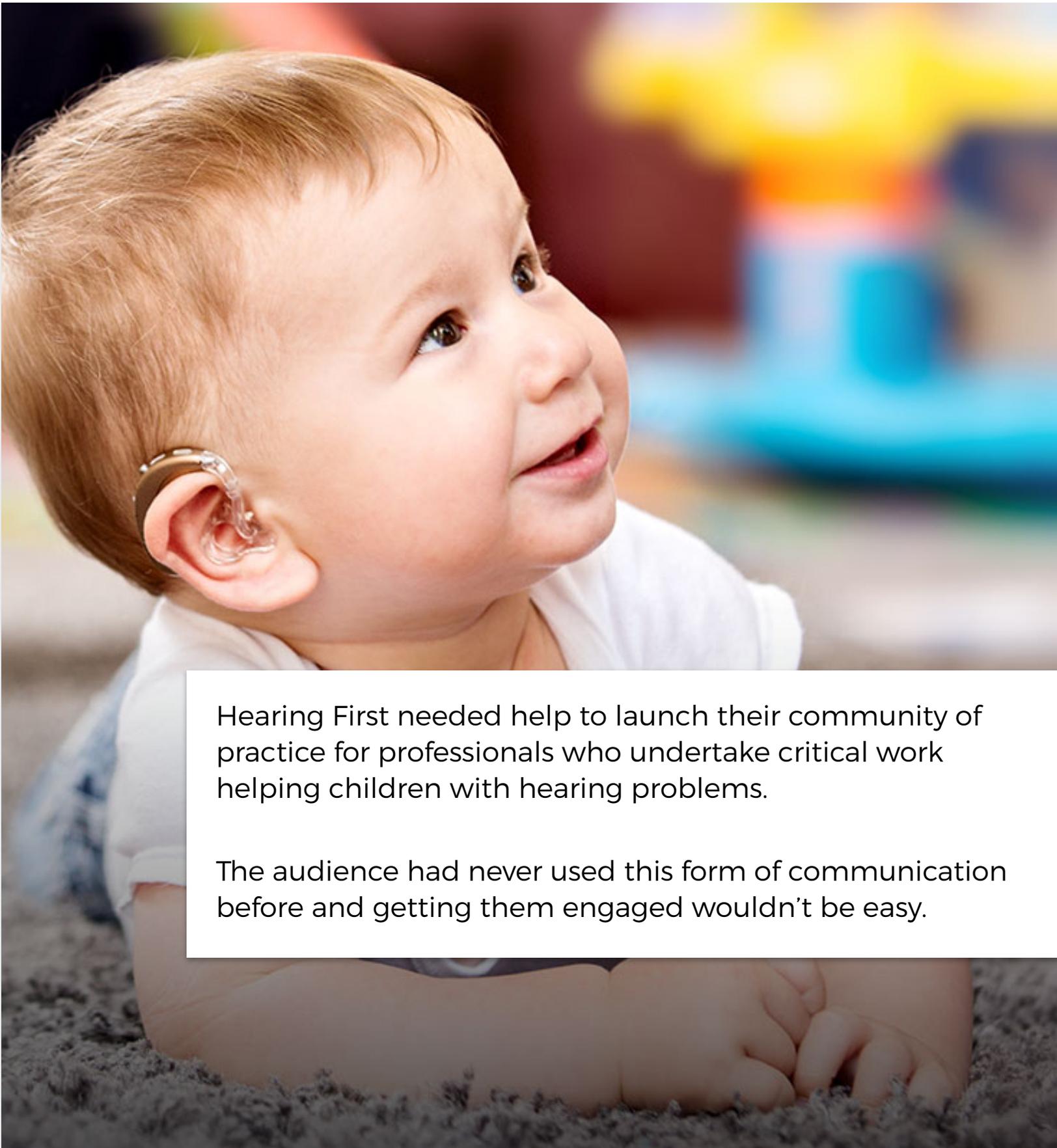




# Hearing First

CONSULTANCY  
CASE STUDY



Hearing First needed help to launch their community of practice for professionals who undertake critical work helping children with hearing problems.

The audience had never used this form of communication before and getting them engaged wouldn't be easy.



# Building a community of practice for learning professionals

[Hearing First](#), a subsidiary of Oberkötter Foundation, has a mission to empower children who are deaf or hard of hearing to reach their full potential.

As a strategic goal to achieve this mission, Hearing First had the challenge of configuring and launching an online [Community of Practice \(CoP\)](#). The initial target audience was listening and spoken language (LSL) professionals.

Hearing First used our book, [Buzzing Communities](#), to develop the strategy and define the the purpose, audience and goals of the community. But they needed to make the leap from planning to action.

The practitioners they wanted to participate in their community were unfamiliar with this style of collaboration. However, their expertise and knowledge would be vital to build capacity within the profession and advance knowledge.

For Hearing First, the vision was very clear...but the implementation of that vision would be tricky.



“We had been following FeverBee’s content for a while and read Buzzing Communities.

Compared to other community content, we felt FeverBee’s evidence based model for developing vibrant and engaging communities would best meet our needs. We needed a consultancy who had expertise and cared to learn what work we had already done and help shape it.”

**Teresa H. Caraway,  
CEO, Hearing First**



FeverBee spent considerable time during the discovery phase with the executive leadership team talking through key concepts, methodology and building a full and detailed profile picture of the LSL professionals they wanted to reach.

From this phase, we identified five key challenges to overcome:

## 1 LACK OF DEDICATED RESOURCES

Hearing First did not currently have a Community Manager or E-Learning professional in the organization who would be the key implementor of this project. In addition there was not any knowledge management or community training materials to support the team.

## 2 COMPLEX PLATFORM

Hearing First had selected Telligent as their community platform and this was deployed with Sitecore website integration. This had resulted in a highly complex site configuration that needed guidance to ensure first time visitors would be engaged in the community.

## 3 INVITATIONS AND ONBOARDING

Hearing First had a detailed list of people they wished to invite to the professional community but needed help with how to go about inviting them and then helping them become active participants in the community. This process requires a detailed understanding of the psychology behind community participation to ensure successful growth and value.

## 4 ROI AND METRICS

Although Hearing First had a broad idea about which key performance indicators (KPIs) were important, they did not have a formal process or strategy in place to identify the data of most value. They needed support to measure their data, interpret their data and set benchmarks for success.



## 5 FAMILY COMMUNITY ROLLOUT

After developing the LSL community, Hearing First planned to develop a second community aimed at families. This community would require a clear value proposition, a detailed roadmap, and acquiring the resources to succeed.

Hearing First had the core foundations for their community to succeed, but primarily needed support to ensure every activity was aligned to best practice, based upon social psychology, and they felt confident going forward.

During our consultancy, it also became clear that the team would benefit from direct help with evaluating the technology platform and its current deployment prior to the launch. This would be among the more deeply technical projects we have been involved with.



Enabling an organization with such an extraordinary mission to help children made Hearing First a particularly satisfying client to work with.”

**Todd Nilson,**  
**Director of Consultancy, FeverBee**



## ENSURING ALIGNMENT

Hearing First needed to align their strategy to community best practices. FeverBee began with an audit and then helped recruit a top-tier community manager. Once complete we provided ongoing consultancy support to the launch of the professional community.

### 1 AUDIT AND RECRUITMENT

The consultancy began with an intensive review and validation of the community strategy. FeverBee worked closely with the executive leadership from Hearing First to articulate the [community concept](#) for the professional community of practice. We then helped Hearing First to acquire and analyze the audience, growth plans, analytics, content strategy and timetable to launch so that it could be shared with other key stakeholders.

FeverBee also tapped our extensive networks to help recruit a top-tier, full-time, community manager who could lead efforts to engage with Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) professionals and eventually families in need of support.

### 2 GUIDED CONSULTANCY

As the community strategy came into sharper focus, FeverBee provided high contact weekly support and guided Hearing First through all the design, configuration and launch of its Telligent community platform.

Through multiple, live, working sessions, we were able to help organize a content strategy and action plan with specific onboarding messaging for an initial group of founding members. Based on our knowledge of community platform usability and best practices, FeverBee helped the Hearing First team to identify key functionality, assist with software quality assurance, platform configuration, user acceptance testing, and reporting on the new platform.

**As part of the search for a viable community manager, FeverBee tapped its extensive network and was able to identify a highly experienced community manager, Katie Paffhouse, who came from a sciences-related community of practice. This was exactly the background Hearing First needed to engage their target audience.**



“As we began our work together, we initially struggled and at times found ourselves resistant to some of the changes suggested to our approach to new community development.

FeverBee were patient and in a positive way moved us in the right direction based upon proven best practices.”

**Teresa H. Caraway**  
**CEO, Hearing First**



By late 2016, the [Hearing First professional community](#) was ready to open its doors to a select group that would become its founding members.

Our recruitment experience allowed us to identify a shortlist of highly experienced, vetted candidates for consideration. After careful analysis and discussion of our findings, Hearing First appointed a new Community Manager, Katie Paffhouse, to drive their community blueprint.

Katie proved to be a highly effective appointment to the new community manager role and we received an “extremely happy” rating for our recruitment process and recommendation.

In the guided consultancy activities, FeverBee was able to provide a comprehensive review and restructuring of the community strategy breaking down everything from the initial structure of the community platform to founding member outreach, onboarding email automation, and structured discussion and moderation.

In May, FeverBee facilitated two days of planning meetings to discuss content, moderation, and launch considerations. The outcome of these meetings was a strategy for initial discussion topics and a timeline to launch the community.





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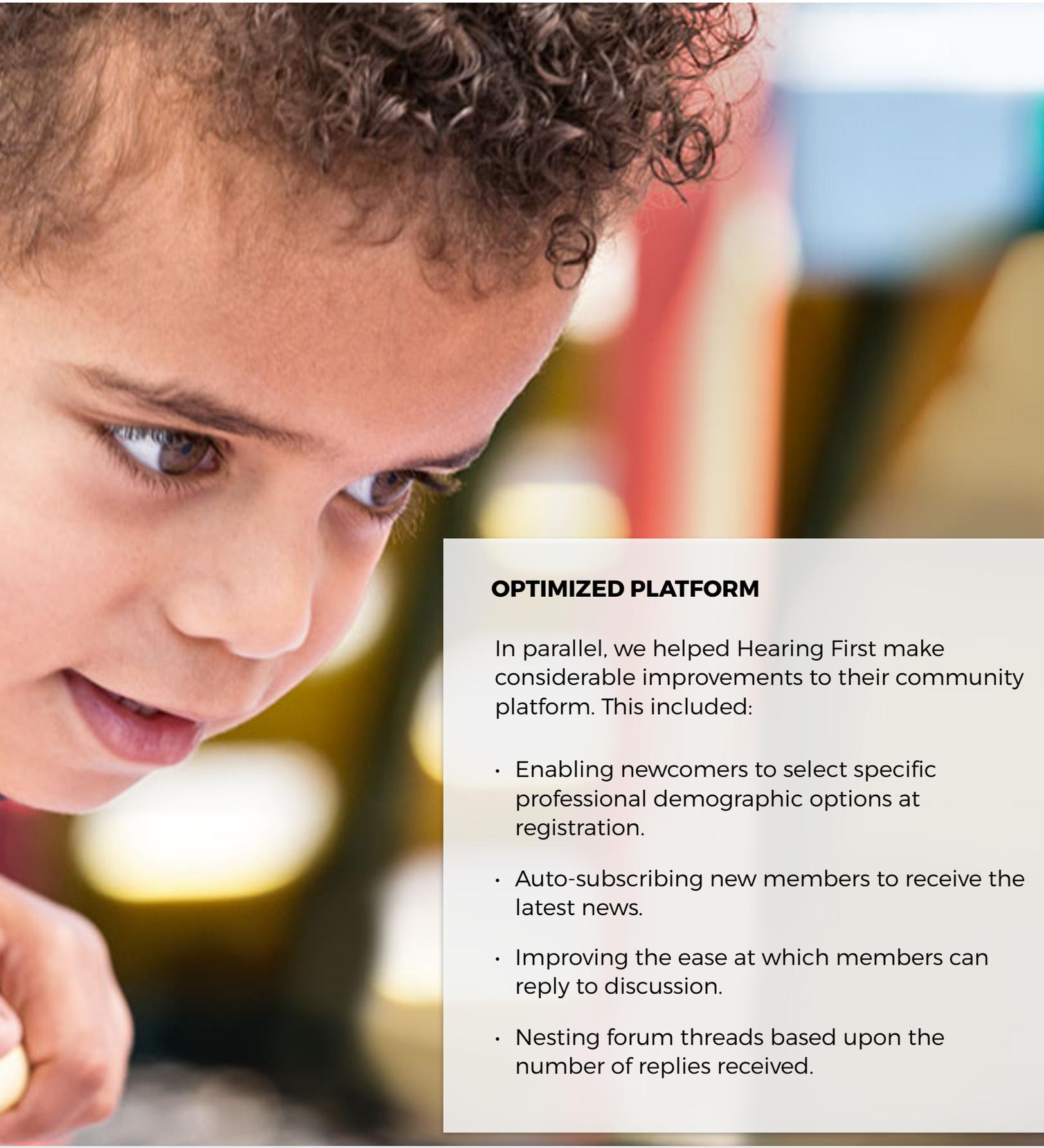


## PARTICIPATION RATES

The first few weeks after the founding members launch saw remarkable results:

- 25%+ of the target audience created an account.
- 50% of those have already participated in the community.
- 15% of them participated in more than one discussion.





## OPTIMIZED PLATFORM

In parallel, we helped Hearing First make considerable improvements to their community platform. This included:

- Enabling newcomers to select specific professional demographic options at registration.
- Auto-subscribing new members to receive the latest news.
- Improving the ease at which members can reply to discussion.
- Nesting forum threads based upon the number of replies received.



## 1 AG BELL CONFERENCE

The AG Bell Conference is a major event for the LSL professions.

FeverBee helped Hearing First to use the event to announce the pending launch of the community and to recruit its core group of founding members.

## 2 DEVELOPING THE MISSION

The community helped to significantly scale the efforts and mission of Hearing First to a much larger number of individuals. larger number of professionals.

At present the current number of LSL professionals is too small to meet the challenge of supporting a rising number of young children with deafness and hearing loss.

## 3 TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE

FeverBee helped create a central tenet to create more interdisciplinary interaction among LSL professionals.

Today LSL professionals have a single destination for cross-pollination of ideas, greater collaboration, and regular interaction with one another.

## 4 PARALLEL COMMUNITIES

The Hearing First community for LSL professionals is linked to launching the support community for families. This was a unique challenge in this consultancy.

We were able to help define the path and present solutions to logistical challenges that arose.



“We have had a fabulous launch of our community and members are engaging and learning out loud together. All of the detail to the process was worth it, it worked and continues to shape our ongoing management plan and expectations.”

**Teresa H. Caraway,  
CEO, Hearing First**





## 5 EXPANDING LSL SUPPORT

The community now enables those in remote geographical locations to get the training and support that they need to be effective.

The community is also intended to reach out beyond the core LSL professionals to training a broader group of educators and medical professionals who only occasionally have cause to help a child who is deaf or hard of hearing and need answers to their questions.

## 6 THE 'WOW' MOMENT

Prior to our consultancy, the leadership team planned to launch multiple groups at once.

We helped the team recognise this was too much work and helped them focus on a single community at launch with a dedicated group of founding members who would know exactly where to post and what to do within the community.

## 7 SENIOR TEAM INVOLVEMENT

FeverBee helped ensure the senior leadership had kept involved and engaged with the Hearing First community efforts since the project began.

The community has become central to the strategy of Hearing First both now and in the future.

## 8 SUPPORTING GROWTH

From an initial audit engagement, FeverBee have been asked to extend their support several times to continue helping Hearing First's growth and success.

A key project has turned into a trusted partnership as Hearing First continue to hit key milestones and strategic success.



**In just two months since its launch to founding members, the community grew to 447 members, making its way into 12 countries and 45 states in the United States. New discussion threads were enjoying a 76% participation rate.**



## **“99% OF MEMBERS ARE HOPEFUL ABOUT THE FUTURE”**

An initial member survey indicated that 99% of the members who joined felt hopeful about the future of the community and that they expect to be a member of the community for a long time.





HEARING FIRST Powering Potential ☰  🌐 💬 ★ 👤

# PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

+ NEW

FORUMS NEWS BLOG RESOURCES SHARED RESOURCES ▼ MORE



A community for listening and spoken language professionals to learn out loud, ask questions, receive support, solve challenges and grow our skills together so that all children who are deaf or hard of hearing have opportunities to reach their full potential.

New to the Professional Community?

TAKE A TOUR

## Community News

### Professional Learning Community Weekly Digest: December 16, 2016

🕒 DEC 16, 2016

This weekly digest highlights discussions and resources you might have missed. See you online! WHAT'S TRENDING? Gym / Physical Education teachers (encouragement) : How do you encourage Gym/PE...

### Best Bets for Learning: December 14, 2016

🕒 DEC 14, 2016

Have you ever wandered into a bookstore and seen the "staff picks" recommendations? If you're like me, I immediately find this section to pick my next book to read. Our goal with the Best...



## Quick Links

## Popular Resources

- **A Minimal Hearing Loss Should Not Result in Minimal Intervention: Research Summary**
- **Activities to Support the Development of Music Milestones Handout**
- **Auditory Learning Guide**
- **Comedy Class - Development of Humor Handout**

VIEW MORE RESOURCES

## FORUM THREADS

By date ▼ Descending ▼ All recent questions and discussions ▼

<b>Help! Child with CI's refuses to wear them.</b>	65 views	4 replies	Last reply 6 hours ago by <b>Melissa Jensen</b>
<b>Introduce Yourself (or, say hi!) Part II</b>	34 views	7 replies	Last reply 10 hours ago by <b>PEDRO BRÁS DA SILVA</b>
<b>Children in a TC approach with early cochlear implantation - What's our role?</b>	136 views	12 replies	Last reply 12 hours ago by <b>Lynn Wood</b>
<b>Holiday Activities and Books</b>	110 views	13 replies	Last reply 13 hours ago by <b>Natalie OHalloran</b>
<b>Do you think iPad Apps can be effective tools to support listening, learning and spoken language development?</b>	36 views	5 replies	Last reply 1 day ago by <b>Lynn Wood</b>
<b>Managing Goodbyes with Families - How Tos and Tools?</b>	37 views	3 replies	Last reply 3 days ago by <b>Marge Edwards</b>

## Highlights



### The Power Of Apps - Talk Time Not Screen Time

In this blog post, Lynn Wood shares highlights the role apps may play in developing listening and spoken language skills.

READ POST



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From an initial lighter support agreement with Hearing First, the trust and relationship that has developed with this incredible support community has led to a hugely rewarding, heavyweight project for FeverBee to be involved with.

The work Hearing First do, and the lives they change, is incredible. We feel honoured to have become their trusted community partner



Todd Nilson,  
Director of Consultancy, FeverBee

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Working with such a great client as Hearing First has been a thoroughly rewarding experience. The great work they, and others connected to the organisation, do is vital. We are proud to be helping them take the next steps on their growth map.



Darren Gough,  
Director of Community, FeverBee