

NEWS / BUSINESS & FINANCE / SMALL BUSINESS

Openforum.com a useful tool for small businesses to network, learn from one another

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Goran Paunovic, creative director at [Art Version](#), a Chicagoland graphic design and web development agency located in Northfield, is a long-time user of Openforum.com. "This is not your typical forum, it's really a gathering of usable information, that particularly small business owners can find useful and learn from," says Paunovic.

Originally launched in 2007, [Open Forum](#) is an online forum and [networking](#) hub for small business owners created by American Express. The site re-launched this past summer and is full of resources including insights, ideas, and the opportunity to connect and network with other businesses.

"The site is a tremendous tool, but you have to know how to use it. You have to reach out and

connect with people. Similar to any other [social media](#) tool, you can't just sit around and not participate," says Paunovic.

Although the site was initially designed exclusively for OPEN card holders, American Express recently entered into a strategic partnership with [LinkedIn](#) to make Open Forum and its resources accessible to professionals on the business networking site, whether they're card members or not. The partnership is meant to allow participation on Open Forum by a larger audience without sacrificing the standards and credentials users of the site are accustomed to - namely blocking spammers from cluttering the environment with irrelevant information.

Some of the key features of Openforum.com to help small businesses connect with one another and learn from one another include:

- **Connectodex:** a virtual rolodex of credentialed businesses for members to navigate - only American Express OPEN card members can set up a profile for their business
- **Idea Hub:** a place to find original and exclusive articles and blog posts from experts in their field
- **Pulse:** a tool for finding and following small businesses on Twitter

"A handful of customers have found us through Open Forum and have become regular clients," adds Paunovic. "I've found vendors there as well. In today's market, where you have so many options, finding the right vendors can be tough. You're looking for someone who is reliable and you can depend on. Google doesn't give you the depth of information that Open Forum does."



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