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TOWN-HALL TECH

A web platform for busybodies and forward-thinkers has spread from Omaha across the U.S.

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN LOCAL

government are characterized as one of two kinds of people: movers and shakers or busybodies. Whichever type of committed citizen you are, one thing's for certain—in a democracy, change only happens when free thinkers spur it.

Enter Mindmixer.com.

"Mindmixer is an online and global participation tool," says Nick Bowden, co-founder and CEO of the startup. "We take what has traditionally been done primarily in face-to-face meetings and put it online. It's meant to be a bridging of the gap between folks that want to be involved but can't—this way it's more convenient."

With Mindmixer, performing your civic duties has never been easier. If the concept still needs hammering out, imagine a host of message boards created for the sole purpose of improving your community.

"Essentially a city will hire us to create a virtual town hall/website/app with topics that range from a variety of issues," Nick says.

Citizens post ideas on everything from housing to education on their community page, and other users provide feedback and support good ideas. Then citizens vote on initiatives they'd like to see implemented in their community. Once voting closes, local government officials consider the top ideas.

Nick, who has a background in planning and consulting, developed Mindmixer as a cure for the lengthy, inefficient meetings he suffered through in the past. He and co-founders Mark Hasebroock and Nathan Preheim started Mindmixer in Omaha,



Nebraska. Though Mindmixer is a recent startup, the site has grown exponentially and now reaches 40 cities nationwide, ranging from small towns to major metro areas and even state governments.

"Any city can sign up—it's open to cities of all sizes, from a community of 2,000 to 3 million," Nick says. "We just recently started working with Cal State Fullerton, so administration on campuses is next."

Whether for busybodies or movers and shakers, Mindmixer is expanding faster than Nick or any government could have imagined, proving that people actually do want to be politically active—they just need the right tools to get started.

"With Mindmixer, cities are getting incredible data to help make better decisions, and a much broader view of the community," Nick says. "It's generally our belief that people want to be involved within their community and its decision-making processes, so giving folks an opportunity to participate without leaving their house has had a pretty profound effect."

In our current and ever-evolving age of new media, Mindmixer functions as a simple platform to submit feedback and enact change. As an added bonus, there's a good chance Mindmixer will eliminate trips to the city building—and not even movers and shakers will miss paying for city parking. UP

CLICK HERE to start a mindmixer for your city or see if it's already signed up.

