Communities of Practice

...in the context of knowledge and learning

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How do you define them?

How do you justify them?

How do CoP’s contribute to learning?

How do you best leverage them?

How do you get them started?

How do you build their momentum?
... communities of practice

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...the key elements of a community of practice

1. A practice…
   ...which creates a common ground and a sense of identity

2. A relevant, trusted place for exchange…
   ...which fosters interaction and the development of relationships

3. A knowledge domain…
   ...which creates a common ground and a sense of identity
...definition of a community of practice

A group of self-governing people whose practice is aligned with strategic imperatives and are challenged to create shareholder value by generating knowledge and increasing capabilities.
features that are common to all communities of practice

- functioning on the basis of productive enquiry
- managed through the governance structure, principles and conventions, the shared leadership of members and effective facilitation
- sharing knowledge, collaborating and learning
- co-creating of the content by members
- self-governance on the basis of agreed conventions
- members assuming accountability to support one another
- using a variety of synchronous and asynchronous collaborative tools, including face-to-face meeting and on-line platform
- support by the organization for communities as a valid way to learn and collaborate

...how communities work
In a community of practice, members agree to:

- utilize productive inquiry
- support each other to enhance learning and performance
- self-manage, self-govern
- collaborate via multiple channels
- generate knowledge to support their practice
The exercise of leadership by community members:

- Optimize the process of exchange and learning in the community
- Scrutinize the knowledge to ensure high quality exchange
... communities of practice

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- Strategic theme: aligned with a strategic imperative
- Core organizational competency: focused on creating a core competency
- Common development need: focused on increasing individual capabilities
- Distributed functional expertise: provides forum for dispersed expertise
- Cross-generational knowledge exchange: creates peer learning space to address demographics
...the justification for communities

- accelerates the generation of capabilities
- increase speed for developing new solutions
- promote innovation through problem-solving, learning, and knowledge creation
- improves and enhances meta-capabilities: collaborating and learning
- connects people into a network for greater speed
- shapes a “boundary-less” culture for greater synergy
- prevents knowledge loss from the organization through exchange of cross-generational expertise
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Knowledge is the capability to take effective action.

Learning is the process of turning information into knowledge.
...the two types of knowledge

**tacit knowledge**
- intuitions, perspectives, beliefs and values that result from experience
- can best be communicated interpersonally through dialogue with use of metaphors
- the mindsets (or mental models) of individuals and the collective mindsets of the organizational culture

**explicit knowledge**
- knowledge that has been articulated and codified in words or numbers
- can be retrieved from the tacit knowledge grid and transmitted relatively easily
Data

Dispersed elements

Patterned data

Information

Validated platform for action

Knowledge

Implicitly knowing how to generate, access and integrate knowledge

Wisdom

Explicit

Tacit
Learning is turning information into knowledge.

Learning inserts into one’s practice the raw timber of information to build capability.
the evolution to e-learning

training

Prescriptive approach

one to many

learning

self-initiated approach

one to one

e-learning

networked approach

many to many
...learning based on explicit knowledge

Gather information

Learn

Transfer

Act

from a variety of sources...

meetings

Interaction with customers

Cross-functional teamwork

Self-directed learning

Changes in how value is created for the customer
the evolution to e-learning...

- Integrated to work
  - just-in-time
  - just-in case, just-enough
- personalized, dynamic content
- allowing asynchronous exchange
- taking/sharing learner content
- supported by coaching
- facilitating community learning
- involving external sources
- connecting different stakeholders
…a knowledge strategy can be seen as a two-cylinder engine for generating capability:

- the “knowledge access” component serves to make knowledge objects readily accessible,
- the “knowledge exchange component serves to generate the knowledge objects through interactions that are part of getting work done

**Knowledge access**
- codified and stored
- tends to be more static
- driven by accessibility and retrieval
- centrally available to all individuals

**Knowledge exchange**
- built in collaboration vessels
- interactive and dynamic
- driven by productive inquiry
...harvesting explicit knowledge

- Gather information
- Learn
- Transfer
- Act

from a variety of sources...

- meetings
- interaction with customers
- cross-functional team work
- self-directed learning

Changes in how value is created for the customer
...the knowledge/learning architecture...the knowledge strategy is not a supplementary “thing to do”: it has to be fully integrated to work has to be fully integrated into the work and add effectiveness as it is realized.
the knowledge/learning architecture

Knowledge access

Knowledge exchange

place information in context

Content Platform

Learning

contribute new knowledge

Collaborative work spaces
how communities engender learning

(source) explicit

(stock) information

(conduit) Knowledge Access
  Content Platform

Knowledge exchange
  Learning Communities

(exPLICIT) explicit

(tacit) knowledge
...the knowledge strategy is not a supplementary “thing to do”: it has to be fully integrated to work has to be fully integrated into the work and add effectiveness as it is realized.
Collaborative work spaces

**Virtual Teams**
- **basis for exchange**: the project plan
- **mandate**: realizing project objectives
- **underlying principle**: same as other teams in the organization
- **leadership**: same as other teams in the organization

**Communities of Practice**
- **basis for exchange**: productive inquiries by community members
- **mandate**: develop the capability of members
- **underlying principle**: generalized reciprocity: mutual support within the community
- **leadership**: self-governance through dispersed leadership within the community

**Expert Networks**
- **basis for exchange**: questions from across the organization directed to appointed experts
- **mandate**: make experts available to resolve problems
- **underlying principle**: expert recognition for the quality of their answers
- **leadership**: under the leadership of the functional domains involved

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...the knowledge/learning architecture
leveraging multiple tools...

Collaborative work spaces

Virtual Teams

- Asynchronous Discussions
- Synchronous chat

Expert Networks

- Search
- Document upload
- Find the expert

Communities of Practice

- E-learning
- Recorded e-mtgs
- Rate the expert

Synchronous Collaboration Tools

Ask the Expert
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• **CoPs have no assignments nor compulsions:**
  - participants do not have direct roles/homework in cops.
  - participants participate by self-selection and self-identification.

• **Participation in CoPs will spring from a felt need:**
  - a burning need is key to motivate and sustain a CoP

• **Technology is an important vehicle, but not an end in itself:**
  - videoconferencing, email lists: all can work to sustain a CoP.

• **Role of leadership is crucial:**
  - leaders can either set the agenda or simply endorse a CoP approach.
    - top leadership should not dictate the specific content of a CoP.
  - CoP initiatives have to address power-sharing with the functional or
    line managers of participating CoP members.

• **Innovation in CoPs begins incrementally:**
  - tools like action reviews and peer assists help a lot to step by step
    improve process. But radical innovation seems to happen only after
    much time is spent together improving their practice.
shared sense of purpose and ownership
self-initiated view of learning and readiness to learn from each other
climate of trust and involvement
partnering mindsets and capabilities
strong technology platform
supportive context and leadership endorsement
realistic expectations for return on investment on the part of management
... communities work on the horizontal axis of an organization
... communities embody networks that foster collaboration and allows for leveraging capabilities across the entreprise
...networks of collaboration

complementing the formal hierarchy
... communities of practice

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...building communities of practice

- planned, systematic approach
- accomplished in two phases
- executive sponsorship, organizational support
- dedicated resources: project management and facilitation
- steering group drives process
Phase I

- Define Community Project
- Establish Community Components
- Launch Community

Phase II

- Expand Community
- Establish Community
- Checkpoint Progress & Value
- Evaluate Purpose & Direction
- Grow Community

...building communities of practice
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...the architecture and functioning of a community of practice

- Attract members and promote engagement
- Build charter - purpose and value proposition
- Generate member-based content

- Content and container attractiveness
- Create a high-trust experience

- Member commitment
- Deliver value and renew relevance

- Capture/access information through technology
- Evolving the depth and scope of member participation

- Continued enhancements of benefits to members
- Build member loyalty

- Build charter - purpose and value proposition
- Promote timely response to inquiry and member-to-member interaction

- Make the community a trusted source of learning
- Create a high-trust experience

- Capture/access information through technology
- Build member loyalty

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...the maturity model for the use of communities of practice in organizations

A highly effective balance is achieved between the formal accountability structure and self-organized communities.

Communities become an inherent part of how work and learning takes place in the organization.

Systematic building of communities for capability development.

Sporadic emergence of communities.

A highly effective balance is achieved between the formal accountability structure and self-organized communities.

Learning and collaborating.

Culture:

- high
- low

Technology:

- low
- high

Enterprise-wide interactivity.
although a naturally forming, existing structure, can be purposefully built

key component of a comprehensive knowledge strategy

cross-generational forums for generating capabilities and making knowledge persistent

organizational support and facilitation increases communities’ ability to improve performance at a greater rate

can be leveraged to create strategic advantage