Communities of Practice

Roles & Responsibilities

Fred Nickols

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## Roles & Responsibilities

Below are the key roles and responsibilities typically associated with a successful CoP.

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<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| **Champion** | The Champion is the chief organizer of events. The Champion may also be the administrative source for communications support. | ☐ Ensure and articulate a valid purpose behind a CoP  
☐ Stimulate interest in the CoP  
☐ Organize face-to-face gatherings  
☐ Stimulate enthusiasm and energy  
☐ Promote the cause and contributions of the CoP  
☐ Arrange for communications support  
☐ Obtain official support when appropriate  
☐ Communicate the contributions of the CoP to the formal organization, if appropriate (i.e. an Informal CoP may choose to do this only rarely)  
☐ Communicate company support to the CoP members. |
| **Facilitator** | The Facilitator focuses on communications between and among members of the CoP. This can be accomplished in face-to-face sessions or in virtual meetings, formally or informally. This role often shifts from member to member depending upon the topic and the participants. | ☐ Clarify communications  
☐ Draw out the reticent  
☐ Ensure that dissenting points of view are heard and understood  
☐ Keep discussions on topic  
☐ Reconcile opposing points of view |
## CoP: Roles & Responsibilities

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| **Integrator** | The *Information Integrator* comprises two distinct roles: (1) the position interfaces with other units of the organization, either other CoPs or business units; and (2) the position ensures clarity and lack of duplication in the information disseminated within the CoP and outward from it. | □ Maintain information-sharing relationships with other units and CoPs  
□ Inform CoP members about relevant activities elsewhere  
□ Inform others about relevant activities within the CoP  
□ Coordinate information from CoP members to avoid duplications, redundancies, or poor quality (e.g., in postings to the CoP web site) |
| **Member**  | *Members* are the people who populate a CoP. They might hold similar official positions (e.g., purchasing agent) or they might be connected in a community by virtue of their mutual interest in a business process (e.g., purchasing). | □ Share knowledge and experiences  
□ Participate in discussions and other sessions  
□ Raise issues and concerns regarding common needs and requirements  
□ Devise workarounds and other solutions to shortcomings in formally documented methods and procedures  
□ Alert other members to changes in conditions and requirements  
□ Be on the lookout for ways to enhance CoP effectiveness (i.e. recruiting high-value members; changes to interaction processes, etc.) |
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| Practice Leader | The *Practice Leader* is the acknowledged leader of the CoP. His or her leadership is based on competence, not rank or position. Leadership in a CoP can shift as the issues and concerns of the CoP shift. Practice Leaders always emerge; they cannot be appointed. | - Identify emerging trends and patterns in CoP activities and knowledge base  
- Identify trends and patterns in other areas that impact the practice  
- Promote adherence to “good practice”  
- Articulate “good practice” for new members  
- Provide or arrange for coaching for new members  
- Provide leadership in resolving problems with and in the practice  
- Evaluate CoP performance versus expectations  
- Be alert to the potential need for CoP changes: more members; different member composition; shutdown |
| Sponsor   | The *Sponsor* is the bridge between a CoP and the rest of the formal organization, particularly the authority hierarchy. | - Facilitate the articulation of a mission for the CoP (if the degree of formality warrants one)  
- Manage official relationships  
- Remove barriers and obstacles to productive contributions by the CoP  
- Run interference for the CoP when necessary  
- Provide for funding as needed |

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