

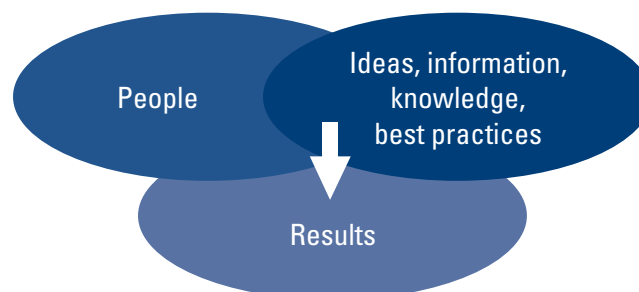
Creating Communities of Practice: The Knowledge Bridge Builders

Creating centers of excellence and centers of practice. Communities of Practice are groups of people who meet because they share common interests and expertise.

Communities of Practice

Communities of Practice are groups of people who meet because they share common interests and expertise. They may be on the same team in an organization or they may cross the boundaries of the organizational chart. The product of their association is knowledge. They create, share and apply their expertise and energy to common challenges. Your agency can benefit from a community of practice if you need to:

- Reduce the constraints imposed by your organizational structure
- Improve strategic thinking and planning
- Retain talented employees
- Create a forum to benchmark best practices
- Improve problem solving abilities
- Expand foresight about changes in technology, demographics, and the external environment
- Coordinate the flow of information among different groups, teams, and customers
- Share processes, procedures, innovative approaches and solutions to challenges
- Communities of Practice Bring People and Ideas Together
- High performance teams, Improved information flow
- Best practices identified, shared, implemented
- On-going sharing and dissemination of ideas, knowledge information
- Less time spent duplicating solutions to problems (“reinventing the wheel”)
- Greater organizational fluidity
- Expanded capabilities to capitalize on cross-organizational opportunities
- Excitement and energy about work, Greater alignment and synergy
- Continuous learning throughout the organization, Reduced risk of information falling through the cracks



Community of Practice Stages

| STAGE 1: Pre-Planning | |
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| <p>Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine the need for this COP - Identify sponsor - Identify champion/community coordinator - Clarify purpose - Identify resources and constraints | <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaining a clear understanding of the overall purpose of the COP - Defining the appropriate scope and boundaries |
| <p>Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agency Sponsor - Champion - RGS team - Community coordinator | <p>Outcomes/Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needs assessment - Purpose |

| STAGE 2: Kick-off and forming the team | |
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| <p>Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define issues the team will explore - Define common knowledge needs - Interview potential members - Identify naturally occurring networks of people and the information they share - Identify gaps in people and resources | <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying the right people to include - Identifying the costs and benefits to team members and to the organization |
| <p>Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Champion - RGS team - Other TBD | <p>Outcomes/Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team roster - Team Kick off Meeting - Preliminary list of the types of information they will share |

| STAGE 3: Developing the team | |
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| <p>Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decide how the team wants to work together - Clarify the purpose of the group - Create strategies for dealing with previously identified gaps - Surface resistance to sharing information and overcome the resistance - Identify criteria and measures for success - Train team members and community coordinator | <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overcoming barriers to sharing knowledge - Creating the right infrastructure - Establishing value |
| <p>Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Champion - RGS Team - COP team members | <p>Outcomes/Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team charter to include information about revitalizing and disbanding the team - Software/hardware requirements - List of measures for success - Baseline data |

| STAGE 4: Maturing | |
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| <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify knowledge gaps - Create action plan to fill these gaps - Create data base and other ways to share knowledge with entire organization | <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refining sphere of influence and roles - Developing and maintaining the culture - Standardizing lessons learned - Create utilization training scenarios |
| <p>Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Champion - CACI Team - COP team members - Community librarian | <p>Outcomes/Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expanded data base - Gap analysis - Action plan - Evaluation of progress to date - Training based on Utilization scenarios - Case studies and critical incidents |

| STAGE 5: Sustaining momentum | |
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| <p>Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share information and best practices with Agency - Develop COP leaders - Recruit new members - Mentor new members - Benchmark Best Practices outside the agency - Create a plan to revitalize and re-energize the team - Conduct After action review | <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining relevance - Maintaining high standards - Continuing to identify cutting edge practices |
| <p>Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Champion - CACI Team - COP team members | <p>Outcomes/Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compilation of Best Practices - Leadership Development Retreat - Formal or informal Mentoring program - Revitalization plan - Identifying new trends, key concepts, results, and areas of improvement |

| STAGE 6: Changing the focus or dissolving the community of practice | |
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| <p>Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decide whether to continue or disband the group - Create strategies and processes for doing this - Measure and evaluate the team's achievements against original intent | <p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revitalizing the COP or - Disbanding the group - Capturing the information and Processes generated by the COP - Creating closure |
| <p>Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sponsor - Champion - CACI Team - COP team members - Possible new team members | <p>Outcomes/Products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final report or new team charter - Written record of processes/procedures, best practices generated by the group - New team kick off or closing team meeting |

About the Author

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