Communities of Practice Guide

PHASE #4: Perform

Maybe you have just started your CoP – you've had a few meetings and you are working on building a website. Or maybe your CoP meets biannually and you see room for greater impact for both members and the public. How can you create and sustain a cycle of participation and contribution?

Perform with rhythm

Your group activities and engagement should generate a unique and interesting rhythm (Cultivating communities of practice: a guide to managing knowledge). For example: perhaps the heavy downbeat of an annual conference is accompanied by syncopated seasonal luncheons and sprinkled with monthly newsletters and weekly coffee talks. A mix of formal and informal beats keep members energized and engaged. Your rhythm will change as your CoP evolves and that's okay. Let the music play.

- What kinds of community activities will generate energy and engagement and support the emergence of community "presence" (activities, communication, interaction, learning, knowledge sharing, collaboration, roles and social structures)?
- What is the emerging cycle of events/activities in your CoP?
- What are the ongoing community processes and practices that will contribute to the liveliness and dynamism of the community and keep members engaged?
- What are the emerging cultural elements of your community? And how should these elements be recognized within your brand/communication/activities?

Notes:

Performing CoP members

Being a member of a CoP is voluntary, thus strong CoPs attract and retain members with vibrant activities and meaningful contribution. Opportunities to contribute and collaborate will give members a sense of engagement and responsibility. This is a balancing act, however, because overloading member activities may decrease retention.

- What are the emerging roles or subgroups within your group? How are these filled?
- What work products can members contribute to support individual and community goals?

Notes:

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Performing benefits

Because being a member of a CoP is voluntary, many successful CoPs provide recognition and benefits for members. Consider spotlighting CoP members in monthly newsletters or giving an annual MVP award for outstanding service or contributions. These awards can extend to non-members as well, which may be a way to demonstrate to your external audience the value of your CoP. For example, if your CoP shares an interest in effective online communication, you may want to recognize the creator of a new online communication tool.

Your group may also want to (or be required to) demonstrate a return on investment for key stakeholders or funding sources. Consider early and often how and when your group will demonstrate benefits and outcomes. Consider generating annual reports including descriptions of members, activities, goals and achievements. Include a copy of your CoP charter.

- How do members get recognized and rewarded for their contributions?
- What are the emerging benefits of the community for members, subgroups, the community as-a-whole, the community's sponsors, and other key stakeholders?
- How does the community demonstrate return on investment (ROI) for its sponsor(s)? Members?

Notes:

CoP Stories (Perform)

The CPO Staff & Outreach Network has taken on a key role in the Chancellor's Campus Outreach Awards. This is a great venue to both recognize members' efforts and those of community partners, and it reinforces the importance of the group's mission to campus leadership.

CoP Evaluation Report examined the benefits of seven CoP's sponsored by the Office of Human Resource Development in 2015. The results not only celebrated these seven groups, but also offered ways to measure effectiveness of other campus CoP's.

> There is no right beat for all communities, and the beat is likely to change as the community evolves. But finding the right rhythm at each stage is key to a community's development.
> —Cultivating Communities of Practice