

Communities of Practice

Roles & Responsibilities

Fred Nickols

© Fred Nickols 2003
All rights reserved



www.nickols.us
nickols@att.net

Roles & Responsibilities

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

Role	Description	Responsibilities
<i>Champion</i>	The <i>Champion</i> is the chief organizer of events. The Champion may also be the administrative source for communications support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure and articulate a valid purpose behind a CoP <input type="checkbox"/> Stimulate interest in the CoP <input type="checkbox"/> Organize face-to-face gatherings <input type="checkbox"/> Stimulate enthusiasm and energy <input type="checkbox"/> Promote the cause and contributions of the CoP <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange for communications support <input type="checkbox"/> Obtain official support when appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate the contributions of the CoP to the formal organization, if appropriate (i.e. an Informal CoP may choose to do this only rarely) <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate company support to the CoP members.
<i>Facilitator</i>	The <i>Facilitator</i> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Clarify communications <input type="checkbox"/> Draw out the reticent <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that dissenting points of view are heard and understood <input type="checkbox"/> Keep discussions on topic <input type="checkbox"/> Reconcile opposing points of view

Role	Description	Responsibilities
<i>Integrator</i>	<p>The <i>Information Integrator</i> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ 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)
<i>Member</i>	<p><i>Members</i> 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).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ 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.)

Role	Description	Responsibilities
<i>Practice Leader</i>	The <i>Practice Leader</i> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify emerging trends and patterns in CoP activities and knowledge base <input type="checkbox"/> Identify trends and patterns in other areas that impact the practice <input type="checkbox"/> Promote adherence to “good practice” <input type="checkbox"/> Articulate “good practice” for new members <input type="checkbox"/> Provide or arrange for coaching for new members <input type="checkbox"/> Provide leadership in resolving problems with and in the practice <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate CoP performance versus expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Be alert to the potential need for CoP changes: more members; different member composition; shutdown
<i>Sponsor</i>	The <i>Sponsor</i> is the bridge between a CoP and the rest of the formal organization, particularly the authority hierarchy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate the articulation of a mission for the CoP (if the degree of formality warrants one) <input type="checkbox"/> Manage official relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Remove barriers and obstacles to productive contributions by the CoP <input type="checkbox"/> Run interference for the CoP when necessary <input type="checkbox"/> Provide for funding as needed

Contact the Author

Fred Nickols can be reached by e-mail at nickols@att.net. Other articles of his can be found on his web site at: <http://home.att.net/~nickols/articles.htm>.