

Communities of Practice Organizer

Category

Agile Processes

Purpose

This framework is used to design, launch and sustain a Community of Practice.

Description

Framework name:	CoP Organizer
Participants:	Community of Practice Leadership Team
Framework goal:	Launch a new community of practice
Framework guidelines:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Define the Vision: create a vision statement that clearly outlines the value the CoP will deliver. ● Recruit the Leadership Team: a cross-functional group of three to eight individuals possessing all the skills needed to launch a CoP. ● Define the Initiatives: what will be the focus, to educate, support, encourage, or integrate? ● Enlist a Sponsor/Champion: a sponsor will help to ensure the CoP's goals are aligned with overall company strategy and provide the resources that individual contributors lack ● Create a Plan: similar to Scrum, having a strong plan to go with your goal will ensure a greater chance of success. ● Find Early Value: look for early wins that will demonstrate the value of the new CoP to your sponsor, your membership and the organization. ● Sustain the Community: The CoP Product Backlog should continue to be developed and refined with a constant focus on growing and improving the existing CoP. ● Continuously Inspect and Adapt: at regular intervals, the Leadership team should step back and examine both the "what" and the "how" of the CoP.
Boundaries provided:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A CoP should have one clear mission (Initiative) ● A Sponsor is critical for formation of a internal CoP

Resources used:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kotter 8-Step Process for Leading Chan • Product Roadmap Framework • Regis McKenna Vision Template
Actionable outcome(s):	A Community of Practice established and running.

Source Notes

The Communities of Practice Organization framework was developed by Joel Bancroft-Connors and is directly based on the [Kotter 8-Step Process for Leading Chan](#).

Explanation of the guidelines

1. Define the Vision:

Before forming a CoP, define a clear vision for why the CoP should exist and the problem it should address. . Many CoPs fail because the community lacked a clear focus. Simply stating a domain of interest - Scrum, project management, testing - is not enough to sustain a CoP. Create a vision statement that clearly outlines the value the CoP will deliver, to whom and how it will deliver that value. Use the [Regis McKenna Vision Template](#) to create a vision statement for the CoP.

2. Recruit the Leadership Team:

A community is defined by the [Oxford English Dictionary](#) as “a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.” Building a community without first finding the “others” to help you is akin to a tailor making you a suit without asking you what colors you liked or your measurements.

This core group will become your Leadership Team and serve as the nucleus of the CoP. In our experience, this team will work to bring the CoP to life. much as a Scrum Team creates a product from a Product Backlog. Think of yourself as the Product Owner for the CoP, the Leadership Team as the Development Team.

To build a Leadership Team, you will need the following:

- A cross-functional group of three to eight individuals possessing all the skills needed to launch a CoP.
- Each individual shares your vision for the CoP and is passionate about advancing the domain.
- Will dedicate time to support the growth and development of the CoP.

3. Define the Initiative(s):

Once you have a Leadership Team and a Vision, you can start to define the focus or initiative(s) that the CoP will focus on. Etienne Wenger’s CoP Quick Start guide defines five strategic

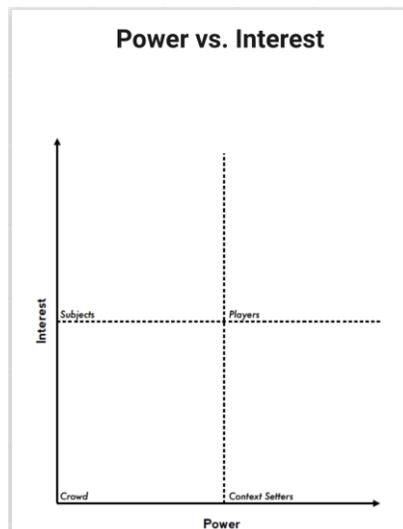
contexts or initiatives for a CoP: educate, support, encourage, integrate and get going. Get Going is more about the creation of a CoP which we have expanded out into the first five steps of our CoP Framework. The remaining four are a good starting point for determining the core initiative of your CoP.

- **Educate:** a CoP focused on education would conduct workshops to educate practitioners and management about the domain. They would help establish a common language around the domain and how it will be applied in the specific context of the organization.
- **Support:** a support minded CoP works to provide frameworks, techniques and assistance to the practitioners of the domain approach/skill. A CoP of this nature would help define and create a supportive infrastructure for the practitioners.
- **Encourage:** encouraging COPs strives to show practitioners and their organizations the value of working together to achieve domain excellence.
- **Integrate:** the CoP with a goal of integration is working towards weaving the domain into the fabric of the organization. How can the domain be a part of the day to day operation of the organization?

Wenger's strategic contexts are just an example of a focus initiative. Working with the CoP Leadership Team, define your driving initiative(s).

4. Enlist a Sponsor/Champion:

A CoP without strong organizational support will be little more than a discussion club. Regardless of your CoP's core initiative, it will require time, effort, and resources. A sponsor will help to ensure the CoP's goals are aligned with overall company strategy and provide the resources that individual contributors lack. An effective sponsor will garner support overcome resistance from skeptical leadership, and provide ongoing guidance as the community grows. In some cases, a sponsor provides a budget to support the CoP. A useful framework for identifying potential stakeholders is the Power vs. Interest Framework.



When looking a sponsor, look for the following:

- Has a vested interest in the vision of the CoP
- Can support the CoP with resources - budget, supplies, etc.
- Ability to dedicate regular time with the Leadership Team and the community.
- Has a vested interest or belief in the skill growth and development of employees

5. Create a Plan:

To maximize your success, be sure to launch your CoP with a plan. Creating a plan follows the same principles a Scrum Team uses to take a product vision and roadmap to create a Product Backlog to deliver increments of value.

1. Use the [Regis McKenna Vision Template](#) to refine your vision you created in Step 1.
2. Understand the potential members of the CoP. This can be done with a [Customer Profile](#) exercise or by documenting customer assumptions or using a Customer Segmentation Frameworks (see below).
3. Develop the high level features of the CoP. Prune the Product Tree works well for this.
4. Refine your Roadmap using [Product Roadmap Framework](#).
5. Create your initial release. Take the first part of the Roadmap and turn it into a well ordered Product Backlog.

Customer Segmentation

Instructions: working in your product teams, take **eight minutes** to identify at least three customer segments for your product. Write the name of each segment at the top of each column and identify at least three characteristics or traits that distinguish the segment.

Here are six ways to consider segmentation:

1. Geographic base or reach
2. Industry, sub-industry, industry served or customer served
3. Product class or product usage
4. Organization size; measured by revenue, number of employees, etc.
5. Product delivery model, product format, packaging format, special technology or process methodology
6. Special use or special needs

Characteristics & Traits			

6. Find Early Value:

When launching your CoP don't spend weeks on getting everything just right. Look for early wins that will demonstrate the value of the new CoP to your sponsor, your membership and the organization.

- Pick a short iteration, one or two weeks
- Hold Sprint Reviews

- Get members involved as soon as possible
- Hold a kickoff meeting with the sponsor there

7. Sustain the Community:

Once your CoP has launched, the work really begins. The CoP Product Backlog should continue to be developed and refined with a constant focus on growing and improving the existing CoP. At regular intervals, the Leadership team should step back and examine both the “what” and the “how” of the CoP. This can lead to a shift in the key initiative(s), roadmap, and leadership.

On a quarterly basis you should:

- Review the Vision and Key Initiatives
- Update the Roadmap
- Hold a leadership and a membership retrospective

8. Continuously Inspect and Adapt:

More a constant reminder than a linear step. Every Sprint, every CoP meeting, every quarter the CoP should be reviewing how they are doing towards reaching the COP’s vision and fulfilling its key initiative(s).