

*"Assistance at A Distance"*



Distance Consulting

by Fred Nickols

In many cases, Distance Consulting provides an effective, low-cost alternative to high-priced on-site consulting. If you want to know more about how it works, give me a call at (740) 397-2363 or send me an e-mail at the address below.

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# Community of Practice

## Roles & Responsibilities

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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 <i>Champion</i> may also be the administrative source for communications support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure and articulate a valid purpose behind a CoP</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stimulate interest in the CoP</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Organize face-to-face gatherings</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stimulate enthusiasm and energy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Promote the cause and contributions of the CoP</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Arrange for communications support</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Obtain official support when appropriate</li> <li><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)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Communicate company support to the CoP members.</li> </ul>
<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"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clarify communications</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Draw out the reticent</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that dissenting points of view are heard and understood</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep discussions on topic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reconcile opposing points of view</li> </ul>

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<p><b><i>Integrator</i></b></p>	<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"> <li>❑ Maintain information-sharing relationships with other units and CoPs</li> <li>❑ Inform CoP members about relevant activities elsewhere</li> <li>❑ Inform others about relevant activities within the CoP</li> <li>❑ Coordinate information from CoP members to avoid duplications, redundancies, or poor quality (e.g., in postings to the CoP web site)</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Member</i></b></p>	<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"> <li>❑ Share knowledge and experiences</li> <li>❑ Participate in discussions and other sessions</li> <li>❑ Raise issues and concerns regarding common needs and requirements</li> <li>❑ Devise workarounds and other solutions to shortcomings in formally documented methods and procedures</li> <li>❑ Alert other members to changes in conditions and requirements</li> <li>❑ Be on the lookout for ways to enhance CoP effectiveness (i.e. recruiting high-value members; changes to interaction processes, etc.)</li> </ul>

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