



COLLABORATE

*Bring people to work together as a practice.
Identify key challenges for people to resolve collectively and co-create meaningful value together.*

Diverse groups within CoPs don't just add value individually; they amplify it collectively as a practice. They form a powerful nexus of knowledge, insights, and experiences. The dynamic interaction results in outcomes that transcend individual contributions.

The more a community creates something concrete together, the more engaged it is. This co-creation of a tangible community asset / qualitative deliverable requires effective coordination of different cooperation and collaboration processes.

Engaging our community in delivering a concrete outcome implies carrying out effective collaboration, cooperation, coordination and co-creation practices and activities.

Activities oriented to developing the practice – Practice Development Project

WHAT

Practice Development Project

Chartering a project to make progress on a specific issue of the practice on behalf of the community.

Some challenges are too big for a community of practice to address in the context of its regular activities or volunteer participation.

WHY

To address an issue that requires focused work and commitment.

HOW

Many of the activities in this book could be undertaken by a focused practice group rather than by the whole community—documenting an aspect of practice, responding to a request for an opinion, or exploring a new idea. But sometimes, the scope of the tasks required for practice development goes beyond what most members can commit to through their regular participation. These include intensive tasks such as doing research, analyzing big datasets, surveying the competition, systematically exploring the potential of a new methodology, or

doing a structured learning expedition. In these situations, the community needs to initiate a project.

The difference between such a project and any regular project in organizations is that it is chartered by the community—either because a group of members propose that they form a team to explore something they are interested in on behalf of the community, or because the community decides that a challenge or opportunity is worth doing some focused work and asks for volunteers to form a project team.

The first step is the chartering process by which the community defines the goal and scope of the project, who is going to work on it, how it is going to be resourced, including the time of members, and how the project will interact with the community.

For the time they form such a chartered practice group, the members who participate act more as a project team than as a community, managing the task, dividing the work, and coordinating activities. For its part, the community at large acts as a kind of “learning sponsor” for the project (and in some cases, when it has a budget, as the funding sponsor as well). In either case, the team regularly reports to the community, receives feedback, and brings back its findings or products to the whole community upon completion of the project.

Variations

Existing project. A project involving members is initiated for some other purpose and the community adopts it as a case study for its learning.

Doing something useful for someone. Sometimes the best way to push the boundaries of a practice is to do something useful together, for instance doing some *pro bono* work together as a way to improve the practice or take it in new directions. While the situation needs to be carefully chosen to serve this purpose, it is a more open-ended learning process than a practice-development process driven by a specific issue. But having an actual task to accomplish, which is meant to be useful to someone, focuses attention and grounds the learning in action.

Use Case:

30 days to become a better practitioner

One of our communities recently undertook a “Thirty-day challenge”, where community members worked alongside each other as “accountability partners” to learn something new, practice a tool or technique, or even practice techniques for life–work balance each day.

The challenge followed the mantra of “No matter what stage you’re at in your career, there’s always something new to learn.” It was designed for people at all levels, whether they were just getting started or had been involved in the field for years.

Each day, a new challenge activity was posted, with participants keeping a journal throughout to record their progress. After the month was up, the community held a meetup in which the group could report back on highlights and experiences from completing the challenge.

“This has been a great exercise, and I have found it even more beneficial than I thought before I started. It’s been fun to challenge myself and take the “JPMorgan Chase goggles” off, remembering there’s a big world out there to be explored.”

Not everyone in the community took part, but it inspired self-driven learning and created some extra buzz and excitement for those who did!

Not only that, but this partly inspired a global *Ignite 30-Day challenge* for community leads to explore social learning practices as well as to consider how they could design a further set of challenges for their own community domain (Blockchain, DevOps, Public Speaking, etc.).