



USER EXPERIENCE

A diverse CoP is one where members, irrespective of their background, feel valued and heard. Prioritizing equity ensure that every member has equal access to opportunities and resources. Inclusion creates an environment where everyone feels they belong and can actively participate.

While members from various backgrounds, roles, and experiences bring unique perspectives that enrich the collective knowledge pool, it's the deliberate and strategic efforts towards fostering inclusivity that ensure these voices are truly integrated and valued.

In the context of a community of practice, we understand user experience to be members' and the community ecosystem's experience of/with the community's operational model. This includes:

- the community processes and practices,
- the community's methods for organisation,
- the digital tools used and the way community members use them.

On the Use of Technology – Asynchronous Interactions

WHAT

Synchronous interaction refers to real-time communication where participants engage with each other at the same time, regardless of their location. This can include activities like live-streaming lectures, video-conference discussions, and any form of live chat. It's particularly effective for immediate social engagement and quick information exchange, fostering a sense of community and allowing for the clarification of misconceptions.

In contrast, asynchronous interaction allows participants to access materials and communicate at their own pace, over extended periods. This mode is more flexible temporally, giving learners the opportunity to deeply explore and engage with the material.

Both synchronous and asynchronous interactions have their place in learning environments, and often, a blend of both is used to optimize the learning experience.

WHY

Countless online tools are available to support asynchronous interactions, including email, distribution lists, discussion boards, SMS, Facebook pages, and chat applications, including text, voice, or video. Since the beginning of the internet (and even before with letter writing), many communities of practice have been able to function using only asynchronous tools.

But even for communities that meet regularly, asynchronous tools serve many purposes, such as announcements and newsletters. Members often use asynchronous tools for conversations outside of meetings.

This is especially important when people need just-in-time help with issues that cannot wait for a meeting or involve people in incompatible time zones. We noted that some community leaders complain that members do not interact much between meetings, but people are busy and need a good reason to start interacting asynchronously. If regular meetings give them all they need, this may well be good enough.

HOW

Email

Some communities simply use email for asynchronous interactions. This can be useful when email is the only common mode of connection, for instance, across diverse organizations. But even within some organizations, email is where most people of a certain generation live, so email compatibility ends up being the one key feature you need in your tools.

One problem with simple email is that it does not keep a shared archive of the interactions. Another is that the sender of an email gets to make the decision about who is included as a recipient and who is left out, for reasons that can be practical or political. When we use email, we prefer online distribution lists that keep an archive of email interactions organized under topics.

In addition, it is the recipients who get to opt into a distribution list, even if entry is moderated, and individuals can choose whether to receive emails instantly, in digest, or by visiting the website occasionally.