# INVESTORS / LEADERS / SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

Identify potential sponsors, SMEs, mentors and young leaders for the CoP.

Get support from top management as the sponsor & to suggest useful executive action for young leaders. Officially appoint SMEs and mentors for advices and guidance.

SMEs are the backbone bringing specialized knowledge often pivotal in addressing and resolving intricate challenges. Senior professionals as mentor, with their years of experience serve as beacons for newer members. Young leaders positioned at the crossroads of strategy and execution, often offer an unique vantage point.

Clarifying & Distributing Leadership

Referencing to the 7 dimensions of intentional development, it more useful to consider a framework with multiple dimensions along which community maturing or some preferred to label as vibrancy can occur. Think of these dimensions as a set of distinct sliders increasing the brightness level of different settings, as illustrated in the figure below. Some communities may try and turn up some dimensions while ignoring others. Even in a given community, some members may be more interested in pushing some dimensions than others. Not everyone has the same view of the ideal setting.

Practice   Domain   Community   Identification   Leadership   Awareness   Context
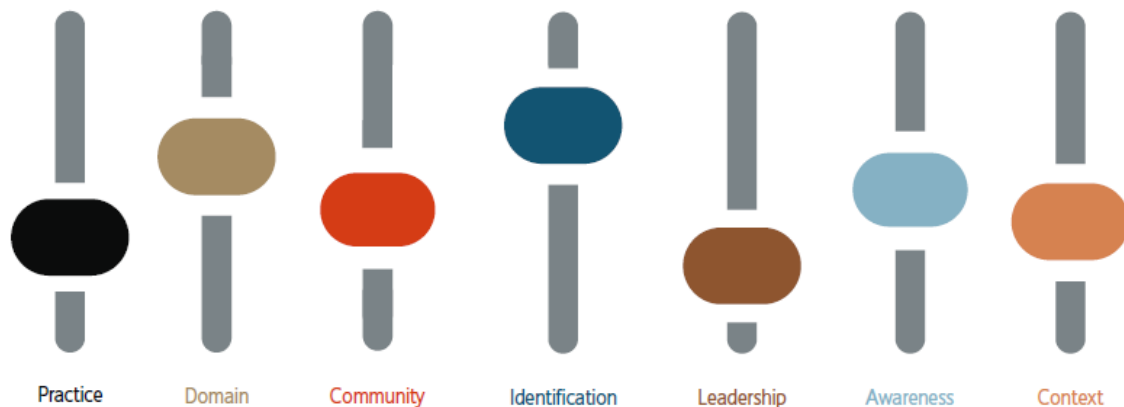
WHAT

Dimension 5: Leadership
In the early days, it is not uncommon for a community of practice to depend on the leadership of one or two people or even on external facilitation. As they mature, some communities develop more complex models of leadership that invite broader initiative.

Adapted from Communities of Practice within and across organization 2023, Etiene Wenger, Beverly Wenger, Phil Reid and Claude Bruderlein.

WHY

Clarifying and distributing **leadership** includes:

- **Articulating leadership roles**. To make sure that things are taken care of and that someone keeps the community space open, many communities of practice have designated leaders who agree to take an active role in cultivating the community.

- **Distributing leadership**. Moving toward more distributed leadership is a good sign of maturing.

- **An engaged core group**. An early sign of maturation is the formation of a core group dedicated to the development of the community and representative of its membership. Note that a core group is not a governance structure; it often remains very informal and rarely has decision authority.

HOW

Intentional developmental efforts in this direction include:

- **Articulating leadership roles**. Clear leadership roles make it easier to clarify expectations—both inside the community and outside. Many organizations provide support and training to people who take leadership in their communities.

- **Distributing leadership**. Members take on tasks that help the community function and develop, from the menial to the complex. They lead activities or host meetings. They may even initiate and lead a practice group, organize a local event, or start a local chapter. To accelerate the distribution of leadership, the leadership tasks can be explicitly assigned to groups of members. This encourages them to take more ownership of their community.

- **An engaged core group**. It consists of members who so value the community that they are willing to take some extra steps to make it more valuable for themselves and for others. They reflect on their experience of the community and work with others to make it healthy and useful. Chapters may each have their own core groups. Ideally, the core group is not static but, over time, keeps attracting new members. While rarely viewed officially as part of leadership, an energized core group does take on a type of leadership. Their commitment inspires other members and is a key factor in ensuring the community's ongoing relevance and long-term viability.

Potential upsides	Possible downsides
- Efficiency increases - There are well-defined ways to contribute to the community - Expectations of who takes a lead, where, and for what are clear - Members develop a sense of mutual accountability	- Strong leadership engenders passivity - An expectation develops that leaders are providing a service (which can be evaluated by fellow members who are the consumers of that service) - Members become critical instead of helping, complaining about something others do as volunteers

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• Even new members can take on leadership roles and experience a sense of ownership over the learning process	• The core group becomes an exclusive elite without renewed membership • Too many decisions are made behind closed doors • Members engage in politicking around their roles, clinging onto them for too long • Leadership becomes a platform for narcissists or loud mouths