



CONVENE & CONNECT

Convening is the art of bringing the community (of practice) and relevant stakeholders together to connect members and engage them in meaningful conversations. The diversity of a community and a risk-free and inclusive environment help develop conversations and engage members.

Start small, create the conducive environment to convene and network people.

Proper community management to ensure diversity of views, prioritize equity for access to opportunities and resource and where everyone feels they belong and can actively participate.

Diversified, equity and inclusiveness environment where there is diverse representation, fairness and everyone feel valued and heard.

Activities oriented to developing the practice – Boundary Engagement

WHAT

Boundary Engagement

Boundary engagement involves activities that bring together people from different communities and that are designed to explore productive ways the communities can articulate their respective practices. It is particularly useful when the disconnection creates problems or when there is a source of tension between them.

WHY

There are times when two or more communities need their respective points of view to understand an issue. It makes sense to have a joint session to address such boundary concerns. Meeting with another community often brings fresh perspectives and new thinking. It can be a source of energy and renewal. Such boundary encounters can even lead to the birth of a new practice at the boundary between existing ones.

HOW

Boundary engagement can be difficult because of misunderstandings, clashes of perspectives, suspicion, and conflicts of interest. Often the members of different practices not only have different terminologies that require translation, but they are not sure about their respective motivation or values. Some communities create stereotypes of others as part of their practice.

Typical examples include law enforcement and social workers, salespeople and design engineers, or professionals and administrators.

Variations

Breakthrough activities. When two practices are in conflict, we have found that it often requires the discovery of a “breakthrough activity”—an activity that is simple enough to require a light commitment but turns out to be immediately useful to all sides. A simple example we have witnessed was with a group involving psychiatrists and social workers: they were able to go beyond quarrelling about approaches when someone proposed the design of guidelines to refer patients from one specialty to the other. The immediate concreteness of such a breakthrough activity can move the encounter beyond ideological discussions and start the process of learning together and building trust across boundaries of practice.

Boundary projects. Community members usually don’t have much time and energy to engage at boundaries unless there is a specific task to accomplish or problem to solve. A joint project that requires cross-boundary collaboration can provide this context. As in the breakthrough activities described earlier, the joint and concrete goal of a boundary project can become an overriding force that focuses the energy of participants beyond the clashes in their perspectives and that creates compelling opportunities for cross-boundary learning.

Joint response. As above, but across a boundary. Coordinating a shared position in response to an event or a policy can be a bridging activity between different communities that forces participants to negotiate their perspectives in deep ways but doesn’t demand any additional commitment beyond producing the joint response.

Use Case:

Igniting a passion for coding

The Buenos Aires *Ignite* “Coding for Non-Coders” community helps people with no programming background, teaching them the Python programming language. A local team contacted the *Ignite* community for help on a particular task.

They needed to automate a business process, but they didn’t have the technology skillset required to do it themselves. “The team asking for help was regularly performing a manual and repetitive process that took several days to complete,” explained one member of the *Ignite* community. “That’s when we decided to assemble a team of mentors and mentees from the community.”

Under the supervision of two mentors and four mentees, everyone started working on the project. “This was a great chance for the mentees to investigate new solutions in Python, and to develop an application while learning new coding skills.”

By the end of the project, everyone involved obtained some kind of benefit:

- A team received a new application that reduced a time-consuming task to less than 10 minutes.
- Mentees learned how to develop a new application, further improving their skills.
- Mentors had the opportunity to lead a team of developers, collaborate with stakeholders, and improve their project management and leadership skills.