



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 – Guest Presentation

WHAT

Guest Presentation

This involves careful selection and on-boarding of a guest who will participate in some of the community's activities.

WHY

Sometimes a community can benefit from the contribution of a guest, such as an expert, a supplier, a member of a “neighbouring” community, or a researcher on a given topic. These guests connect the community to its broader field, bring new ideas, and infuse new energy and perspectives not available in the community. In addition to the traditional plenary session, some communities also arrange for the guest to work with subgroups or meet with individuals. Hosting guests can be a good development opportunity for more junior community members.

HOW

Experts are used to setting the agenda. Many have their ready-made presentation and are not used to—or even comfortable with—engaging with a group beyond some short question–answer session at the end. But the idea of a community of practice is that practitioners set the agenda. As a result, a guest expert may need a bit of coaching and facilitation to prepare them to be engaged interactively with the community in the driver seat. They should be encouraged

to bring stories from their own experience of practice. If an expert-led session is introduced, the core of the activity should not be the expert's presentation, but time for members to interact, ask questions, and draw the expert into their challenges. The outcome of the expert contribution should enable the community to do something from the perspective of their practice.

Guest presentations should not be a substitute for other community activities more focused on peer-to-peer interactions. A lecture series does not constitute a community of practice. We have seen organizations where communities were experiencing "low energy" in good part because their activities consisted almost exclusively of presentation events or webinars, like "brown bag" lunch speaker series (which are not bad things, but are simply not communities of practice).

Variations

Ramp-up and ramp-down. In this case, a guest event lasts about a week. It starts with a few days of online "ramp-up" discussion, then a videoconference or a meeting, and a few days of online "wind-down" discussion. The notes and a recording of the teleconference are published on the website for those who could not attend.

Expert at the end. In one community, experts were expected to join the full community meeting and talk at the end to discuss observations and suggestions that could help the community move forward. This means that experts cannot simply come with their usual spiel but have to use their perspective to shed some light on what they have observed through the lens of their outside expertise.

Use Case:

Ignite masterclass

External speakers are regularly invited by *Ignite* communities to facilitate what we term "masterclass" events.

Typically, masterclasses start with a talk with a broad audience which is "beamed" to rooms in multiple locations (or held virtually). But they also must feature a hands-on element, where along with a smaller group, the speaker delves deeper into the practice and shares new techniques for their day-to-day use and application back in their respective teams.

This format constitutes something of a blend of traditional training and social learning. It is something we always try to encourage as a way to make a larger impact when considering the cost of external speaker events (in terms of funding and time spent organizing).