

SEARCH
C A N A D A

Knowledge Unbound



Communities of Practice: Getting Off on the Right Foot!

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Objectives

- **CoP Characteristics**
- **CoP Facilitation**
- **Getting Started**
- **Supports**

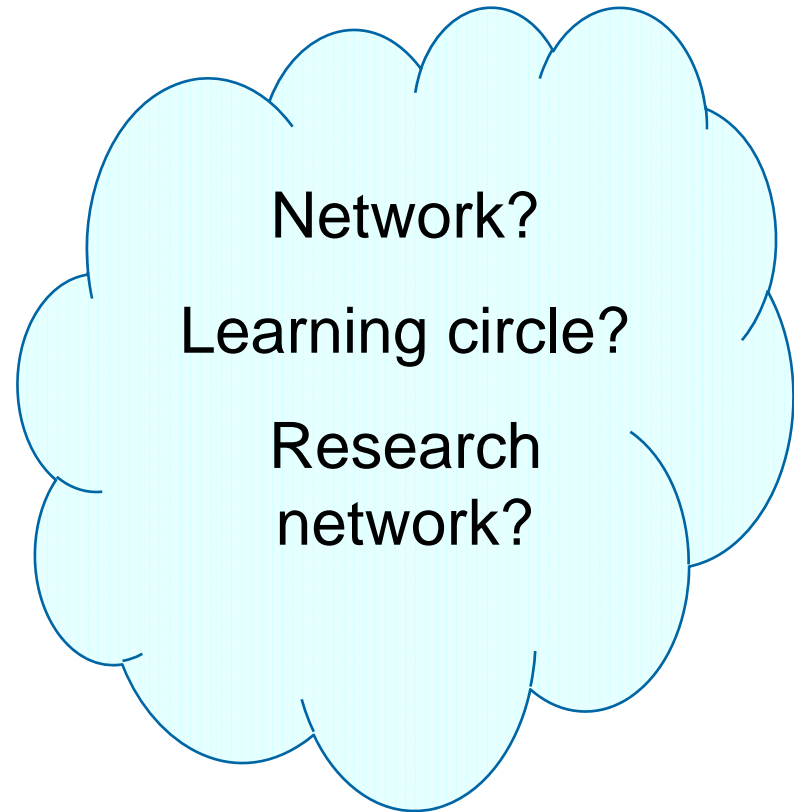
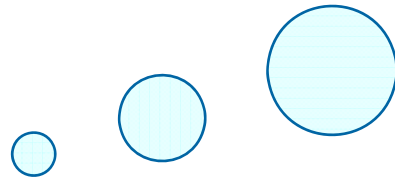


Definition

“Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly”

(Wenger)

Don't get too hung up on language!



Potential CoP Activities

Problem solving

Information seeking

Seeking experience

Reusing assets

Coordination and synergy

Discussing developments

Mapping knowledge and identifying gaps

Documentation projects

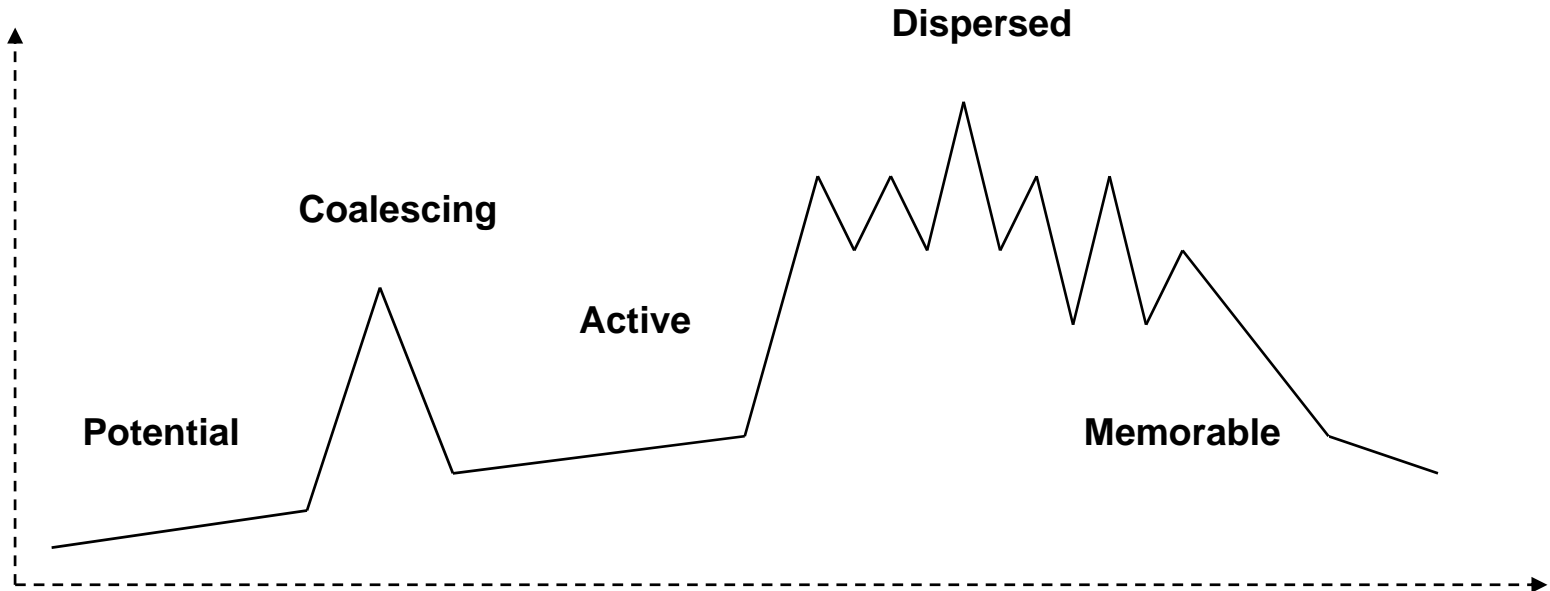
Source: http://www.ewenger.com/theory/communities_of_practice_intro_WRD.doc



**Is a CoP what you really need or
does it just sound good?**

CoP Lifecycle

Level of Energy and Visibility



Tensions

Discover/
Imagine

Incubate/Deliver
Immediate Value

Focus/
Expand

Ownership/
Openness

Let Go/
Live On

Three Characteristics

- **The *Domain***
- **The *Community***
- **The *Practice***

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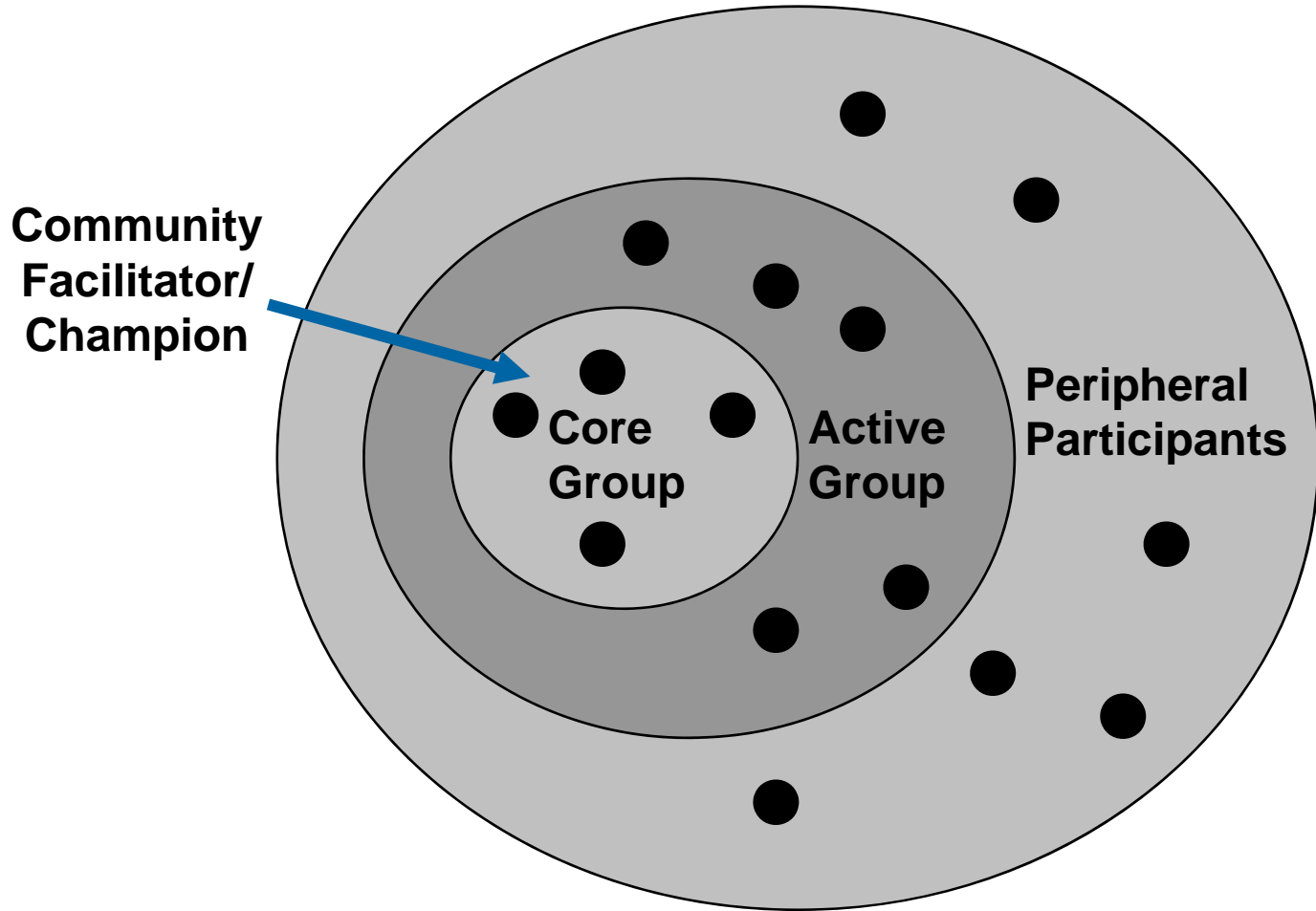
SEARCH's Interest in CoPs

- **See the potential of CoPs in the creation, accumulation, and diffusion of knowledge**

CoP Facilitation

- **Knowledge of the CoP domain & practice**
- **Interpersonal & communication skills**
- **Facilitation skills**
- **Builds and guides membership**
- **Brings in needed resources & supports**
- **Doesn't take over**
- **Facilitates conversations**
- **Effective at troubleshooting & revitalizing**

Source: Parboosingh, J. Tools for CoP Facilitators.



Getting Started

- **Not an “off-the-shelf” approach!**
- **Assess support**
- **Map knowledge needs**
- **Build community (existing or new)**
- **Build community**
- **Connect across boundaries**

Getting Started

- **Foster belonging**
- **Can't miss conversations (WIIFM)**
- **Modes of interaction**
- **CoP Charter**

How to Kill a CoP

- **“World peace” domain**
- **Become an information sharing network; “nice to have” not “need to have”**
- **Ignore WIIFM**
- **Overmanage**
- **Ignore importance of facilitation**
- **Homogeneity**
- **Lack of attention to domain, community or practice characteristics**

Supports

- **Look for organizational and other external supports**
- **Seed funding**
- **Communication supports**
- **Limited customized guidance/ advice**
- **Facilitator network**

More Information

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Questions & Discussion