Business Evolution

This Free Masterclass Helps You Drive Innovation-Led Growth In Your Business

Communities of Practice

Overview: **Communities of Practice (CoP)**

What does the masterclass cover?

→ Building Successful Communities
→ What is a Community of Practice?
→ The Value of COPs for Organizations
→ Types of COPs

→ Designing COPs
→ COPs and Other Teams
→ Behavior and Culture Change
→ Knowledge Capture

→ Metrics and Management for COPs
→ Learning from External Online Communities
→ Calculating ROI from COPs

How does this help you?	Collaboration and knowledge sharing are foundational innovation accelerators. In this masterclass, learn to harness Communities of Practice (CoP), amplifying your organization's shared expertise and driving collective innovation.
How does this accelerate your growth?	CoPs serve as reservoirs of collective wisdom and expertise. Engaging with them unlocks diverse insights, fuels innovative thinking, and sharpens your adaptability, positioning you at the forefront of change.
How does this delight your customers?	An organization that harnesses the power of CoPs is better equipped to identify customer needs, trends, and pain points. This collective know-how results in tailored, innovative solutions, consistently delighting your customers.
How does this empower your team?	CoPs foster a culture of continuous learning and collaboration. They empower team members by providing them platforms to share knowledge, learn from peers, and grow in their roles. This enhances team morale, motivation, and professional development.
Where is this Masterclass available?	**The free masterclass and playbook are available at:** **https://howdo.com/masterclass/team/communities-of-practice/**

HowDo®

Business Evolution

MASTERCLASSES

Overview

What Is Innovation?

Innovation is the process of introducing new solutions to your business.

Solutions can be products, platforms, processes, services, technologies, experiences, and brands.

How Does Innovation Help You?

Innovation helps business leaders:

- **Grow revenue** by identifying untapped markets and creating new solutions. *E.G.: **Amazon** created the cloud computing category by launching AWS.*

- **Decrease operating costs** through automation, continuous improvement, supply chain optimization, and efficient resource use. *E.G.: **Toyota** reduced waste and costs with lean manufacturing and just-in-time inventory.*

- **Delight customers** by improving customer service, anticipating needs, and personalizing experiences. *E.G.: **Netflix** keeps users engaged with AI-based content recommendations, increasing engagement and reducing churn.*

- **Mitigate risks** by proactively identifying and addressing potential threats. *E.G.: **Siemens** uses AI-powered sensors to predict maintenance and prevent failure.*

- **Empower teams** to increase productivity by automating tasks while accelerating creativity. *E.G.: **Google's** innovation policy led to the creation of two of their most popular products: Gmail and AdSense.*

- **Attract investors.** Investors prefer innovators. *E.G.: The most innovative companies are consistently the most valuable companies: **Alphabet (Google)**, **Amazon**, **Apple**, **Meta (Facebook)**, and **Microsoft**.*

Business Evolution Gives You a **Comprehensive Curriculum**

These **Free** Masterclasses Walk You Step-By-Step Through the Innovator's Journey

01 Mindset

Develop the mindsets that drive business innovation and growth.

- Growth Mindset
- Resilience
- Continuous Learning
- Data-Driven Decisions
- Customer Obsession

02 Plan

Grow your business by designing solutions that customers need.

- Customer Analysis
- Competition Analysis
- Market Analysis
- Solution Analysis

03 Tools

Boost growth using proven tools from top companies.

- Key Performance Indicators
- Weekly Business Reviews
- Product Management
- Startup Accelerator
- Business Incubator
- Mergers and Acquisitions
- Research and Development

04 Team

Build talented teams that act with urgency to drive growth.

- Talent Acquisition
- Corporate Culture
- Team Experience
- Mentorship
- Communities of Practice

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Business Evolution was **Created by an Innovation Expert**

West Stringfellow created Business Evolution.

West has over 27 years of experience growing startups and Fortune 500s with innovation:

- **Innovation Leader**
  - **Amazon:** Senior Product Manager
  - **PayPal:** Senior Director, Product & Platform Innovation
  - **Rosetta Stone:** Chief Product Officer
  - **Target:** Vice President, Innovation and Entrepreneur in Residence
  - **Techstars:** Created & led the Techstars + Target Startup Accelerator
  - **Visa:** Vice President, European eCommerce & Innovation
- **Inventor:** Awarded five patents for advertising, payments, and social technologies
- **Entrepreneur:** Sold two patents to a Fortune 50 company
- **Coach:** Empowered hundreds of entrepreneurs, executives, and teams

West founded HowDo in 2017 to democratize innovation.

Dear Innovator,

To help you grow your business using innovation, I'm excited to offer you HowDo's **free** Business Evolution Masterclasses.

These Masterclasses contain actionable insights that you and your team can use to grow your business today. They distill the growth formulas used by the world's most innovative companies into step-by-step guides designed to transform your business ideas into profitable realities.

Having spent nearly three decades navigating the highs and lows of innovating in Fortune 500s and bootstrapped startups, I designed these Masterclasses to work for your business, regardless of size or budget.

I am sharing these Masterclasses as part of my ongoing commitment to democratize innovation.

Wishing you the very best,

West Stringfellow

Founder & CEO, HowDo
Creator, Business Evolution

Community of Practice

Masterclass

Content

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

What is a Community of Practice?

→ Also called learning networks, or thematic groups, a community of practice (COP) is a tool used by companies to store institutional knowledge

What is the goal of a COP?

→ Build, disseminate, protect, and retain corporate knowledge

→ Promote learning among members

→ Stimulate creativity

Why is a COP important?

→ With shortening tenure at companies among Gen-X and Gen-Y workers, organizations need structure to capture individual and institutional knowledge so that it is not lost

BUILDING SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

"Most of our intelligence doesn't reside in our brain, it is externalized as our civilization, our culture. A standalone human is just an app"

— Francois Chollet, AI and deep learning researcher, Google, Quote via Twitter.

To build a successful COP:

01 Define the COP and how organizations can structure a conducive community environment

02 Develop the community

03 Stimulate the cultural change that is part of continuing the COP process

Source: Chollet

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE?

A group qualifies as a Community of Practice (COP) based on three components:

Domain

→ The common interest that distinguishes and unites the voluntary members of the group

Community

→ Sharing of information and interaction amongst the members of the community

Practice

→ Performing the tasks related to and improved by the discussions within the community

COPs develop organically in the right environment. The difficulty is in creating that environment.

THE VALUE OF COPS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

→ The advantage of a COP is that learning and the resulting advancements occur organically.

→ This can only happen after the basic components of the community are established.

→ COPs allow all skill levels to learn simultaneously, including newcomers

Example COP - Hill's Pet Nutrition:

→ Line technicians formed a group to develop & retain technical expertise

→ This group meets weekly

→ Open discussion on success, frustrations, and challenges

→ Appointed a "mayor" to keep meetings on track and facilitate activities as needed

→ Through weekly discourse, generated a proposal to install new technology that resulted in less downtime and waste

Source: Wenger & Snyder, IRMA

TYPES OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Self Organized

→ Exists within an organization
→ Resistant to efforts to be managed or controlled
→ Membership is fluid as focus changes over time and the community adapts

Sponsored

→ Initiated and supported by management
→ Expected to produce measurable results that benefit the company
→ Have greater autonomy
→ Receive resources like a cross-functional team

Thematic Group

→ Have leaders and facilitators and a critical mass of active members
→ Receive management support and resources
→ Focus on problem-solving and knowledge transfer

COP as part of an agile software development process
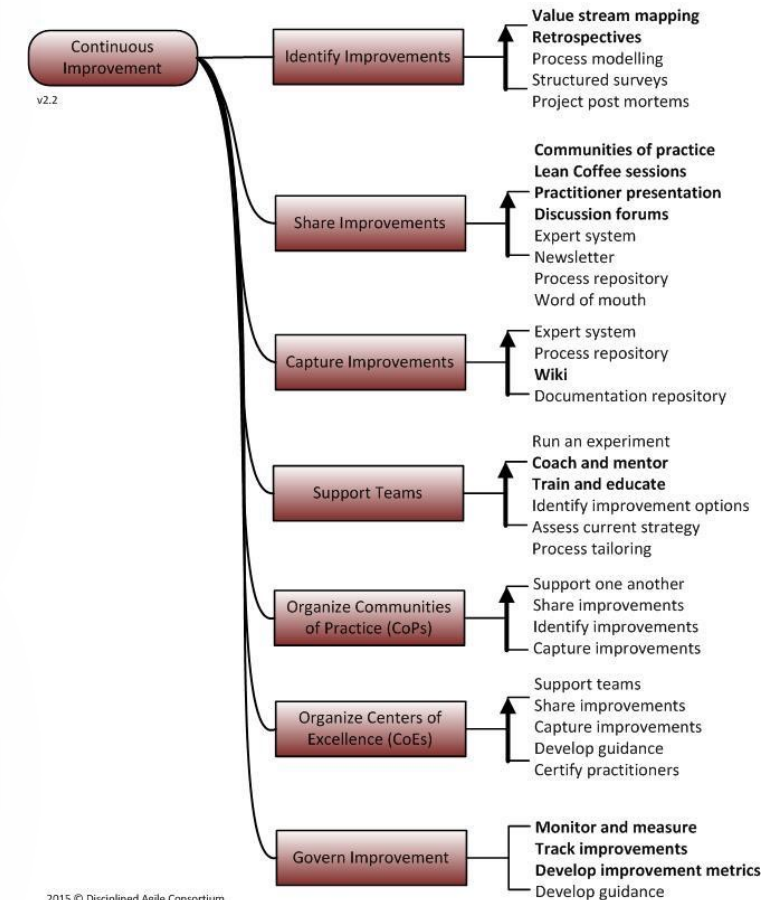
Source: Nickol, World Bank Group, Digital Agile Consortium

Three core parameters define a COP:

1. A Call to Action

→ Craft a compelling message so members connect on their own terms

→ The call itself should stimulate collaboration or learning

→ It should be straightforward and communicated through popular channels

→ It should be directed to the early adaptors and influencers in the community

2. Frictionless Collaboration

→ Friction impedes collaboration and occurs through communication tools, proximity, and organizational structure

→ There are tools available to remove this friction and cultivate community

3. Feedback Loop

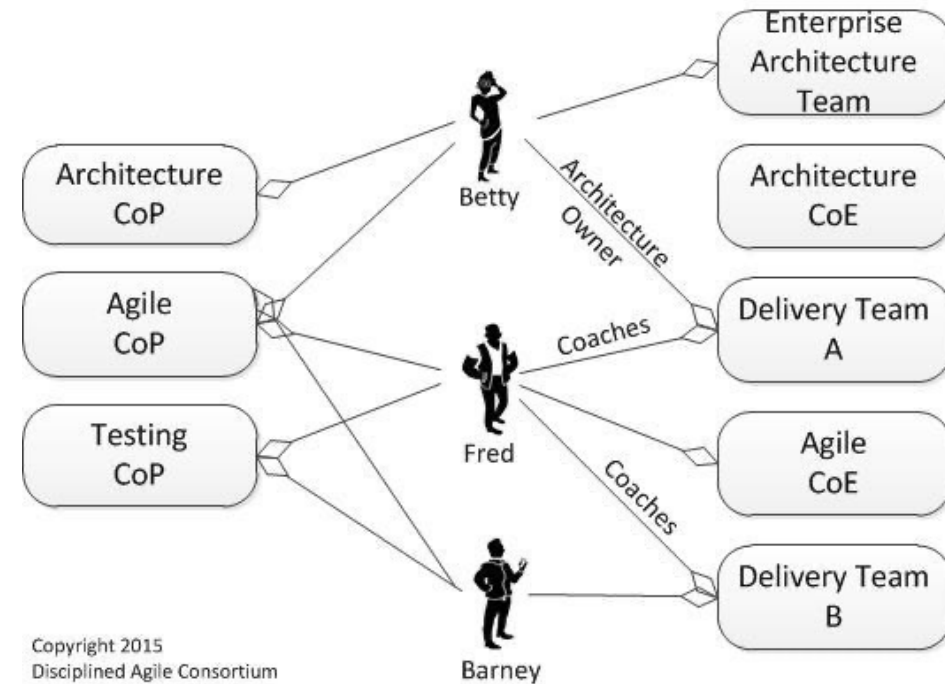→ Nir Eyal's hook model uses triggers to keep the audience involved in the community:

The Hook

COPS AND OTHER TEAMS

A formal COP may be initiated by an existing Center of Excellence (COE). While COEs are typically set up to support a short term organizational goal, COPs often last longer and may replace COEs

Roles sometimes overlap in communities

Architecture CoP

Agile CoP

Testing CoP

Betty — Architecture Owner

Enterprise Architecture Team

Architecture CoE

Fred — Coaches

Delivery Team A

Agile CoE

Barney — Coaches

Delivery Team B

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BEHAVIOR AND CULTURE CHANGE

"In the initial stages of building a community, the ability to change behavior is the primary success metric. If you can orchestrate behavior change, you can fundamentally shift the economics of a process. Typically, this behavior change is also seen as valuable to community members, and that generates a pull effect that grows the community and normalizes the new behavior." -Rachel Happe

The Five Key Stages of Culture Change

|	
Potential	Early on there is no established sharing practice
Coalescing	Community members begin to interact and focus on common goals
Maturing	The COP sets standards, solidifies relationships and outlines its agenda
Active	Shared practices develop and are integrated into group practice
Dispersed	The COP begins dispersing and is no longer active, and functions as a knowledge repository

→ Behavior and cultural change is a slow, iterative process that decision makers need to make a long-term commitment on

→ Moderation for communities is needed, and must be focused and relevant, allowing contributions by members

Source: IRMA

KNOWLEDGE CAPTURE

Feedback loops, like the one below, can transform culture by creating an environment
in which people support and challenge each other, building relationships along the way
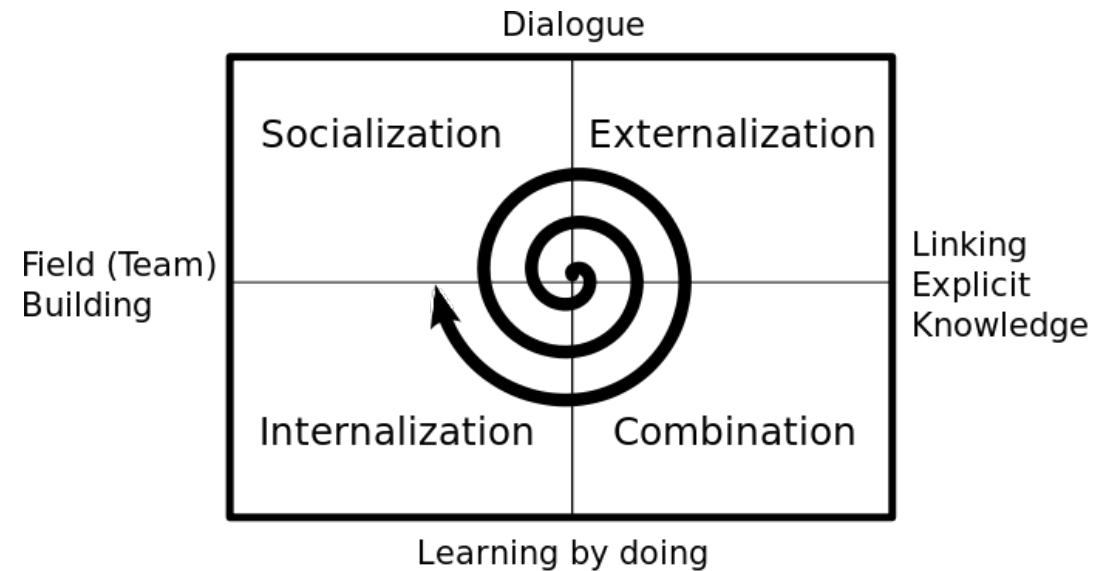
METRICS AND MANAGEMENT FOR COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

As with any other difficult to quantify strategy, finding concrete positive results is essential.
Measuring success in participation, learning and value are vital.

Participation

→ Establish baselines and set growth targets for membership and participation

→ Track member penetration

→ Monitor interactions and documents added/shared

→ Calculate replies-to-discussion ratio

→ Build metrics to determine if communications are meeting community needs

→ Active participation rate can show if the org is meeting community needs

Learning

→ Connect activities to objectives to identify the impact of the community

→ Proxy measures, such as time or money saved, can be used to measure learning

Value

→ Effects of COPs on operations and productivity are hard to quantify

→ Value can be assessed through the members themselves, by analyzing the stories they share about the community

Source: HBR, DRC, Wenger

LEARNING FROM EXTERNAL ONLINE COMMUNITIES

GrowthHackers emphasizes the importance of understanding the behaviors of its audience, encouraging casual members to actively contribute. This is measured through the engagement pyramid:
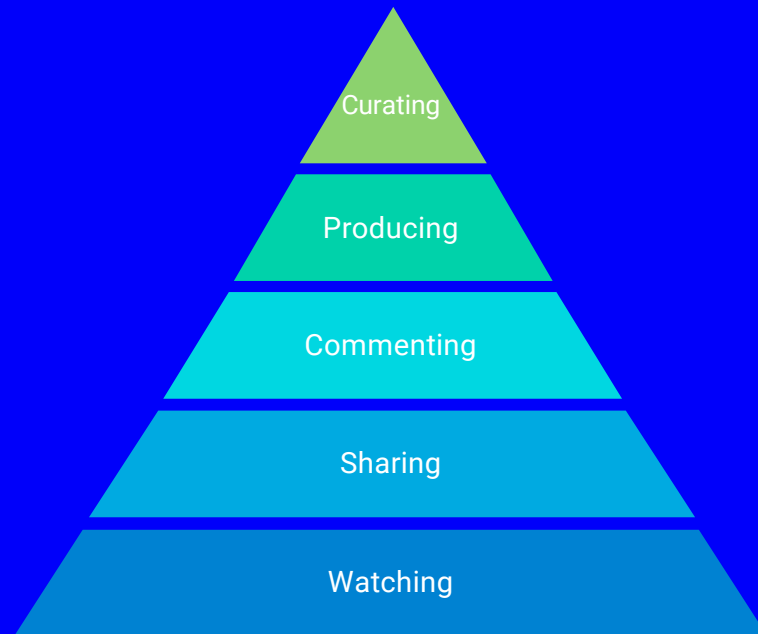
The Engagement Pyramid

Stack Exchange rewards experts within domains by tracking activity and awarding reputation points. The Stack Overflow site is intended to facilitate the open exchange of information:
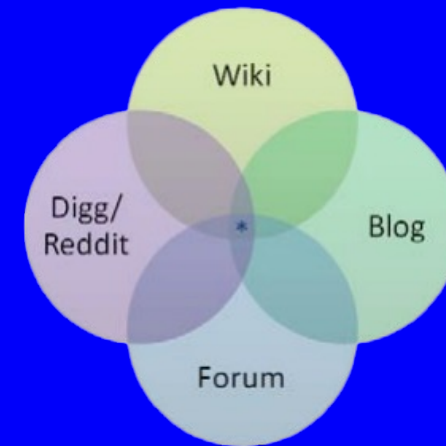
Stack Overflow's Position

The Stack Exchange network has a six step review process for new sites in order to ensure quality as new communities emerge

Source: Social Media Modellen, GrowthHackers, Stack Overflow

CALCULATING ROI FROM COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Deriving concrete value from communities requires clearly communicated metrics that are tailored for each organization.
A top down approach beginning with business goals allows the community to be compared against business activities.

ROI of Online Communities

FeverBee has created an in-depth resource covering the entire ROI calculation process including the best data sources to look into and the common pitfalls leading to over or undervaluing a community.

The Power of Networks

Using external communities can result in increased site traffic, leads, and revenue-per-customer. (Refer to resources by Higher Logic)

Support Programs

Community provided answers can troubleshoot problems for customers, eliminating wasted time and strengthen networks (Refer to resources by The Community Roundtable)

Measuring ROI of Online Communities

Created as a companion to the Oracle RightNow product, this resource has insights on specific community use cases including service and support, insights and innovation, loyalty, awareness, and commerce. Use the resource to learn about hundreds of metrics to look into alongside powerful equations for communicating ROI.

Source: FeverBee, Higher Logic, Community Roundtable, Oracle

Congratulations on Completing the Masterclass!

Your path to innovation doesn't stop here — it's just getting started.

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West's Closing Note to Innovators

For those driven by a passion to make an impact, solve large problems, and reap significant rewards, successfully innovating stands as one of the most exhilarating and fulfilling pursuits. That said, **just a friendly reminder:**

Knowledge is Power. To empower you, I am sharing the knowledge I have gained from 27+ years of hands-on experience. Please do not stop learning here.

→ **Empower yourself with the right knowledge.** Do not rely solely on my experience and knowledge. To determine what is right for you, your team, your business, investors, and customers, do your own research. To help, I have curated thousands of links in Business Evolution's Masterclasses. Use this as the foundation for your further research.

→ **Seek multiple experienced perspectives.** Follow relevant experts who share their insights on YouTube, LinkedIn, X, StackOverflow, Reddit, GitHub, or wherever they share their insights. The more you know, the more likely you are to make the right decision.

→ **Stuck? Get help.** Others have solved your problem before. They may have even written about it. You may be able to hire them. Or use a generative AI to brainstorm (I'll show you how). In my experience, the joy of the journey is finding answers, learning and growing.

Innovation takes commitment and requires real time, money, and effort.

<div style="border: 2px solid red; color: red;">**INNOVATION IS HIGH RISK**</div>

→ **Innovation involves real risks.** If you fail, you risk your professional reputation, your credibility, your mental health, and your personal wealth.

→ **Everyone fails at some point on their journey.** But remember, every great success story 🎉 has its chapters of challenges overcome.

→ **To reduce the risk of failure, hire experts and use data-driven decision making, customer-obsession, long-term planning, and continuous improvement.**

→ **When you fail, learn quickly from the lessons, ensure you don't repeat the mistakes, and forge ahead only if you assess it is safe to do so.**

Time is our only non-renewable resource. Use yours wisely.

→ **Please take time for yourself – especially your health and loved ones**. It's easy to get lost in innovation's allure and lose track of what truly matters.

"Best Wishes Innovating! I hope the Business Evolution Masterclasses help you on your journey." – West Stringfellow

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