



# Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge

By Etienne Wenger, Richard A. McDermott, William Snyder

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Today's economy is fueled by knowledge. Every leader knows this to be true, yet few have systematic methods for converting organizational knowledge into economic value. This book argues that communities of practice--groups of individuals formed around common interests and expertise--provide the ideal vehicle for driving knowledge-management strategies and building lasting competitive advantage. Written by leading experts in the field, *Cultivating Communities of Practice* is the first book to outline models and methods for systematically developing these essential groups. Through compelling research and company examples, including DaimlerChrysler, McKinsey & Company, Shell, and the World Bank, authors Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William M. Snyder show how world-class organizations have leveraged communities of practice to drive strategy, generate new business opportunities, solve problems, transfer best practices, develop employees' professional skills, and recruit and retain top talent. Underscoring the new central role communities of practice are playing in today's knowledge economy, *Cultivating Communities of Practice* is the definitive guide to fostering, designing, and developing these powerful groups within and across organizations.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

From the time our ancestors lived in caves to that day in the late '80s when Chrysler sanctioned unofficial "tech clubs" to promote the flow of information between teams working on different vehicle platforms, bands of like-minded individuals had been gathering in a wide variety of settings to recount their experiences and share their expertise. Few paid much attention until a number of possible benefits to business were identified, but many are watching more closely now that definitive links have been established. In *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, consultants Etienne C. Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William Snyder take the concept to another level by describing how these groups might be purposely developed as a key driver of organizational performance in the knowledge age. Building on a 1998 book by Wenger that framed the theory for an academic audience, *Cultivating Communities of Practice* targets practitioners with pragmatic advice based on the accumulating track records of firms such as the World Bank, Shell Oil, and McKinsey & Company. Starting with a detailed explanation of what these groups really are and why they can prove so useful in managing knowledge within an organization, the authors discuss development from initial design through subsequent evolution. They also address the potential "dark side"--arrogance, cliquishness, rigidity, and fragmentation among participants, for example--as well as measurement issues and the challenges inherent in initiating these groups company-wide. --Howard Rothman

#### From Publishers Weekly

Among the myriad challenges managers in large corporations face today, one is becoming increasingly important: how to make the best use of the knowledge that a company's employees possess. The authors consultants all lift models from Xerox, DaimlerChrysler and the World Bank to show how to tap into the wisdom within, making this book helpful, in theory. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder spend much time explaining ways to organize, maintain and sustain communities of practice, which they define as groups that "share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and... deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis." Laying out a logical, step-by-step process for building one of these communities, the authors define specific roles for each member of the group. But senior managers looking, as the subtitle suggests, for "a guide to managing knowledge" may be disappointed in the scant space actually devoted to developing a system that captures and manages the learning that comes out of a "community of practice." Managers seeking the best way to obtain and use the knowledge coming out of these groups probably won't find it here. (Mar. 6)Forecast: Wenger is the biggest name in the theory of communities of practice, and those familiar with his work will want to add this book to their collection. Neophytes would do better with his 1998 primer, *Communities of Practice*.

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#### Review

Remarkably thorough, very readable and truly useful. This one's a winner. -- *Training Magazine*, July 2002

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#### Martha Wilson:

As people who live in the actual modest era should be update about what going on or facts even knowledge

to make these people keep up with the era which is always change and move forward. Some of you maybe can update themselves by reading books. It is a good choice to suit your needs but the problems coming to a person is you don't know what type you should start with. This *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge* is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and want in this era.

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**Mary Bradford:**

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