

BUSINESS PERFORMANCE COMMUNITIES

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IMAGINE ...

- A tightly knit group of champions meets every Monday morning to update each other and surface issues as they **role out a complex, global change initiative**. Together they identify common problems, **develop solutions they will coordinate across the organization**, and provide each other with **personal and professional support** as they prepare for the week ahead.
- “Core communication constituencies” meet with the CEO and Senior Management Team at biweekly coffees. In a relaxed atmosphere they share tasty desserts and brainstorm how **strategic objectives can gain better traction internally**. When they go back to their offices they talk about their visit “upstairs,” batting around ideas with the president. The follow up conversations with colleagues bring important insights that feed the next coffee with the CEO and **spread news organically throughout the organization**.
- In the cafeteria on the 3rd Wednesday every month technical experts have lunch together and troubleshoot problems that are cropping up in the cracks between their silos. Together they identify issues and generate grass roots solutions, sidestepping bureaucracy and **keeping their projects on the fast track**.

Each of these is an example of a Business Performance Community. **Business Performance Communities are groups of people who assemble voluntarily to work together toward goals that benefit organizational performance.** They increase performance capacity and business acceleration. Because membership is voluntary, a new dynamic takes place inside these groups: *contribution*. This new way of working together gives birth to *collective intelligence* which drives *business acceleration*.

Business Performance Communities are:

- **Voluntary** – members may come and go of their own accord
- **Autonomous** – the community has its own sensitivities and evaluation process and will not be constrained by organizational bureaucracy
- **Care driven & contribution oriented** – common concern is the primary driver. This stands in contrast to a traditional competitive environment in which individual achievement is the primary driver.
- **Ecological** rather than hierarchical – subgroups are in constant flux, coalescing and dissipating based on interest and available resources.
- **Free to cross organizational boundaries** – members at the top and bottom of the organization may have equal status in the community, and communities can cross organizational silos.

The emergence of **Business Performance Communities** can be traced to progress in areas that include the study of tacit and social knowledgeⁱ, the large scale practice and acceptance of Communities of Practiceⁱⁱ, the wide recognition of the value of emotional intelligenceⁱⁱⁱ and pride as a chief motivator for increasing personal and organizational performance^{iv}.

Healthy **Business Performance Communities** identify and develop three critical forces:

Business Drivers – these are the benefits the sponsoring organization will receive from community activities.

Community Concerns – these are the common causes that unite the membership, causing the community to form.

Participant Benefits – these are the value propositions for membership.

Examples:

| <u>Business Drivers</u> | <u>Community Concerns</u> | <u>Participant Benefits</u> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ improved operational performance ➔ better internal communications ➔ increased skill for staff members ➔ development of core competencies ➔ increasing fungibility of staff members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ social & political goals; e.g., <i>Save the Whales</i> ➔ development of a body of knowledge; e.g., <i>Project Management Community of Practice</i> ➔ professional association; e.g., <i>Association Executives Council</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ skill building ➔ networking for employment opportunity ➔ proximity to power ➔ affiliation & loyalty ➔ enhancing reputation ➔ access to peers for problem-solving ➔ belonging to a larger effort ➔ building alliances |

ⁱ Ikujiro Nonaka, Toshihiro Nishiguchi, editors; *Knowledge Emergence: Social, Technical and Evolutionary Dimensions of Knowledge Creation*; Oxford University Press; 2001. See especially Chapter 3 by Georg Von Krogh, Kazuo Ichijo and Ikujiro Nonaka entitled, *Bringing care into knowledge development of business organizations*.

ⁱⁱ Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William M. Snyder; *Cultivating Communities of Practice*; Harvard Business School Press; 2002

ⁱⁱⁱ Daniel Goleman, Annie McKee, Richard E. Boyatzis, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, Harvard Business School Press; 2002

^{iv} Jon R. Katzenbach, *Why Pride Matters More than Money: The Power of the World's Greatest Emotional Force*, Crown Business, 2003.