

(How) Can you set up a 'Community of Practice'?

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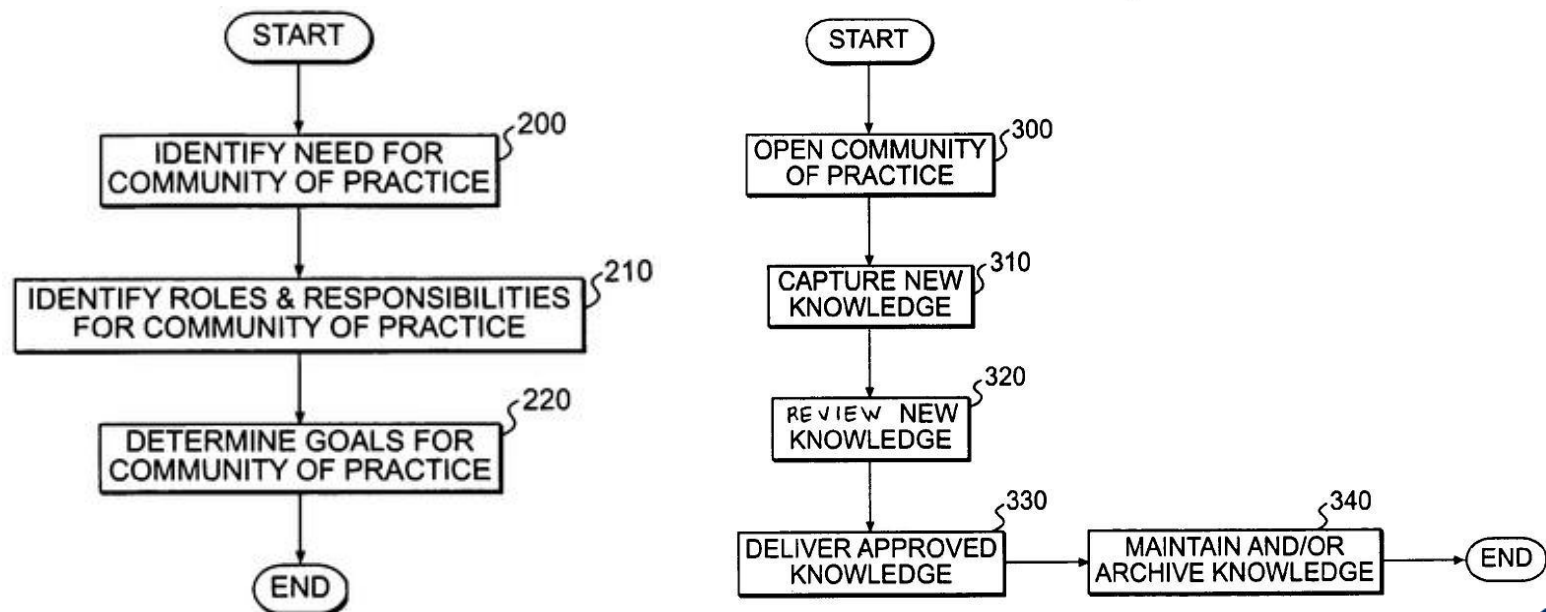
MPA, Inst. of Civil Engineers

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- More than teams, they are groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise. Not necessarily co-located, often spontaneous.
- Knowledge can be embedded and shared by the practices of the community. Generally informal, and very hard to ‘manage’.

Communities of Practicepatented!

- United States Patent 7127440 “Knowledge management system and method”
- *“A method and system for gathering, managing, and sharing knowledge in a community of practice.”*



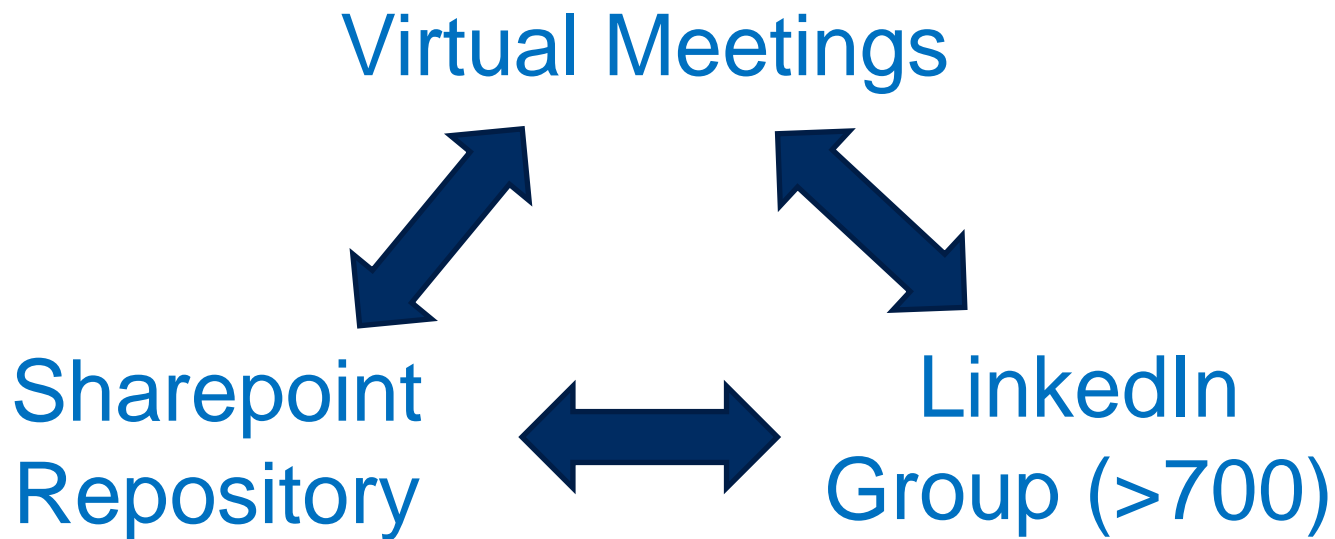
- Question: can senior management deliberately set up a CoP?
- Business problem: lots of Project Management Offices (PMOs) in HP, but no way of identifying or connecting them. Minimal sharing.
- Aim: to connect and share.
 - Issues: who, where, what, why, how and when?

• *Lee-Kelley, Turner & Ward (2014)*

- Initial interviews with senior mgt. and important accounts.
- Workshop for PMO staff and researchers.
- Fact-finding questionnaire.
 - Information-gathering + areas of interest.
- Then set about creating a virtual community.

- Monthly virtual meetings (audio + slides) on a topic of interest.
- Chaired by a ‘convener’ (Programme Mgr.) supported by a ‘core group’ of PMO Mgrs.
 - Made joining and engaging ‘hassle-free’; spread by word-of-mouth.
- ‘Mission Statement’ and ‘Terms of Reference’ made purpose and methods clear.

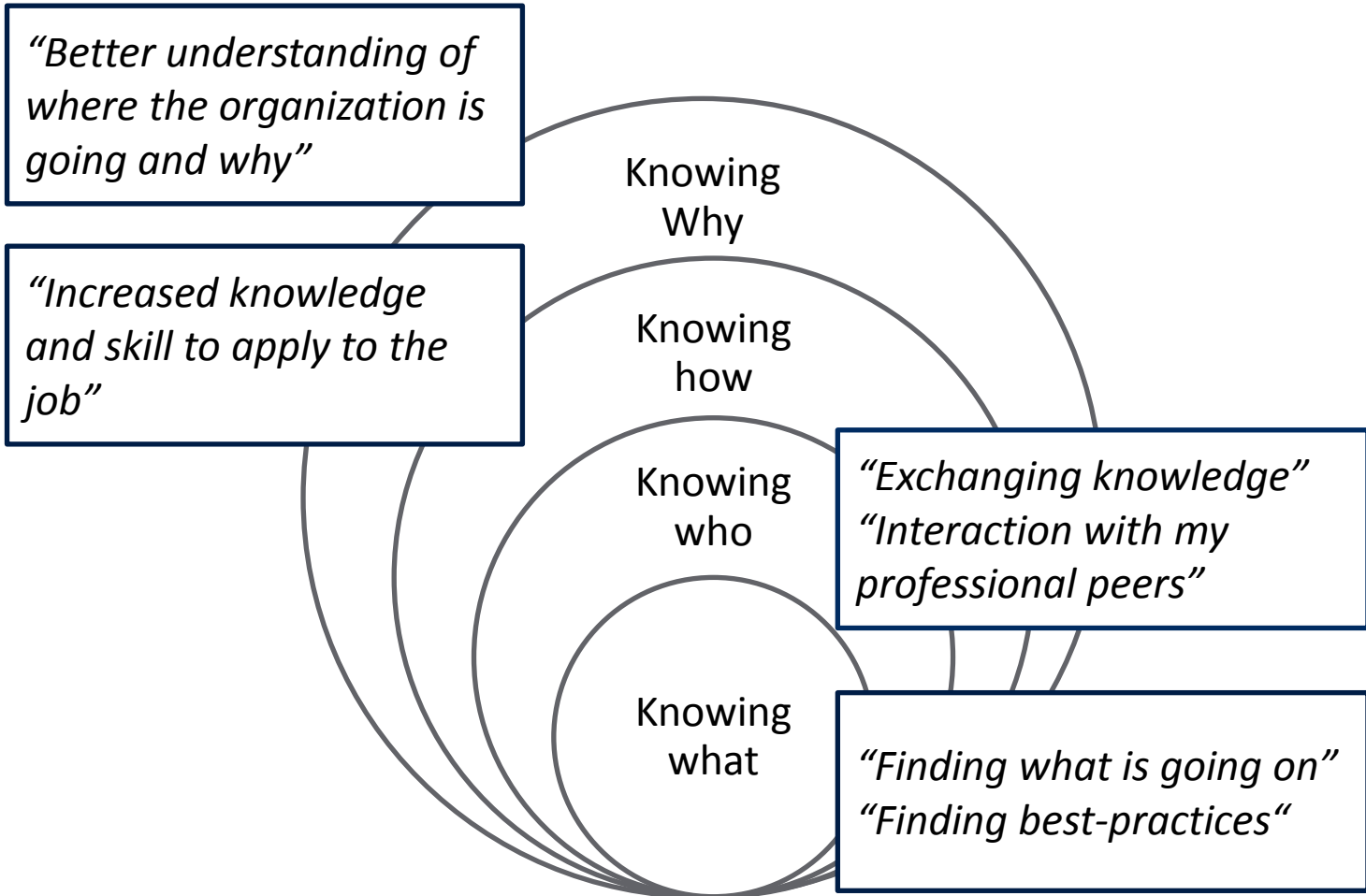
- Membership ~150 just after the start to >300 by the end. Average ~50 per meeting.



- A new 'Service Catalogue' of PMO offerings.
- Formation of a "Lessons Learned" SIG.
- Sharing of time and resource estimation tools throughout the community.
- Introduction of a PMO 'quick-start' methodology.
- Internal marketing of tools and groups whose existence had not been well publicised.

- Sharing – not ‘knowledge is power’
- Access to new knowledge
- Sense of professional identity and social networking.
- ‘Push’ moving to ‘pull’.
- Motivation to share based on professional recognition and reputation.

Knowledge Shifting over Time



- Initiation:
- **Scoping and Planning the CoP Initiative,**
 - Needs senior management support
 - **Select a convener and core group**
 - Give them sufficient time
 - **Develop clear structure, aims and rules**
 - Market the group, emphasising benefits
 - **'Connection' can be a goal.**

- Implementation and Growth:
 - Consult on topics of interest
 - Identify valuable outputs
 - Consider different meeting times to accommodate multiple time zones.
 - Use available technology
 - Seek feedback

- Maintenance:
- **Ensure evolution and continued relevance**
 - Encourage line manager support
 - **Keep topics fresh and relevant**
 - Use new technologies
 - **Visible senior management sponsorship**
 - Encourage SIGs