



Establishing Communities of Practice

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Introduction

This paper covers IAIDQ's procedure for establishing Communities of Practice.

Abstract

The paper introduces the term "Community of Practice (CoP, pronounced as See-O-Pea) and explains why this term has been adopted in preference to the terms "Special Interest Group" (SIG) and "Chapter".

It suggests the broad domains into which such communities would fall—the Topic-based Domain (c.f. SIG), the Geographical Domain (c.f. Chapter) and the Enterprise Domain (c.f. Industry SIG).

It outlines the initial organisational model for CoPs and the BoD approval process. It then invites discussion to refine that model.

It then lists the topics already suggested for such communities and invites members to express interest in joining one of more CoPs.

Lastly, it announces the formation of the IQ Body of Knowledge CoP and invites members to submit contributions of URL's referencing material that conforms to the IAIDQ's Code of Ethics and relates to the field of Information Quality.

Definition

A Community of Practice is a group of IAIDQ members working to identify, define and develop best practice and to build up the visibility and status of the Information Quality profession. A CoP:

- may be local, and therefore analogous to a chapter;
- may cover a specific technical or non-technical data /information quality domain or topic (data quality measurement, cost of poor data quality, information stewardship, etc), and therefore be analogous to a Special Interest Group (SIG);
- may cover a particular enterprise or "vertical segment" (e.g. Healthcare or Government), this would be a second sort of SIG.

Comments

A CoP must be approved and endorsed by the Board of Directors of the IAIDQ before it can operate as an IAIDQ CoP. At this stage the structure and modus operandi will be relatively informal but later as their scope and responsibilities increase it may be necessary to increase the level of formality. For example if a local CoP, say in the UK, takes on the responsibility for planning and running conferences this will bring with it a significant financial risk. It would therefore be sensible to form a limited company in order to protect the officers from personal loss in the event of a financial failure of a conference.

The intention is that CoPs will be focussed on ends not means. We expect to be able to keep up a steady stream of deliverable via the website, the trade press(es) and peer-reviewed journals.

Strategic Drivers

Our key objectives are to:

- ✓ Deliver value to Members & Community
- ✓ Be truly international and inclusive
- ✓ Create effective organisation

We realised that the Board's work had concentrated on setting up the Association and there had not yet been the transition to a fully operable organisation. We therefore decided, amongst much else, to drive forward the formation of active CoPs to address these three issues.

Rationale

Deliver Value to Members & Community

Communities of Practice are intended to become a key service of the association and a major part of the Member Value Proposition. They will promote growth and activity by giving members the opportunity to network with like-minded people, to make their contributions to the body of knowledge about Information Quality and to gain knowledge from the experience of others.

The participation of members, perhaps also co-operating with people from other areas, is the only way that the Association can deliver the products and services it needs to establish itself as the premier authority in the field of Information Quality and the establishment of a fully certified professional membership.

CoPs also become a forum for the promotion of the Association and the recruitment of new members. Only IAIDQ members will be able to participate in CoPs.

CoPs will be accountable to members and IAIDQ Board.

Why no Chapters?

We need to explain why the emphasis has shifted away from more formal Chapters. There are a number of reasons for this:

Firstly, the Board saw them as being too formal at this stage. The Board realised that in the same way as much of its initial effort has been spent in establishing governance control and management structures then setting up formal chapters would require a similar amount of effort.

Secondly, the concept is not international. The concept of chapter is familiar to North American members but in Europe and Australasia the term is unfamiliar.

Currency of Term

Why did we choose the name "Community of Practice"? Firstly, it is a name that sums up the aims of the Association very neatly. It is also a term that is rapidly gaining currency in many different fields of practice. For example, we found this definition in a Canadian Website (<http://www.tcm.com/trdev/cops.htm>)

At the simplest level, they are a small group of people who have worked together over a period of time. Not a team, not a task force, probably not even an authorized or identified group. People in CoPs can perform the same job (tech reps) or collaborate on a shared task (software developers) or work together on a product (engineers, marketers, and manufacturing specialists). They are peers in the execution of "real work." What holds them together is a

*common sense of purpose and a real need to know what each other knows.
There are many communities of practice within a single company, and most people belong to more than one of them.*

Activities

A Community of Practice will be focussed on activities of a professional or social nature.

The first function of a geographical CoP will be to bring like-minded people together to enhance their understanding of IQ methods and issues by talking together informally and by organising more formal seminars and so on. At the simplest level a CoP meeting could be IQ professionals meeting in a bar or restaurant. The CoP will offer a support network for IQ professionals working in the same milieu. It is anticipated that as membership grows a regional CoP, e.g. the UK CoP, may create affiliated CoPs covering a smaller area, perhaps covering a major city and its hinterland, for example, London or Manchester. Conversely, as geographic spread increases, it may be deemed convenient to affiliate CoPs together; for example, forming an EU CoP from CoPs covering member states.

A CoP for developing a specific technical or non-technical topic—for example, the IQ Body of Knowledge—will necessarily be geographically dispersed. The members will therefore mostly interact via electronic means, probably a combination of telephony or VoIP, email and discussion groups via the website. The activities will be of an intellectual nature. Examples would include the gathering and collating of references to web-based information relevant to the domain under development, the joint authoring and peer review of White Papers, diagnostic techniques and so on.

An Enterprise Domain CoP works in much the same manner but will focus on specific issues affecting a particular industry segment. This type of CoP is also more likely to work with governmental bodies, standards bodies and the like in order to influence the regulatory environment in which enterprises of the chosen type work.

As CoPs become more mature we envisage that they will become responsible for organizing public events like conferences and seminar programmes. At this point, it may become necessary to incorporate the CoP in a more formal way, in order that the officers are shielded from personal financial risk.

The activities of these CoPs will be managed as part of the IAIDQ's Operational Plan and therefore the officers will report to the BoD.

Co-operating With Other Bodies

IAIDQ Communities of Practice may, for any of a number of good and wholesome reasons, choose to engage in collaborations or partnerships with other established Professional bodies either at a supra-national level (topic based or enterprise segment CoPs) or within defined geographic communities.

This is permitted only where the other party organisation shares the same broad objectives as the IAIDQ and where such a relationship can deliver a tangible benefit to the IAIDQ in terms of supports and a clear opportunity to increase the membership base or benefits to members within a particular class of CoP. As such, the scope of such relationships is not limited to organisations in the IT/ICT arena but could include Accountancy or Legal professional bodies. Another useful field of co-operation would be with marketing institutions

The branding and marketing of such relationships should, at all times, make all best efforts to clearly represent the role of the IAIDQ in the collaborative venture and should not seek to divert attention away from the International organisation.

The nature of the relationship and minimum requirements on those engaging in activities or events of any such collaboration to be members of the IAIDQ should be clearly set out within the rules or bye-

laws of such a collaborative venture. At a minimum, the IAIDQ would require that all those involved in the direction of such a collaboration would be members in good standing of the IAIDQ and that the objectives of the collaboration would be to promote and encourage all those involved to join the IAIDQ.

Collaborations or partnerships that form part of the establishment of the CoP should be clearly documented in any proposal or request for recognition of a Geographic, Topic-based or Enterprise CoP. In this documentation, the benefits to the IAIDQ should be clearly set out. If there are actual examples of where the other body has already been of clear and tangible assistance to the IAIDQ Community, this should be documented also.

The establishment of a formal collaboration between the IAIDQ and any other body in this context would be subject to approval by the International Board or their duly appointed delegate(s).

Establishing a CoP

There are a number of steps necessary to set up a CoP:

Concept and Proposal

A CoP may be proposed by any group of at least three IAIDQ members

They will need to submit a brief proposal to the IAIDQ Board covering the following topics

- Background (define the domain)
- Positioning and relationships with similar CoPs
- Services proposed
- Resources needed (anticipated costs¹)
- Organisation Structure
- Resume (CV) of the proposing members

The Board may drive the formation of a CoP. In other words, the Board may put together the proposal and then recruit the officers and members of the CoP.

Board Review

When the BoD receives a proposal it will evaluate:

- Definition and positioning
- Likely member involvement
- Deliverables promised and benefits for members and/or community
- Costs (in light of Deliverables promised)
- Proposers' knowledge/experience in the CoPs content area

Approval

The Review and Approval process will be finalised via the normal Conference Calls. Once approved, the formation of a new CoP will be communicated to members via the website, email list server and so on. Where appropriate, there will also be a press release made to the relevant local, national and specialist newspapers and journals.

¹ At this stage it is anticipated that there will be neither significant costs to the Association caused by the formation of a CoP nor that a CoP will need a budget. This will be reviewed as CoPs develop.

Implementation

A good example of the implementation of a Geographic CoP is the Irish IQ Network (www.iqnetwork.org). At the time of writing, it has yet to be formally ratified as a CoP but it has all the hallmarks of a well-run one. It has strong links with the academic community and the Irish Computer Society, a website and a scheduled programme of events.

In general, the officers should aim to find sponsors (for example, their employers or local university) who are able to provide facilities for formal meetings.

It is the IAIDQ Webmaster's intention to upgrade the hosting package for the IAIDQ website to allow forums to be set up to enable online discussion and file exchanges to take place.

Monitoring

The leader of each CoP will be responsible for making the VP Operations aware of the activities of the CoP during each cycle between conference calls. The exact form of these reports is yet to be determined and the Board is also currently considering the optimum frequency for Conference Calls.

CoP Support

The Board and the Association as a whole will support the various CoPs by providing such things as:

- Promotional materials
- Logos
- Web site & Services
- Email addresses
- Encouragement and ad-hoc advice and support

CoPs Suggested

CoP Type	Title	Lead Contact
Topic-based	Build IQ taxonomy Build Body of Knowledge ²	Keith.Underdown @ iaidq.org
	Improving quality controls in election data	Larry.English @ iaidq.org
	Develop Professional Certification Process	Bill.Foster @ iaidq.org
	Help develop supra-national IQ regulations & laws	Lisa.Flint @ iaidq.org
	Tools for IQ	Doug.Johnson @ iaidq.org
	International Standards watch	Grant.Robinson @ iaidq.org
Geographic	United Kingdom	Keith.Underdown @ iaidq.org
	Ireland	Daragh.Obrien @ iaidq.org
	Australasia	Grant.Robinson @ iaidq.org
	South Africa	Diana.Joseph @ iaidq.org
Enterprise Segment	Healthcare	
	Insurance	
	Education	Lisa.Flint @ iaidq.org

Building the Model

The Board of the IAIDQ now invites members and interested others to build on this model and to suggest other CoPs and to volunteer to organise a CoP or to join one or more. In the first instance send your comments and suggestions to **Keith.Underdown @ iaidq.org** and he will collate them for the Board.

Next Steps

- Review the procedure for establishing a CoP outlined above
- Gather and Collate the information
- Contact all who have expressed interest
- Update Website
- Gain Board approval
- Publish in Newsletter

² These two activities are very closely related but require slightly different skills so it makes sense to make them explicit but manage them as one CoP.