

The Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to Communities of Practice

By
Daragh O Brien

DON’T PANIC

This article is not about IQM or DQM. It is about the IAIDQ. More importantly it is about how you can get involved in developing the IAIDQ as an Association and raise the profile and standards of the professional discipline that is Information/Data Quality Management.

One of the main features of the IAIDQ, and the benefit most members cite for joining is the sense of community and the sense of being part of a large network of professionals working on similar challenges with similar goals.

The key to supporting and nurturing that sense of community is the IAIDQ Communities of Practice (CoPs).

QUICK... CALL THE CoPs!

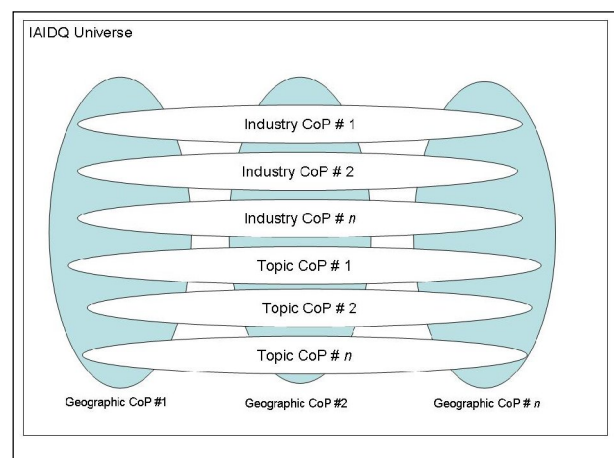
So what is a CoP? The term CoP refers to *“a group of individuals participating in communal activity, and experiencing/continuously creating their shared identity through engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities.”*¹

In the context of the IAIDQ, a CoP is a grouping of members either in the same geographic region, the same industry/enterprise segment or with a shared specialist interest in niche topic in information and data quality.

In many ways, the CoP structure allows the IAIDQ to develop virally through a ‘network of networks’, with cells popping up and connecting back to the network to become part of the global whole. And like another

‘network of networks’ – the Internet – over time the CoP structures in the IAIDQ will enable our members to derive benefits even if your local or industry CoP has a false start.

A detailed document outlining the concept of CoPs in the IAIDQ is available on the IAIDQ website at http://www.iaidq.org/main/doc/establishing_cop.pdf. The document outlines the key steps and procedures for setting up a CoP.



Relationships between Geographic and other CoP types

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_practice, last accessed 2006-12-09 : 09:35 UTC

This article tackles some of the practical issues that arise in forming, developing and sustaining a Community of Practice. Some of the challenges arise before you start the process of recognition. Even more crop up as your CoP matures. At every step, the IAIDQ Board of Directors is available to help and advise.

FINDING A COP

A full listing of current active, in formation, or proposed CoPs and relevant contacts can be found on the IAIDQ website. There are a number of other CoPs in discussion at the moment which are not listed, so keep checking the website for updates.

BUT THESE AREN'T THE COPs I'M LOOKING FOR

So you've looked at the list and you don't see a CoP for your geographic region or for the IQ challenges in the Widget manufacturing industry. What do you do?

A very real option is to start your own CoP. Shrugging your shoulders and walking away will only leave you wondering "what if...?" and certainly won't help address whatever needs you had that prompted you to look for a CoP in the first place.

So what do you need to do? I would suggest first contacting the IAIDQ Board to let them know you are considering a CoP. They will be able to do a 'handshake' by email with others in your area or industry to make an introduction. But knowing who the people are is not enough. To get traction, you need to have some goals, some tactics, and an audience who will listen.

THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

Irrespective of whether you are establishing a geographic CoP or one of the other types, you need to have a goal and you need to have a plan.

Let's assume that your goals are:

- Provide an environment for people like you to share best practices and war-stories
- Provide social and professional networking opportunities for people in your niche
- Run an event per year where best practices for IQ in your industry can be shared
- Raise profile of Information Quality in your industry so you get better budget, better projects, and more staff.

Two goals not listed here, but which is universal to all member services and strategy in the IAIDQ is to increase and retain membership and to constantly meet or exceed expectations; more on that in a moment.

Let's also assume that you have limited budget because you're the only IAIDQ member you know in your area (geographic and industrially). Mission impossible? No, just mission very bloody difficult.

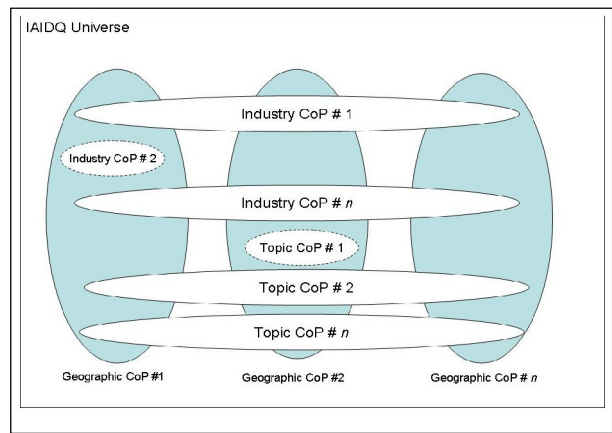
Geographic CoPs can act as incubators for other CoP types. In other words, if you contact the geographic CoP for your region and ask if you can lead a working group on the challenges in your industry they will not say no. They will probably incorporate your niche into the agenda of an event and give you a platform to start raising the profile of your proposed Industry CoP (such as by inviting speakers from other countries to an event).

Depending on how they have been structured and who's involved, your Geographic CoP could have links to other organisations that serve your industry, such as an Informatics Professional body which can help you build your Industry CoP network.

If you don't have a geographic CoP to fall back on, then you have a bigger challenge but also a greater opportunity.

My advice is not to pursue an industry CoP without the support structures of a Geographic CoP to assist you.

If you don't have a Geographic CoP in your area – **build that first**, because the industry stuff will emerge from that.



Geographic CoPs as incubators

TOP TIPS FOR SETTING UP A GEOGRAPHIC CoP

Don't do it alone

Find other IAIDQ members to help, or email your five best friends from your industry or from college and ask them to help. Try and get them to join the IAIDQ in the process, but in the early stages it isn't too important. However, for your buddies to be on the CoP Board with you, they'll need to join up.

Don't go at it alone

Let the IAIDQ Board of Directors know you are looking at setting up a CoP but you are in the early stages. They can help put you in contact with members in your area and can give advice based on the experiences of other CoPs. Also, the IAIDQ can advertise any activities to members worldwide, put you in contact with speakers for events, and also start the process for formally recognising your group as a CoP.

Seek out a collaborator

Every country has a large number of professional bodies for IT and Business. Contact these organisations (such as the Professional body for your industry) and tell them about the IAIDQ, Information Quality, and that you would like to run some events for their members to inform them about the topic. Most organisations of this type are constantly looking for ways to increase value for money to their members and should be amenable to helping you get set up. They may even have the means to help with the logistics for events, and might have a meeting room you can make use of.

Other potential collaborators include Universities, who have plenty of room with AV equipment lying idle during the evenings and may have academics researching IQ or related topics.

Collaborators add to your social capital when issuing press releases, looking for sponsorship, or simply trying to get good speakers to an event. Collaborators are not the same as partners however. A partner needs to enter into a formal agreement with the IAIDQ at an International level, although that process is a logical step from the early collaboration.

Run an event (at least one)

Every CoP needs a focal point on the calendar. Depending on the local setup and level of interest, you could run a regular one-hour lecture/seminar followed by drinks or a meal. Alternatively, you could go all out and have two one-day conferences per year, a day-long seminar in the summer and one hour evening sessions at least four times a year on a variety of topics. The options are endless.

Bear in mind that as it is your event, you can dictate the agenda. So if you want to stick something in about your industry (the CoP need that started this off) then do so.

Events take work and effort and a degree of planning. Good collaborators can help with this. But the events themselves are important as they are the “magnet content” that give the sense of community and the opportunities for learning that CoPs are meant to deliver.

Sustaining the CoP takes commitment and requires effort to ensure that there is a constant stream of valuable contributions into the community. These contributions then flow into the wider IAIDQ CoP network and benefit all members, who add to it and increase our social capital and our body of knowledge

OTHER RESOURCES ON-LINE

The IAIDQ Policy paper on CoPs can be found online:
http://www.iaidq.org/main/doc/establishing_cop.pdf

A number of good articles and resources can also help you kick start your CoP:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_practice
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtual_Community_of_Practice
- <http://www.knowledgeboard.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=378>

2006 North America Information & Data Quality Conference

San Francisco, California, USA, October 16-19, 2006

by Dave Wilson, IAIDQ VP of Event Services

CONFERENCE REPORT

I hope you were there with some 200 of our colleagues! Both business leaders and IQ professionals alike were challenged as never before by the wisdom of our conference keynote speakers and the achievements of our peers in their practitioner case studies.

This year's IDQ Conference was held at the Hyatt Fisherman's Wharf in the famous North Beach district, only a few blocks from San Francisco Bay, and the weather cooperated perfectly all week, staying cool and clear throughout.



The days were full of new challenges and ideas, and each evening an adventurous group

went out for dinner together to network, make new friends, and simply enjoy some of the great restaurants that San Francisco had to offer.

Our opening keynote speaker this year was Dr. Blanton Godfrey, former Chairman and CEO of the Juran Institute and currently Dean of the College of Textiles at North Carolina State University. Dr. Godfrey expounded on why we really must understand our purposes in collecting data, how data are transformed into actionable information within our organizations, and the potential impacts of emerging trends in advanced analytics and interactive databases on business decision-making. I was so personally challenged by Dr. Godfrey's insights that I have committed to making the next year one of education on these ideas for the senior leadership team where I work.

We also had the great pleasure of formally recognizing the two people most responsible for IAIDQ's origin in a Founder's Keynote Panel during which both of IAIDQ's original founders, Dr. Tom Redman and Larry English, were presented awards. In their Panel session, they talked about the several possible futures of information and data quality for business, and explored what is likely to come next, when our organizations can no longer extract competitive advantage solely from its investment in information technologies.

Ted Friedman, VP of Data Integration & Data Quality for Gartner Research, discussed the challenges that await us in the future, as we rapidly evolve from "educating the masses" and building business cases for IQ initiatives, and move towards increasing the pace of change and sustaining ongoing value. Of particular interest were Ted's insights into the roles, skills, and practices that have proven to be key for the success of information and data quality improvements, as well as a darker reality where organizations that fail to see the significance of data quality to their business would not survive.

Twenty four (24) colleagues from the ranks of business leaders and IQ professionals presented practitioner case studies. The greatest measure of success in a multi-track program is that we have difficulty selecting which talk to attend, and this year's program was a stellar example of that kind of success.

While our keynote speakers always challenge us with new ways to examine what we're doing, why, and how, the most inspirational and eye-opening visions of what's possible come from those among us who have stories to tell about their strategies, adjustments, and successes in their own organizations. It is in these sessions and in the evening socializing that we build relationships and networks as practitioners.

Getting a chance to see what someone else has already accomplished always resonates with each of us and we directly benefit from that success, both during and after the conference each year. As conference co-chair, I am most grateful to all the individual practitioners who, through their presentations, shared their success with us.

In the final hour of the conference, Don Carlson, Elizabeth Davis, Mehmet Orun, and Ken Karacsony led a closing practitioner panel discussion that gave us an opportunity to see how we can best apply the week's lessons to our workplace. It was a thought-provoking final session where audience and panel members alike addressed the new approaches learned throughout the week, and debated how best to make our individual efforts more productive. To be sure, a final challenge was issued and taken up by all those that were there.

IAIDQ partnered with Wilshire Conferences to deliver an extraordinarily well-run event. On behalf of IAIDQ members and directors, I offer our sincerest thanks to my conference co-chair, Tony Shaw and his Wilshire staff. I also wish to recognize IAIDQ Advisor and Aera Energy's Lwanga Yonke, who was Program Chair for the conference. Through Lwanga's leadership and dedication an outstanding program was fashioned and executed.

As I said at the beginning, "I hope you were there..." because you would no doubt have been changed by what we saw and heard during this event.

A Non-Attendee CD-ROM is available to interested parties. Please send inquiries to kristen@wilshireconferences.com. Information about the 2006 conference agenda is available at <http://www.wilshireconferences.com/IAIDQ/Info.html>.

Do mark your calendars and join us for the 2007 North America IDQ Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada at the fabulous Palms Hotel, September 24-27, 2007.

Save the Date

24-27 September 2007



September 24-27, 2007 + The Palms Hotel & Casino + Las Vegas, Nevada

Join business leaders and IQ professionals at IAIDQ's 2007 North America Information and Data Quality Conference at the fabulous Palms Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada!

European Data Management & Information Quality Conferences, London, 30th Oct – 2nd Nov 2006

by Daragh O Brien

CONFERENCE REPORT

The IAIDQ had a strong presence at the European Data Management & Information Quality Conferences in London at the end of October last year (30th Oct to 2nd Nov). A large number of members, including Board members and Advisors were presenting. The event also provided an opportunity for a number of Board members to meet in person for the first time.

Speakers at the conferences included Bill Inmon, Larry English, and quite a number of IAIDQ members from several European countries and the US.

The IAIDQ had a public meeting at this conference at 8:00am on the second day of the event. Despite the early start, over 20 people attended that session (not counting our Board members and Advisors), and the IAIDQ signed its first new member up from the conference before 9:00am.

Thanks in part to the strategic location of our stand (just outside the toilets, where everyone who drank too much free water and coffee had to pass eventually), the IAIDQ attracted a lot of attention and enquiry during the three days of the main conference. Members from the UK Community of Practice, along with Board members Daragh O Brien and Dave Wilson manned the stand during the event.

One strong area of interest from current and prospective members was Communities of Practice. There have been enquiries about ‘how to do it’ from Scandinavia, Poland, and elsewhere. (Editor’s note: See Communities of Practice article also in this issue.)

In addition, our UK Community of Practice made some valuable contacts with the British Computer Society, who had a stand next to ours at the event. It is hoped that that contact will allow the UK/British Isles CoP to build a strong presence and provide good value for our members in that region. Board members and Advisors also had meetings with DAMA International to work on further progressing our partnership arrangement with them.



Daragh O Brien and Dave Wilson with representatives of the British Computer Society

I walked away from the event with the feeling that the IAIDQ had truly ‘arrived’ in terms of professionalism and credibility within the wider community. The level of interest and interaction we had with members and prospective members, along with the interest in the CoPs, bodes well for the Association in 2007 and beyond.

Our thanks are due to Jeremy Hall and the team in IRMUK as well as Larry English and his team at Information Impact who organised the Information Quality tracks of the conference. We’re planning for 2007 already.

Forthcoming Events



Up-to-date Calendar of Forthcoming Activities is online at iaidq.org/main/calendar.shtml.

Please contact our webmaster to add other IQ/DQ events to the IAIDQ Web Calendar.

22 Feb 2007	IQ Network Spring Forum Irish Community of Practice of IAIDQ	Dublin Ireland
12 Mar 2007	Information Impact International: TIQM® MASTERY SERIES: IQ 101: IQ Principles and Processes <i>10% discount to IAIDQ members</i>	Nashville TN USA
13-14 Mar 2007	Information Impact International: TIQM® MASTERY SERIES: IQ 201: Assessing Information Quality <i>10% discount to IAIDQ members</i>	Nashville TN USA
15-16 Mar 2007	Information Impact International: TIQM® MASTERY SERIES: IQ 501: Conducting Information Process Improvement <i>10% discount to IAIDQ members</i>	Nashville TN USA
20 Mar 2007	Post Codes Implementation Update Irish Community of Practice of IAIDQ	Dublin Ireland
17 Apr 2007	Information Quality in Multimedia Processing/Searching Irish Community of Practice of IAIDQ	Dublin Ireland
10 May 2007	Information Quality in Irish Healthcare - Panel discussion & Forum Irish Community of Practice of IAIDQ	Dublin Ireland
12-13 Jun 2007	Information Impact International: TIQM® MASTERY SERIES: IQ 301: Measuring the Costs of Poor Quality Information: Business Case for and Measurement of IQ Initiative Return-on-Investment <i>10% discount to IAIDQ members</i>	Nashville TN USA
14-15 Jun 2007	Information Impact International: TIQM® MASTERY SERIES: IQ 401: Improving Information Product Quality: Data Correction, Data Preparation and Data Movement Control for Operational and Business Intelligence <i>10% discount to IAIDQ members</i>	Nashville TN USA
19 Jun 2007	Research Opportunities in Information Quality Irish Community of Practice of IAIDQ	Dublin Ireland
24-27 Sep 2007	2007 Information and Data Quality Conference IAIDQ and Wilshire Conferences	Las Vegas NV USA

The Newsletter's Editorial Board and the International Association for Information and Data Quality does not and cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information contained in this Calendar of Events.

Call for Contributions

to Future Issues of the IAIDQ Newsletter

IAIDQ Members are invited to send in their contributions to be considered for the **April 2007** issue of the Newsletter.

- WHEN:** March 8, 2007 (Thursday) Submission Deadline
- WHAT:** Articles (1000-1250 words)
Tips / Best Practices (400-650 words)
Recent DQ News (40-500 words)
Association News in Photos (single photo with a one-paragraph caption)
Upcoming DQ Events (event title, location, link to more information)
- HOW:** Send contributions in editable electronic medium
(preferably MS Word)
via email to editor@iaidq.org

Detailed submission guidelines are available by request. Please email the editor.

We also welcome any comments or suggestions you may have regarding our Newsletter. Please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Dy [michelle.dy@iaidq.org] or Arnt-Erik Hansen [Arnt-Erik.Hansen@iaidq.org].

The Information and Data Quality Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the **International Association for Information and Data Quality** iaidq.org

This Issue's Editor(s): Michelle C. Dy, Grant Robinson

If you are interested in joining the Newsletter Working Group, please contact the Editor-in-Chief via email [editor@iaidq.org].

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