

FREE* Newsletter

*(Faculty Resources for Educational Excellence)

VTCSOM Office of Continuing Professional Development

Office of Professional Development (OPD)

Office of Continuing Medical Education (CME)

Center for Simulation, Research & Patient Safety (CSRPS)

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Vol. 2, No. 9

October 2014

Quote of the Month

"I know there is strength in the differences between us. I know there is comfort where we overlap."

— [Ani DiFranco](#)



Practicing within Communities

As working adults, we all function as members of multiple communities. These communities exist within our work environments, neighborhoods, extracurricular activities in which we or our children participate, and more. Wenger, et al.¹ describe communities of practice (CoPs) as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis."

CoP members discuss shared issues, create tools and processes to address the issues, share knowledge from a variety of perspectives, and use their complementary strengths to solve problems. CoPs are far from being solely utilitarian, however. For example, practicing within an Academic Medicine CoP offers members a connection to others with similar interests, a greater sense of belonging, and a professional "home" outside of their clinical affiliation.

The table below enumerates various short- and long-term benefits for both organizations and community members.¹

	Short-Term Value Improve Business Outcomes	Long-Term Value Develop Organizational Capabilities
Organization Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem-solving arena - Quick answers to questions - Reduced time and costs - Improved quality of decisions - More perspectives on problems - Coordination, standardization, and synergies across units - Resources for implementing strategies - Strengthened Quality Assurance - Ability to take risks with the backing of the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity to develop new strategic options - Increased talent retention - Capacity for knowledge-development projects - Forum for "benchmarking" against rest of industry - Knowledge-based alliances
	Improve Work Experience	Foster Professional Development
Member Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help with challenges - Access to diverse expertise - Able to contribute to a team - Confidence in one's approach to problems - Fun of being with like-minded colleagues - More meaningful participation - Sense of belonging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forum for expanding skills and expertise - Network for keeping abreast of field - Enhanced professional reputation - Increased marketability and employability - Strong sense of professional identity

If you are interested in exploring new CoPs, the Office of Continuing Professional Development is an excellent place to start. Have a passion for leadership, research, patient safety and quality improvement, GME program leadership, or medical education? Participating in one or more of our series will naturally align you with others with similar interests.

Looking forward to learning with you!
-- Shari

¹ Wenger E, McDermott R, Snyder WM. (2002). Cultivating communities of practice. Boston, Harvard Business School Press.
² Lave, J & Wenger, E. (1990). Situated learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.