# NEXT-GENERATION COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

*Research Sponsorship Opportunity*

## PROJECT OVERVIEW AND SCOPE

APQC defines a community of practice as a group of people who come together, either face-to-face or virtually, to share and learn from one another. Although communities vary widely in scope and duration, most are organized around a common interest in a topic, challenge, opportunity, or body of knowledge and allow members to come together to share problems, experiences, insights, best practices, and tools.

APQC CEO Carla O'Dell describes communities of practice as knowledge management's "killer app," or the one indispensable approach that helps KM engage employees and deliver value. This is, at least in part, because communities provide an organizing framework for a wide array of KM activities, from gathering and disseminating content to expertise location and networking. Communities connect members to information and one another, and they also provide a place where knowledgeable people can hammer out best practices and solutions relevant to a specific knowledge domain.

Over the past 15 years, APQC has conducted four large-scale studies on communities of practice and identified dozens of best practices related to building and sustaining effective communities. However, as technology and work norms evolve, we must consider whether classic community structures still deliver the same value they did a decade ago. Do communities retain pride of place in the KM toolkit, or have new tools for enterprise social networking and collaboration shifted the landscape?

This study will reassess established best practices for communities, including:

♦ the strategic role of communities and the business objectives they aim to achieve;
♦ community roles and responsibilities, including the factors that drive effective leadership;
♦ approaches to connect community members with knowledge and expertise;
♦ methods to encourage engagement and participation; and
♦ methods to define and measure success.

In this context, the research team will focus on how innovative technologies have influenced community platforms, norms, and structures. Key topics include:

♦ the infrastructure that supports today's communities of practice;
♦ how enterprise social networking platforms, mobile apps, and tools for collaborative content creation have affected community interactions and knowledge sharing; and
♦ whether the ubiquity of social networking in people's personal lives has affected how community members engage, share, and interact.

## AUDIENCE

- Chief knowledge officers (CKOs)
- KM program leaders, directors, and managers
- Community/Network leaders

## RESEACH QUESTIONS

- For what business purpose(s) do organizations leverage communities of practice, and has the business case for launching a community changed over the past 10 years?
- What are the primary tools and approaches (e.g., webinars, content libraries, conversation threads) used to connect community members to knowledge and expertise?
- What is the intersection of communities and enterprise social networks?
- How have other technology innovations, such as mobile apps and tools for collaborative content creation, affected community interactions and outputs?
- What are the critical success factors for community leadership and engagement, and have they evolved significantly in light of recent societal or technological changes?

## DELIVERABLES

- Input into data collection tools
- Survey summary results report
- Best Practices Report including sponsor's perspective
- Research overview
- Promotions for research deliverables across multiple media platforms
- Disaggregated, blinded data
    - Delivered in a flat Excel file
- Webinar event showcasing research results and sponsor's thought leadership
- Presentation and recording
- List of attendees who opt-in to share name and organization

## ABOUT APQC

APQC helps organizations work smarter, faster, and with greater confidence. It is the world's foremost authority in benchmarking, best practices, process and performance improvement, and knowledge management. APQC's unique structure as a member-based nonprofit makes it a differentiator in the marketplace. APQC partners with more than 500 member organizations worldwide in all industries. With more than 40 years of experience, APQC remains the world's leader in transforming organizations. Visit us at www.apqc.org, and learn how you can make best practices your practices.

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