

What is a Community of Practice?

“Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”¹

Communities of practice are social learning environments. No one is the expert. Rather, we're brought together by what we don't know, and are learning and improving together.

In a community, practitioners:

- Help each other solve problems
- Hear each others' stories across contexts
- Reflect on their practice and improve it
- Build shared understanding
- Gain confidence
- Keep up with change
- Cooperate on innovation
- Explore the landscape
- Find a voice
- Gain strategic influence²

Through working together, a community helps establish a shared understanding of competence in their practice.

What is a community of practice not? It's not a:

- Class or training -- We're all co-learners.
- Work group/task force -- We're helping each other move existing work forward within our own contexts, while being open to new strategic partnerships.
- Cult or partisan political group -- We may act and think freely.
- Social/networking club -- We focus on doing our work better in tangible ways.
- Service -- Its value is what we collectively make it.
- Therapy session-- Though it should engage your whole and authentic self.

¹ Beverly and Etienne Wenger-Trayner, “Introduction to Communities of Practice”
<http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

² This list is from slides shared by Beverly and Etienne Wenger-Trayner during a workshop in Grass Valley, California, July 2018.