

# Preface

Community management has become important in knowledge services programs, customer relations, brand advocacy, and social media strategy. The purpose of this book is to help knowledge services leaders launch and lead communities programs as part of their initiatives, to help community managers do their jobs successfully, and to provide a deep understanding of the fundamental concepts of communities of practice.

Knowledge services is an approach that streamlines managing an organization's intellectual capital by converging information management, knowledge management, and strategic learning into a single enterprise-wide discipline. Knowledge strategists put the people affected by knowledge services and the knowledge strategy first. This people-focused approach to knowledge services focuses on the people and how they collaborate to share knowledge.

Communities are fundamental to a knowledge services approach: they engage people to deliver value to the organization. Communities enable a wide variety of knowledge services activities, including gathering and disseminating content, asking and answering questions, solving problems, finding experts, transferring knowledge and learning about a subject.

This book provides an in-depth tutorial on how to make communities work to really improve business performance. It covers principles and proven practices that ensure community success and longevity, provides tips and techniques for leading communities and communities programs that the reader can apply immediately, looks at different types of communities and the technologies that support them, and illustrates by sharing a number of real-world examples of communities in practice.

Communities are groups of people who share an interest, a specialty, a role, a concern, a set of problems, or a passion for a specific topic. Community members deepen their understanding by interacting on an ongoing basis, asking and answering questions, sharing their knowledge, reusing good ideas, and solving problems for one another.

According to Richard McDermott, healthy communities have a driving purpose, clear activities, a sense of accomplishment, and high management expectations. The heart of a community of practice includes peer-to-peer relationships, responsibility for stewarding a body of knowledge, membership which crosses boundaries, and room for dealing with whatever comes up.

Communities connect people with related interests so that they can share with one another, innovate, reuse each other's ideas, collaborate, and learn together. Starting a community is an excellent first step in launching a knowledge services initiative and can be used as a building block for more elaborate functionality.

Communities enable knowledge to flow between people. Community members share new ideas, lessons learned, proven practices, insights, and practical suggestions. The community can innovate through brainstorming, building on each other's

ideas, and keeping informed on emerging developments. Reusing solutions is enabled through asking and answering questions, applying shared insights, and retrieving posted material. Members collaborate through threaded discussions, conversations, and interactions. And they learn from other members of the community; from invited guest speakers about successes, failures, case studies, and new trends; and through mentoring.

One of the keys to the success for any community is effective community management. Community management is leading a community of practice so that it achieves its objectives, it remains active, its members benefit from participating in it, and its members adhere to its published code of conduct.

This book is based on my experience in managing communities, leading communities programs, and leading knowledge services for over 20 years. It is a practical guide, and you can start applying its lessons immediately. It can be used by a wide range of knowledge services and communities of practice professionals. These include knowledge managers, knowledge management program leaders, knowledge services leaders, knowledge services evangelists, community managers, community evangelists, communities program managers, collaboration program managers, collaboration evangelists, Enterprise Social Network (ESN) administrators, social business leaders, social media strategists, brand specialists, and anyone providing instruction or advice to these people.