

efios measuring value in CoP

The bottom line is that measuring the success of a community of practice requires insight in the stage of the community and the purpose of the measurement.

When working with a sponsor before starting a community of practice in the corporate environment, it is imperative to set the expectations right on what can be considered a successful venture.

The three parties usually involved in the start of a community are the sponsor, the participants and the corporation (company) that employs the participants. Each of these three has different interests in the community, and therefore a different measure of success.

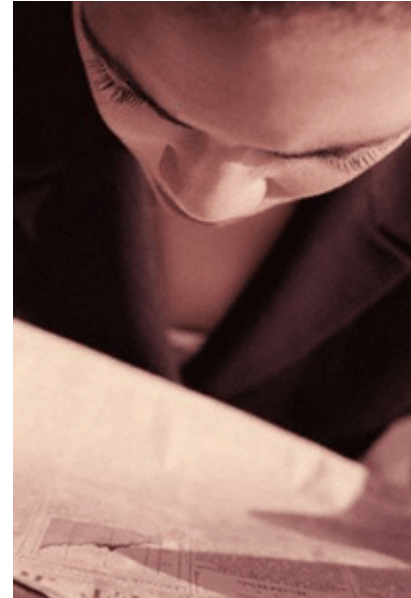
Identify the measurement attributes

When talking about which method is best it is important to understand why it is important to measure in the first place. There are four compelling reasons to make measurements for success in the community:

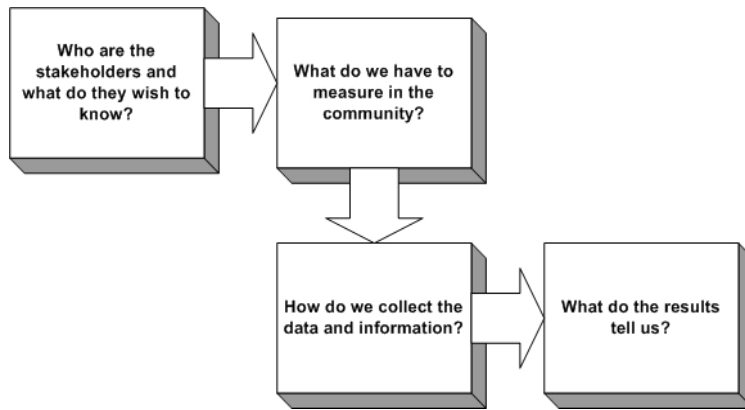
- Feedback, to determine what is going on
- Follow on, to define what is next
- Funding, for the roles, activities and platform
- Focus, to stay within the community domain or redefine it

Within multi-community environments, the measurement can also act as a benchmark for future sponsorships and help to make a business case for starting a new community.

Efios has a simple but effective way of depicting what process is involved in getting to measure the success of a community, in practice.



"The measurement process is about the people in and around the community – the technology to measure data is for this purpose merely an enabler."



Don't forget the business objectives

There are two important factors in this measuring process; one is to always take into account the business objective of the community and the second one is that the outcome should nearly always lead to change – improvements, enhancements etc.

When trying to answer 'what do we have to measure' in the diagram above the stage of the community's lifecycle can give important clues. In the early days of the community it can be more meaningful to measure contributions, participants and other system parameters whereas further down the community life the number of new ideas, problems solved or time savings contribute more.

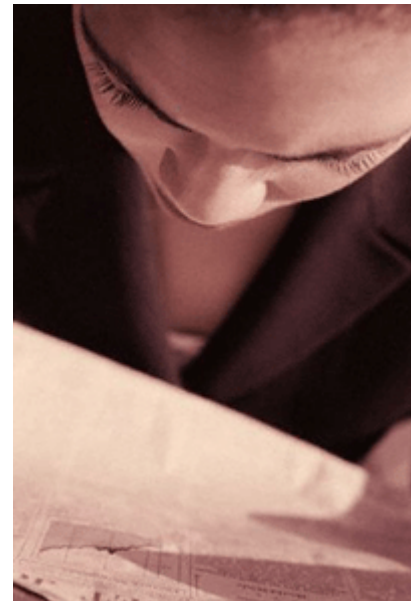
Tangible or intangible?

In general terms, there are two types of measurement throughout all stages of the community, which should be adequately used when measuring value and success:

Tangible – or quantitative results (“on paper”) for example log files, performance measurement, number of contributions, frequency of contributions, response time of participants, conversion rate, savings.

Intangible – or qualitative results (“in the head”) for example stories, anecdotes, feedback, commitment

Though success can be hard to define in quantitative terms, Etienne Wenger has published some sample formula's that take both the tangible and the intangible part of the community's performance in account.



"Within multi-community environments, the measurement can also act as a benchmark for future sponsorships"

The bottom line

The bottom line is that measuring the success of a community of practice requires insight in the stage of the community and the purpose of the measurement. There is no doubt about the need for measurement in the corporate environment, and its role can be significant for the sponsor.

Like working inside the community, the measurement process is about the people in and around the community – the technology to measure data is for this purpose merely an enabler.



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