

## **Community Manager Role ACT KM Discussion summary**

Communities are central to a lot of knowledge sharing and collaboration activities. I am in the process of developing a comprehensive definition of what a community manager (aka facilitator) does and what behavioural characteristics they need to be successful (as part of our internal community manager development program). I would be interested to see what members of this forum think would make a good "behavioural and capability role definition" for a successful Community Manager. I will summarise any posts and provide them back to the forum as an attachment at the end of the week.

Thanks in advance

**Arthur Shelley** Cadbury Schweppes

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Here are the character traits I think a community coordinator (don't like the title 'community manager') should have:

- well respected
- knowledgeable about the community's domain (but not an expert)
- well connected to a range of community members
- keen to develop the community's practice
- good communicators
- personally interested in community leadership
- good workshop and meeting facilitator
- likeable

The other critical feature is that the coordinator should be approved/accepted/chosen by the community leadership. Leadership in a community is typically emergent, so look for those people who care about the community and are organising activities. If this doesn't happen the community members are likely to work against the coordinator. Mark has written about this happening in SMS Consulting group a few years back (<http://tinyurl.com/z9c5y>). And my friends at BHP Billiton, who first gave me this advice, can tell a number of stories to support this view.

Cheers

**Shawn Callahan** Anecdote

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Our Community Facilitators:

- Act as the intermediary between people seeking knowledge and people who can provide the knowledge. They actually seek out experts to support community requests for assistance.
- Identify, maintain and make accessible the collection of knowledge sources in their area of responsibility.
- Facilitate validation of knowledge before updating repository.
- Monitor other Knowledge Communities and other reporting systems to extract new knowledge or identify issues that require solutions.
- Identify needs for new knowledge and stimulates its creation.
- Assist management in prioritizing new technology developments based on community needs.
- Manage the community portal.

Facilitator competencies:

- Recognized by peers as competent (not expert) in broad range of community subjects.
- Good people skills.
- Passionately interested in the community subject area.
- Proficient in KM process and tools

Community facilitators monitor the virtual collaborations in their community and ensure that someone is responding to them. But the most effective facilitators also attend various community meetings where face-to-face discussions often lead to issues of community interest. As an example, our electronic technician community has an active virtual collaboration site and the facilitator often attends regional maintenance manager meetings. It is at these meetings that issues have been discussed that would not have made it to the virtual site if the facilitator had not heard them.

**David Smith** Halliburton Knowledge Management

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To reinforce the comments from Shawn & David.

Some community coordinator attributes:

- PASSIONATE about the domain & the development of a community.
- A PRACTITIONER of the domain themselves.
- Respected & liked by their PEERS.
- Aware & prepared for the organisational POLITICS they will encounter.
- Skilled in facilitation PROCESS (be it virtual or real).
- Willing to PERSEVERE on this for months rather than days.

I would rate passion & peer connections over KM/facilitation skills as the latter can be taught or supplemented by others. Whilst most communities tend to have 1 person as the real driving force & supporter, you need a range of people (in terms of seniority, line of business affiliation & location) clustered around them to generate ideas & word of mouth.

## Matt Moore Oracle

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Here is some research that shows that emotional intelligence will make up for cognitive intelligence in terms of work related performance. If you are the silent, with a brain the size of a planet, don't despair, the introverted brainiac also does well. I'm a big believer of hiring for attitude and teaching skills and wholeheartedly agree with Matt's statement:

"I would rate passion & peer connections over KM/facilitation skills as the latter can be taught or supplemented by others."

Côté, S. & Miners, C. T. H. 2006. Emotional Intelligence, Cognitive Intelligence, and Job Performance. Administrative Science Quarterly, 51(1). From the Economist:

"Given a choice between two potential recruits, one intelligent but cold and one engaging but not as clever, which would you pick? Most managers assume that brightest equals best. But these two Toronto academics note that employees with high "emotional" intelligence, even if they have lower "cognitive" intelligence, still tend to perform well: in fact, the lower the cognitive intelligence, the stronger the relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance. Emotionally intelligent workers, the authors suggest, might score higher in job performance ratings because they can work more easily with different groups, leave a positive impression with their superiors, and manage conflict. There is still hope for the super-bright introvert, however—the authors do not conclude that employees with high cognitive abilities and low emotional intelligence are at a disadvantage relative to their opposites. There may, in fact, be room to succeed for both the killjoy and the extrovert, depending on the task at hand."

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The issue of community facilitation is one I have experienced from 'both sides':

[http://www.hilaryburrage.com/2006/01/official\\_community\\_engagement.php](http://www.hilaryburrage.com/2006/01/official_community_engagement.php) (and other postings).

I would like to suggest (though it's not going to be a popular idea) that really people who seek to facilitate professionally should also have experience of 'being facilitated', preferably in a role where they genuinely have little influence... then the snags and challenges suddenly take on a new perspective.

Having said that, there are also occasions when what is NOT needed is just that sort of engagement. Sometimes the only real way forward is for elected politicians / representatives actually to have the courage to 'make a decision and deliver it', whilst also ensuring that those 'on the ground' understand what is happening and why, and that it has a very good chance of being a positive development for all concerned - on whose behalf it has been implemented. (If folk don't like it, they can vote out those who chose to do it.) This informed decisiveness is called Leadership, and is something which requires different, but also crucial, characteristics; it's obviously of a different order from Facilitation.

Democracy has many facets....Best wishes,

**Hilary Burrage**

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You need a committed leader for the community. The community leader should:

- Know the subject
- Have energy for stimulating collaboration
- Have sufficient time to devote to leadership
- Regularly spend time:
  - Increasing membership
  - Lining up speakers
  - Hosting calls and meetings
  - Asking and answering questions
  - Posting information which is useful to the members

**Stan Garfield** Hewlett-Packard Company

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I appreciate your inputs and concur very much with the importance of the "people skills" I have posted a discussion on our internal portal to see what non KM professionals think. However, there I posted a draft and then asked for comment. The major points are on people capabilities, then some process followed by a few tool related items. I am looking forward to merging your enhancements into this.

Regards

Arthur

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The role of the Community Manager is a part time voluntary activity normally undertaken by a senior person who is widely known and respected for their ability to facilitate a group of key contributors. As the champion of the community, they ensure the community members gel as a group and collaborate to generate outcomes that are beneficial to individuals, the community membership and the business as a whole.

Subject expertise is less important than people skills as their aim is to facilitate discussions with probing questions. They should maintain the group's focus on establishing areas of common interest and priorities. Community managers secure commitment from volunteers for actions the community agree there is value in collaborating further on. They facilitate proceedings through membership participation rather than attempt to do all the work themselves.

Although the work should not be onerous (once communities are established, rotation of the Community Manager responsibilities is a good way of keeping the community vibrant, maintaining interest and increasing the scope of influence of the community.

## **Community Manager Key Responsibilities:**

- Lead the community, engage membership and other stakeholders
- Organise community interactions and activities on regular basis
- Ensure the purpose of the community remains aligned with personal aspirations of the members as well as business goals
- Create an identity for the community to which people want to belong
- Generate an atmosphere of fun to keep the interactions vibrant
- Network with potential new community members to promote community benefits
- Collate feedback from members and facilitate responses to source of feedback
- Ensure collaboration activities are beneficial to the community members
- Engage members and generate a sense of commitment to community activities

## **Community Manager Role ACT KM Discussion summary**

- Network with HR and Communications personnel, advise them of interest stories
- Communicate community benefits and successes to wider stakeholder groups
  
- Establish (with members) agreed processes for community activities and events
- Establish accountabilities and timeframes for agreed projects, tasks and activities
- Identify objectives, roles and responsibilities for community members
- Designate resources requirements and determine any funding arrangements
- Anticipate risks and explore impacts non-delivery of desired outcomes
- Establish a monitoring and review process
  
- Liaise with the Content Manager to discuss layout and formats of content on the portal
- Screen submitted content for appropriateness and relevance
- Encourage members to load useful content to the relevant portal pages

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