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Perceived Value of Participating: Transforming communities of professional practice

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PERCEIVED VALUE OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY

Elizabeth A. Carter, PhD

Practical application of transforming a community of professional practice

How does your organization utilize communities of practice to add value? Answer these practical application questions to identify, diagnose, and improve the results for the community members and the organization.

Practical Application Question #1- Is your group a community of practice?

Does your group exhibit the qualities of a community of practice? Check by answering these questions.

1. Does the group share a concern, or a set of problems?
2. Does the group have a passion about a topic or an opportunity?
3. Does the group wish to deepen their knowledge and expertise?
4. Is the group willing to meet once, twice or more a month to cultivate their relationship and knowledge?
5. Is the group committed to continue meeting for an indefinite point in time, and continue to bring in new members as existing members reach their personal and professional goals?

If you have answered yes to all these questions, then your group is a community of practice. If you did not response yes to many of the questions, then your group may really be a team and should be treated as one.

Practical Application Question #2- What are your member expectations, benefits and outcomes?

Are you fulfilling the needs of your members? Check by answering these questions.

1. What do your members expect when they join?
2. What are the benefits you advertise? How often do you survey the members to see how well the benefits match the expectations?
3. What percent of the members admit that they gained more than they expected?

4. Do the members know the difference between a benefit and an outcome? Can they articulate tangible, quantifiable outcomes?
5. Bonus question. Based on benefit realization to date, is the member progressing faster or slower than he/she expected?

If you haven't solicited feedback from your members lately, now would be a good time to do so. A quick questionnaire can provide lots of information. It could be a multiple-choice option using the categories found in this case study, or a full qualitative analysis where the members provide their answers and then they are consolidated into categories relevant to your organization.

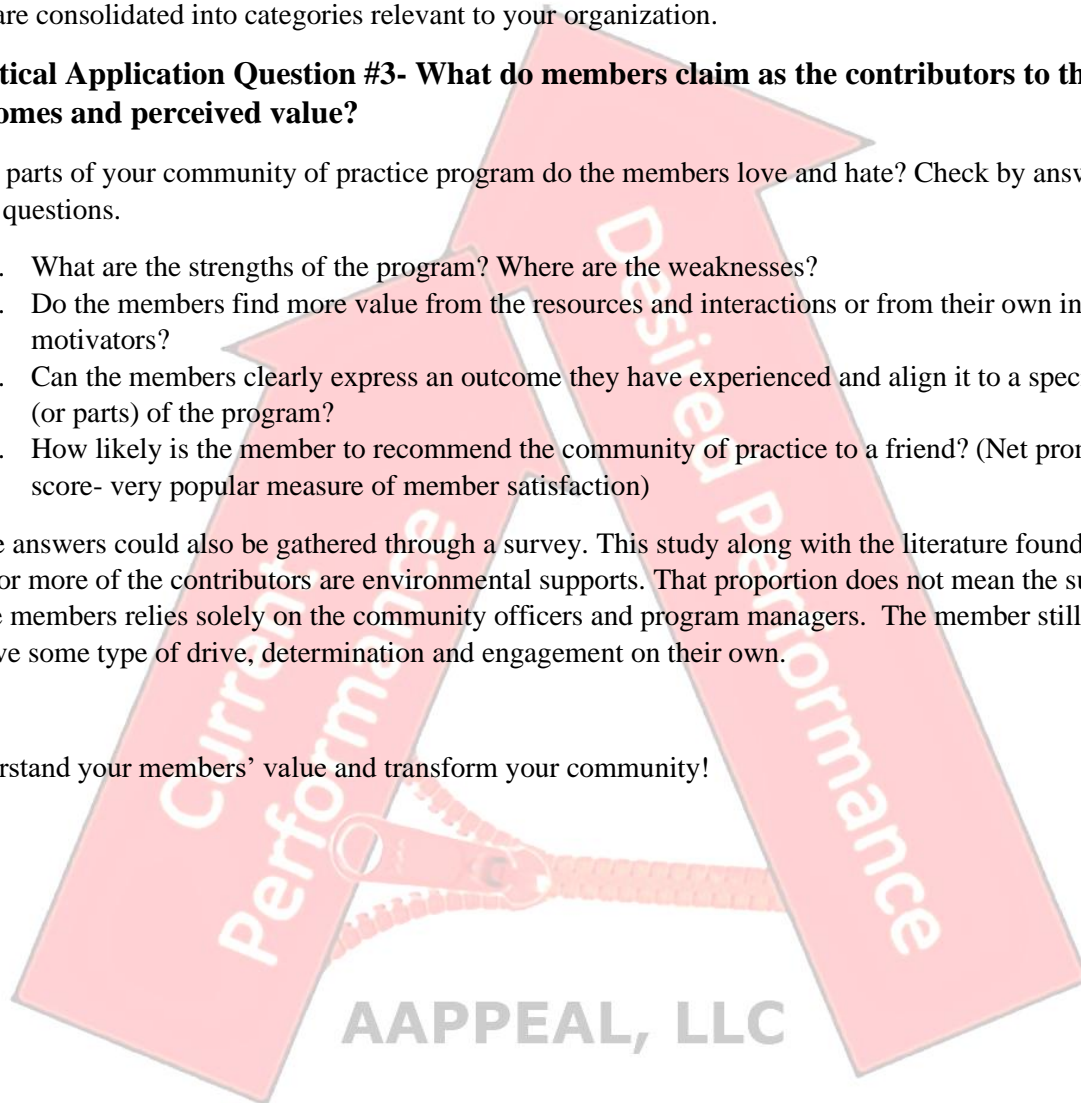
Practical Application Question #3- What do members claim as the contributors to their outcomes and perceived value?

What parts of your community of practice program do the members love and hate? Check by answering these questions.

1. What are the strengths of the program? Where are the weaknesses?
2. Do the members find more value from the resources and interactions or from their own intrinsic motivators?
3. Can the members clearly express an outcome they have experienced and align it to a specific part (or parts) of the program?
4. How likely is the member to recommend the community of practice to a friend? (Net promoter score- very popular measure of member satisfaction)

These answers could also be gathered through a survey. This study along with the literature found that 59% or more of the contributors are environmental supports. That proportion does not mean the success of the members relies solely on the community officers and program managers. The member still needs to have some type of drive, determination and engagement on their own.

Understand your members' value and transform your community!



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