

Learning and Organisational Resources for Communities of Practice

Type of resource: Managing, supporting and evaluating (individual and collective, and informal and formal) learning

Type of scenario: Identity development

CharterPolicy: Elaborating CoP charter and policy

Summary

- Objective: to elaborate a CoP charter.
- Scenario: debate with the CoP members in order to reify the identity of the CoP.
- Tools: SweetWiki, CoPe_it!

Objectives

The objective of this LOR is to elaborate a charter of the CoP by defining its domain, main objectives, members' general profile, main activities, projects, plans, expected outcomes, objectives of development, etc. It is related to the three generic scenarios: 'Reification', 'Debate & Decide' and 'Identity development'. The coordinator organises a debate within the CoP. This discussion can be held from time to time (once a year for example) in order to redefine the charter and take into account change in the CoP context.

This LOR can be particularly helpful for CoPs that have developed spontaneously in order to undertake as a way of reflecting on their development and planning their future direction.

Scenario

1. The coordinator with core members elaborates a list of questions to answer regarding what their CoP is and will be. An external consultant may be contacted for this. The questions can be related to:
 - ABOUT WHAT has this CoP been created? This is about the definition of the professional domain of the CoP (e.g.: teaching, engineering, computer science, etc.), and possibly the identification of its specific context (e.g.: teaching science in primary school, engineering in public building, programming in Java, etc.).
 - WHY has the CoP been created? This question is about the objectives of the CoP. They can be internal (defined by the core members for example) or external (defined by the institution or company that hosts the CoP). The CoP can also develop in practical terms the term of office defined by the institution or company.
 - WHO are the members? This is about the main expected characteristics of the CoP members (students, professionals, apprentice, or all together), their level of competencies, etc.
 - FOR WHOM? What is the audience of the CoP? Only the members or other employees of the institution, or the external public?

- HOW? What kind of activities will be organised?
 - WHEN? What will be the pace of the CoP? The activities can be organised weekly, monthly, etc.
 - WHERE? This is related to the possible blending of face to face activities and distance activities, individually at home or collectively at the work place.
 - WITH WHICH TOOLS? What will be the tools used for connecting the members, reifying the practice, communicating information, etc.?
 - WITH WHICH POLICY? What kind of behaviours should be encouraged or avoided from the members?
2. Once a first list of questions and answers is worked out, the coordinator can organise a discussion with the members. In this discussion, the coordinator may keep in mind some issues:
- some points are maybe not debatable, for example the term of office from the institution;
 - choosing tools sometimes lead to very long discussions; appropriate training for some members may be envisaged;
 - in case of difficult debates, votes can be organised;
 - each interested member should have the opportunity to express his/her opinion;
 - the goal of the discussion is to make choices and decisions; the coordinator will focus the debate on this objective.
- Some decisions can be made unanimously. In case of debates, each member should have the opportunity to express his/her opinion. Then a vote can be organised.
3. The decisions made are written into a text that the members can read and comment until a deadline.

Tools to support activity

- SweetWiki (<http://sweetwiki.inria.fr/> - <http://palette.ercim.org/content/view/160/119/>) can be used for the collective writing of the charter.
- CoPe_it! (<http://copeit.cti.gr/> - <http://palette.ercim.org/content/view/156/119/>) can be used in order to collect the opinions of the members on the different sections of the charter.

Further resources

- This LOR is also in connection with the LOR “**MapCoP**: Mapping your community of practice”.
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