What are communities of practice?
Communities of practice are groups of people who share a passion for something that they know how to do and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better.

Why focus on communities of practice?
- short-term value
  - help with challenges
  - access to expertise
  - confidence
  - fun with colleagues
  - meaningful work
- long-term value
  - personal development
  - reputation
  - professional identity
  - network
  - marketability

What are some critical success factors?
- community
  - Domain that energizes a core group
  - Skilled and reputable coordinator
  - Involvement of experts
  - Address details of practice
  - Right rhythm and mix of activities
- organization
  - Strategic relevance of domain
  - Visible management sponsorship, but without micro-management
  - Dance of formal and informal structures
  - Adequate resources
  - Consistent attitude

Where to start?
- educate
  - Communities of practice are a familiar experience, but people need to understand how they fit in their work.
    - Conduct workshops to educate management and potential members about the approach
    - Help people appreciate how communities of practice are inherently self-defined and self-managed
    - Establish a language to legitimize communities and establish their place in the organization
- support
  - Communities of practice can use some light-handed guidance and technology infrastructure.
    - Provide some process support, coaching, and logistic assistance
    - Identify needs and define adequate infrastructure without undue emphasis on fancy technology
- get going
  - Starting to cultivate communities of practice as early as possible creates early examples that allow people to learn by doing.
    - Have a few pilot communities going as soon as possible
    - Find communities to start with by identifying areas where there is potential and readiness
    - Interview some prospective members to understand issues, start discussing a community, and identify potential leaders
    - Gather a core group to prepare and initiate a launch process
    - Help members organize an initial series of value-adding activities
    - Encourage them to take increasing responsibility for stewarding their knowledge
- encourage
  - Practitioners usually see the value of working as a community but may feel the organization is not aligned with their understanding.
    - Find sponsors to encourage participation
    - Value the work of communities
    - Publicize successes
- integrate
  - The formal organization must have processes and structure to include these communities while honoring their root in personal passion and engagement.
    - Integrate communities in the way the organization works
    - Identify and remove obvious barriers
    - Align key structural and cultural elements

set strategic context
A strategic context lets communities find a legitimate place in the organization
- Articulate a strategic value proposition
- Identify critical business problems
- Articulate need to leverage knowledge