



We've had a lot of activity within our Communities of Practice. As each develops we get many similar questions and I thought it might be helpful to talk about the structure of membership and its relation to the CoPs.

Currently every employee of a corporate sponsor company is a member of LCI. This is a huge benefit for our largest members like Turner, Skanska and Balfour Beatty. It means worldwide, their employees get discounts to events and will start to enjoy discounts on simulations and other products offered by LCI. But it is only a benefit if you take us up on it.

The Communities of Practice have no specific members. All members are member of every Community of Practice. However, each CoP maintains a mailing list, largely of those folks who attend and who are not members. Across the country more than 50% of our attendees are not yet LCI members. We hope that Core Groups will print out a few LCI applications from the website for the attendees' ease of use in signing up.

CoPs also have different organizational structures. While LCI is a 501(c)(3) corporation, the CoPs are unincorporated associations. This means they are not legal entities. However, Core Group members and events are insured through LCI and we manage the finances for the organization (which includes each CoP). Because CoPs are not legal entities they are unable to sign enforceable contracts and open bank accounts. They also cannot offer or sell memberships or engage in business transactions. We have followed this procedure to make sure that Communities of Practice do not incur the non-profit filing expenses that would be required if they were each individually formulated and also to help monitor expenses, costs of meetings and engagements of speakers and other programs.

When a Community starts out, usually there is a flurry of activity. Typically either Greg Howell or I will facilitate the development of the CoP. This is to ensure that there is sufficient interest in the community to support a community of practice and to help the CoP understand the steps that have been successfully followed in developing our "chapters." The basic process is to find among the local or regional participants in the supply chain (Owners, Designers, Contractors, Trade Partners and Academics) a Core Group of dedicated individuals that are willing and able to develop programs meant to bring together practitioners and interested participants. The Core Group usually arranges for a two day Introduction to Lean that is offered through LCI—the first day concentrating on basic principles and the second day concentrating on local practice.

Often Core Groups believe that they need to organize themselves into a number of committees—finance, research, membership, calendar, program etc. We have found that this kind of organization is rarely successful since the main purpose of the CoP is to deliver programming of interest to the region. Having connections with universities in the area is



always a good idea and having deep relationships with companies whose core business philosophy measures success or failure on how well they implement lean principles is also key.

But CoPs that have developed a deep committee structure have usually abandoned it within the first year because there is often not much for the committees to do. In addition, as excited as we all are about the advent of a new community of practice, participation beyond the Core Group usually wanes pretty quickly.

This brings us to the events themselves. Many new communities of practice believe that they cannot attract interest in the CoP unless their events are free. We have generally found that free events are not sustainable. People who are interested in finding out about lean will attend a free event but those deeply involved in the community—interested in lean application—tend to attend events that are beyond merely introductory, with deeper knowledge sharing that requires a basic understanding of what we're trying to accomplish.

LCI underwrites CoP development but not blindly. As stewards of the corporate funds, we take seriously the obligation to have a game plan before we let any group organize a chapter and any programs go forward without our assistance. Almost two years ago we completed a chapter development memo that discusses the three stages of CoPs—startup, active and mature. All active and mature CoPs have lots of leeway in how their programs are set and managed. We obviously work more closely with startups to make sure they get off to a good start.

One interesting development in the New Mexico chapter bears reporting. The NM-CoP has engaged in discussions with the local US Green Building Council Chapter about cross-publicizing each other's events. Their thought was that each organization might have cross membership in the other. Given the fact that our CoPs don't have local members, we solved the issue by allowing the NM USGBC be a sustaining sponsor of the local CoP and allow their folks to have discounts to CoP meetings. That was done quickly, with the assistance of LCI national and mitigated the need for formal negotiations and contracts, etc.

As CoPs develop, we'll be there to help in Core Group formation and program planning. We want to be "liberal" at the same time that we fulfill our stewardship obligation. This will likely become more challenging as we develop CoPs. I thought I would share these thoughts to our entire community so all are familiar with the policy.

In the meantime, give your local CoP a visit and let us know your experience there. I'd like to be able to report in this space on the feedback generated from our members on some of their experiences in the Communities of Practice. And remember, in May we're asking CoPs to look at possible lean metrics that would help their local communities in determining and reporting



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on the success or lack of success of basic lean design and construction principles. I'd like to take that information to the Board so we can begin to chart our pedagogy and future programs.