



Business Consulting Services

Techniques for Creating Online Communities of Practice

Applying lessons Learned . . .

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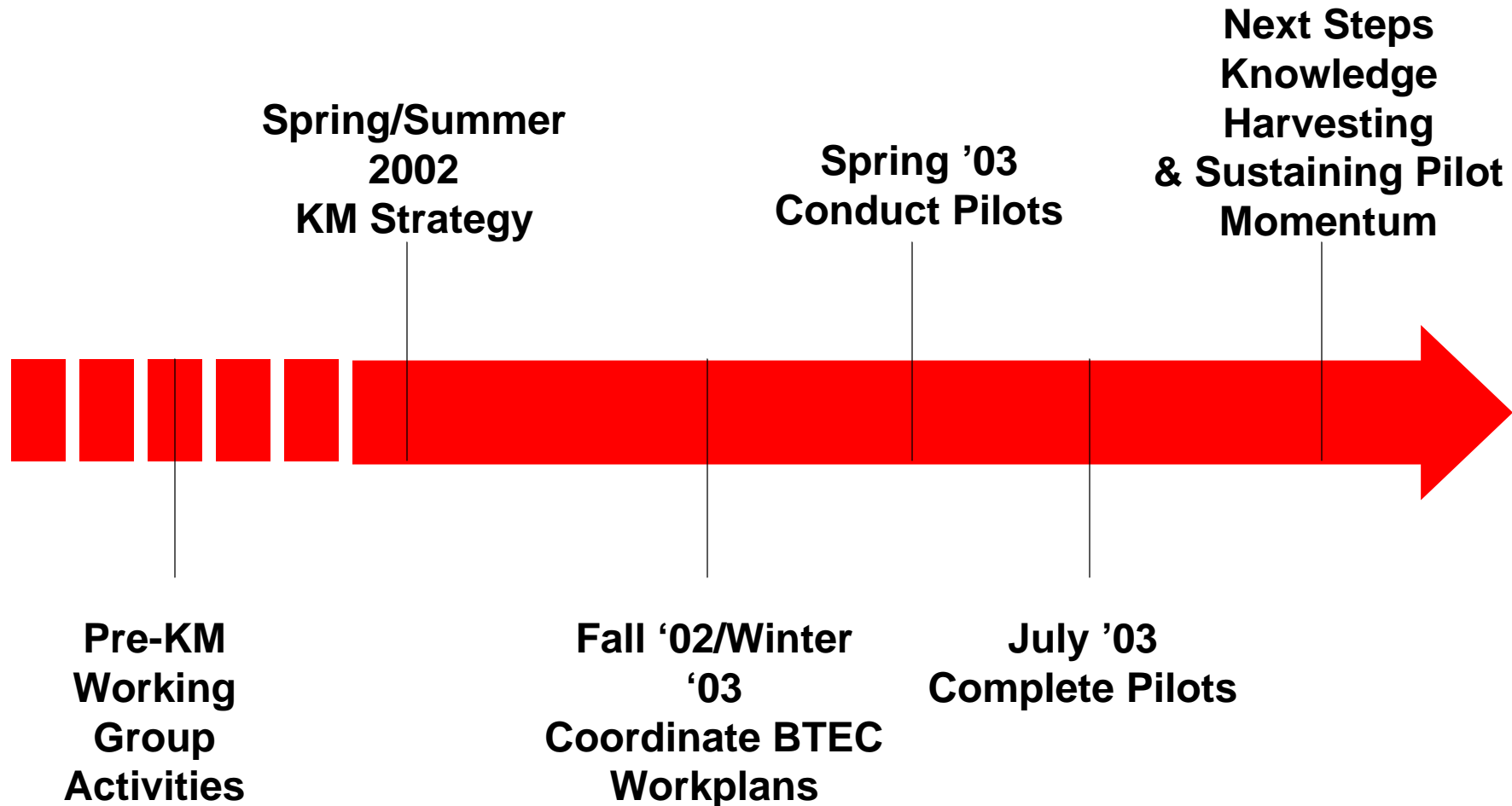
What is a Community of Practice?

- Group of people who share:
 - Common interest
 - Common practice
 - Commitment to share and expand the knowledge base for that practice

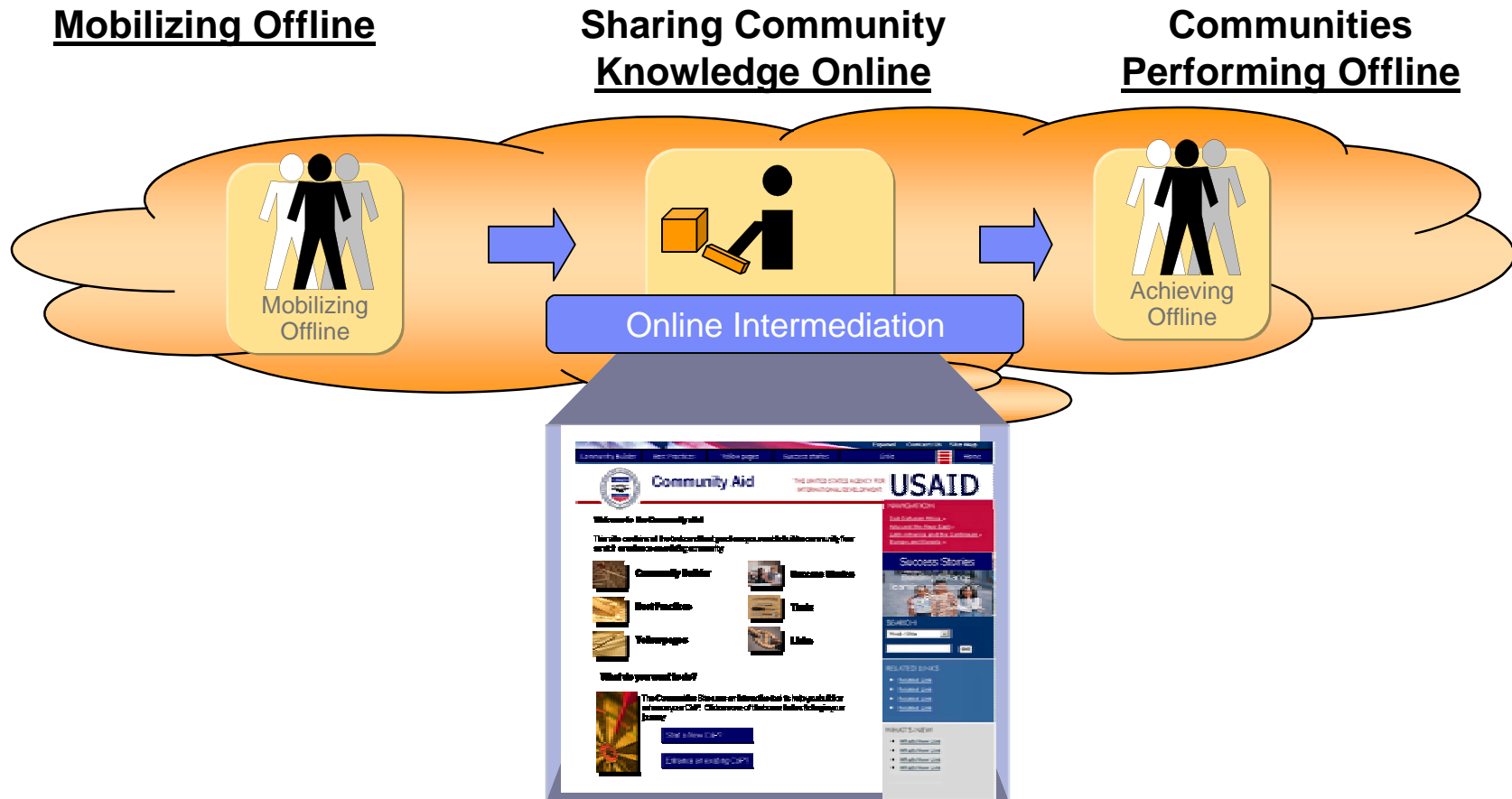
- Members may be:
 - geographically dispersed and
 - represent multiple functions, divisions or companies.

- CoPs are often supported by team-ware and web-based technologies.

USAID's Community of Practice Pilot Project . . .



Communities of Practice Transcend the Offline and Online Worlds



www.knowledge.usaid.gov
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Selection criteria is critical in determining which Communities to endorse at the organization level.

- Clear, demonstrated, and documented need (ideally supported by a business case)
- Presence of existing networks (formal or informal)
- Internal community leadership (or potential for leadership)
- Executive sponsorship
- Manageable size and budget
- Culture amenable to change or open to knowledge sharing
- Technical competence and access to necessary technology

A critical element in the community-building process is setting a common set of goals and objectives around a set of community norms.

- Performance metrics and overall goals
- Classification and cataloguing standards
- Standard approaches for identifying, recruiting, and bounding community membership
- Intra-Group communication protocols
- Functional requirements for technology

Some common Community roles from best practice organizations include

- **Executive Sponsor:** Nurture and provide top-level recognition for the community while insuring its exposure, support, and strategic importance in the organization.
- **Leader/ facilitator:** Provide the overall guidance and management needed to build and maintain the community ,its relevance and strategic importance in the organization, and its level of visibility among stakeholders.
- **Content Manager:** Search, retrieve and respond to direct requests for the community's knowledge and content.
- **Events Coordinator:** Coordinate, organize and plan community events or activities.
- **Communications:** Developing the communications and outreach plan and the lead in providing the ongoing unidirectional communications with the CoP.
- **Reporter:** Identifying, capturing, and editing relevant knowledge, best practices, new approaches and lessons learned into documents.
- **Education and Skill Development:** The lead on coordinating the education and skill development activities, workshops, and content.

Process of choosing technology solutions for a community is similar to that of choosing any technology product.

- **Define the CoP mission** statement, value proposition, performance measures and metrics, and pilot project achievement benchmarks
- **Establish overall CoP governance**, membership, and define roles
- **Develop implementation plans** including events plan, marketing and communication plan, education and skills plan, and advisory service plan
- **Develop functional requirements**, identify products that can support the pilot CoPs, and analyze and evaluate products and recommend appropriate technology solutions

Common community portal requirements

- **Community Home page** to assert their existence and describe their domain and activities
- **Personal Home page** for community members to organize their community membership content and other portal information
- **Conversation space** for on-line discussions of a variety of topics
- A facility for floating **questions to the community** or a subset of the community
- **Directory of membership** with some information about their areas of **expertise** in the domain
- **Shared workspace** for synchronous electronic collaboration, discussion, or meeting
- **Document repository** for their knowledge base
- **Search engine** good enough for them to retrieve things they need from their knowledge base
- **Community management tools**, mostly for the coordinator but sometimes also for the community at large, including the ability to know who is participating actively, which documents are downloaded, how much traffic there is, which documents need updating, etc.
- Ability to **create sub-communities**, subgroups, and project teams

More questions ??? www.GettingToGreen.org

- Research and best practices on:
 - President's Management Agenda
 - Communities of Practice
 - Knowledge Management
- Copy of Presentation
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- More real-life examples and best practices