Network mapping to build communities of practice

A summary of
Norman, C. & Huerta, T. (2006). Knowledge transfer and exchange through social networks: Building foundations for a community of practice within tobacco control. Implementation Science, 1(20). doi:10.1186/1748-5908-1-20

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Method, Knowledge exchange	March 5, 2010	October 3, 2017
Method		

Relevance For Public Health

Communities of practice (CoPs) provide opportunities for knowledge transfer and exchange activities in public health. This strategy will be useful to those who are planning and developing CoPs that include multiple sectors and involve the collaboration of many disciplines. Individuals and organizations involved in health promotion and disease prevention across geographically dispersed communities/ populations may find this approach especially useful.

Description

This resource describes a strategy (method) for organizing individuals and organizations around a common purpose or goal. The researchers used a network mapping model to facilitate the development of a community of practice (CoP) around smoking prevention and cessation [Web-assisted tobacco intervention (WATI)]. CoPs are self-organizing, adaptive and responsive learning systems. They use simple rules and procedures to guide collective learning across organizations. This learning can occur when individuals with different but complimentary skills and expertise actively share their knowledge. The method draws on social networking methodology, complexity theory, science of networks and organizational behaviour. It can help with planning, organizing and evaluating knowledge dissemination and exchange strategies involving CoPs.

Implementing the Tool

Who is Involved?

Practitioners, funding representatives, policymakers, governmental representatives (at all levels as appropriate) and researchers involved in health promotion and disease prevention may find this to be a valuable strategy. It would also be useful for community-based organizations and NGOs to exchange knowledge.

Steps for Using Tool

The authors suggest the following steps:

- Hold/host/organize an interactive meeting and educational session for individuals/ organizations sharing a common area of interest.
- Determine participants' expectations and knowledge, the nature, frequency and intensity of their relationships and their motivation for collaborating.
- Use network analysis procedures to produce and present a network map of the participants and other potential members of the CoP, including the strength, direction and centrality of their relationships.
- Extend the network by engaging peripheral stakeholders (increase the number of links).
- Develop core activities and communication processes for the CoP.
- Work through the stages of CoP development proposed by the Wenger et al. (2002) (potential, coalescing, maturing, stewardship, transformation).

Evaluation and Measurement Characteristics

Evaluation

Has been evaluated.

The researchers evaluated the impact of activities that took place during a three-day professional meeting. Participants completed a questionnaire prior to the research meeting and again three weeks following the meeting to evaluate the strategy. Researchers used mapping processes to illustrate social and professional networks in the area of Web-assisted tobacco intervention (WATI) at baseline. The questionnaire assessed expectations, knowledge, motivation for collaborating and interpersonal relationships, and took less than 30 minutes to complete. This process encouraged the formation of new network connections, increased participants' engagement in knowledge transfer and exchange (KTE) activities and formalized collaborative CoPs involving multiple disciplines and sectors.

Validity

Not applicable

Reliability

Not applicable

Methodological Rating

Not applicable

Tool Development

Developers

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Method of Development

This method draws on social networking methodology (social network analysis), complexity theory, science of networks and organizational behaviour.

Release Date

2006

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Resources

Title of Primary Resource	Knowledge transfer and exchange through social networks: Building foundations for a community of practice within tobacco control
File Attachment	None
Web-link	http://www.implementationscience.com/content/1/1/20
Reference	Norman, C. & Huerta, T. (2006). Knowledge transfer and exchange through social networks: Building foundations for a community of practice within tobacco control. *Implementation Science, 1*(20). doi:10.1186/1748-5908-1-20
Type of Material	Journal article
Format	On-line Access, Periodical
Cost to Access	None.
Language	English
Conditions for Use	© 2006 Norman & Huerta

Title of Supplementary Resource	Cultivating communities of practice
File Attachment	None
Web-link	
Reference	Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
Type of Material	Book
Format	Paper copy
Cost to Access	Book purchase
Language	English
Conditions for Use	Not specified