Craig Rollason & Faizal Dawood

Keeping a community of practice alive and kicking

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Session Objectives

"Practical strategies to establish and keep Business Analysis Communities of Practice (CoPs) sustainable, vibrant and engaging".

Agenda

- Background – 20 mins
- Community Challenges – 40 mins
- Business case – 20 mins
- Hints & Tips – 5 mins
- Q&A / Close – 5 mins

Craig Rollason

Head of Business Analysis at Biffa
And Leadership Coach

30+ years in business analysis:
Jaguar Land Rover (10 years), National Grid (20 years) and various consulting roles including DWP, telecoms, retail, care sector. Have also covered roles including PMO management and change management.

CoP Experience:
Developed first CoP in National Grid as part of a knowledge management initiative early 2000s across dispersed BA model. In consolidated model, developed practice events extending to 120 across BA and Solution Architect roles.

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Faizal Dawood

Lead Business Analyst Consultant at hippo

12 years in business analysis:
Couple of years' experience in the private sector on predominantly waterfall projects then moved to DfE working on large agile programmes before joining Hippo where I have worked with DfE, DWP, MOD along with some shorter engagement with some private sector clients.

CoP Experience:
Led a community of 8 BAs in the private sector, created a community of 30 BAs (perm and contract staff) at DfE as practice lead and currently a very active community member at Hippo of 40 reporting into the Head of BA

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WARM UP ACTIVITY

What do you think of then you hear the word community?

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What is a CoP?

“A Community of Practice has been defined as a group of people who ‘share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.”
(Wenger et al., 2002)

WARM UP ACTIVITY

Show of hands – Who is currently part of a BA CoP?

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Types of CoP

Professional Communities

BCS, IIBA, IRM

Organisational Communities

Line Managers

Domain Based Communities

AI, Analytics, Business Change

Practice Based Communities

Business Analysis, User Research, Product Owner

Social Communities

London Meet up

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Structural Considerations for Practice-based communities

CoP Personnel

You may join communities with permanent staff or a mix of contract staff.

Aligning goals ensures everyone gains and contributes value in sessions

Reporting Structures

Reporting structures can impact how well a CoP runs.

Whether BAs report to other BAs or different professions, it's key they feel connected and supported.

Communities and sub-communities

You may be part of one large CoP or several across departments.

It's important they stay aligned—otherwise, confusion and disengagement can follow.

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Case Study: nationalgrid

	PURPOSE	TOPICS	CHARACTERISTICS
BA COP 1 (6 years)	Setting standards Teaching BAs Connection	• Writing a compelling business case • BA role & outputs during sourcing (RFP) events • What do BA's do?	• Loose commitment • High importance BA/Business topics • Onsite / low cost • Internal FTE mostly
BA COP 2 (5 years)	Accelerated sharing of knowledge (ASK)	• Deliberate Knowledge sharing across silos • Practice Performance/ employee engagement reflection • External perspectives (int + ext)	• High commitment (mgmt and attend) • Relational, knowledge, reflection, fun • Offsite / low cost • Internal FTE + contract + supplier

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Case Study: Biffa

	PURPOSE	TOPICS	CHARACTERISTICS
BA COP (2 months)	Setting standards BA Competency Framework	New • BA Competency Model • BA Processes and templates • Organisation engagement in BA • Alignment to Performance Objectives Existing • Ice Breaker • Guest Speaker • Problem Solving Corner	• High Commitment • High importance BA/Business topics • Onsite / low cost • Internal FTE

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Case Study: hippo

	PURPOSE	TOPICS	CHARACTERISTICS
BA CoP when I first joined (Circa 10 BAs)	Setting standards Community feel Support networks	• Set up / revive community sessions • Build out support structures • Develop a sense of community	• Define roles and responsibilities • Understand ceremony cadences • Test and learn
BA CoP now, 3 years later (40 BAs)	As above, but also: Drive internal initiatives Formal support structures	• Enhance and future proof existing processes • Drive new community workstreams • More formal working structures	• Reduce single points of failure / reduce tacit knowledge • Drive initiatives to save costs • Build about ROI workflows • Continued support of junior analysts

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What challenges have you faced in either setting up or maintaining a community?

10 minutes table discussion
5 minutes playback

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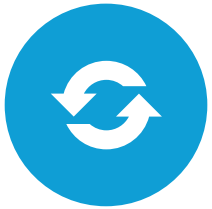
Lessons Learned

MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

GOOD DESIGN (LOCATION, FACILITATION, TOPICS)



FEEDBACK LOOP / KEEP CURRENT

INTEGRATION WITH WIDER ORGANISATION (TIMING, TOPICS)

CREATE FOR WHERE YOUR ORGANISATION IS/MATURITY

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Challenges in your workplace

⚠️ Stakeholders may be hesitant if your idea disrupts existing processes or requires a cultural shift.

⭐ **Offer a pilot or MVP approach to reduce risk and demonstrate small, early successes to build momentum like the creation of templates.**

⚠️ Communities of practice might not be seen as urgent compared to other initiatives.

⭐ **Emphasise why this needs attention now and explore cost-effective implementation strategies. Align COP to wider organisation goals.**

⚠️ They may be concerned about leadership, governance, and long-term sustainability.

⭐ **Define clear roles and responsibilities, including who will lead the initiative and how progress will be tracked.**

⚠️ Leaders may worry that a CoP will become a distraction from employees' main responsibilities.

⭐ **Position the CoP as a productivity booster, not a time drain. Highlight how it can help employees solve problems faster, learn from peers, and reduce rework.**

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The benefits / business case for CoPs

Selling the benefits of operating a successful CoP.

CoP Benefits

- Selling the benefits of a **community of practice (CoP)** to management requires demonstrating its direct impact on business objectives and bottom-line results.
- You should frame the CoP not as a social club, but as a strategic tool for **knowledge management, innovation, and employee development**.

Financial Drivers / Considerations

Reducing Redundant Work:

A community of practice **prevents costly redundant work**. It acts as a knowledge hub, allowing employees to quickly find out if a problem has already been solved, saving time and resources.

Faster Onboarding of New Hires:

A community of practice **accelerates onboarding** for new hires. It provides a direct pipeline to the collective knowledge of peers, reducing formal training time and helping new talent become productive much faster.

Improved Problem-Solving Efficiency:

When an employee encounters a difficult or unusual problem, they can post it to the CoP. This gives them access to a wide range of expertise and perspectives, leading to quicker, more effective solutions.

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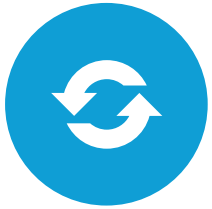
Business Case for CoPs

IMPROVED EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT / LESS TURNOVER

IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS SILOS



SKILLS IMPROVEMENT – SMES AND SHOW & TELL

EMPOWERED STAFF

MORE ROBUST PROCESSES (LESS SINGLE POINTS OF FAILURE)

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Design Your Ideal BA Community of Practice – 10 minutes

- **Task**: Within your tables discuss the aspects of an ideal CoP. *Assess common features and differing needs*.

- Each table should answer the following questions:
  - **Purpose**: What would be the primary goals of our BA CoP?
  - **Benefits**: Which benefits (from the presentation) do we most want to realise?
  - **Structure**: How often would we meet? What formats (e.g., lunch & learns, knowledge shares, mentoring)?
  - **Engagement**: How do we encourage participation?
  - **Success**: How will we know it's working? What are signs of success?

- **Group Presentations** (2 minutes per group)
  - Each team presents their "CoP Blueprint" to the room.

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Hints and Tips

Hints and Tips from Faizal

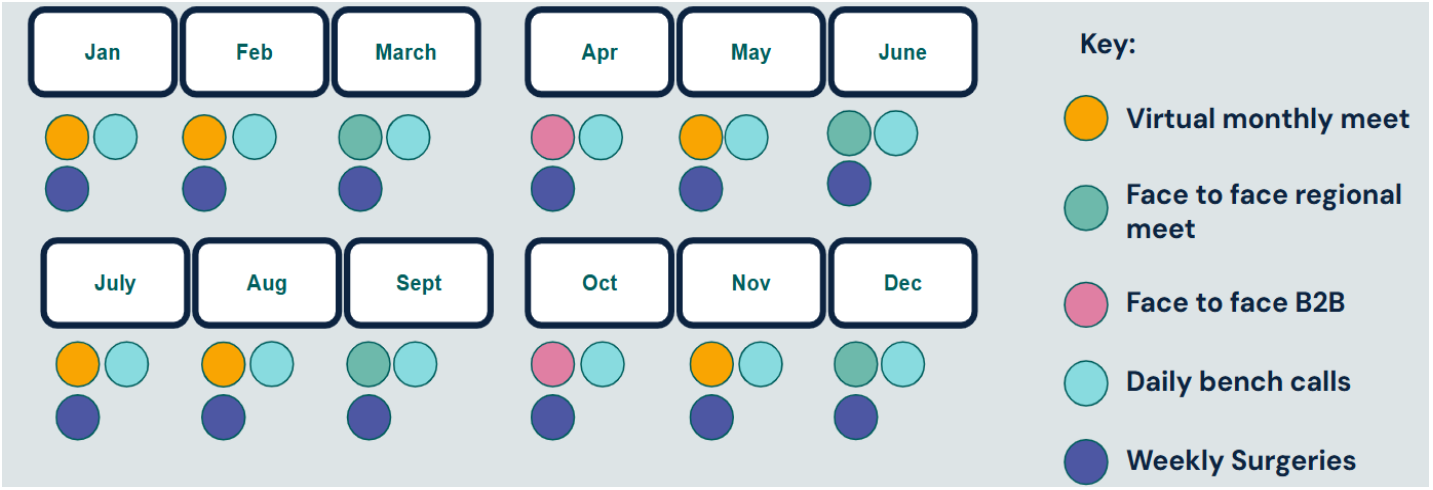
Rotate the facilitator for regular community sessions eg Monthly meet ups & Surgeries

Daily Bench calls for BAs not currently on a project

Biannual BA away days

Quarterly regional monthly face to face meet ups

BA Events Calendar – Below shows the various monthly touch points we have at Hippo demonstrating the constant interactions BAs have with the community



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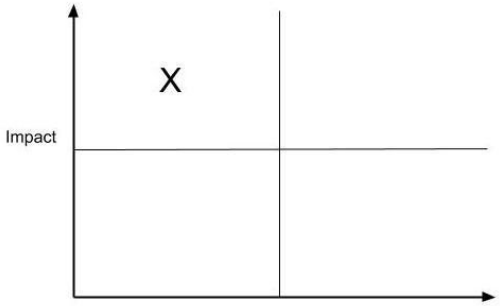
Hint and Tips from Craig

Wendlebury village hall



"Practice topics"
Effort vs Impact

Guest speakers

Negotiate engagement

Connect externally & showcase

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Hint and Tips from 2025 BA Conference

- **Refresh MoJ BA Practice**
  - Working with an expert supplier
  - *Collaboration, engagement, reshaping*
- **Building a Regional COP (Cumbria)**
  - Taking the initiative to build a regional COP
  - *Foundations, Nurturing, Leadership*
- **Building a COP at BoE**
  - Use of Maturity Assessments to drive development
  - *Value, Purpose, Participation*
- **Building a COP at NFU Mutual**
  - Use BA tools to shape COP (POPIT, VMOST)
  - *Motivators, Journey, Value*

Drive to create something for the community over a longer time period

Thank you!

Any Questions?