



Aquaculture Communications Group

The Aquaculture Community of Practice: Leveraging the Knowledge of Many

Dave Conley* and Tor-Eddie Fossbakk

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Nobody knows as much about aquaculture as you do!

- The people working in this industry each and every day.
- In the production, supply and services sectors, in research and development, in universities, private and public labs, and in government.
- Collectively, this group contains a wealth of knowledge - experience, insight, wisdom - that can be leveraged to solve a number of challenges facing the aquaculture industry.
- I will focus on the communications challenge and how the "Community of Practice" concept can be effectively applied to facilitate better communications and public relations - to leverage the collective knowledge of the aquaculture community.



- "An immense and ever-increasing wealth of knowledge is scattered about the world today - knowledge that would probably suffice to solve all the mighty difficulties of our age - but it is dispersed and unorganized. We need a sort of mental clearinghouse for the mind: a depot where knowledge and ideas are received, sorted, summarized, digested, clarified and compared." - H.G. Wells, 1940



- Using computers and the Internet (Web) we now have the technology to enable us to realize the vision of H.G. Wells and create “a depot where knowledge and ideas are received, sorted, summarized, digested, clarified and compared.”
- We also have a concept that unites the technology and the people that will use it -

Community of Practice



Community of Practice - a definition

- "Community of Practice" (CoP) is a phrase coined by researchers who studied the ways in which people naturally work and play together. In essence, communities of practice are groups of people who share similar goals and interests. In pursuit of these goals and interests, they employ common practices, work with the same tools and express themselves in a common language. Through such common activity, they come to hold similar beliefs and value systems. **What holds them together is a common sense of purpose and a real need to know what each other knows.**



Community of Practice...cont'd

- CoP's are groups 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.
- These people don't necessarily work together every day, but they meet because they find value in their interactions.
- As they spend time together, they share information, insight, and advice.
- They help each other solve problems.
- They discuss their situations, their aspirations, and their needs.
- They ponder common issues, explore ideas, and act as sounding boards.



Community of Practice...cont'd

Looking at the aquaculture community from a communications and public relations perspective:

- We share a concern about the way that aquaculture is being communicated to the public and to decision makers.
- We share a set of problems, which is about trying to get our side of the story told.
- We are passionate about what we do and find it difficult to see negative opinions and commentary get so much of the media coverage.



Aquaculture Communications CoP

- Bring together people in the aquaculture community that have a real interest in communicating what they do and want to contribute to changing public opinion.
- The real power of a CoP is in its ability to facilitate contributions from people in the aquaculture community from all over the globe, enabling us to maximize the use of scarce resources - skilled people, time, and money.
- CoP is the framework within which each of us can deposit our knowledge and ideas, where we can sort, summarize, digest, clarify and compare them, across distance and time.



Aquaculture Communications CoP

- We can become the stewards of our collective knowledge.
- Share it across distance and time.
- Bring people, experiences and ideas together to solve problems and overcome challenges.
- Dynamic and interactive, with more information and knowledge being added every day.
- **My challenge is your challenge; your solution is my solution.**



Aquaculture Communications CoP

- Enable us to rapidly build and manage our own knowledge management platform that we could use for a wide variety of strategic communications objectives.
- Enable us to have discussions on topics or themes and provide a searchable archive for future reference.



Some CoP Applications

- Compiling and centralizing information that currently resides on personal computers all over the world.
- Supporting initiatives by producer organizations and others.
- Distributing news and other timely information to the aquaculture community all around the world (e.g. ***Aquaculture Newsclips***).
- Notifying producers / suppliers / associations / researchers about important issues, news, trends, etc.
- A tool to develop priorities and set objectives.
- A means of identifying tasks and delegating responsibilities.
- A tool to help plan and execute strategic communications initiatives.



Conclusion

- Nobody knows as much about aquaculture as we do.
- We have the knowledge, experience and skills within the aquaculture community to effectively communicate our perspectives.
- The Community of Practice concept, coupled with the power of the Internet, is a vehicle to leverage the knowledge of many to deal with the communications challenges of the aquaculture community.