

Communities Connect Members Across Space, Time

Save to myBoK

by Barbara Siegel, MS, RHIT

Communities of practice are not a 21st century idea. From ancient cave dwellers of the American southwest to the guilds of the Middle Ages to today's Silicon Valley denizens, members of communities have found value in community participation.¹ In today's fast-paced, high-tech world, associations are challenged to encourage participation and at the same time bring value and benefits to members.

Launched only two years ago, AHIMA's Communities of Practice (CoP) connect more than 45,000 members to each other as they search for best practices, advice, tools, professional opportunities, and professional development.

Open 24 Hours a Day

Web-based communities of practice are dubbed the "killer application" for associations in this century.² The CoP is the knowledge management tool for HIM professionals. This application makes HIM knowledge easily accessible from any location 24 hours a day. The information is current and credible, and members connect instantly with each other in more than 200 active CoPs.

"I belong to other listservs and they are good because they make you think of issues that you may not have considered before," says Mimi Nawrath, RHIT, a CoP member. "But you cannot rely on the information coming forth [like you can with the CoPs]." Our community model, with members in the center, is strengthened by a growing body of knowledge that connects members to resources and services and, most importantly, each other.

Only a Few Clicks Required

As director of health information in a large medical center, I participate on several task forces and committees covering topics including HIPAA, APCs, revenue management, electronic signatures, and regulatory reporting, to name a few. Benchmarking and information gathering are critical to process improvement and rapid cycle change in our organization.

Almost every day, I check the FORE Library: HIM Body of Knowledge (BoK) or one of the more than 15 communities I have joined. There, I find what I need with only a few clicks of my mouse. I'm not alone. Lorelei D. Barrett, RHIA, an internal compliance auditor, says she "uses it daily to research various issues." For educator Michelle A. Green, RHIA, "the availability of online resources is invaluable."

Have you recently been asked to research a topic and remember reading an article six months ago in the *Journal* on that very same topic? Or maybe you attended a seminar on a similar subject. You no longer need to spend valuable time looking for that one article or trying to contact a speaker via snail mail or telephone. By taking advantage of this member benefit, you can join the Community of Practice that meets this immediate need, click on a link, ask your question, and search the BoK.

Strength in Numbers

AHIMA is a diverse community of members, strengthened by our unity, our differences, our values, and our professionalism. By connecting with each other, we grow stronger, gain knowledge, challenge current practice, and raise the bar as we look toward the future. In our 75th year of community, stay connected. Log on to the CoP at www.ahima.org and start making connections for today and for the future.

Notes

1. Wenger, Etienne, Richard McDermott, and William M. Snyder. *Cultivating Communities of Practice*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.
2. LaBranche, Gary A. "Knowledge Management: The Killer Application for the 21st Century." *Association Forum* 84, no. 2 (2000).

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Driving the Power of Knowledge

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