

Communities of Practice in Scout Groups: Why Do Volunteers Go the Extra Mile?

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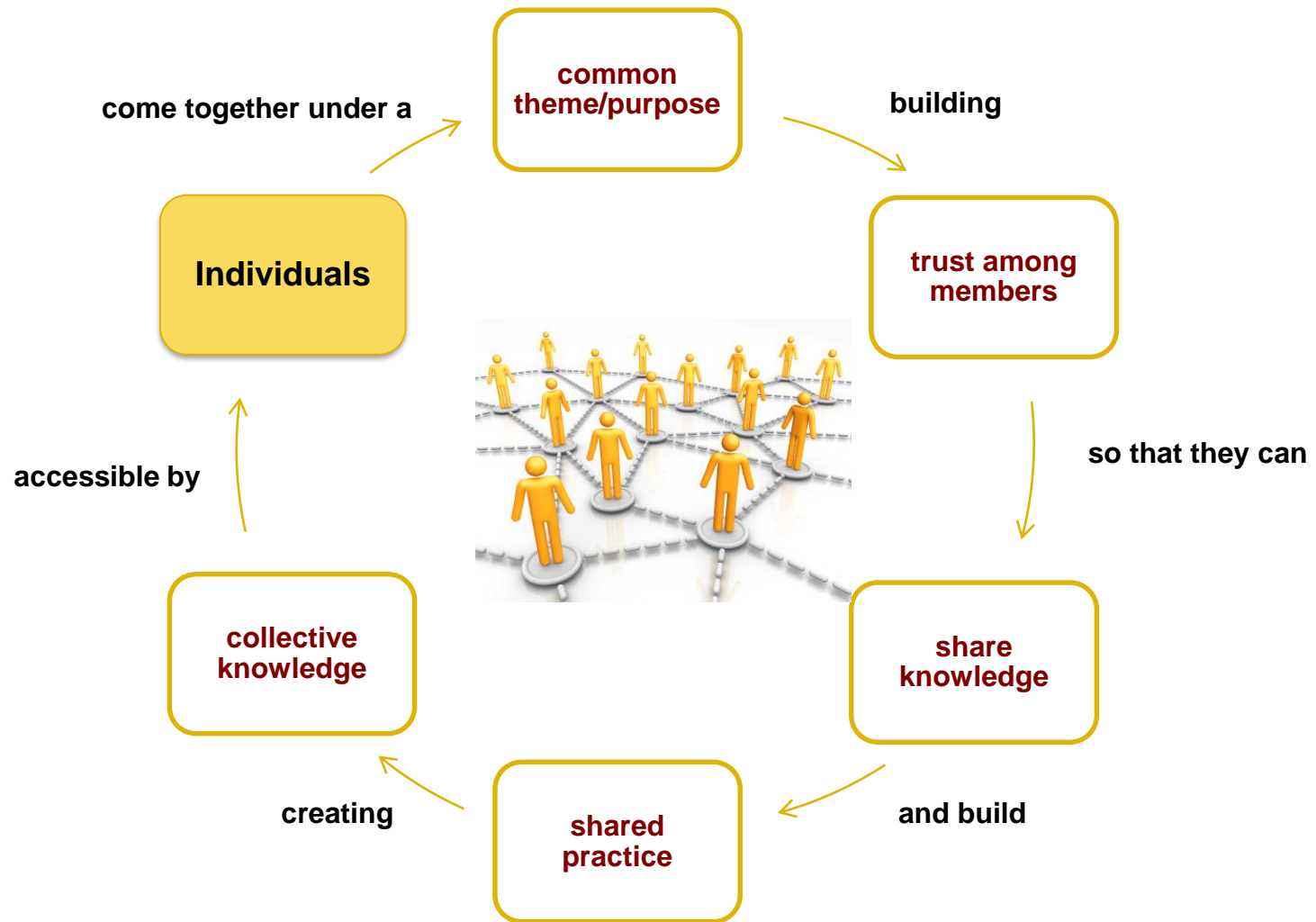
Communities of Practice (CoP)

Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a passion for something that they know how to do, and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better

Wenger (1998); Wenger & Snyder (2000)



Communities of Practice: A means to develop collective knowledge



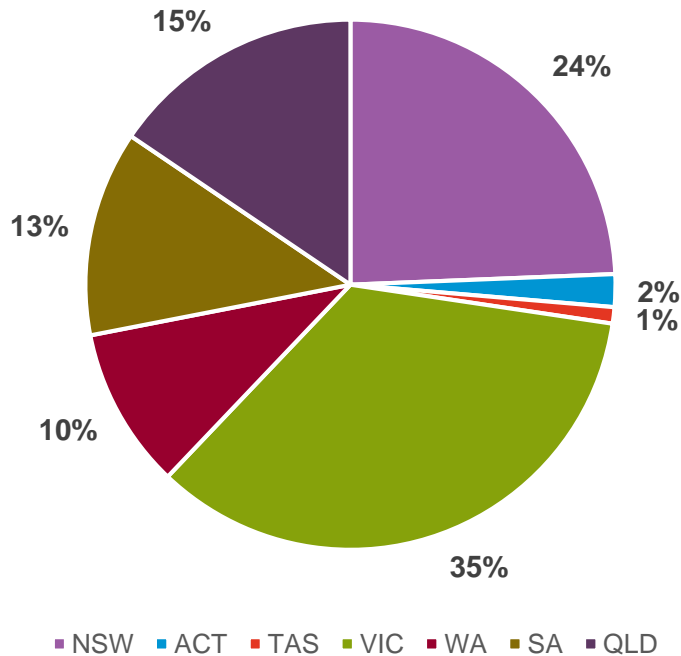
- Preliminary research on how Scout members share knowledge revealed that many of them engaged in “extra volunteering” through participating in CoP activities on a regular basis
- **Survey questions:**
 - Do you belong to a group outside of your own Scouts group?
 - How often do you meet?
 - What is the purpose of this group? Why do you do it (the benefits)? (open ended)
- Qualitative data coded and analysed (Leximancer)
- Data structure developed using the Gioia method (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton 2013)
 - 1st order *concepts*, 2nd order *themes*, 3rd order *dimensions*

Volunteers in Communities of Practice

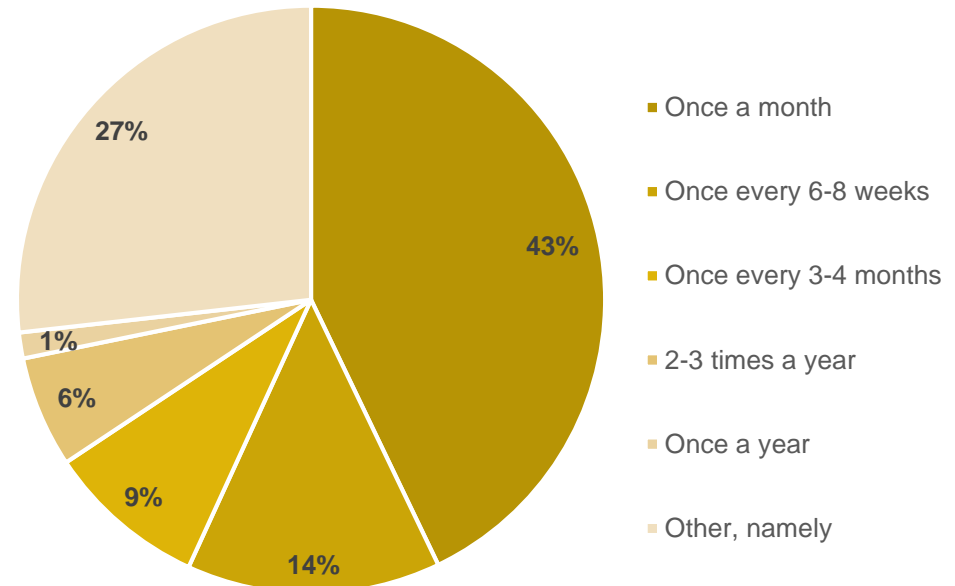
879 volunteers involved in CoPs

- Effective Sample of **702** – after removing missing/incomplete data
- Average tenure as a volunteer: **14 years**

Respondents' Branches (N = 702)



Frequency of CoP Meetings (N = 702)



'Other, namely' (Open-ended):

- 54% Meeting Weekly;
- 9% Meeting Fortnightly;
- 15% Meeting on Facebook or any other electronic means

Common characteristics of CoPs

- The group's purpose is to help its members solve problems (4.02)
- The group is effective in helping its members solve problems (4.05)
- The group's purpose is to share knowledge and learn from each other (4.43)
- The group is effective in sharing knowledge and learning from each other (4.32)
- The group's members share the same interests and objectives (4.33)
- The group's members are able to decide on discussion topics themselves (4.21)
- The group's members decide on the frequency and location of the meetings (3.93)
- People can leave and join the group freely (4.08)

BENEFIT 1: Role & Operational

Enhancing volunteer's role (41%)

“Building network of friends within Scouting has helped me feel more engaged with Scouting on a personal level but has also helped me perform better in my role as I have been able to share ideas and workload with others.”

- **Learning from others and sharing their own knowledge and skills** (programming, activity ideas)
- **Collaborative problem solving** (discussion of shared problems; learning how other leaders address common issues)
- **Source of peer support** (feedback; encouragement; practical help)
- **Sharing resources and workload**
- **Remain involved in Scouting on their own terms** (commitment; convenience)

Facilitating operations (10.5%)

“Effective management of the Region to support Districts and Groups raise the quality of their program and increase membership overall.”

- **Supporting strategic direction, coordination and leadership** (facilitate growth; improve program quality)
- **Increased capability to organise joint events** (event & trip planning; district or multi-troop activities)

BENEFIT 2: Personal development and belonging

Competence & Enjoyment (28.6%)

“Learning more about and becoming more confident in my role”

- **Opportunity for self-development** (Acquire new knowledge/skills; expand/refine current skills; sense of personal achievement)
- **Derive personal enjoyment** (pursue own interests; participate in fun activities)
- **Increase volunteer’s confidence in performing their Scouting role**

Community & Relatedness (32.1%)

“I have found a real sense of community and mateship in the Scouting movement.”

- **Meeting other volunteers and building a network of friends**
- **Fellowship, camaraderie and a sense of belonging**
- **Keeping up to date with what is happening in the organisation and remaining in touch with recent developments in activities and programming**

BENEFIT 3: Contribution to Others

Contributing to Scouting (18.8%)

“The ‘good-feeling’ of knowing I am contributing in a role that supports the Group's development, and is a role that complements my abilities well.”

- **Providing a service to Scouting** (running activities; maintaining facilities & infrastructure)
- **Helping and supporting other volunteers and leaders**
- **Contribute by sharing knowledge or experience; utilising existing industry skills**

Creating Outcomes for Others (20.4%)

“We believe that young people learn by doing and therefore offer an exciting program of activities to develop your child's potential – physically, intellectually, socially and spiritually.”

- **Satisfaction from seeing others achieve, grow and develop** (learning, achieving milestones, and developing confidence)
- **Creating opportunities for youth members to achieve meaningful outcomes and gain new experiences**
- **Giving to society at large; helping others; contributing to the community**
- **Identifying and understanding the needs of different members** (youth; adult volunteers; minority groups) **and assisting them to participate**

Now we know “why”what’s next?

Further analyses into “who” they are, and “so what?”



- Explore differences between CoP vs “other” Scout members:
 - Motivation profiles
 - Personality profiles
- And whether CoPs have an impact on:
 - Needs satisfaction (competence, autonomy, relatedness)
 - Outcomes – identification, engagement, belonging, intention to stay, learning and thriving





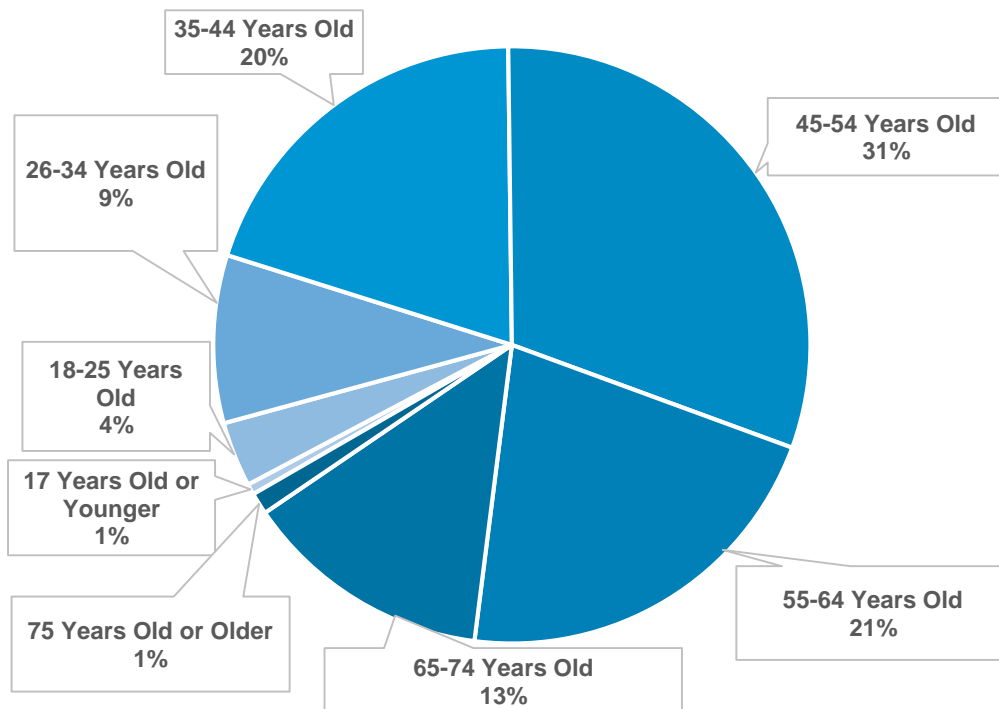
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Volunteers in Communities of Practice

Demographics

- 341 of the 702 participants with informative content about their involvement in CoPs provided their age and gender.

Age of Volunteers in CoPs (N = 341)



Gender of Volunteers in CoPs (N = 341)

