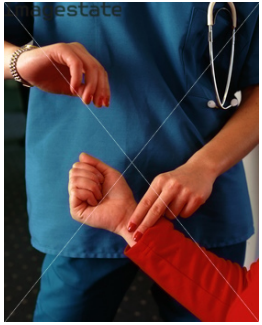


Over the last few years many companies have asked Dr. McDermott to assess the health of their communities of practice. This assessment has included over 50 communities in many different industries: pharmaceutical, engineering, oil, telecommunications, technical consulting, and defense. It has included communities in Europe, North America and Asia. The purpose of this assessment has not just been to provide feedback on communities, but to engage the organization in improving the vitality, value and effectiveness of their communities.



## Assessment Outcomes

Grounded in the theory of community development (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002), as well as Dr. McDermott's own practical hands-on experience starting, sustaining and renewing communities, this assessment helps organizations understand what they need to do to keep their communities of practice vibrant and valuable. It focuses on those elements of community activity and structure we know to be critical to long-term community success. The assessment results in three reports:

- a description of the overall health of your communities of practice
- organizational level recommendations
- recommendations to individual community leaders and members

### Overall Health Assessment

Because Dr. McDermott has seen many different communities in many different industries, he is able to compare your communities to similar communities in other companies, identifying where your community's development is ahead or behind others. This report describes community activities, relative health, barriers to effectiveness, aspirations. In addition, Dr. McDermott provides his observations and recommendations on what the organization needs to do to sustain their vitality and value.

### Organizational Level Recommendations

As communities mature, the relationship between the communities and the organization typically changes. Communities frequently want more influence and

impact as their host organization wants more visible value and measurable results from them. As a result, communities and the organization typically both want more integration. Dr. McDermott prepares a report and usually gives a presentation to a senior management team on the overall health of their communities, what the organization can do to sustain their vitality, the changing role of communities and what the organization can do to use them most effectively.

### Individual Community Reports

Dr McDermott provides a short written report to each community assessing how they compare to similar communities in other companies. Drawing on his experience sustaining communities in many different companies, Dr. McDermott recommends what community leaders can do to keep their community vital, beneficial to members and valuable to the organization.

## Assessment Process

Dr. McDermott has developed a comprehensive approach to community health assessment. Working with your organization's community development group, we customize the assessment to your organization's needs and budget. For example, while it is theoretically desirable to interview all community leaders, budget constraints often prevent it, so we assess a selection of communities, rather than all, focusing on a sample of healthy and less healthy ones as well as those that are most important to the business. The generic assessment elements include:

1. Insights from community development team. This discussion clarifies the purpose of the assessment and the team's view of the communities' original purpose, history and health. It identifies which communities to focus on, who to interview and how to customize the interview and survey questions.
2. Review community tools. You can tell a lot about a community by looking at the electronic tools the community uses to communicate. We review the site as well as unobtrusive statistics on use.
3. Observe community meetings. While it is usually impossible to observe meetings for all communities, it is helpful for us to sit in on a few. This gives us a tangible experience of the community.
4. Interview community leaders. This is key to the assessment. It not only covers their description of community activities, value, and relationship to the organization, but it also helps us understand the concerns, strengths and weaknesses of the leaders themselves.

5. [Survey community members](#). This survey covers different ground from the community leaders' interview. It identifies the issues member face, the value they get from the community and the potential they see in it.
6. [Interview stakeholders](#). Senior managers' and project team leaders' expectations of communities are critical to the community development process and the changing relationship of communities and the organization.
7. [Discuss findings](#). Dr. McDermott prepares preliminary tables of findings and discusses them with the community development team. Collaboratively, we reflect on the meaning of the findings and together define recommendations.
8. [Report](#). Dr. McDermott writes up the reports and presentations that he and the team decide will be most useful. Since Dr. McDermott has a background in organizational change, he helps the team focus on both an accurate reflection of the communities' status and identifying what community leaders, support team and managers can do to make communities more effective.

## Collaboration

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While Dr. McDermott can lead this assessment, it is much more powerful if the community development team and he work as partners, collaboratively conducting interviews and analyzing results.

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