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Etienne Wenger is as a leading expert on communities of practice. He was a pioneer of the "communities of practice" research and is now a globally recognized thought leader in the field. Etienne's work is considered seminal to both research and practice in several domains, including business, education, and government.

After working as a teacher for many years and getting a Ph.D. in artificial intelligence, Etienne Wenger joined the Institute for Research on Learning, where he developed his new learning theory centered on the concept of community of practice. For the last twelve years, he has been helping organizations develop and implement knowledge strategies based on communities of practice. He is much sought after as a keynote speaker and workshop leader. He also teaches courses on communities of practice online. He and his partner Beverly Trayner organize an annual retreat for community leaders with.

Etienne's work has been very influential. In the course of his career, he has provided a seminal conceptual framework for two different fields. His first book on artificial intelligence in education shaped the field known as "intelligent tutoring systems" in the 1980's. Then in the 1990's his work shaped the field of "situated learning" and "communities of practice." He was the co-author with Jean Lave of *Situated Learning*, where the term "community of practice" was coined. Building on these original ideas, he later wrote *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, a seminal book that lays out the theory of communities of practice. His work did not remain theoretical, however. A new book, *Cultivating Communities of Practice: a Guide to Managing Knowledge* (co-authored with Richard McDermott and William Snyder) is addressed to practitioners in organizations and was published by Harvard Business School Press.

In education, this works has inspired a new line of research that focuses on the social nature of learning and its connection to communities, social practice, and identity. In business and government, this work has revolutionized the field of knowledge management and organizational learning. After an initial focus on technology this field is now placing the emphasis on the human aspects of knowledge. Indeed, cultivating communities of practice is increasingly recognized as the most effective way for organizations to address the knowledge challenges they face. It is commonplace to say that people are the most important resource in organizations. Yet we seldom understand this truism in terms of the communities in which individuals develop the capacity to create and share knowledge. Communities of practice—properly understood and cultivated—are an organization's most versatile and dynamic knowledge resource. Today, Etienne's work is inspiring the knowledge strategy of most leading organizations in both private and public sectors.

Education

2010	Honorary Ph. D., University of Brighton, UK.
1985-1990	Ph. D. in Information and Computer Science, " <i>Toward a theory of cultural transparency: elements of a social discourse of the visible and the invisible.</i> " University of California at Irvine.
1982-1984	M.S. in Information and Computer Science, University of California at Irvine.
1979-1982	B.S. in Computer Science, University of Geneva, Switzerland.

Professional experience

1997 – present	<p>Independent researcher, consultant, author, and speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Works with clients to develop and implement knowledge strategies based on communities of practice</i> ▪ <i>Helps these clients launch and cultivate communities of practice and develop an internal capability to do so</i> ▪ <i>Conducts workshops for senior managers and for professionals on communities of practice, their roles in organizations, and the process of developing them</i> ▪ <i>Conducts evaluation projects on communities of practice, learning, and networking in organizations</i> ▪ <i>Acts as an advisor on projects</i> ▪ <i>Provides training to community leaders, developers, and support providers</i> ▪ <i>Speaks at professional conferences, conventions, and other public and private events</i> ▪ <i>Teaches online and face-to-face seminars on communities of practice</i> ▪ <i>Conducts research projects on communities of practice and supporting technologies</i> <p>His commercial clients include: AFF-Oslo, AstraZeneca, British Telecom, Cisco, Erste Bank, Executive Networks, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Kimberly-Clark, McKinsey, Petrobras, Procter & Gamble, Philips, Project Management Institute, Rio Tinto, Shell, Sun Microsystems, Teradata, TerraForum, Threshold Corporation, Xerox, and ZS Consulting.</p>
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	<p>His governmental and non-profit clients include: Australian Vocational Education, British Red Cross, Canadian government, Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, Canadian Mental Health Association, Center for Excellence in Finances, Department of Education of South Australia, Dutch Government, European Social Funds (EU), Florida International University, Health Canada, Harvard Early Childhood Innovation Project, Health Services Authority of British Columbia, HR Norge, IDEA Partnership, IFAD, Ingham County Health Department, International Partnership Network, Iowa Area Education Agency, Norwegian Vocational Authority, Piedmont Health Education Association, Singapore government, Society for Research in Higher Education, South African Qualification Authority, Swiss Vocational Education, UNICEF, US Federal Government, Vermont Oxford Network, and the World Bank.</p>
1987 – 1997	<p>Research Scientist, Institute for Research on Learning, Palo Alto, California</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Took a lead in achieving the research mission of the institute, which was to “rethink learning” from the ground up.</i> ▪ <i>Developed a new theory of learning based on the concept of communities of practice and wrote a seminal book about it.</i> ▪ <i>Helped major clients of the institute apply these ideas in their organizations.</i> ▪ <i>Directed the “retainer” program of the institute, bringing in clients who wanted gain access to the research of the institute through an ongoing affiliation.</i>
1981 – 1982	<p>Systems analyst, Battelle Institute, Geneva, Switzerland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Developed a statistical package for a major client, including a three-dimensional editor for statistical tables, which was then sold as a general product.</i>
1977 – 1979	<p>Assistant principal and faculty member, Unity School, Denver, Colorado.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Coordinated the parent-school relationship program</i> ▪ <i>Developed a curriculum for teaching French as a second language.</i>
1974 – 1977	<p>French teacher, Alliance Française, Hong Kong.</p>

Academic work

2009 – present	Invited research fellow, Open University of the Netherlands
2007 – present	Visiting professor, University of Manchester, United Kingdom, School of Education
2006 – present	Invited research fellow, Open University, United Kingdom
2005 – present	Honorary professor, University of Aalborg, Denmark, School of Humanities
1996 – present	Invited lecturer and workshop leaders at various universities. His recent tours have included the following universities: Bergen, Birmingham, Brighton, Cambridge, Canterbury, Coventry, Exeter, Fielding Institute, Florida, George Mason, Harvard, Lancaster, Lund, McGill, North Texas, Northeastern, Oslo University College, Padua, Trento, UniRoma, University of California, Ulster, Utrecht, Vasteras, Warwick, Wisconsin, Wolverhampton, York.

Publications

Books

Wenger, E., White, N., and Smith, J. (2009). *Digital Habitats: stewarding technology for communities*. Portland, OR: CPsquare Publications.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., and Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: a guide to managing knowledge*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

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Articles and papers

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- Wenger, E. (2003) *KM is a doughnut: shaping your knowledge strategy through communities of practice*. Keynote paper. Sydney, Australia: Proceedings of KM 2003.
- Wenger, E. (2002) *The QB community at Eli Lilly: A community of practice among quantitative biologists at a large pharmaceutical company*. Case study written for the BEEP Project of the European Union, www.beep-eu.org, Case 374.
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- Wenger, E. (2002) *Ayuda Urbana: a constellation of communities of practice focused on urban issues and challenges in Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean region*. Case study written for the BEEP Project of the European Union, www.beep-eu.org, Case 333.
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