



MnCMN Thought Leadership

Cultivating Change: Building a Thriving Community of Practice for Minnesota's Change Leaders

By Julie Zaruba-Fontaine

Welcome to a featured article from the **Minnesota Change Management Network (MnCMN) Thought Leadership Collection!**

This collection spotlights the incredible work being done by our members—sharing innovative solutions, personal insights, and lessons learned in the field.

MnCMN is a vibrant community of professionals passionate about advancing the practice of change management across industries in Minnesota and beyond. Our network exists to connect, grow, and inspire leaders who champion change inside organizations every day. If you're ready to learn, connect, and contribute alongside a growing network of Minnesota change professionals, visit www.mncmn.org to become a member today!

Cultivating Change: Building a Thriving Community of Practice for Minnesota's Change Leaders **By Julie Zaruba-Fontaine**

Imagine this, in the heart of St. Paul, Minnesota, a group of change managers at a government agency faced a familiar challenge: siloed teams, duplicated efforts, and inconsistent adoption of new technologies. Despite individual successes, the lack of shared learning left them exhausted. Then, they tried something different. They formed a Community of Practice (CoP), blending the **Art of Hosting's** (AoH) participatory practices with **Prosci's** structured methodology. Within a few months, cross-departmental collaboration soared and project adoption rates improved. Their secret? A deliberate fusion of human-centered hosting and evidence-based change management.

This is my Community of Practice creation story. You may be wondering how I got here. It all started with a comment during a weekly check-in with a colleague. We were discussing the siloed nature of our work and how we need a space to share,

collaborate, and discuss best and emerging practices. After the meeting I reached out to several other change managers throughout the Enterprise and all of them shared, they would be interested in joining a Community of Practice (CoP.)

Next, I developed a Goals and Roles document which discussed the roles of attendees and our goals for the meetings. During our first Community of Practice meeting, we spent time getting to know each other and discussed the Goals and Roles document. Below is a step-by-step guide to help other Organizational Change Managers (OCM) develop their own Community of Practice.

Step-by-Step Creation Strategy: Merging Art of Hosting and Prosci®

1. Define Purpose and Secure Sponsorship

AoH Principle: Begin with a “conversation that matters.” Host a World Café session to co-create the CoP’s purpose, ensuring alignment with organizational goals¹⁷.

Prosci Alignment: Use the **Prepare Approach** phase to identify sponsors and link the CoP to strategic objectives. Active executive sponsorship is the #1 success factor for CoPs³⁵.

2. Design the Container for Participation

AoH Practice: Create a “safe container” using circle processes or Open Space Technology to foster trust and self-organization¹⁷.

Prosci Tactics: Apply the **ADKAR® model** to address individual barriers:

- **Awareness:** Communicate the CoP’s value through stories and data.
- **Desire:** Invite middle managers as champions to model engagement⁴⁵.

3. Launch with Collaborative Rituals

Host a kickoff using **Pro Action Café** (AoH) to prioritize challenges and prototype solutions.

Embed **Prosci’s Three-Phase Model**:

- **Prepare:** [Develop a charter with roles and metrics.]
- **Manage:** Use checklists and templates for consistent practice sharing²⁵.
- **Sustain:** Create feedback loops to harvest insights and adjust strategies¹³.

4. Nurture Continuous Learning

AoH Methods: Rotate hosting duties among members to build leadership capacity⁷.

Commented [RW1]: Is there a specific kind of framework you recommend here?

Prosci Integration: Align CoP activities with the **Five Tenets of Change Management**, e.g., “Organizational outcomes are the collective result of individual change”².

5. Scale with Intention

Transition from ad hoc gatherings to structured “learning sprints” tied to project milestones.

Leverage **Prosci’s Enterprise Change Management (ECM) Framework** to integrate the CoP into enterprise-wide change maturity⁴.

Lessons from the Field: Wisdom from Practitioners

“Make Tea, Not Agendas”: One Minnesota CoP found that informal “coffee chats” boosted psychological safety more than rigid meetings. *“The magic happened when we stopped presenting slides and started sharing stories,”* noted a facilitator⁶.

Middle Managers Matter: A manufacturing CoP struggled until they invited line managers to co-host sessions. Result? 30% faster buy-in for plant-floor initiatives⁵.

Fail Forward: A failed attempt to standardize tools taught a financial services CoP the value of AoH’s “emergent design”—adapting methods in real-time based on member needs¹⁷.

Key Takeaways for Minnesota’s Change Leaders

Blend Structure and Emergence: Prosci’s phases provide scaffolding; AoH’s participatory methods ignite energy.

Lead with Questions, Not Answers: Hosting “strategic silence” in conversations surfaces collective wisdom¹⁷.

Measure What Connects: Track both adoption metrics (Prosci) and qualitative stories of collaboration (AoH).

Celebrate “Small Wins”: A public health CoP used a “progress wall” to visualize incremental successes, sustaining momentum during long-term transformations³⁶.

Final Encouragement

Change is not a solo sport. As you build your Community of Practice, remember the AoH adage: *“The wisdom is in the room.”* Pair this with Prosci’s rigor, and you’ll create more than a network—you’ll foster a movement. Minnesota’s challenges are complex, but your collective capacity to host change is greater still. Start small, stay curious, and let the practice evolve. The next breakthrough is already brewing in the conversations you’ve yet to host.

Inspired by the Art of Hosting's participatory principles and Prosci's evidence-based frameworks.

About the Author: Julie Zaruba Fountaine is a member of the Minnesota Change Management Network and a change management coordinator, consultant, and keynote speaker based in Northfield, Minnesota. She is the founder of Empower Possible, a wellness and change management organization that delivers innovative solutions through workshops, presentations, and consulting services. Julie integrates evidence-based and emerging change management practices to enhance well-being and engagement across diverse organizations, including healthcare, academia, and nonprofits. With over a decade of experience in wellness roles, she has also served as an adjunct instructor at the University of Mary. Julie holds advanced degrees in health sciences and business leadership.

A Note from MnCMN

As a MnCMN member, you can submit your own story to be featured in our Thought Leadership Collection. Share a case study, lessons learned, or a bold idea that's sparking dialogue in your organization. Whether your change initiative succeeded, failed, or is still in progress—we want to hear your voice. **Review submission details & submit your story at office@mncmn.org**

If you're new to MnCMN, we invite you to learn more about becoming a member. Membership gives you access to:

- **Exclusive networking events** with change leaders across industries
- **Professional development resources** like workshops, tools, and templates
- **Special pricing** on [Prosci® Certification Courses and Agile Change Leadership Institute programs](#)

[Learn more and join today at www.mncmn.org](http://www.mncmn.org)