# Vice President of Engineering

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# Community of Practice

![Global Gateways logo] Global Gateways, Inc.

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Community of Practice
A group of people who are brought together by a desire to learn more about a common class of problems/opportunities.

- John Moran
Global Gateways

Today, senior executives in similar roles face similar problems even though they are in different companies. This is true regardless of whether the roles are in the engineering organization or the information technology organization. It may be surprising, but it is also true across different types of companies.

Generally stated, these problems include:

- shrinking budgets
- shorter schedules
- accelerated development
- personnel recruitment and retention
- changing technology.

At a lower level, the more specific problems you may have encountered are:

- Offshore development – What are the risks, rewards, and challenges? What are the critical success factors?
- The Prima Donna personality – When can you replace them? When can't you?
- Architecture – every few years it changes – client server, multi-tier – what's next?
- Technology licensing issues – What are the differences between internal use and product inclusion? How do you deal with sole sources, lack of ongoing support, and issues with standard contracts. *"What's in your wallet?"*
- Development environments – Which ones help? Which ones hinder?
- Team organization – What is the most effective mix of junior and senior people to maximize productivity?
- Runtime environments – Java or .net – What are the real benefits and drawbacks without all the hype? What are the problems?
- Capital equipment – What are the issues with buy-ing used equipment? Where are the good deals?
- Enhancement vs. maintenance releases – What happens when you combine them? How do you fix it?
- Mergers and acquisitions – What are the issues of driving two product lines together now? How does this affect the future?
- Process – *"My reports tell me we've got the best processes in place, but we just can't get stuff out fast enough"* Why?

If these problems sound familiar, you are not alone. Other VPEs are facing similar challenges too.

The common set of problems faced by senior engineering executives, combined with the pressures of today's economic climate, create an opportunity for these executives to come together to share their problems and jointly explore issues to find the best possible solutions. This process is called a Community of Practice.



Have you ever wondered how some of your peers are dealing with some of the same problems you are facing?

Have you ever wanted to be able to bounce some ideas off someone before implementing them?

Have you ever had a solution to a problem and thought that it could help someone else with the same problem?

Then the Community of Practice is for you.

## Purpose

The Community of Practice exists as a non-competitive[1] forum for the free exchange of ideas and information that can be helpful to all members in addressing the problems they face daily in product development.

Communities of Practice have been formed for CIOs and, separately, their direct reports. These groups have shown the effectiveness of information sharing and the proactive development of best practices.

These proven techniques are now being extended into the VP Engineering community to foster the same kind of collaborative problem solving in a group of peers.



## Membership

The VPE Community of Practice group is limited to C-level executives in engineering organizations. This includes both Vice Presidents of Engineering and Chief Technology Officers.

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1. Companies that are competitors are put in different CoP groups to prevent potential conflicts.

## Benefits

The Community of Practice provides its members with many benefits. These include:

- Networking
- Exchange of ideas
- Confidential web site for information sharing
- Social

## Focus

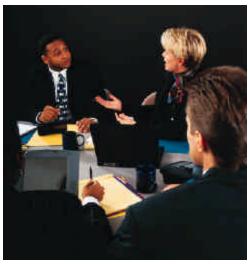The Community of Practice has four areas of focus:

- People
- Technology
- Process
- Metrics

**People**—mentoring and developing engineers to create an exciting environment that encourages each person to contribute their best level of effort.

**Technology**—developing and utilizing the most appropriate technology for ongoing product development, testing and release.

**Process**—developing and utilizing the most effective processes to create and enhance products that support the cost and productivity goals of the organization.

**Metrics**—utilizing metrics to create baselines and subsequently measure the effectiveness of changes to determine the level of success.



## Format

The Community of Practice group meets for a half-day once-a-month and is hosted by a community member company. Each meeting typically consists of one or two presentations, followed by discussion of issues raised by members. Presentation topics are selected by the members in advance. Each meeting is followed by a dinner that furthers the interaction of members for professional and social purposes. Dinner is included in the membership fee.

## Join Us

So, if you would like to:

- Have additional potential solutions to the difficult problems you face
- Share your solutions for the benefit of the group
- Discuss potential alternatives in a non-threatening environment prior to making an important decision
- Expand your network of peers

then consider joining us for the next VPE Community of Practice meeting. We look forward to seeing you there.