

# Transcript | How to Use Your Network to Grow Your Career

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70 countries around the world. And I'm sure as if we turn to the chat, we'll start to see lots of folks joining from all around the world today too.

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And our mission is to make governments smarter. And we do this by putting the best knowledge and skills at the fingertips of public servants around the world. I could see Kelly first in the chat to introduce yourself. Welcome, Kelly. Nice to meet you. In Peterborough, Elizabeth from Nairobi, Kenya, welcome to the both of you. For those of you who are interested, I am joining from sunny Edinburgh, Scotland today, where it actually is sunny. So that is a delight.

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Before we jump into today's session, I'd like to start off by extending an invitation to all of you who are listening to join me in the Life and Government community on Apolitical.

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You'll be hearing a little bit more about this throughout the session today. We've created this community to provide a space for public servants from all around the world like yourselves to connect with peers, ask and answer questions on all aspects of life and government. And it's a really active and supportive space with nearly 1,000 public servants waiting for you to join them. And you can do so at the link that you should see in the chat.

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And you'll also find the link in the resources section of Zoom on your screen.

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So please do join us there. I can see a few more folks introducing themselves. Welcome, Tracy. Welcome, Catherine from Ottawa. Wonderful to meet you both.

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I will get a few technical notes out of the way before we get into today's conversation.

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And my colleague is just sharing that in the chat for you as well. All right. So before we introduce our wonderful speakers, we're just going to run a few quick polls to get a sense of your background and where you're coming to for today's discussion.

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So let's have a look at the first poll, and that is, how important do you consider communities and peer networks to be for your career development. Let us know if you think they're very, somewhat, important, neutral, or not important at all. And I'll give you just a few moments to think about that and let us know what you think. I can see lots of votes already coming in, somewhat, no surprise so far in terms of your perspective on this question, given you've signed up to join us at today's event. Okay, so far, most of you are feeling that communities and peer networks are very important or somewhat

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Important for your development, which is fantastic. 66% of you have said very important, 28% have said somewhat important.

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6% neutral, and I'm delighted to hear that none of you think that networks and communities are not at all important for your career development.

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That's fantastic. I'm going to go on to the second question that you can now see on your screen. And that question is, what is the biggest benefit you've gained from a professional network? Have a think. Is that learning new skills or knowledge?

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Finding new job opportunities, feeling more connected and supported, perhaps advice or mentorship.

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Maybe collaboration on shared challenges, or maybe you haven't quite found the benefit just yet.

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Let us know what you think. Again, I'll give you a few moments to submit your answers.

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Looks like we're quite split. There's so many benefits to be gained from a great network. So one more moment so far. I can see skills and knowledge just eking ahead.

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Which is great to hear. Okay, final results are on the screen in front of you. 26% are finding that you're learning new skills or getting knowledge from having a professional network in your career, which is fantastic, and closely followed by feeling more connected and supported or access to advice and mentorship.

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That's fantastic. Okay, I'm going to move on to one final poll question. And that question is, do you currently belong to a professional community or peer network? Yes, you might be active in one or more communities.

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You are a member of a professional community or network, but you're not super active. No, but you would like to be.

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Maybe you're not quite sure what's out there or you don't think it would be helpful for yourself.

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Again, have a little moment and let us know what you think.

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Looks like most of you are active in a community or a member of a community or network.

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Keep those boats coming and we'll reveal a final result in just a moment.

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Okay, 42% of you are a member of a network or community. Hopefully after today's session, you are so inspired by the benefits to be gained that you go and get even more active than you already are in those communities and networks.

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Fantastic. Thank you so much for taking part in those polls. We're going to go into the main event. So I'm going to introduce you to our speakers. We're very fortunate to have two brilliant guests today with us.

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Jessica Bott and Chika Masuda, and I'm going to introduce them now. Jessica is the Communities of Practice Lead for the UK cabinet Office's Transforming Public Procurement Program. Jessica is dedicated to building empathetic communities of practice where public sector procurement professionals can collaborate, share best practices, identify common challenges, and foster continuous learning.

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Can't wait to hear more about that work, Jess. And Chica is head of intelligence research at the Government of Japan's digital agency and is responsible for planning and managing the service design community, as well as leading intelligence research in the corporate strategy department. You can read the full bios by visiting the resources tab at the bottom of your Zoom screen and heading to the speaker section. And I don't know about you, but I'm really looking forward to learning more from both of our speakers today.

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So let's get into it. We're going to start with a quick icebreaker to kick things off.

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Each of our speakers will have 30 seconds to share their responses, and we would love to hear the answers of everyone here today as well. My colleague is just going to post a link in the chat, which you can see there now, and that'll take you to a thread in the life and government community I mentioned earlier. And we'd love to hear your answers to the same question.

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So have a think and let us know. And the question we're going to be hearing from all of you on is what is one skill or area of knowledge that you have developed thanks to your network?

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I'm going to come to Jess first and then to Chica.

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It's quite an interesting question. I would say that one skill that I've developed thanks to my network is the ability to be part of building and nurturing a community of practice.

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That generally supports peer learning and collaboration, of course, departments and sectors.

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In my role, I've learned how to bring people together around shared goals, facilitate meaningful conversations and create a space where knowledge is not only shared but also applied to best practice, especially with the new act that's come in for communities of practice and that's with engaging with networks across central government and the wider public sector

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Bringing together that collective knowledge and openness and collaboration at Good Turn a group of professionals and stakeholders in their own fields into a powerful learning community.

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That's fantastic. I can't wait to hear more about that, Jess.

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Chica, what about you?

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Yes, I've developed the skills to facilitate conversation across different cultures, roles and agendas, especially within the government where communication is often siloed. So everyone is very nervous that you're having that open mind communication.

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That's fantastic. And a multicultural conversation today with everyone who's introduced themselves in the chat. So that is wonderful. Okay, so let's get stuck into things. We have two present presentations to share with you over the next half hour, first from Jess and then from Chika.

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We're going to share their present experiences of building and utilizing networks in the public service. And don't worry, we will leave plenty of time for you in the audience to ask questions afterwards. So please do start thinking about those and post them in the Q&A tab at the bottom of your screen, which you'll see on Zoom.

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So get those questions coming. And first, let's get started with Jess. Take it away whenever you are ready.

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Okay, brilliant. If we could have the next slide, please. Okay, so hi everyone. I should begin by sending my apologies on behalf of my colleague Steve Sully, who is unable to join us today.

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Due to unforeseen circumstances that were unavoidable. He was very much looking forward to joining today. So he sends his best.

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And hopefully I can carry it for the both of us today. So next slide, please.

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So as kindly mentioned a few seconds ago with my intro I am Jessica Batt and I'm the Communities of Practice Lead for the TPP program in the cabinet office. I'm currently on some comment from the Metropolitan Police Service.

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Where I've currently spent the last portion of my career. In my current role in the cabinet office, I focus on building a focused communities of practice across the public sector.

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Space for the Transforming Public Procurement Program, where we bring procurement and commercial professionals together to share best practice And learn from one another under the new Procurement Act that came into play towards the end of February this year. And Communities of Practice is part of a

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Learning intervention. We've grown a national network of professionals across a variety of teams and roles.

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Especially those that are on the ground doing the work themselves.

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We've created a communities of practice space which is a portal on our government commercial college system that we use. So it's been busy, but it's been an exciting journey and I'm happy to be here with you today to represent

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My team and the community and purpose and how effective it can be at networking tool. If we can go back one slide, please, if that's okay Okay, let me quickly just detail. So who we are. So I've already introduced myself and said my apologies for Steve.

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So the TPP program communities of practice are all about bringing people procurement professionals from across the public sector to connect and learned from one another. It's not just about having a network It's about having a space where people feel supported, especially during this major transition from

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The old regulations to the new ones that come with the Act.

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Through the space that we've built in communities of practice. We conduct regular meetups that are topic focused.

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We have 11,000 people who are part of it. And engaging with the new transition and the resources that we have.

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In order to drive the reform forward. And that's really the power of the model. It's not top down, it's peer-led and it's human so with focus on real learning and connection. Next slide, please, so we can talk about the challenge.

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Okay, so now let's talk about the challenge. A new piece of legislation has come into play and of course that always brings like complexity and uncertainty for the area of work and of course the procurement Act is no exception

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There are over 92,000 contracting authorities in the UK and that's quite a huge audience affected by the change.

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The Procurement Act fundamentally changes how these organizations buy goods and services just to provide you a breakdown.

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Our role as communities of practice is to be part of that learning product.

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As a supportive mechanism following the new Act to help guide support and ease those currently in the period of transition. Next slide, please.

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So transforming public procurement, for short TPP, because it is quite lengthy if I keep saying those.

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Three beautiful words itself is more than just a policy change. It's about capability, culture and confidence. Next slide, please.

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So we supported the learning from the Procurement Act And a community of professionals following the development of detailed policy guidance and the full e-learning program.

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Which consists of nine core e-learning modules and several deep dive sessions each have their own level of certification for both.

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These are key enablers, but as we all know, it's not just about producing the material, it's also about embedding and making it stick. So hence communities of practice comes into play. Next slide, please.

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So the solution, communities of practice We act as a glue that helps connect people to the guidance to each other and share learning.

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Next slide, please. It's not just about being a marketing tool. Our communities of practice is a learning intervention as well. There's a difference between a community and a community as a practice, but both entwine quite beautifully together. It's designed to meet user needs and empathise with concerns.

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And recognise individuals that are working the role And what they face on a daily basis.

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Next slide, please. So now where do we start to build a community of practice? Next slide, please.

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So we began by mapping the landscape for all those 92,000 authorities. From there, we recruited several points of contact across central government and the wider public sector to represent their organizations and teams.

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Carrying out the change. We also developed a network of over 2000 soup users who are our community champions.

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They are honestly the soldiers on the ground who help us to make meaningful connections who have carried out the e-learning and the deep dives where applicable We run a program of online meetups with subject matter experts focused on real and relevant topics. Next slide, please.

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So now we have growing and managing the communities of practice. Next slide, please.

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At the heart of it all is our communities of practice portal hosted on the government commercial college It's our communities hub. It is our home to resources, discussions.

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Forums, updates, case studies links to the e-learning and more where individuals can connect. I should say forums is particularly an excellent mechanism for people to network Especially under the new Act.

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And as commercial professionals as well to share knowledge and experience where they can submit questions to one another and engage in meaningful conversations. Next slide, please.

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We also created the supernuser. Our dedicated newsletter is for nominated soup users These individuals, like I mentioned, champion the Procurement Act and have done the e-learning slash deep dives And they act as key points of contacts within their teams and they're an excellent

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Group of people. They help cascade information, answer questions and provide insight back to us as we move forward with the change.

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Next slide, please. Here we have our bottom line.

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For regular communication. Communities of practice also enables consistent targeted communication.

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For our community from uh it consists of like a monthly e-shop which we're sharing learning resources, a touch to maintain momentum and engagement.

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So showing current updates, latest news. Our upcoming sessions that they can sign up for on Eventbrite and join us. Next slide, please.

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We also have LinkedIn. Which is also an excellent networking tool for professionals like Facebook just a bit more heavy. We've also taken the conversation public using LinkedIn to share updates testimonials and event promotion. It's helped us extend our reach and highlight how communities

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Of practice, support, adoption of the new act through real stories community voices. Next slide, please.

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So we've hosted over 30 meetups with more upcoming to keep momentum going following the implementation of the new Act.

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Each focused on specific practical topics presented by experts and community members as well to present for themselves what they're doing within their teams and organizations. And it's also a great way for them to network with one another and answer questions and learn from each other as well. These sessions give people real tools and confidence

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To apply the new rules. Next slide, please. And we also embedded feedback in every session we do. It helps us listen, improve.

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And make sure that the community stays relevant. Feedback also helps members grow their own networks by contributing to shared experience. It also provides us valuable insight on what we can do to improve their experience, how we can support further and what the community needs.

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Next slide, please. Now, where are we today?

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Next slide. Like I've mentioned, we have over 11,000 members, over 35,000 meet up attendees, 85 plus percent satisfaction which is exceeding our KPIs and we are now supporting over 50% of the top 25 regional fora.

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We've built one of the largest communities of practice in the UK and we're still growing. So don't just take our word for it. Next slide, please.

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What's also very important within a community is testimonials. That show the impact the community is having, not just on capability.

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But on confidence and well-being of those that are actually within those roles.

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These voices are powerful. They show how meaningful connection can shape someone's learning.

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And of course, to network with one another. Next slide, please.

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This will be the last slide from me. When we talk about networks as engines of growth.

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Collaboration and well-being. Communities of practice as a community as a networking tool is a perfect example of that action.

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In the TPP program, as this is like a learning intervention We've seen how creating a space for people to connect around shared challenges can lead to rural development, confidence building and even career progression.

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These communities aren't just about sharing updates, they're about creating a sense of belonging within your role.

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Especially in complex and changing environments like the public procurement. They open up doors to new ideas, new roles and new professional relationships.

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And above all, they remind people that they are not alone. They are part of something bigger with shared purpose and support So thank you very much for listening to me. I hope I've shown how communities of practice can be more than just a network.

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It can be a lifeline, a learning tool and a space to grow together. Thank you.

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Thank you so much for that, Jess. That was really great. I actually wonder if anyone on this call is a member of your huge community of practice already. If you are, do feel free to make yourselves known in the chat. We'd love to hear from you.

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Now I'm going to go straight over to you, Chika. Take it away whenever you are ready.

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Thank you very much. And Jess, thank you so much for a wonderful presentation.

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And... Today I want to talk and share a little bit about the Japanese government situation.

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Next slide, please. So... So good evening from Tokyo. So now Tokyo is 11 p.m right now. My name is Chika Masuda, head of intelligence research and also appointed community manager at the digital agency of japan which was established in 2021.

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So our agency is the newest organization in Japan government And the praise all similar to the UK's GDS.

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Since joining 2021, one of my key responsibilities has been engaging with experts.

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Both to introduce the agency's work to run from others. Next slide, please.

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So our intelligence research team collects and organize data to inform digital strategy extracting insights and turning them into actionable outputs. We support decision making through reports, briefings, and visual tools.

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Beyond analysis, we conduct policy design research and foster communicate communities for dialogue and collaboration.

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We serve as both brain and the bridge connecting knowledge with action across government.

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Next slide, please. So I tried to share the challenges we faced and how we've expanded the power of community within the government organization.

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Next slide, please. So to understand Japan's bureaucracy is to understand how Japan works.

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It may appear quiet and order but beneath that surface lies a complex administrative system highly structured and historically rooted.

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The modern bureaucracy in Japan emerged in the late 19th century.

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Influenced by both Chinese tradition and Western modernization. But instead of simply copying Japan-shaped a unique system.

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One that values stability, loyalty, and unspoken norms. This has created what we call an ordinary enigma.

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Efficient that often close to the others. So but in today's world where the digital connections demand openness, even bureaucracy must evolve.

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I'd like to talk about how something unexpected community is beginning to reshape this word from the inside.

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Next slide. So let me dive into introducing our organization, Digital Agency, a little bit.

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So our organization was established in September 2021 directory under the prime minister's office.

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To read the creation of the Digital Society in Japan The need for this agency became clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed Serious weakness in Japan's digital infrastructure.

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So we have defined our mission, vision, and values, and this initiative present one of the first challenges of this kind of within the Japanese government.

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The heart of our philosophy is the principle of no one left behind Our organization is deeply committed to a human-centered approach in every single we do.

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Next slide, please. So our organization was established 2021 under the cabinet.

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As the command center for Japan's digital transformation, it sets basic policies for national and local governments as well as equity public sectors.

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On a unified budgeting mechanism allows the agency to allocate funds across ministries to enable strategic government-wide digital investments.

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Slide, please. So currently, the digital agency composed of four groups and these are supported by close functional units known as expert units.

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Our agency operates as a result of the combination of these groups usually made up of civil servants And the cross-functional expert units from the private sector As of 2024, there are over 1,200 employees of digital agency in which 40% are civil servants and 47% are experts.

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This is quite unique. The other government ministries doesn't hire the expert inside the organization. So this store agency that only the organization hiring.

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The experts as a walker. Next slide, please.

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So the dose very chaotic organization. The health community shapes our careers.

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Next slide, please. I became the first community manager in the Japanese government. There was no playbook for it, but I was fortunate to be part of the newly reforms digital agency which works across ministries and has room to try new things

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Inside that agency, there was a clear cultural divide. Private sector hires preferred remote work, while career people across preferred being in the office.

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That these two groups didn't connect well and it was hard to build shared momentum.

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So instead of assuming we listened We launched a voluntary survey to understand what people were feeling what challenges they faced and what kind of connection they needed.

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That became the first step toward building not just a team, but a real sense of community in government.

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Next slide, please. So 10 skilled members from various departments such as data scientists.

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Project managers, designers, and engineers volunteered volunteered to join the survey team They identified several key issues.

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So those key findings to be found out. So to respond quickly, we designed a simple plot field solutions.

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Improving the lighting and the layout of meeting rooms, blending earphones.

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At no cost, creating open informal gathering spaces inside the office. The aim was to create small visible changes, everyday interactions and support the organic growth of community within the organization.

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Next slide, please. So in Japanese government culture, it's common for senior officials to have private offices. Often with windows while regular staff use shared spaces.

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This tradition carried over to the digital agency. As a result, many of the window side rooms were assigned as executive office.

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And not used for meeting rooms. So meanwhile, most meeting rooms are bearable to staff with so or converted straight rooms dark rooms cramped and window rest. So when the agency planned to expand the new floor, we saw an opportunity

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Using the survey result and insight from casual Ranch conversations with the minister, we highlighted meeting the environment where affecting psychological comfort and daily collaboration.

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We also gathered data on how frequently these executive offices were actually used.

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A bit like rowing but it opened to the door to discussing a more equitable use of space.

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So fortunately, the minister understood the issues and supported our suggestions.

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The new window side rooms were designed. As made in the spaces for all staff, not just for executives.

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This small shift challenged our long-standing tradition and sent a clear message that space should serve collaboration, not hierarchy.

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Next slide, please. So this is our new open space be now a staff survey, one of the most common requests was for an open space where people could naturally connect. Unlike traditional government offices where space is integrated by headcount, this idea faced pushback.

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Some departments worried it would reduce tasks or seem inefficient. So it responded with stories.

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How the lack of space made it hard to host external guests or collaborate across teams.

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We blow stuff into the process. One of our volunteer designers helped shape the way out and our data scientists modeled the positive impact on engagement and the culture.

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So thanks to this effort, the open space was approved. It's now the heart of the agency used for all hands meeting every month, guest talks.

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And informal gatherings. Even the prime minister visited to join an open dialogue on digital policy to this space. So this space has changed how we work and how we relate.

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To each other and the public. Next slide, please. So this is one of example. This is a monthly accessibility review.

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So internal and external members join as accessibility specialists who use their own experiences, walk through the current app and conduct real-time reviews. This is big big change for the Japanese government. We can hear the user's voice.

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Next slide, please. So the creation of the open space was a turning point.

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It allowed not just people, but new ideas and connections to follow flow into the organization.

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For a long time, Japan's government office offices were closed to informal exchange, but the space welcomed external expert researchers innovators, civic leaders, even students and give staff a chance to be the real relationship.

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As a result, the digital agency began to be seen differently.

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Not just as a government body, but as a place where knowledge is shared and where people from inside and outside connect.

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And that changed carriers too. Staff expanded their networks to discover new opportunities, and found ways to apply their expertise more meaningfully.

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Community became more than culture. It became a pathway for growth.

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Next slide, please. So to close, I'd like to share what this experience has taught us.

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So it wasn't just about creating a nicer office. It was about creating the conditions for people to connect, to collaborate and to grow.

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We saw that even a small change in the physical space can shift culture if done with intention.

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Staff began to see their work not just as individual tasks, but as part of the shared mission.

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Most importantly, we learned that community is not a side activity.

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So it's a foundation for better collaboration, better running, and better government.

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We now have several surviving communities that are functioning very effectively.

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And on the personal level, it also opened up new career festivities. When people feel connected and valued, they take initiative to expand their networks and explore new ways to contribute.

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So thank you very much for listening to my presentation.

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Thank you, Chika. That was so great. We have had a couple of questions come in already. So we'll give you a moment to pause after sharing so much wonderful information in those quick presentations.

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We will be turning shortly to the Q&A, so remember to keep any questions that you have for today's speakers coming in Zoom.

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We do have questions from you already, both pre-submitted and in the Q&A. What I would just say is to ensure your questions do get seen and not lost in the chat. Do submit it in the Q&A function. That's the best place to make sure that your question gets seen. I'll give you a minute or two to type any new questions that you want to submit. And while you're doing that, I'm going to just take an opportunity to remind you For the first time, for those of you who might not have been here for the opening remarks, or if you were, a little bit of reminder that we have a fantastic life in government community on the apolitical platform. This is a forum where members are sharing questions, advice, and resources on the many facets of working as a public servant.

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It's a great place to connect with peers and start to build your network using some of the advice you've learned today. So do take a moment to join via the link that my colleague is posting in the chat now. And stay tuned because we're going to come back to this for an opportunity in this community, which I'll announce in just a few moments.

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Time. So I am going to go to the questions. So I'm going to start with a question that we've had come in from Q&A from Kelly.

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And this question is for you, Jess. Kelly has some experience with the GCF community and found it a really useful platform to network with other commercial colleagues and also ensure that Kelly's knowledge was up to date on knowledge drops, which is great. Really a case study for what you were talking about earlier, Jess.

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Kelly's question is, how do you ensure the reach of such platforms to every relevant civil servant? You've built such a huge network and community of practice in the work that you're doing. Have you done that? Tell us your secrets.

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Okay, thank you so much for your question, Kelly. I'm glad that you're finding the GCF community very valuable.

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From your side of things. I would say that ensuring reach and inclusivity across such a wide range of varied civil servants for specifically the commercial and procurement sector is definitely a challenge.

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But we're always something that we're working on to improve our reach.

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For the TPP communities of practice, we focused on building a strong network of single point of contacts that we identified very early on in the process when we were starting to embed communities of practice as a learning intervention of the

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Tpp that's across departments including arm length bodies and of course the wider public sector As well as recruiting as such those nominated super users that we have within those organizations. So we have this box that we're cascading the information and resources

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And then we have the CPUs as well and that's a strong over 2000 colleagues that have been absolutely brilliant in championing our community and of course the procurement Act.

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And they help cascade information locally. In terms of reach as well, we use a mix of channels, so government commercial college portal.

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Communities of practice portal We have our newsletters that we've dedicated. We have the newsletter that we have for our super newers and we also have a TPP commercial newsletter that we have from our communications team that also plug communities of practice as well in their updates.

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We have LinkedIn and direct engagement as well to try and meet people where they are in the formats that they are comfortable with so We do have local communities of practice where myself and my colleagues join and cascade information that way and then gather

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As such from them as well as a valuable resource. That said, we know that there's more that we could still do. We are keeping momentum following the Act.

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Our goal is to make communities of practice more accessible, silence we continue to work on.

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Relevant and timely. So whether someone joins the meetup, reads a case study.

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Or of course, chats within our forum that we have on the communities of practice portal. They feel that they are part of that conversation And have the opportunity to stay up to date and network with one another.

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That's amazing. Thank you, Jess. It sounds like it's been such a successful project.

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Thank you for sharing the detail. I'm going to go on to the next question that's come in via the Q&A and do keep them coming. So this question is about remote and working in return to work movement. So the question is, how is the return to work movement impacting networking?

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And how is that impacting employees who are not responding to the return? So perhaps those who are still working remotely or working hybrid.

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Would love to hear your thoughts on that. Perhaps, Chika, you would love to talk a little bit about this. You spoke about the importance of physical environment creating connections. So I would love to hear your take.

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Thank you very much for giving the questions. So in Japan government, the return to office movement has helped We recognize in-person networking. Spontaneous conversations and cross-department connections have become easier, contributing to stronger internal collaboration However, for employees who continue to work remotely, the shift has also introduced challenges.

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Some feel increasingly isolated or worried about missing out on informal information, roles, and career opportunities. So to address this.

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Our organization must ensure that networking and visibility and not limited to physical presence.

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So that includes designing inclusive hybrid meeting and creating the dedicated channels for remote employees to connect.

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Share and grow professionally regardless of where they work. So we are using the Slack channels and having the communication easily And also our team is making the once a month the meetup hybrid.

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Researching, sharing, running, uh. Workshop.

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Yeah, that's what you're doing right now.

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Fantastic. Thank you. Jessa, do you want to add to that?

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I think you covered that absolutely brilliantly. I guess from our perspective.

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We've thought return to work impacting networking with colleagues and those that are not responding It varies within organisations, but within communities of practice within TPP, most of our to be fair, the high majority of our sessions are conducted online, so it does reach those colleagues that

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This may not particularly apply to who are not responding to the return to work, but there are resources available online to to engage those that may not be meeting in person. We do also still have our conferences that we meet colleagues across the wider public sector

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And central government that is still being conducted such as PureX that we have within the UK that happens every so often that we engage with colleagues but as a community of practice It is aimed to be more of a

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As well an easier enabler for people to network and collaborate together.

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That's fantastic. And a great question, great answers and a great question as well. And I'd love to hear from anyone who is attending as well if you've got thoughts on how return to work is impacting your networking or if you're working remotely or hybrid, we'd love to hear your experiences. So feel free to share in the chat as well. And we'll continue the conversation there.

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While we do that, I will turn to another question. We have a number of pre-submitted questions that some of our attendees shared with us. I will start with the next one, which is, as an introvert, I sometimes find networking challenging.

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What strategies or tips have you found effective for making meaningful connections in professional settings?

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And how have you ensured your networks are introvert friendly? Very relatable question from an attendee there. Would either of you like to take that one?

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Networking tips for introverts.

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I don't mind going first. I shall take the lead. I would say, to be honest, I may not be coming across like this Because I'm presenting. But I would say that I'm also introverted as well when it comes to certain settings it can depend

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With who you're with as well. Teams, whether you feel a little bit anxious to be doing certain things and then here's me doing this today so um For those that are a little bit more introverted from you have to find

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Ways in which to connect everyone together. Again, whether that is in person or whether that is online.

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For us, because ours is heavily online, people have that capability to do that within a comfortable setting to engage.

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Whether that's joining our sessions that we have online, whether they're being presented to.

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And then we also have sessions that we are enabling a bit more further now, which consists of breakout rooms.

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Understand for an introvert that might be a bit more of a challenge. If you're put into a space of say five or 10 people into a little room as part of a session, it can cause a bit of stress and anxiety, I can imagine.

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But you have to put yourself out there as well. I can't speak on behalf of the person that has sent the question I would say find what you're comfortable with. There's ways of doing certain aspects and having that open conversation whether that's via email, a LinkedIn message as well.

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Fantastic. Chica, would you like to add anything to that? Any networking tips for introverts?

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Yeah, that just mentioned, but that community is a not forcing by someone to joining the community is not causing someone because if you find out some community you are interested in or just trying to see what's there going on so no need to force yourself

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To join the community it's um you can build.

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Your own community if there is no community you are interested in. So it's more flexibility there having the community inside the organization So don't worry about that if you said inside of the government if we said community we imagine that such a huge kind of the hundred or thousand people gathering but the only five or 10 people is fine

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So just to find out some people who wants to talk, it's fine.

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Some great advice. Thank you so much. We have a couple more questions coming in via Q&A.

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I'm going to ask this one, which has come in from an anonymous attendee. Could you please share your personal experience regarding the strategies that have worked best for you in expanding your professional network to secure new career opportunities?

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So what do you do when you're looking to leverage your network for that next role or a new opportunity?

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Should I go? I'll take this one to start with. For myself personally um sort of what I said in the previous answer the comments, but it's also about putting yourself out there where you feel confident and comfortable to do so as well without feeling pressured.

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For myself, I think a good example is that I went on second comment to the cabinet office so me being previously technically still part of the nps I put myself out there to build that connection because I was interested in the space and I was interested in

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The community aspect. Engage in LinkedIn as well within your own organisation if there's networks and communities within your teams.

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We also have within our department coffee roulette. Where you're allocated someone that is not necessarily within your direct team, but as a wider departmental sub teams And then you have a coffee online with them, not necessarily face-to-face if you're in the same office if you want to do that. Whereas it's

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Myself because my colleagues are across the uk because the silver zone is quite large.

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And that's a good way to speak to someone that you wouldn't necessarily do so. And they could be from various levels within their role, experience, job grades, however it works within your organization.

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And you could be speaking to someone that would expand your career because you're having a an open and honest, normal conversation with someone that doesn't necessarily have to be professional and you're sharing your interests.

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So that's a good way of opening up your network as well, whether you can do a coffee ruler or something like that.

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If I'm speaking from a communities of practice perspective. A community is valuable for career development. Again, it's about creating a safe and supportive space where people can learn from each other.

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To build your confidence and to, of course, gain exposure to new ideas and ways of working so you'll be, I've seen professionals build networks outside of their immediate teams from our

online sessions that we do because they speak to one another on our MS Teams chat function for when we do our online events.

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So they network with one another and you tend to recognize the names that engage more with one another from reoccurrent sessions. And that gives you progression opportunities. It's less about hierarchy it's more about feeling empowered and shared learning and

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What you want without your career. So I think that's it from me.

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Fantastic. Thank you. Chica, I've got a question for you that's come in via the Q&A. And this question is, does Japan have a version of Civil Service Live? If you're not familiar with Civil Service Live, it's the UK's annual staff learning conference.

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Is there something similar in Japan? And tell us about it.

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Unfortunately, we don't have access to government, but the digital agency provided the service design date twice in a year.

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And also the AI. We have once a year, we have a kind of the live demonstration they uh as presented by our organization.

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That sounds great. And what a nice initiative to introduce for your team. That's wonderful. Okay. So I'm going to go to another pre-submitted question that's come in from an attendee.

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And this one is about initiating conversations. So how do you initiate conversations that matter and build a purposeful connection? So I think it's kind of getting to beyond the small talk. You might make a conversation, make a connection with how do you make that kind of purposeful connection, initiate conversations that matter.

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Any thoughts from either of you?

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What we can also do is if there's any questions that we don't answer here during the session, we can take those to the community, the life and government community. Feel free to also, if

anyone has any thoughts on that question, you can also add them into the chat. Jess, I see you've unmuted. Would you like to share your thoughts on initiating conversations that matter?

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Yeah, so it depends what type of conversation you're looking to initiate yourself whether Yeah, honestly, it just it depends.

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You can start small and it doesn't have to be perfect, whatever type of conversation you're looking to initiate with someone, but ensure that you have a purpose for starting that conversation.

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Why are you reaching out? Why them and what outcome you're looking to gain from that conversation from reaching out, whether that be in person, verbally, whether that be via email or whether that would be in a virtual meeting.

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You don't have to wait for everything to be perfect in order for you to reach out or speak with complete professional jargon. It's also about speaking at a human level, why you're contacting them.

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It's just about getting that right person. You're reaching out to them because you have a shared topic or challenge and you're looking at identifying a common resolution with them So it's meant to be a natural way for you to communicate with someone like you would do in your personal life

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As well but that is quite a tricky question, but it depends what type of connection you're looking to reach out from someone.

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I think it's a great tip. I think, you know, starting with just building, starting with small talk, right, start and just build that connection with someone naturally and then build from there so that you could kind of form the relationship to have that conversation. Fantastic.

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Okay, so those are all the questions that we have received so far today and all the time we have for questions today. If you also do go to the chat, my colleague has shared an example of coffee roulette and how that's working in DEFRA, which is the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It's a nice post about coffee roulette and building blended connections.

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We have had some incredible wisdom from each of our speakers today, and I would love to ask all of you who've joined us to give Chica and Jessica a real virtual round of applause.

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Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom. And importantly, thank you to all of you, the attendees who have joined us today, asked questions and for being so engaged in this topic. I can see lots of love in the Zoom reactions, which is wonderful. The team is going to pull up a quick poll to find out how you felt about today, which is going to help us continue improving our content and deliver more great events like this. So we really appreciate your responses.

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Poll there. And the question is on a scale of one to 10, rank your agreement with the following statement. This event was a valuable use of my time, meaning one meaning you completely disagree and ten meaning you completely agree.

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Take a moment to do that. And before we say goodbye, this event is about growing your career, gaining new skills and knowledge from the networks that you have to boost your own work.

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I mentioned that we'd come back to the life and government community on apolitical. We want to start a thread where you can start to connect all of those dots and really treat today's session as the first opportunity to find a new piece of knowledge or maybe seek a mentor, a new role, or even just a great book recommendation. So my colleague has just posted a link in the Zoom chat to a post in the Life in Government community that I made just before Our event started. I've pinned it to the top of the community as well, so you can find it easily. And my challenge to you is simply to comment on that post and introduce yourself. Tell us your name or what you do and where you are. And critically, what are you looking to grow your career? And it can be truly anything. And once you've done that, make sure to revisit the post and check out the other comments.

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And start a connection. We'll send a reminder in the event follow-up email that you'll get tomorrow. So come back and read the comments and see if you can make a connection with a colleague from around the world.

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Okay, that is all we have time for today. We hope you found the session useful and helpful. And again, a huge thank you to everyone who's made today happen and for taking time out of your busy days.

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Keep an eye out for an email with today's recording and resources, and we hope to see you at another apolitical event very soon. Have a great day. Thank you and goodbye.

