

I. Application of Constructivism:

I have chosen to design a Community of Practice Learning System (COPLS) for new associates/brokers in the commercial real estate business, specifically tailored to the philosophy and culture of the Cassidy & Pinkard Colliers organization.

II. Learning Challenge:

Cassidy & Pinkard Colliers is a reputable and steadily growing commercial real estate company located in the DC metro industry. Commercial real estate is a highly competitive arena that requires brokers and their team to be ahead of the curve. Cassidy & Pinkard Colliers hires motivated and qualified individual to groom into successful knowledgeable brokers. In order to efficiently “groom” aspiring brokers, a constructivist learning environment based on CoP is ideal for these new brokers.

New associates/brokers at Cassidy & Pinkard Colliers are sometimes taken under the wing of a broker and the relationship is very much like an apprenticeship. However, there is no constant method of application or apprenticeship structure across the company. Although experienced, brokers are not necessarily prepared to properly train their underlings which could lead to some misguided practices down the road. The skills required to become a successful broker are multi-disciplinary and complex in nature, and experience is the most valuable asset in this profession. How can these brokers obtain the most knowledge using the resources around them? They have an experienced broker within reach but the industry is more diverse and complex than the knowledge of one broker. New associates have a plethora of goals and tasks to accomplish as a new comer. Below are a list of some of the challenges the face:

- Assimilate into company culture and become familiar with the various lines of service
- Network within the firm as well as with outside brokers – brokers inside Cassidy & Pinkard Colliers locations (DC, MD, VA) and outside real estate agencies
- Become familiar with the real estate market – rates, competition, companies in the area, buildings, sub-markets
- Learn how to create, develop and maintain client relationships/accounts
- Utilize broker resources appropriately and efficiently

III. Target Audience:

New associates are the target audience that will benefit from this training. These individuals most likely have a college education and will probably have a business related background, some may even have a real estate related

background. New associates are typically financially motivated people, but this may not be their primary motivation.

New associates may or may not have been targeting a specific service or industry early in their career. Some brokers are specific to tenant representation others prefer to provide all types of services to their clients but may target a specific business sector such as health or science organizations which need lab spaces in their buildings.

IV. General Knowledge Domain:

The goal of this CoP is to become familiar with the skills necessary to become a successful broker. Commercial real estate is a multi-disciplinary profession therefore the new associates will be exposed to different skill domains in this CoP:

- Interpersonal communication
- Financial analysis
- Client management skills
- Brokering and Real Estate practice

V. Learning Activities

Participation is the key element of a Community of Practice. The new associate CoP will include internal company resources as well as external company resources that will be readily available on the site. Familiar not only with the different services but meet the professionals who work in that field. Additionally, they will meet new brokers who are also new and more experienced brokers as well.

VI. Learning Outcomes:

The ultimate goal is to become a successful broker. Often this is measured in monetarily, but the benefit of training is not measured by money. The goals of the new associate development are:

- Develop confident associates by expanding their knowledge base, they become efficient problem solvers
- Standardizing the practice
- Develop new areas of expertise based on the interest of the new associates (specialization in specific type of business such as government or life sciences)
- Help new associates add value to the negotiation process

- Associates will feel they are a valuable asset to the organization
- Develop a “best practice” that will boost them into becoming a successful broker on their own terms – leveraging best practices

Community of Practice Characteristics	Learning Activities	Learning Outcomes
Encourage Collaboration	Case Studies – New associates are encouraged to work together to come up with solutions for case studies. More challenging case studies can have new associates collaborate with other divisions to form viable solutions that are not limited to commercial brokerage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The associates will become familiar with other members and how and when their function in the organization is relevant to their job. • New associates will add value to the collaborative negotiating process when brokering deals.
Promote Articulation/Interpersonal Skills	Virtual Chat & Discussion Boards – The whole COPLS is an environment for interaction. Through any participation that allows discussion, such as case studies or questions/answers, all participating members will develop these invaluable skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associates will learn how to interact with clients in a professional setting. • Members will learn how to interact with other departments to efficiently utilize time and resources for themselves and other colleagues. • As associates become familiar with the business, they can effectively articulate services and persuade their clients.
Promote Assimilation	Case Studies & Discussions – Some case studies will require associates to interact with other departments within the company, such as marketing or project management. As the associates call upon others for their knowledge they will also be assimilating into the culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New associates will become with the culture of the company through interactions. They will become familiar with the process of different services, become aware of cultures in their own office as well as satellite offices. • Associates will be comfortable to reach out to people outside of the immediate office. • Learn to open business channels to generate possible brokerage deals.

Community of Practice Characteristics	Learning Activities	Learning Outcomes
Promote Problem Solving Skills	Case Studies– A variety of case studies will encourage the brokers to combine knowledge with their resourcefulness to formulate practicable actions to the challenges presented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associates can apply the ideas from the case studies to real life situations and challenges in the workplace and with their clients.
Promote Resourcefulness and Research Skills for application to real world problems	Research – Associates will be provided a wealth of resources relative to brokerage. Other related resources will be provided by the instructional designer. Associates will also have the opportunity to post suggested or helpful resources to share with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associates will learn to identify what resources are relevant to their job and which ones may help with challenges outside of the COPLS. • Resources are not limited to the web; the associates can also use more experienced professionals and their colleagues as resources. This characteristic spill over into other activities that will promote assimilation and interpersonal skills.
Multiple Perspective	Discussion Boards - As the members interact and construct their own reality on the COPLS, the open learning environment is perfect for developing multiple perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associates will have insight to different angles/approaches which can help them in many ways, such as understanding their client’s needs.
Assessment & Evaluation	Blogging, and Polls – The community contains an area where member can blog. This can contain feedback and evaluation of the learning environment. Additionally, there will be a short poll users can use to quickly evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners can assess the effectiveness of the learning environment, if they feel it needs improvement in some aspect they will have the opportunity to express their opinion. This helps the designer as well with scaffolding and providing more learning tools if needed.

Community of Practice Characteristics	Learning Activities	Learning Outcomes
<p>Promote Reflection</p>	<p>Members will have the opportunity to record their thoughts in a posting area that can either be public or private. They can choose to discuss and interact with others regarding their thoughts and opinions, or they can choose to remain private in their reflections.</p> <p>Whether or not the members realize, through participation they will be called upon to reflect and develop their thinking skills as they participate in the other areas of the COPLS. Assuming they think before they answer other people’s questions or participate in a case study discussion, this activity is often” unintentional” as they construct the reality of the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community develops a genuine and relevant context as the members share their thoughts and opinions. • The new associates can develop other areas of their skills as they become familiar with their own thought process in problem solving. • New associates can discover new areas of interest and perhaps an area they may want to specialize in. • Broker will become intimate with real estate market. They can confidently operate business procedures and communicate with clients.
<p>Scaffolding</p>	<p>Hyperlinks (research), discussions – Associates will be provided the tools necessary to climb the ladder of experience. As they interact and become more active in the community they are able to solve more complex problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associates will learn to apply the skills of research and the knowledge they have attained from their online experiences to real world situations. They will have the idea and tools to effectively meet the challenges at their desks, from the start to the finish of a task.

VII. Assessment:

Assessment will be an ongoing process that will quickly adapt to the needs of users who control the direction of the environment. The design of the community of practice will allot space for a survey or poll that will be updated frequently to gain feedback from the users. The purpose of this feature is to help the designer with evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional environment and the designer can make changes to the scaffolding as necessary.

VIII. Expansion

The community of practice is a complex entity that becomes its own reality. In its initial creation, the main audience for the COPLS are the new associates. As the members actively participate the focus of the community is at the hands of the learners. It is entirely possible that the primary benefactor could change from new brokers to another participating group. The beauty of a COPLS is the adaptability of the environment. The real-world system can easily bend to the needs of the members to accommodate them.