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Amplifying Our Impact: Exploring Technology-Enhanced Approaches to Extraordinary Citizen Diplomacy

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Amplifying our Impact: Exploring technology-enhanced approaches to extraordinary citizen diplomacy



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INTRODUCTION

Across the world, the complex challenges of our time threaten the vitality and well-being of many communities. These challenges cross borders, and include such issues as disease outbreaks, air and water pollution, social-political uprisings, and economic instability, to name a few. When faced by difficult challenges, community leaders may retrench within borders, view problems from within cultural and national perspectives, and view outside viewpoints and people as threatening. The result can be fractured relationships, suboptimal strategies, and divisive conflict. The complex challenges of our time can only be solved by promoting mutual understanding of the causes and consequences among stakeholders, and by pursuing collaborative solutions across cultural, geographic, and national boundaries.

Citizen diplomacy is the concept that every global citizen has the right, even the responsibility, to engage across cultures and create shared understanding through meaningful person-to-person interactions (Jennifer Clinton, retrieved from <http://centerforcitizendiplomacy.org/>). Citizen diplomacy has the power to lead to more interdependent forms of engagement between citizens of different countries. Citizen diplomats conduct much of their formal work through short duration visitor programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. Citizen diplomacy is recognized by many governments around the world as a powerful force in building and sustaining a secure, economically sound, and socially interconnected world. Many world leaders have participated in these visitor programs.



PROBLEM STATEMENT

While the important work of promoting mutual understanding among citizens of many nations is performed, in part, by a dedicated and passionate core of staff and volunteers citizen diplomats, their work is often constrained by event schedules, geography, and program design. These limitations may result in "Sprinter's Diplomacy," whereby a great deal of energy is focused on short term visitor experiences, with little if any attention focused on driving creativity and innovation in addressing challenging problems, or building extraordinary partnerships and alliances that last over time. Clearly more can be done to extend these relationships and amplify the impact of citizen diplomacy efforts by establishing a "Community of Practice."

OBJECTIVES

Modern day information technologies have the potential to facilitate information and resource sharing among diverse stakeholder groups, enhance the potential for cross-border collaboration across time and space, and enable the sharing of best practices within the citizen diplomacy community. In contrast to "Sprinter's Diplomacy," an experiential learning design model and technology-enhanced methods are proposed to cultivate a Global Ties – U.S. "Community of Practice." The intent would be to amplify the effectiveness and impact of citizen diplomacy initiatives.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODEL

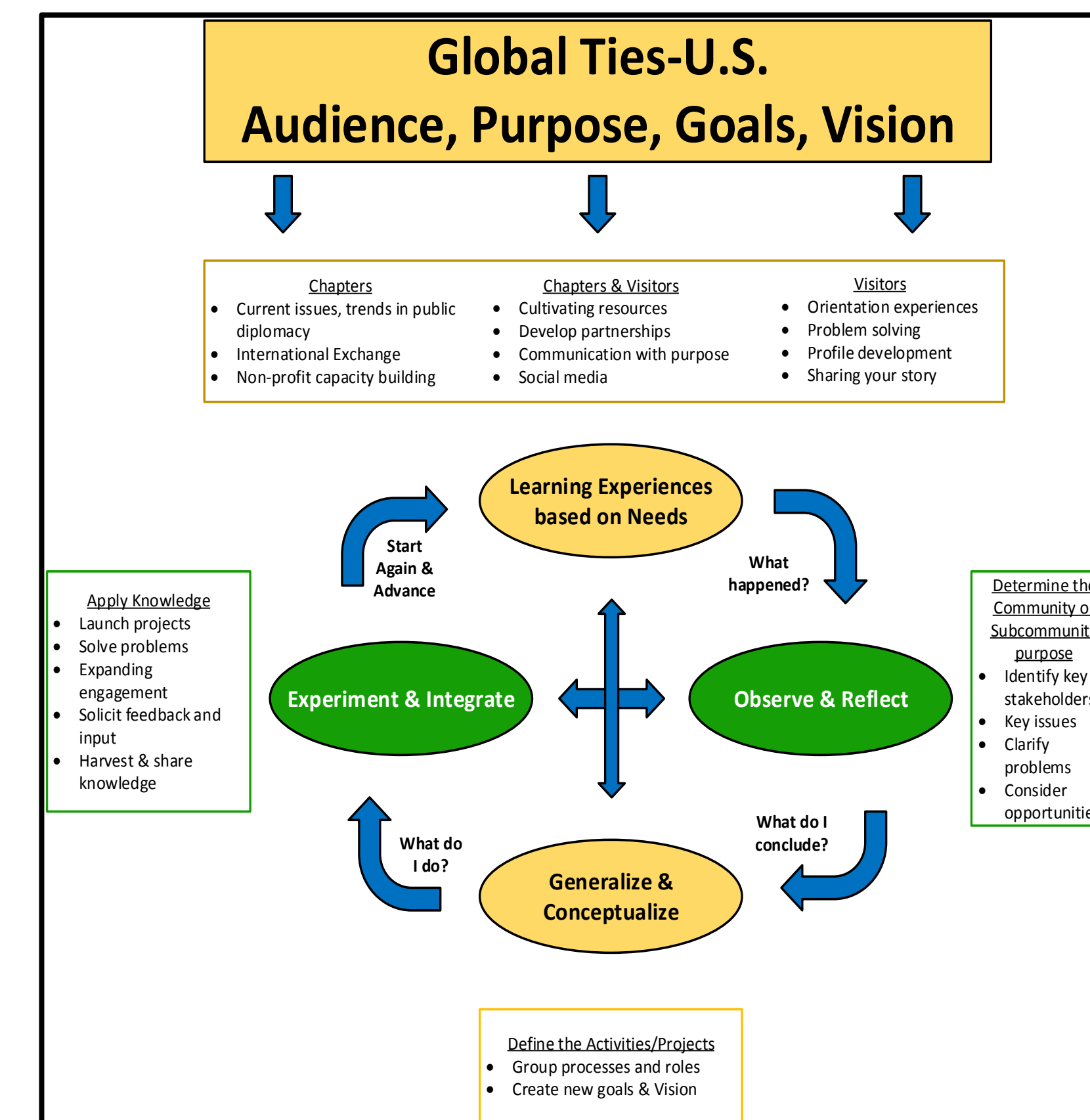


This model illustrates how a community can be facilitated beyond the annual conference, sponsored events, and "visit" experiences.

GOALS

The Global Ties "Community of Practice" can be designed to facilitate a relationship among chapter staff, volunteers and visitors for the purpose of facilitating learning, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. Global Ties - U.S. may seek to achieve the following goals:

- Provide a shared context for host chapters, volunteers and international visitors to build trust, mutual respect, reciprocity, and shared purpose.
- Identify learning needs for chapter staff and volunteers based on the challenges they face in serving as citizen diplomats and in building the capacity of non-profit organizations. These needs can inform the development of formal education opportunities such as courses, workshops, and seminars.
- Enable dialogue between international visitors and their U.S. based counterparts who come together to explore new possibilities, solve challenging problems, and create new mutually beneficial outcomes.
- Diffuse existing knowledge through ongoing forums.
- Expand the community to include more volunteers, and to incorporate new visitors.
- Introduce collaborative processes to help visitors connect with citizen diplomats to organize around activities to address practical problems or better understand critical issues.
- Work with international visitors and citizen diplomats to generate new knowledge based on changes in needs, resources, and technologies.



Sources:
Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning*. New York, NY: Prentice-Hall.
Svinicki, M. D., and Dixon, N. M. (1987). "The Kolb model modified for classroom activities." *College Teaching*, 35(4), 141-146.

Core Technical Features	Relationships	Learning	Action	Knowledge
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member networking profiles • Member directory with relationship-focused data fields • Subgroups that are defined by administrators or that allow members to self-join • Online meetings/chat • Online discussions • User-controlled delivery modes for notifications and information • Community activity reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-learning tools • Assessments • Web conferencing and webcasts • Online meetings • Online discussions • Web-site links • Interactive multimedia • Variety of community member roles and responsibilities is supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management • Task management • Document collaboration • File version tracking • File check-in and check-out • Instant messaging • Web conferencing and online meetings • Online discussions • Subgroup working spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keyword and full-text searches (sitewide and by section) • Digital stories • Idea banks • Web conferencing • Online meetings • Online discussions • Announcements • Web-site links • Multiple modes for knowledge representation • Resources directly associated with interaction

EXPECTED OUTCOME

- Chapters and volunteers will have a better understanding of how to build, operate and grow non-governmental organizations. Chapter leaders will be better equipped to lead their organizations.
- International visitors will maintain a high level of motivation to remain involved with Global Ties - U.S. and their volunteer counterparts in the U.S.
- International visitors will derive more value from their visit experience.
- Education and information sharing will lead to more effective practice of citizen diplomacy.
- The "Community of Practice" environment will result in the creation and organization of a library of resources, professional insights and reflections, and instructional materials which can be shared among this community.
- Increase volunteer retention.

SOURCES

Cambridge, D., Kaplan, S. & Suter, V. (2005). *Community of practice design guide: A step-by-step guide for designing & cultivating communities of practice in higher education* <http://www.educause.edu/virtualCommunities/944>

Clinton, J. (2014). *Why Citizen diplomacy? The Center for Citizen Diplomacy*, <http://centerforcitizendiplomacy.org/>

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