



# THE ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORK FIELDBOOK

BEST PRACTICES, TECHNIQUES, AND EXERCISES TO  
**DRIVE ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATION AND PERFORMANCE**

ROB CROSS, JEAN SINGER, SALLY COLELLA,  
ROBERT J. THOMAS, AND YAARIT SILVERSTONE





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**THE ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORK  
FIELDBOOK**

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Best Practices, Techniques,  
and Exercises to Drive  
Organizational Innovation  
and Performance

EDITORS

Rob Cross, Jean Singer, Sally Colella,  
Robert J. Thomas, and Yaarit Silverstone

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Acknowledgment xi

The Contributors xiii

Introduction xxi

---

## **PART ONE BUILDING NETWORKS FOR COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY 1**

1. Building a Technical Community, Angelique Finan and Grady Bryant 3
2. Networks of Excellence, Peter Gray and Dan Ranta 11
3. Driving Business Results Through Networked Communities of Practice, Rob Cross and Guillermo Velasquez 22
4. Mapping and Engaging Influence Networks, Myra Norton 44

---

## **PART TWO BRIDGING ORGANIZATIONAL SILOS 57**

5. Network Analysis for Engineering Small Practice Groups, Barry Dayton 59

6. Building Trusted Ties in a New Organization, Joe Blasnales 72
7. Forging Global Connections, Christie Dowling, Betsy Smith Redfern, and Victor Gulas 89
8. Building Healthy Teams, Kate Ehrlich, Ivan J. Blum, and Inga Carboni 107

---

### **PART THREE DRIVING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE THROUGH NETWORKS 123**

9. Changing Culture Through Networks and Narrative, Steve Denning and Rob Cross 125
10. Message Monitoring to Accelerate Change, Terry G. Williams 139
11. A Workshop for Aligning Networks with Strategy, Sally Colella 149
12. Positioning a New Leader for Success Through Network Fine-Tuning, Rob Cross, Robert J. Thomas, Ana Dutra, and Carrie Newberry 157
13. Improving Decision Making Through Network Reconstruction, Rob Cross and Robert J. Thomas 171

---

### **PART FOUR CONNECTING PEOPLE FOR INNOVATION 183**

14. The Innovation Lab: Building Idea-Sharing Networks, Jean Singer and Kristi Droppers 185
15. Building a Collaborative Innovation Network, Wendi Backler 203
16. Connecting Through Improvisation, Christiane Frischmuth 218
17. Helping Leaders Uncover Hidden Assets, Sally Colella 233

---

### **PART FIVE DEVELOPING TALENT THROUGH NETWORKS 243**

18. Embedding a Network Perspective into Leadership, Michael Chavez and Mara Green 245

19. Improving Leadership Effectiveness Through Personal Network Analysis and Development, Rob Cross 264
  20. Developing Leaders' Networks Through a Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement Workshop, Katy Strei and Sally Colella 282
  21. The Mentor Marketplace, Christie Dowling and Victor Gulas 291
  22. Managing External Stakeholders and Stemming Knowledge Loss, Carlota Vollhardt and Brigitte Lippmann 304
  23. Smart Mentoring to Increase Connectivity, Adrian (Zeke) Wolfberg 315
  24. Newcomers' Boot Camp, Betsy Hudson 321
  25. A Network Approach to Onboarding, Michel Buffet, Gregory A. Janicik, Maria Gallegos, Giulio Quaggiotto, and Lauren Ashwell 326
- Index 347



To Jake, who inspires us to think, to do important work, and to act with honor.



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## INTRODUCTION

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Welcome! We wrote this book as an effort to move from theory to practice in the important domain of organizational networks. Recent books have helped to explain why leaders should pay attention to informal networks, how a network analysis can yield surprising insights into how work gets done in an organization, and what principles inform a network perspective. In this book, we speak to those of you who are wondering what comes next. Having examined the networks in your organization, how can you use what you've learned? Having adopted a network perspective, how can you embed it into your organization's operations? What approaches can help you either repair specific trouble spots in a network or develop the kind of collaborative environment that can yield tangible performance improvements?

Much has been written on networks and network analysis recently. In part, this is a product of social media and networking technologies, which have altered—to some degree—how people connect in and outside of organizations. But this focus on networks also seems to be a broad response to a competitive environment that has sent leaders scrambling to find new and different paradigms that will boost performance. Most leaders are desperately seeking a multiplier effect—a way to get more from their organizations' talent and other resources. But after a decade when almost every large organization in the world adopted some form of matrix structure, applied yet another technology enabling employees to instantaneously

connect, or adopted a cultural change program urging more collaboration, what we have to show for it is a lot of overloaded employees.

In response, more and more leaders are coming to understand that behind any new formal structure or collaborative technology is a web of relationships that drives growth, innovation, and overall organizational performance. Indeed, business value is increasingly created through the rapid formation (and dissolution) of networks of people who represent expertise, critical resources, and decision-making power. Using the tools and techniques of organizational network analysis (ONA), managers can map and assess these relationships between people and groups. By challenging the often implicit and flawed assumption that “more is better” when it comes to collaboration and networks, and by making visible the disconnects between existing networks and those required to support an organization’s strategy, the approach helps managers see and take action on the traditionally invisible relationships through which value is either created or depleted.

But after conducting an organizational network analysis and examining the results—perhaps seeing fragmentation between groups that need to be tightly connected, talented employees whose expertise is not sufficiently leveraged, or an excess of connectivity that is slowing everything down—leaders then ask, “Now what? What do we do with these insights? What are some effective ways to act on them?” This book is our response to those questions. Our purpose is not to advance the scholarship on organizational networks but to give leaders some practical approaches for strengthening the key networks in their organizations.

Most of the contributors to this book represent the corporate members of The Network Roundtable, a group of nearly 80 organizations—including large corporations, consulting firms, and government agencies—that formed to advance the understanding of how network analysis can be used to enhance organizational and personal performance. We asked these professionals, all of them highly sophisticated users of network ideas, to describe the most effective approaches they have used to strengthen connectivity and the organizational context in which they implemented changes. The result is not just a compilation of highly practical network-building activities; it’s also a collection of stories about organizations working to drive a paradigm shift, from a focus on formal structures to an understanding of flexible networks.

We have divided the network interventions into five thematic sections, but many of them could serve multiple purposes or could be tweaked to suit various agendas and organizational circumstances. Some of the contributors present workshops and programs in great detail, providing interventions that you could use in your own organization tomorrow. Others describe broader network-based approaches and therefore offer valuable principles and lessons. Some of the workshops and exercises presented here could work as standalone network-building

activities; others could be a component of a leadership development program or of a large-scale change effort. It's important to note that not all of the interventions must be preceded by a full organizational network analysis. Many contributors here report that although it is ideal to go into these activities with insights from an ONA, organizations can reap benefits even if they forgo that first step.

We invite you to explore all of the network-building approaches presented here and to consider which might be appropriate for your organization. In doing so, we hope that you will be better able to reap the considerable benefits that well-managed organizational networks can offer.



## PART ONE

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# BUILDING NETWORKS FOR COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY

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**T**he four chapters in this section start from the premise that truly worthwhile collaboration creates tangible value for an organization.

Angelique Finan and Grady Bryant describe VeriSign's ongoing experience of bringing together the technical professionals across this geographically dispersed company into a knowledge-sharing community. The technical community, which holds an annual symposium and maintains a robust online presence, grew out of an earlier initiative to establish a network of the company's elite engineers. The message: as you consider network building in your organization, look at what's already going on that could be leveraged into a more comprehensive approach to knowledge sharing and community building.

Peter Gray and Dan Ranta lay out the principles that guide ConocoPhillips in creating "Networks of Excellence" (NoEs), internal communities of practice intended to encourage knowledge sharing. Articulating roles and responsibilities, attending to the network's daily operations, and working to institute a culture that supports the exchange of knowledge are all crucial, but at ConocoPhillips, the foundational principle of network building is this: a Network of Excellence must demonstrate its ability to contribute significant value, either in cost savings or in revenue generation.

That requirement also informs the communities of practice at Halliburton, write Rob Cross and Guillermo Velasquez. Communities of Practice (CoPs) can be more than groups of like-minded professionals who keep one another up to date in their field. If carefully designed, these communities can boost organizational performance. The authors describe how Halliburton uses organizational network analysis (ONA) to strengthen CoPs by identifying brokers who can draw in peripheral members and contribute specific expertise, and by building an awareness of the knowledge that resides in the community.

In the final chapter in this section, Myra Norton lays out a detailed process for identifying the individuals in a client organization who have the greatest influence on purchasing decisions. Using the example of an information technology company that followed this process to increase sales, customer loyalty, and customer satisfaction, Norton describes in detail how the tools and techniques of ONA can give salespeople unique insight into the “influence networks” within client organizations.

## CHAPTER ONE

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# BUILDING A TECHNICAL COMMUNITY

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Angelique Finan and Grady Bryant

The first years of the twenty-first century were a period of tremendous growth for VeriSign, a provider of Internet infrastructure services. By late 2006, the company comprised 15 business units operating out of 73 locations globally. This growth was in part the result of 47 acquisitions. VeriSign, originally focused on digital certificates, took on a variety of Internet and telecom businesses, including Internet-based payment processing, management of the .com and .net registries, international mobile phone roaming services, mobile phone payment services, management of customer premise security devices, Voice over IP (VOIP) services, SS7 signaling services, and distribution of digital content.

Forming a coherent company out of all those acquisitions was a challenge. It's a simple matter to sketch out a new org chart but much more difficult to align cultures, loyalties, goals, and operating processes, and to capture the hearts and minds of employees. Many of VeriSign's acquisitions had operated in the fast and loose startup environment and so were accustomed to autonomy. Especially for very young, very small companies, it's difficult to give up your identity to become part of a larger, more mature organization.

We at VeriSign knew that to accomplish our mission—developing, securing, and operating some of the world's most critical electronic infrastructure—we had to maintain the trust and confidence of the public. That, in turn, meant that employees needed to be well connected and engaged. Unless we made a concerted effort to develop connections among people representing acquired companies, we would be unable to leverage talent across the organization, develop standards for problem solving and for system architecture and software, formulate and adopt

best practices, share new ideas and technologies across the organization, and achieve operational excellence. Also, if our employees did not come together in some sort of community, we would be unable to develop a strong brand identity, and we would risk losing our most talented employees, who might not feel they had anything at stake in the company's mission or any important relationships within the organization.

---

## VeriSign's Goals for a Technical Community

To engage employees and build connections among them, we needed a program that would cross organizational boundaries to help the globally distributed workforce meet the company's mission. The program we launched was called the VeriSign Technical Community. This community included all technical employees, representing all engineering disciplines as well as technical project management and technical management, who came together both face to face at an annual symposium and virtually, through an online platform called the Matrix.

The VeriSign Technical Community program had several goals:

**Improve employee engagement, professional development, and job satisfaction.** Engaged employees feel a sense of purpose and connection with the corporate mission. They invest their free time in the company and increase morale by exciting others. They are also less likely to leave and more likely to care deeply about their work. To feel a sense of engagement, employees need opportunities and a platform to share their ideas, accomplishments, and plans. And those who truly excel need rewards and recognition.

**Foster a culture of knowledge sharing, collaboration (within and across projects), joint problem solving, and innovation.** People may be naturally inclined to work together, but the company must help employees find one another, form lasting connections, and, perhaps most important, develop trust in one another. Trust is especially essential for innovation; employees will not share their new ideas unless they feel safe doing so.

**Better integrate newly acquired, geographically dispersed companies.** When new groups show up on an org chart armed with nothing more than a press release, a new set of benefits, and a new logo on their paycheck, there are many more questions than answers. Legacy employees may not seem interested in the new acquisition, and the new employees may feel isolated, unsure how they fit in and what to do to fix the situation. Giving all employees ways to connect and share is essential to a more complete and functional integration.

---

## Strategy and Approach

The goals and objectives for the Technical Community program didn't occur to us overnight. They were deeply informed by our experiences in an earlier initiative to develop a common software framework for engineering teams. Because use of the framework was optional, we needed to involve the teams in the development process. We started small, first with a cross-functional steering committee to guide the framework, and later with a group of the company's elite engineers to widen the net.

The group of elite engineers met face to face every six months at what we called the VeriSign Software Engineering Summit (VSES), a two-day event that featured an external technology speaker, typically an author or the developer of a well-known technology. The summit involved a recreational activity that afforded networking time and an opportunity for attendees to deliver a presentation on their work area.

As we witnessed the level of engagement of the attendees and the increasing popularity of the event, we realized that we were on to something. People who may have otherwise never met were now reaching out to one another for help and advice. They looked forward to upcoming summits and played an active role in the planning. E-mail was flowing.

Although e-mail is a very useful tool, we envisioned something more. Our goal was to organize the discussion about the software framework in a way that could engage all software engineers in the company, not just those who attended the VSES. This goal sparked the idea of an online community for the company's technicians. We also started thinking that if the VSES could provide many benefits to a relatively small number of people, maybe there was something we could do on a much larger scale, perhaps with as many as 250 participants. This thinking led to the VeriSign Technical Symposium (VTS).

### **The VeriSign Technical Symposium—Bringing People Face to Face**

The VTS is a key element of the VeriSign Technical Community program. It's a multiday, multitrack annual event at which representatives from all organizations with technical employees meet face to face. Attendees have the opportunity to network with their colleagues and learn more about best practices, proven technologies, latest projects, and innovations throughout VeriSign.

In building a technical community, we want to provide all of our technical people with both face-to-face and online opportunities to share, connect, and collaborate. We see great value in bringing employees together to network and build relationships, and then sustaining those connections and conversations in an online community in which a broader audience can participate.

***The First Symposium*** In 2006, we held our first VeriSign Technical Symposium to promote discovery, discussion, and knowledge transfer within the technical community. A gathering of this size requires considerable investment, and that can happen only with the full support of an executive sponsor. With modest success under our belt in engaging software engineers at the VSES, we were fortunate to gain the support of the company's CTO. We soon learned, however, that we had more selling to do. Getting lower-level management to commit the time of their people to attend an unknown event was more difficult than we had expected. And employees themselves were reluctant to leave their busy jobs for a few days. To overcome this, we targeted mid-level and upper-level management and enlisted Corporate Communications to get the word out. This helped seed the first event, after which the word spread virally. From then on, there was a healthy demand for attendee slots.

The agenda was packed with presentations from all levels of the organization. From keynotes by our CEO and CTO, attendees gained valuable insights into the company's strategy and vision. Through several panel presentations, they heard about projects and technologies used in different technical organizations. During presentations by their peers, they could take a deep dive into various topics.

In addition to promoting knowledge sharing, we wanted attendees to network with their colleagues from other parts of the organization. We developed various activities to encourage this. In one networking game, each attendee received cards with the names and photos of two attendees from different parts of the organization and were given a few questions to ask, such as "What do you like best about working at VeriSign?" and "What are your hobbies and outside interests?" Attendees who tracked down their assigned people and collected answers were entered into raffles for high-tech gadgets. Attendees also participated in recreational activities such as golf and kayaking, which helped them get to know one another in a more relaxed environment.

Symposium attendees also enjoyed watching the live finals of our annual Code Fest competition. For several months leading up to the symposium, we held a series of online coding competitions, powered by the company Top Coder. Employees from all over the company competed in these online matches, and the winner of each match advanced to the onsite finals. During the symposium, computer stations were set up on stage in the center of a large room, where the finalists were given a limited amount of time to code solutions to three problems in Java, C++, or C#. Computer monitors were located around the room so attendees could watch the finalists at work. They cheered their colleagues on as results were tabulated and winners were announced.

During the Code Fest finals, tables were set up around the room manned by various organizations and individuals. This gave attendees a targeted yet informal opportunity to get to know about initiatives other than their own.

**Feedback and Modification** Following the first symposium, we surveyed attendees, many of whom noted that the event helped them connect with colleagues in different parts of the company and develop a better understanding of the many kinds of technical work performed within VeriSign.

Fortunately, attendees at the first symposium carried their positive experience back to their colleagues, and we never had a problem filling the slots again. For future symposiums, we received more and more submissions to present technical presentations, and being invited to the symposium is now considered a big perk.

Based on the feedback we received, we made modifications to the symposium format. Due to the incredible interest in presenting, we added more technical presentations, tracks, and Birds-of-a-Feather (BoF) sessions—90-minute informal discussions on a topic led by a knowledgeable facilitator.

We also formalized the role of the symposium Planning Committee, which is made up of representatives from all of the company's technical organizations who play an active role in promoting VTS participation. They encourage employees to submit presentations and assist them with their submissions. They also have the tough job of reviewing submissions for technical presentations and BoF sessions, and ultimately selecting them. Committee members then work with presenters to prepare for the symposium, provide feedback, and facilitate their sessions onsite.

Today, the annual VeriSign Technical Symposium is a cornerstone of the technical community. The two-and-a-half-day event is attended by about 200 employees representing all technical organizations, including sales and customer support. Our senior leadership provides the keynote. Multiple tracks of technical presentations focus on the various disciplines in our community, such as software engineering, database engineering, security, and quality engineering.

The technical presentations showcase the talents of our engineers, who receive considerable recognition for being selected. Presenting at the symposium is a great developmental opportunity for our technical people. They put a lot of effort into preparing their presentations and get lots of support from their teams. Several of our engineers have taken their technical presentations to national conferences, such as JavaOne and Independent Oracle Users Group (IOUG).

Each VeriSign Technical Symposium concludes with an awards ceremony announcing winners of CTO Awards, which recognize employees for their outstanding contributions to the company in the areas of individual technical excellence, team technical excellence, and technical leadership.

The event seems to have helped achieve one of our goals for the community program: engaging employees. As one attendee wrote on a feedback form, "I was more energized about the company and my role in the success of it than I have been in the past two years I've been with the company."

## Building an Online Community

The other central component of our community is an online platform and suite of tools, called the Matrix, which lets community members connect, share, and collaborate. The name captures what we aim to do: connect globally and organizationally distributed people with similar skills and interests and enable them to better collaborate and share information.

***Launching the Matrix*** The Matrix initially consisted of blogs, forums, an event calendar, tags, RSS feeds, comments, and user profiles that display members' photos, skills, expertise, and personal interests. We used the open source software Drupal to provide these capabilities. We added the Vault, a central metadata repository for reusable assets, such as code components, white papers, best practices, and scripts to promote reuse and knowledge sharing.

Before we launched the Matrix, we introduced it at the first VeriSign Technical Symposium. The 100 attendees were our beta users. During a general session, we gave demonstrations of the Matrix and tried to excite people about contributing to it so that there would be some interesting content when the online community was officially launched. We held raffles to get VTS attendees to complete their online profiles, and we asked them for feedback. We hoped that they would be our evangelists for using the new tool.

After we had some interesting posts, such as trip reports from technical conferences and blogs discussing building effective teams and announcing the availability of technical resources, we launched it to the broader technical community. We teamed up with the company's internal communications group, which was enthusiastic about fostering grassroots communications in the company. The group promoted the Matrix and tech community events on the intranet and in targeted newsletters and e-mails.

In the ensuing months, we held three open houses in our Mt. View, Dulles, and Bangalore locations. We invited people to enjoy some afternoon refreshments, network with their colleagues, and learn more about the Matrix. We demoed the Matrix and talked about the goals of the technical community. We set up stations around the room, where attendees could complete their profiles and enter into raffles. At this point, more than one-half of our technical community had completed profiles. We also received support from the many managers who encouraged employees to complete their profiles and contribute content to the Matrix.

***Maintaining and Improving the Matrix*** The online community continues to grow both in participation and in its ability to foster collaboration and transparency. We made a giant leap forward with the addition of a wiki to the Matrix toolset.

We selected Confluence as the wiki software. Due to its flexibility, extensibility, and ease of use, it's been widely adopted within our technical organizations, especially in product development. Project teams use it for team workspaces. Technical writers love it for collaborating on technical documents. Project managers maintain dashboards to monitor and publish project status. Program managers publish information to market their programs. Development teams integrate it with other development tools for issue tracking and continuous integration.

Not only is the wiki a great collaborative tool, but also it does a superb job allowing people to stay in touch with projects, programs, and groups across the company. When we added the wiki, we decided to implement it in a way that would promote transparency in the community. We wanted people to be able to learn about other projects, technologies, and organizations by browsing other groups' wikis. So unless there was a need to keep information confidential, we encouraged space owners to keep their spaces open.

We've found that such cross-functional transparency is a vital part of knowledge building and sharing within the company. One senior technical leader said that browsing the Matrix is a key resource for her to keep up to speed with what's going on in many of our projects. Community members see the value and promote openness.

To keep our tech community coming back to the Matrix, we must keep talking about it and making people aware of what's being shared on it. We reach out to subject matter experts to get answers to questions in the forums. We also use e-mail newsletters to keep community members informed of discussions and information being shared in blogs and forums. Contributors to the Matrix are entered into monthly raffles and recognized for their contributions. We use an RSS feed to integrate into the community platform content from the wiki that would be of interest to the whole community.

We also need to ensure that the tools we provide continue to meet the needs of our users. At VeriSign, we have a small team of engineers who promote the development and adoption of common components and best practices, and support the technical community toolset, its advancement, and adoption. We also provide training and orientation for new employees and consult with groups on how to best use the wiki.

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## Enhancing and Expanding the Community

We constantly seek feedback from the community. We use that feedback, which comes in a number of forms, both solicited and unsolicited, to shape our future actions. We also use the feedback and metrics collected from the online

community as a measure of success. You have to know your community to keep it vibrant and engaged. We believe that both the Matrix and VTS have increased knowledge sharing, collaboration, and networking capabilities among VeriSign technicians. We've also witnessed the launch of additional subcommunities in the areas of quality engineering and software architecture.

We've enhanced the social networking and community-building capabilities and improved the usability of our platform. We wanted to provide more Facebook-like features to allow employees to make connections and form interest groups. Jive Software's Social Business Software, which we've selected as the platform, supports multiple communities, groups, blogging, user customization, forums, and "friending."

We have recently implemented these capabilities companywide in the belief that all employees can benefit from improved knowledge sharing. When we upgraded the technical community platform, we allowed people to test it before we rolled it out to the entire company. We hope the platform will promote greater cross-functional transparency and allow employees to make more connections with their colleagues throughout the company.

The VeriSign technical community still maintains its own presence on the Matrix but so do the customer support and web properties communities. And we expect other communities to form. In addition, numerous collaborative groups and social interest groups have been created, a greater number of thought leaders are blogging, and employees are connecting with each other and enhancing their profiles. Our ability to roll this out companywide has been bolstered by an executive leadership team that values hearing from its employees, is committed to building a culture of trust and employee empowerment, and supports multiple communication channels—top down, peer-to-peer, and bottom up.

## CHAPTER TWO

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# NETWORKS OF EXCELLENCE

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Peter Gray and Dan Ranta

Smart managers intuitively understand the importance of the problems that knowledge management efforts are often designed to address: sprinkled across most organizations are people doing similar kinds of work, but they often remain unaware of one another's expertise, successes, and failures. Some of this lack of awareness is the result of waves of downsizing, reorganizations, leadership changes, and new acquisitions. But even in the best-managed large organizations, employees who could benefit from one another's experiences are often isolated by formal structures and mechanisms that subdivide work into different reporting channels and focus employees on local rather than global goals.

Although formal structure is generally meant to ensure accountability for the execution of work, it often neglects employees' ad hoc and unsystematic needs to talk to colleagues working on similar problems. To address this gap, leaders have been urged to seed and support informal communities of practice, which provide a forum for birds of a feather, as the saying goes, to flock together.

Communities of practice have emerged in a variety of shapes and forms, but they all grapple with the same problem: how do we best help employees who are geographically dispersed tap one another's experience and expertise? Many firms have launched electronic discussion spaces to provide a virtual meeting place. Unfortunately, technology-enabled communities rarely live up to their billing. However simple it may seem to connect people electronically, online discussion forums often rely on the energy of one or two people. When those people lose interest or change departments, the entire forum can die a sudden death. With a few notable exceptions, such initiatives generally succeed in creating the online

structures that employees *could* use to communicate with one another, but they fail to attract and sustain an engaged member base. They become digital ghost towns; visitors stop by for a quick look and, finding no activity, leave. Those who do post questions receive few answers, and because activity levels are low, those answers often come days or weeks after they were needed.

It has become conventional wisdom that a “build it and they will come” approach is naïve and that effective knowledge management is more about people and processes than it is about technology. Yet managers still grapple with what this means: Which people? What processes? And how can managers make sure that a community is focused on a measurable, sustainable, and attention-grabbing business impact?

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## Excellence Networks at ConocoPhillips

In 2004, ConocoPhillips faced these questions and many others as it launched a large initiative to create internal communities of practice that would enhance knowledge sharing within the firm. For this international integrated energy company with thousands of job sites (often quite remote) spread across 30 countries, the challenge of sharing knowledge was very real—and the potential payoff was large. Facing fierce competition on all fronts, ConocoPhillips knew that to continue on its success trajectory, it needed to rapidly and effectively harness the knowledge of its highly skilled but geographically distributed workforce. Instead of assuming that technology either was the solution or was irrelevant when creating online communities, senior managers understood that effective global communities required new processes, roles, cultures, *and* technologies. They also recognized that each had to be focused on solving difficult business challenges.

With more than 10,000 employees participating in about 100 of what ConocoPhillips calls “Networks of Excellence” (NoEs) as of the writing of this chapter, and a growth rate of about 10 new networks per year, the company has developed a set of valuable principles for identifying, nurturing, and enabling these topic-focused communities. A culture of knowledge sharing has emerged in which network members take responsibility for helping their globally distributed colleagues—even if they meet face to face only once or twice a year.

### Financial Returns

More than four years after the first NoEs were launched, ConocoPhillips can point to specific networks that have documented annual cost savings and revenue generation in the millions of dollars (and some even in the tens of millions of dollars).

Savings can include cost avoidance. For example, consider a ConocoPhillips NoE called the Upstream Rotating Equipment Network. In 2008, an employee in Indonesia posted a question to the network's online portal inquiring whether it was safe to extend the run time of a power turbine beyond its scheduled maintenance overhaul. As things stood, the scheduled timing of the overhaul would have halted production while the turbine, and the gas compressor it drove, were temporarily shut down. Expert engineers in Alaska, Australia, and the corporate engineering group all responded, indicating it was both safe and permissible to continue running the equipment as long as the power it produced was acceptable and vibration levels were below alarm limits. By temporarily extending the turbine's run time and deferring the overhaul to a more opportune time, the Indonesian unit avoided millions of dollars in additional lost production without compromising safety.

The company's NoEs can also help generate new revenue. For example, in 2008, workers at the Belanak production platform in Indonesia needed to shut down crude-oil cooling equipment every two weeks to remove wax buildups that, if left untreated, could cause problematic pressure drops. But this involved a time-consuming solvent soaking process. Members of the Facility Optimization Network at Belanak reached out through the network and found a solution using thermal cycling to melt the wax, which allowed them to increase production by 104,000 barrels per year.

## Four Principles of Effective Networks

In the remainder of this chapter, we focus on the principles ConocoPhillips followed to develop the vibrant and effective networks that have resulted in these kinds of cost savings and revenue generation. In the following, we group these principles according to the question they address:

1. What key decisions determine whether a new network should be formed?
2. What kinds of roles are necessary to ensure network success?
3. How can a company establish the kind of knowledge-sharing culture that networks require?
4. How does the day-to-day network operation maximize benefits and minimize efforts for all involved?

ConocoPhillips' unique combination of approaches in each of these four areas provides the backbone of its network effort and the blueprint for its success going forward.

The following sections expand on each principle.

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## Network Formation

Ensuring that each new network has the greatest chance to succeed is a process that begins long before the network is formed. Many authors and consultants stress the informal nature of such communities, arguing that any attempt to systematize them will crush them. ConocoPhillips found the exact opposite—that without clear and explicit links to the organization and its business purpose, networks often evolve in ways that fail to contribute to business goals. The company adheres to two fundamental principles in this regard.

First, no network is created without a clear and detailed *business case* that specifies the value proposition to the company and is agreed on by network leaders and members. Insisting on a business case prior to the creation of a network goes against the typical “let a thousand flowers bloom” approach that is often promoted. But in many cases, uncontrolled growth of new networks saps employees’ attention and engagement, leading to neglect and network failure. Setting a high bar at the outset means that every potential new network must have a strong business justification, which signals to potential leaders and members that the result will not be something that consumes their time without producing real business value. For example, in the case of the Upstream Rotating Equipment Network, leaders set out specific and challenging performance improvement goals for turbines, compressors, and pumps.

Second, proposals for new networks must clearly specify the kinds of deliverables that will be produced through the ongoing operation of the network and the specific kinds of activities that it will support. *Deliverables* (such as research reports and reusable work products) and *activities* (such as electronic discussions and teleconferences) must relate directly to the business case and support the attainment of business goals. A high degree of focus on these two areas helps separate the wheat from the chaff, leading new network proponents away from fuzzy “more is better” claims about collaboration and toward specific activities that produce a solid payoff for the collective investment of time.

Following these two principles means that, ultimately, ConocoPhillips managers provide each new network—through its business case, its deliverables, and its activities—with a clear operating model that connects it to the overall Exploration and Production business objectives. The principles have a profound effect on the nature and character of networks at ConocoPhillips: aligning them with organizational priorities, helping members understand how they can affect important business goals, providing clear justification for why members should invest their time in the network (how the network melds with their “day jobs”), and shifting the idea of knowledge sharing away from an abstract idea and toward a concrete set of measurable objectives. As a result, networks have become a cornerstone

of ConocoPhillips' ability to reach its business goals and deliver additional value through global collaboration and expertise sharing.

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## Network Roles and Responsibilities

Conventional wisdom holds that for a community to succeed, its members must truly feel ownership of the community, which motivates a range of behaviors that are necessary for its success. Studies suggest that leaders naturally emerge over time as conversations happen among members and as those who care the most about the success of the community step forward. As with its network formation experience, ConocoPhillips found out early in the process that this conventional wisdom actually harmed the company's efforts. When members saw a swirling, unfocused mass of interactions, they had trouble seeing how they fit in.

The company therefore went against the traditional perspective by explicitly formalizing a range of roles and responsibilities at the outset of a new network. Taking advantage of the decentralized nature of the firm, which has autonomous business units around the world, each NoE was built by allocating roles such as leaders and core team members to individuals across geographic locations, thereby creating a new kind of linking mechanism. The four main roles are sponsor, leader, coordinator, and core member.

### Sponsor

Successful networks have a *sponsor*, a senior mid-level manager who may be selected by an appropriate business leader but may also be a self-selected champion or a subject matter expert (SME). Network sponsors work closely with network leaders to charter and champion the network, and they coordinate with senior management and business units to ensure that the network is focused on strategically valuable goals and improvement opportunities. They provide the foundation, direction, and governance that attract the masses to participate in network activities, with a goal of fostering widespread interest and enthusiasm for knowledge sharing and network participation.

During a network's developmental stages, sponsors provide input and validate the business case, participate in the network assessment process, and refine the operating model as the general ConocoPhillips approach to networks is customized for their needs. As the network matures, sponsors and leaders guide improvements and make sure that participants are being served, goals are measured and met, and adequate resources are applied.

## Leader

For a network to be successful from the beginning, it must have a formal *leader*. Often selected by sponsors and then approved by the business, these mid-level individuals leverage relationships with others in an effort to guide the direction of the network's knowledge-sharing goals and objectives. Leaders provide active support (as opposed to vocal yet passive support) by helping design the network and removing any organizational obstacles.

Connecting globally dispersed units is not easy, and network leaders are key to knitting together efforts across a set of decentralized business units to ensure buy-in from locations around the world. Leaders are also crucial in encouraging SMEs, network members, and other thought leaders to participate and take on roles that promote knowledge sharing. Leaders help create the business case, assess the network's effectiveness, and hone its operating model. They must be willing to "manage up" because they may be informally directing network members who are above them in the company's formal hierarchy.

## Coordinator

Successful networks at ConocoPhillips also have a local *coordinator*, who works with the network leader to provide local and regional input into the network's operations and eventual upgrades. Typical responsibilities of a network coordinator include monitoring peer-to-peer questions occurring within the network to make sure answers are provided expeditiously and helping manage the content of a network, such as lessons learned and best practices. Coordinators also manage the overall look and feel of network portal sites and help manage regular training and awareness campaigns.

## Core Member

Finally, successful ConocoPhillips networks have *core members*, who drive connectivity down to the local and regional levels. Core members are a select group of general network members who are nominated by the sponsor and leader to ensure broad coverage in subject matter expertise and geographical areas of the business. In addition to serving as important role models through their active participation in many front-line network activities, core members help steer the evolution of the network under the guidance of sponsors and leaders. They are heavily engaged in formulating and executing plans to ensure that network deliverables reach the local and regional levels, and they broker connections between question askers and SMEs.

Through their engagement in day-to-day activities, core members often know who might be the best resource for a particular challenge and can ensure

appropriate knowledge sharing. As such, core members serve a vital role in expanding the number of general members who can contribute expertise.

## Assigning Roles

Management cannot assign people to a network role without considering how that will affect their workloads and careers. ConocoPhillips has found that the best way to manage this is to include these duties as part of people's expected contributions to the company, while scaling back other duties. The key here is to present the network as critically important to the business, not as an "extra activity" that is separate from individuals' regular work activities.

Heavy engagement with a network should not pull people away from their core jobs, and many employees prefer to engage in demanding network roles only for a specific period of time. Thus, ConocoPhillips has found that it is healthy to rotate individuals in and out of network roles roughly every two to three years. The strong benefits of network involvement can be seen in the many employees who have been heavily engaged in a network role and have then used that experience to position themselves for advancement within the company. It's clear that the breadth of experience that individuals acquire in their network roles more than makes up for the time away from their core jobs. As they wrap up their formal network duties, most continue to be strong network advocates and contributors, which can help encourage participation.

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## Knowledge-Sharing Culture

Time can be the greatest barrier to knowledge sharing if employees are too busy to seek out or contribute best practices. Key to the creation of a knowledge-sharing culture at ConocoPhillips was helping employees realize that efficiently soliciting knowledge from colleagues actually saves time. Several specific initiatives helped transform the culture from one that had previously taken "knowledge sharing" to mean ad hoc interactions between people who happen to know each other by chance into one in which people purposefully seek to build knowledge-sharing relationships.

## Testimonials

ConocoPhillips actively solicited testimonials of knowledge-sharing successes that resulted in time savings and cost savings. In 2005, the company collected nearly 1,000 stories and published the most powerful ones on a Knowledge Sharing

home page. Each story was written to communicate both the process behind the knowledge-sharing effort and the specific knowledge created; this way, each story was essentially a lesson learned.

Being able to quantify (in terms of both time and money) the effects of this sharing also helped secure higher levels of corporate support for the network initiative—something that was necessary on an ongoing basis as new executives became involved. Knowledge sharing at ConocoPhillips is now driven from the top. This has elevated the importance of knowledge sharing as it becomes embedded in the culture.

In a recent enterprise-wide survey, knowledge sharing received the second highest increase in employee satisfaction results (from 2006 to 2008). This accomplishment is particularly significant because as recently as 2004, most employees would likely not have recognized terms such as “knowledge sharing” and “networks.”

## Connecting as Part of Daily Work

Network success requires a commitment by management to actively support knowledge sharing so that employees feel that it is part of their “day jobs.” ConocoPhillips designed easy and efficient technology-enabled processes that focused on connecting people as part of their daily work, to enable the seamless flow of lessons learned and best practices to the right people at the right time. Becoming an effective network meant embracing the technology as well as the set of roles and processes.

Showing managers that this approach to knowledge transfer would maximize employees’ efforts to solve problems was the key. The corporate culture was particularly sensitive to anything perceived to be an additional burden, and one clear sign of network success is that knowledge sharing is not viewed in this manner.

## Recognition

To celebrate its successes, ConocoPhillips has created a range of opportunities for high-profile recognition of employees who have achieved the most success in knowledge sharing through networks. Interestingly, nominations for outstanding knowledge sharing often come from the network members themselves.

The firm has also linked knowledge-sharing behaviors to employees’ variable compensation. Together, these actions have elevated the visibility and importance of knowledge sharing. With recognition at global, regional, and network levels, the shift toward knowledge sharing has led mid-level managers around the company to support their employees’ network participation. “What my boss finds

interesting, I need to find fascinating” has a direct impact on knowledge sharing; therefore, getting mid-level managers onboard is of critical importance.

## From Strategy to Tactical Reality

Through these efforts, knowledge sharing at ConocoPhillips has transitioned from a strategic imperative to a tactical reality. Network members regularly seek out and share knowledge across and within business units. A strong knowledge-sharing culture lubricates networks by establishing a shared belief system; employees participate knowing what is expected of them and understanding why knowledge sharing is key to company success. As a result, a sense of openness and trust permeates the networks. Employees know that asking questions and seeking knowledge is part of what they do to generate business value; it is a sign of strength, not weakness.

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## Day-to-Day Network Operation

Two measures of success for any network at ConocoPhillips are the rate at which members engage with one another and the breadth of ideas that flow through the network. As network membership increases around the world, lessons learned and best practices can be more widely shared, thereby providing immediate benefits. Several aspects of day-to-day operation are crucial to producing this positive spiral of effort and benefits.

## Promotion and Facilitation

Interactions must be vigorously *promoted and facilitated* by the network leader and core members. They must monitor and participate in discussion databases and net-meetings, and ensure that lessons learned contain high-quality content. Network leaders and other employees in network roles must take the lead in recognizing opportunities for collaboration and beneficial engagement, and channel individuals toward the proper means of engagement.

While many network interactions are reactive and always will be (“I have a problem—can your experiences help me solve it?”), ConocoPhillips measures the maturity of networks by the degree to which they begin to operate more proactively. Networks that create business value for the company are those whose business cases include both a focus on solving challenges and whose members share with others without being asked by, for example, posting lessons learned that are likely to help others.

## Strong Processes and Technologies

Central to successful networks have been the *processes and technologies* that enable them. ConocoPhillips has gathered ideas from network members to create a portal system that adroitly links to the corporate e-mail system. Each member receives an e-mail that outlines daily activities on the network, along with links to the portal for more details. This drives a peer-to-peer problem-solving process that has proven very successful for the company.

Those who do not choose to “bring the corporation to bear” when seeking solutions are often questioned by their managers and peers. In other words, it is expected that acting and operating as part of a global company includes using the network-based portal technology. Effective content management by the networks themselves (with some centralized IT support) is crucial, with a focus on collecting, managing, and organizing the right information to support ongoing business success.

## A Part of the Workflow

Organizing lessons learned and best practices into easily retrievable sources, providing collaborative workspaces within a portal where people can share, and organizing knowledge-sharing events, such as net-meetings, all serve as deliverables and activities that can be *embedded* into the workflow. In this way, employees’ day-to-day activities are enhanced through access to lessons learned and best practices, raising the level of productivity.

At the behest and guidance of the network sponsor, a central network facilitation and support group works with the network leader, network coordinators, and core team members to create standard repositories and procedures that collect, store, and make available lessons learned and best practices in ways that fit the unique needs of the network. Network leaders and core team members are trained on the best practices for using these tools and processes, and they work with the network sponsor and the core membership to build the deliverables and activities that will sustain growth in beneficial sharing.

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## An Underlying Urgency

The networking initiatives at ConocoPhillips have succeeded because the efforts in each of the areas described previously were inspired by a great sense of urgency about the long-term competitive advantages to be obtained from knowledge-sharing networks. The marketplace in which ConocoPhillips competes is changing

dramatically. Competitors are continually strengthening their positions by maximizing their organizations' intellectual capital and discovering high-quality solutions to business problems. Increasingly, they are doing so in drastically reduced amounts of time. To remain a leader, ConocoPhillips must continue to create synergy among its employees by building an even more powerfully organized collection of best practices, ideas, tactics, and strategies, and seamlessly delivering them to the right people. To compete in today's marketplace, it is not enough to rely on individual experts' knowledge. It is critical that ConocoPhillips continue to harness its collective knowledge through collaborative networks.

Networks that focus on knowledge sharing have already become critical enablers for many oil and gas companies. Networks at ConocoPhillips are enabling functional areas and business units to build greater levels of openness and trust, which, in turn, improve employee collaboration and the sharing of valuable best practices and lessons learned. This sharing is leading to positive business results, such as reduced project cycle time and cost of production, as well as elevated competitive differentiation and improved financial results.

## DRIVING BUSINESS RESULTS THROUGH NETWORKED COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

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Rob Cross and Guillermo Velasquez

Most executives, especially those in knowledge-based organizations, would say that they heartily support the creation of Communities of Practice (CoPs), which can enhance information sharing and best practice transfer across an organization. But ask those same executives to invest organizational resources in the establishment and maintenance of CoPs, and they might well demand something in return. In an environment of tight budgets and tough competition, CoPs must be more than ad hoc groups of people who happen to share expertise or work in the same area; they need to create tangible, measurable business value. We have found that CoPs can do that if they are carefully designed and continually refined through the use of network analysis tools.

In this chapter, we explore how companies can use a network perspective to design CoPs that contribute to business performance, using as an example Halliburton, one of the world's largest providers of products and services to the petroleum and energy industries and an industry leader in the knowledge management realm.<sup>1</sup>

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## Organizational Network Analysis and CoPs at Halliburton

Over the past decade, Halliburton has regularly employed organizational network analysis (ONA) to build 19 CoPs across a variety of business disciplines and technical services. Each community initiative had to show measurable results directly linked to financial performance. By applying targeted interventions based on ONA assessments, Halliburton has been able to do just that. As an example, in one year, a global CoP within a critical business unit

- Lowered customer dissatisfaction by 24 percent
- Reduced cost of poor quality by 66 percent
- Increased new product revenue by 22 percent
- Improved operational productivity by more than 10 percent

Employees in this unit design, manufacture, and install equipment enabling the production of hydrocarbons from newly completed oil and gas wells. Although initial planning for the completion of a well is very important, the final design is highly dependent on the well's operational parameters. This means that during its completion phase, the final design may go through a large number of changes depending on how the drilling of the well develops, various reservoirs it may cross, expected production, and local logistics. Because of this dynamic environment, all those involved must collaborate closely to avoid errors in handoffs from one group to the next.

Halliburton created a “Completions CoP” to reduce nonproducing time, which costs the business unit 4 percent of net profits owing to penalty contracts—a substantial drain only likely to worsen because of increased complexity in new designs. Through its investments in building this CoP, Halliburton created a global, collaborative environment that mobilized expertise to solve problems at individual wells and helped others around the world avoid costly mistakes. For example, at one point, a member of the completions community experienced a specific problem with a deep-water well in West Africa. Through both virtual forums and specialist roles in the network, a solution to the problem was found and then propagated with such speed that three other similar completions to be performed within the next 24 hours avoided the same problem and saved important customers millions of dollars in nonproducing time.

### Benefits of Using Network Analysis

A network analysis was integral to establishing the CoP, allowing management to take targeted actions to improve network effectiveness. Rather than a “more

is better” philosophy to promoting collaboration with a technology or cultural change program, Halliburton focused on increasing connectivity at certain points and decreasing it at others. For example, some of the improvements included the following:

**Identifying overly connected people.** The network analysis highlighted the community’s over-reliance on three Global Technical Advisors (inside the oval in the graph in Figure 3.1a). Prior to the launch of the community, employees in each operational unit turned to people in these formally designated roles for problem-solving help. Halliburton initiated the community in part to help employees connect directly with each other to solve problems and thereby eliminate the inefficiencies and bottlenecks resulting from excessive reliance on this group of specialists. Instead of capturing and sharing best practices, these highly valued experts often became consumed by repetitive and mundane requests from the field. This impeded critical knowledge dissemination and also made the community vulnerable to the departure of these employees.

**Bridging invisible network silos.** The ONA revealed a series of silos in the network across both geography and function. For example, operations in the Gulf of Mexico had developed several new best practices and, as a result, decreased the cost of poor quality there by 50 percent in 12 months. Yet during that same period, the rest of the countries involved in the ONA had experienced a 13 percent *increase* in the cost of poor quality. Clearly the Global Technical Advisors were not effectively transferring best practices—and only a few connections between the countries existed outside of these roles (connections between people in the Gulf of Mexico and Angola were due to the fact that four individuals in Angola had previously worked in the Gulf of Mexico).

**Creating awareness of expertise distributed in the network.** The Global Technical Advisors were ineffective in part because they were overloaded. But an equally important impediment was that they did not know many people in the field—the very workers who needed their best-practice insight. The ONA revealed that, on average, six people in the field knew one or more Global Technical Advisors; the Global Technical Advisors, however, on average knew only one person in the field. A significant focus for improvement lay with technical and organizational means to help build awareness of “who knows what” throughout the network. For example, the network analysis informed several strategic international transfers of high-potential employees. These transfers offered

professional development opportunities for the individuals and established connections between previously disjointed operating regions.

**Identifying and drawing in peripheral network members.** The ONA also helped identify key individuals within the various countries who were very knowledgeable and experienced but were not actively engaged in helping to solve problems outside their area of operations. Halliburton targeted these individuals to become more involved and tapped into their knowledge and expertise to help others. In addition, the company assigned several highly skilled individuals to the role of knowledge broker.

### The Business Value of Improvements

These highly targeted efforts generated substantial business results, as previously outlined. In addition, a follow-up analysis performed one year after the interventions revealed overall improvement in the network (Figure 3.1b). The ONA allowed Halliburton to focus on connectivity that had value for the organization—not just on an indiscriminate increase in collaboration. Measurable improvements in knowledge transfer were evident. For example, “cohesion”—a key network measure of the average number of steps it takes for each person in the community to get to every other person when in need of knowledge or expertise—improved by 25 percent. In addition, community members’ estimates of the time it took to get answers and solutions were reduced by an order of magnitude, from 30 days to 3 days on average. These improvements, combined with anecdotal evidence, made clear to Halliburton that important business conversations were occurring without imposing an unnecessary collaborative burden on all employees.

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## Five Added-Value Propositions of Network Analysis

In addition to improving the effectiveness of established communities, ONA can help create new ones. By understanding and tracking a fledgling community, leaders can turn it into one that produces value for members and the organization. This section identifies five common value propositions that organizations seek from CoP programs and shows how ONA can be used to achieve them by targeting interventions and tracking improvements in collaboration within the community. The remainder of this chapter demonstrates how network interventions can help a CoP deliver on these five value propositions:

FIGURE 3.1a HALLIBURTON PRE-CHANGE NETWORK ANALYSIS

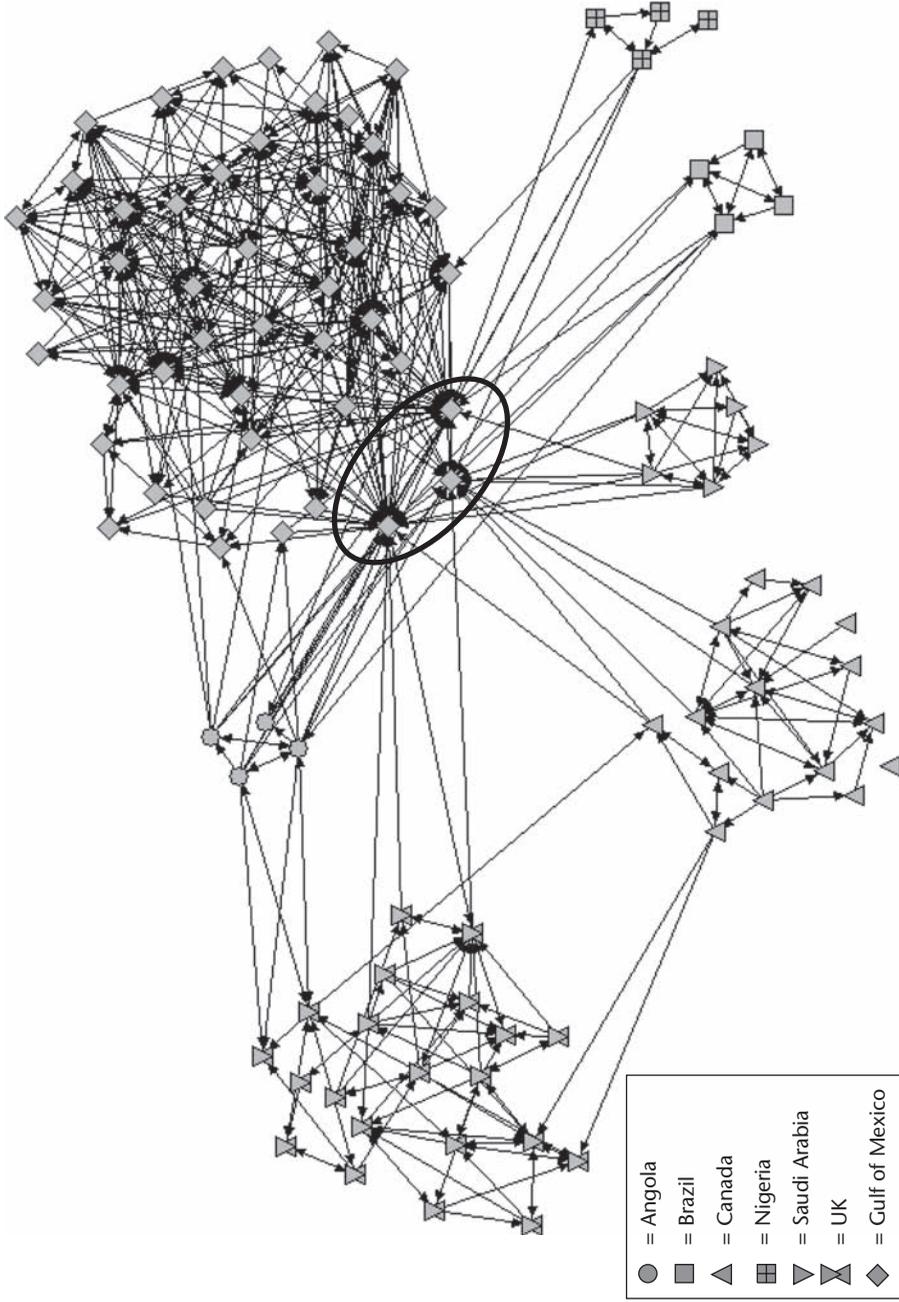
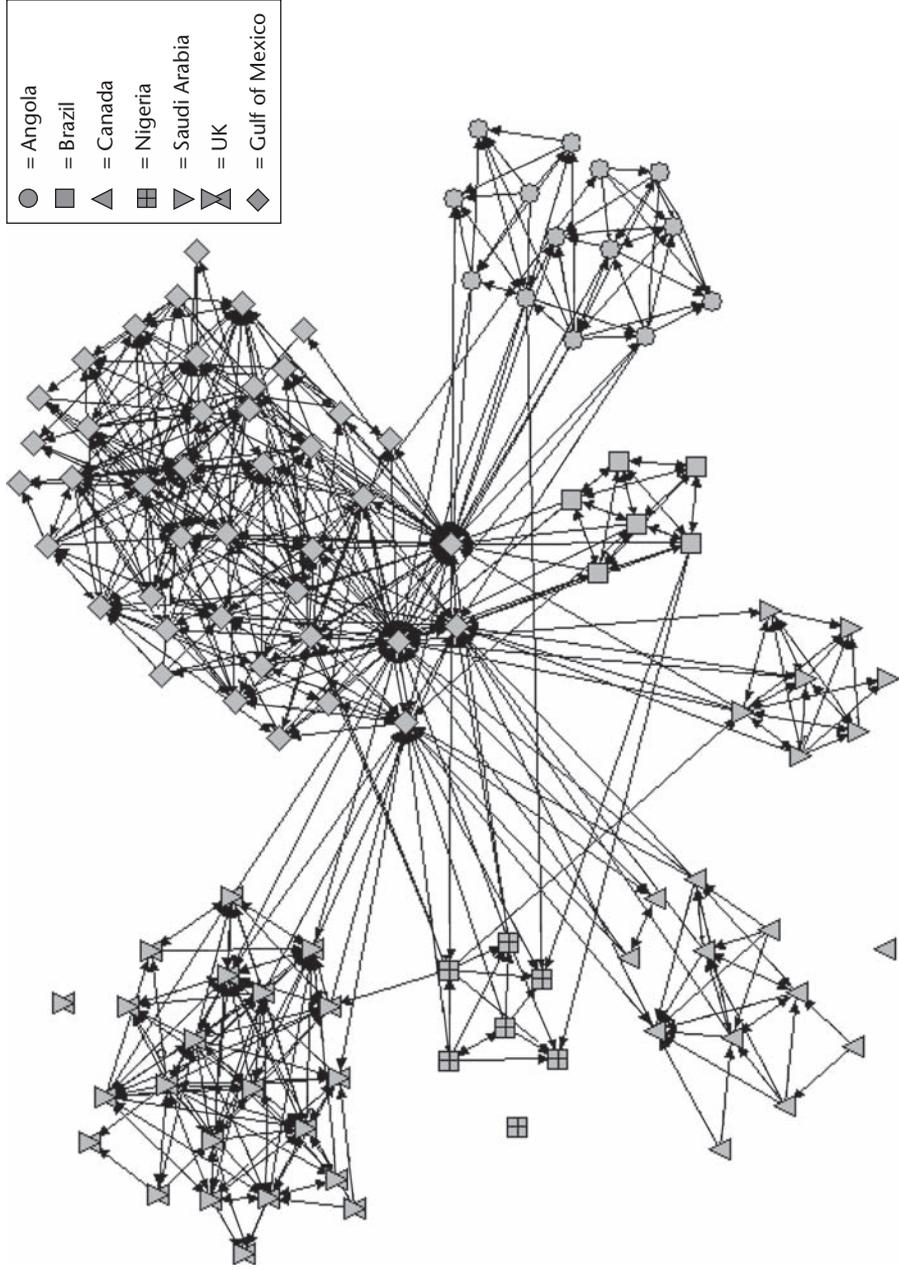


FIGURE 3.1b HALLIBURTON POST-CHANGE NETWORK ANALYSIS



- Improving information flow and knowledge reuse
- Developing a sense-and-respond capability to capitalize on new opportunities
- Driving planned and emergent innovation
- Nurturing value-creating interactions
- Ensuring employee engagement through CoPs

## Improving Information Flow and Knowledge Reuse

A common objective for any CoP program is to encourage information flow, knowledge reuse, and learning among employees. Substantial efficiency and effectiveness benefits result from communities that promote knowledge creation and transfer. Unfortunately, in new communities, we typically see information flow and learning networks that are constrained by formal structure and, to some degree, the personalities and interests of those involved.

In general, three simple actions can promote information flow:

1. Identify key brokers who have expertise important to the community and make them the “go to” people on those topics. Publicize this to the network and, just as important, ask the brokers to direct people to others instead of answering questions directly. Include this in their job descriptions and performance reviews.
2. Use a regularly scheduled call or meeting among this small set of brokers to share challenges and help them better understand the expertise of other brokers as well as key community experts.
3. Ask the brokers to help draw two or three peripheral people into the community. These simple and targeted efforts can improve overall cohesion in a network by up to 25 percent.

For the Halliburton communities, establishing certain roles early on was an important step. One role was the *knowledge broker* (the person tasked with the coordination of the community). In the early stages of the community, while people are developing trust, the knowledge broker has the greatest impact on the level of collaboration among members. The best knowledge brokers increase membership and encourage frequent participation, all through telephone calls and e-mails. As the community members develop trust, the knowledge broker takes a more passive approach as members increasingly collaborate directly with each other.

Another was the role of *local knowledge champion*, the individual identified at every location as the “go to” person. This role was established when the knowledge broker of the electronic technicians community (one of the company’s pilot CoPs) noted that by involving certain individuals in every location, knowledge and information flowed very efficiently to all potential members in each location.

Management noted this success, and the role was officially implemented across communities.

As part of their job, knowledge brokers organized periodic teleconferences with local knowledge champions from around the world. These calls created a forum to discuss technical issues, identify success stories, and brainstorm operational challenges. As a result, they were crucial for diffusing best practices and cultivating a sense of community among these dispersed people.

## Developing a Sense-and-Respond Capability

Creating a healthy community requires more than additional communication and information flow. To address new problems and opportunities, members must be aware of expertise distributed throughout the network—not just the knowledge and skills of those they currently seek out. Awareness of colleagues' expertise can be mapped to provide a latent view of a network—not the people currently tapped for information but the people who should be if circumstances change.

Lack of awareness is a common impediment to collaboration in CoPs. Fortunately, overcoming this is relatively simple and does not impose a substantial time or cost burden on community members. Two broad categories of interventions help build awareness of who knows what.

First, information about members' expertise can be made available so that employees reach out to one another as appropriate rather than simply relying on reputation or a current set of contacts. Expertise or skill profiles, which can be provided in paper or electronic form, generally include two kinds of content: information about an individual that builds credibility in the appropriate professional context, such as patents, publications, degrees, and project experience; and some personal information, such as alma mater, interests, hobbies, and a picture, which can start a conversation between strangers.

Second, simple shifts in face-to-face or virtual gatherings can substantially improve awareness among community members. Left to their own devices, most people cluster with those they already know and like. In face-to-face meetings, community leaders can break this pattern by shifting where people sit or populating breakout sessions to encourage connectivity where an ONA suggests it would be helpful. In virtual forums, a community leader can ensure that peripheral voices are heard by how they design the agenda. Whether face-to-face or virtual, effective meetings draw participants with educational content for the group—but they also include interactive forums focused on community members' successes and challenges. These efforts engage others in problem solving so that work gets done while people in the network learn about one another's expertise.

At Halliburton, CoP efforts focus on building awareness of expertise by enabling certain community members to meet periodically to discuss effective practices, challenges, and the latest technologies. Also, at the time a community is launched, potential members are surveyed to uncover their knowledge and expertise. This information is used by the knowledge broker to reach for the right experts, no matter where they are, when looking for solutions to specific issues.

Another tool for building awareness is the monthly report of community activity that most Halliburton communities have adopted. The report is a compilation of users' postings in the collaboration tool (the most important component of the community portal). There are two types of postings. First are requests for knowledge or information, such as "Does anybody know XYZ?"; "Has anybody done XYZ before?"; and "What kind of experience do we as a company have doing XYZ?" Halliburton refers to these requests as "issues." The other type of posting is unsolicited knowledge sharing from individuals with a lot of experience who post case histories and experiences in an effort to educate others and prevent problems in other locations.

In the community activity report, distributed to all members, one can see the issues ranked by the number of times the issue was read by community members, the issues that involved more than one community, how many issues were opened and closed that month, and the average number of days to close an issue. The report also includes the number of active and passive participants, unique users, contributors by geographic area, and the names of the top 10 contributors (see Exhibit 3.1 for a disguised template).

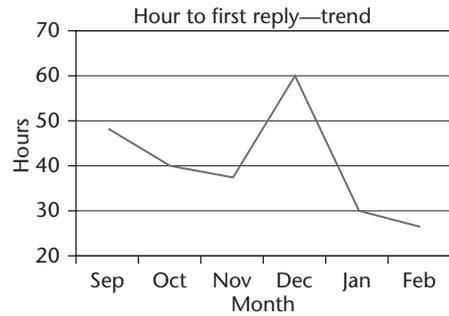
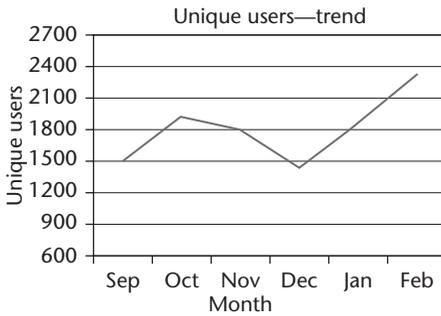
**Exhibit 3.1 Community Portal Statistics Tracked**

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Most Viewed Discussion Items</b>	<b>Times</b>
Unique users	2335	Revised drug and alcohol policies and work methods available	905
Unique contributors	130	Wanted: Cross PSL collaborative best practices and lessons learned	388
Unique viewers	2223	Tight gas experience and achievements	332
User days	5245	Receiving error message after attempting to export XMLs	305
Times viewed	9538	Determination of bit torque in WellPlan Torque and Drag Module	253

(continued)

**Exhibit 3.1 Community Portal Statistics Tracked (continued)**

Unique discussions viewed	808	Need a Compass Wallplot Composer best practices document	217
New discussion items	82	Coiled tubing drilling market size	205
Discussion responses	218	Wanted: information on flash drive security	172
Total contributions	300	Drill pipe size and ECD	151
Average number of replies	2.88	Reservoir/production consulting—How to be more efficient and productive?	151
Hours to first reply	26	Geodetic System in Compass	138



Regular Contributors	Posts	Contributions by Country	Posts
Contributor No 1	13	Country A	62
Contributor No 2	10	Country B	58
Contributor No 3	10	Country C	29
Contributor No 4	9	Country D	17
Contributor No 5	9	Country E	10
Contributor No 6	7	Country F	10
Contributor No 7	6	Country G	10
Contributor No 8	5	Country H	9
Contributor No 9	5	Country I	9
Contributor No 10	5	Country J	8

## Driving Planned and Emergent Innovation

Innovation can occur in many situations, not just in the creation of new products and services. Take, for example, the Halliburton salesperson who was asked by a customer about the performance of a perforating device. The salesperson posted the question in the perforating community and got a lot of valuable information about the device from wells around the world. He presented this to the customer with a proposal to use this device. The customer was impressed with the speed and the quality of the information and decided to award Halliburton not only with business related to the specific device but also with perforating services in many other wells. Before CoPs existed, a salesperson could not have taken such an innovative approach to serving customers.

Although CoPs often focus on providing efficiency benefits by disseminating current best practices, they also can help drive product or process innovation, as the previous example shows. Because membership is often voluntary, communities tend to form based on affinity—people who care about similar aspects of their work will naturally be drawn together. Unfortunately, subgroups in communities can become fairly rigid silos based on people’s expertise (defined in terms of either core technical skills or functional affiliation). Rather than produce the creative friction that is key to innovation, these groups can sometimes regenerate similar solutions and ways of thinking.

A network analysis helps a community leader focus on three opportunities:

- Identifying silos within a given community that are solidifying around domains of technical expertise
- Recognizing and adjusting, where appropriate, the relative influence of overly prominent and marginalized voices in the community
- Ensuring that problem-solving networks are integrated and used early in projects

***Communities in Key Functions*** When assessing communities in key innovation functions—such as R&D—it is relatively simple to find ways to ensure the influence of various categories of expertise through such actions as project staffing, internal improvement efforts, or career development processes. Leaders of broad-scale CoP efforts often lack direct control over these levers—imposing a daunting but not an insurmountable challenge. One way to overcome this is to thoughtfully organize tables or breakout groups in face-to-face meetings to help build important connectivity. Another technique, creating “alternative perspective” stories that characterize how different expertise produces different solutions to the same problem, can help members see complementary strengths, even in a virtual meeting. Communities with small budgets can promote light-hearted

competitions and report on “what if” innovations that might emerge through the collaboration of those with different skills. Such actions also allow leaders (or “go to” people) to model desired behaviors by bridging connections between experts rather than trying to answer all questions directly.

***Improving Access to Experts*** Halliburton takes two approaches to ensuring that communities are able to access a wide variety of experts.

First, the company includes a diversity of roles and disciplines in a community’s problem-solving efforts. As one of literally hundreds of examples, in South Texas, a field mechanic reported problems with the belts on units with CAT 3208 engines, which were delaying projects and decreasing customer confidence. The field mechanic who reported the problem developed a simple solution, replacing the existing belts with Kevlar type belts, which increased the belt life for very little cost. By helping to propagate this solution across other engines of this type, the production enhancement community documented savings of \$143,421 in annual maintenance and cost.

To help CoPs get to the root of problems—and perhaps discover innovative solutions instead of focusing on superficial issues—communities are designed to include a range of relevant roles and disciplines, such as Operations, Technology, Training, Sales, Manufacturing, and Logistics. Before a community is formed, a knowledge-mapping exercise is conducted to identify the various topics that will be important to the community. Local champions are then surveyed to find out whom they recognize as subject matter experts (SMEs) in those topics. The people identified are then tapped to play key roles in the community.

Second, Halliburton has also helped its CoPs avoid insularity and leverage relevant knowledge and expertise by developing a network of knowledge brokers who can locate experts in all communities. If one community faces a problem that none of its members can address, the knowledge broker determines which other CoPs might be able to help and reaches out to their knowledge brokers, who then quickly engage the appropriate SMEs from among their members.

This kind of cross-community coordination makes perfect sense, because most issues that arise are not restricted to a specific service or discipline. An issue with wellbore stability, for example, could involve the drilling fluids community, the three different drilling communities, the logging community, the chemistry community, and others. In one instance, a member of the chemistry community was looking for a simple and inexpensive way to identify hydrocarbons from drill cuttings. The issue was posted in the chemistry community, and the knowledge broker located an innovative solution within the down-hole mechanical engineering community. The knowledge broker is the person who crosses boundaries. These professionals, who can play a crucial role in spurring innovation across the company, often do not get as much recognition as they deserve.

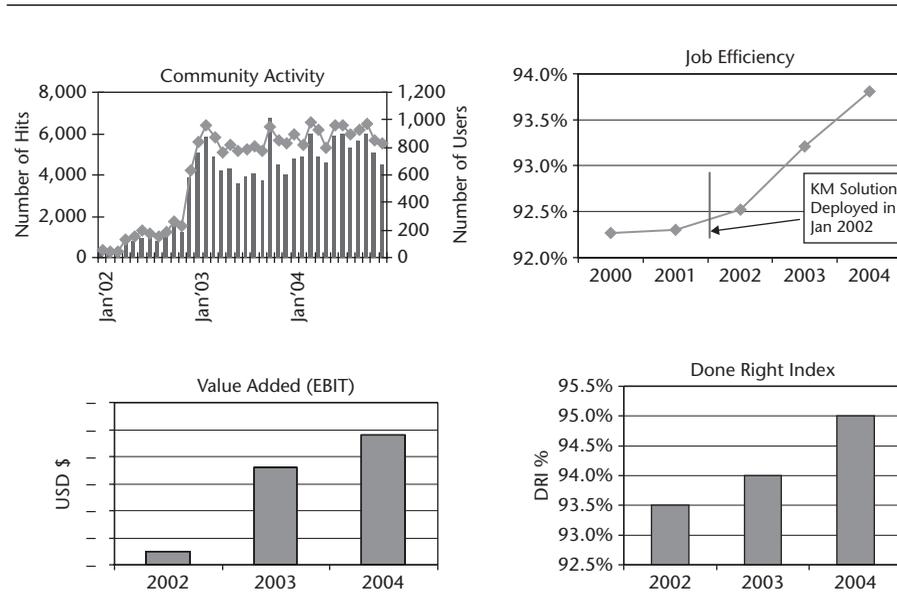
### Nurturing Value-Creating Interactions

Executives tend to decide whether or how to support a CoP on the basis of measurable value creation. Network analysis can help here by allowing a community leader to relate group-level properties to business results. Specifically, one can test the correlation of individual or community networks with important outcomes such as increased revenue, decreased cost, and improved customer satisfaction.

At Halliburton, the metrics used to track the effectiveness of CoPs have evolved. Initially, the company used a score card (like the one in Figure 3.2) for each community, which included data on community activity, job efficiency, and value added, among others. The tangible value added was difficult to design and implement but not impossible. From 2001 to 2005, the company gathered value-added numbers on a monthly basis from each community. These figures were rolled up at the corporate level each quarter. From July 2001 to June 2005, the company recorded \$130 million in business value from distance learning and CoPs with an ROI of 379 percent.

In 2005, management decided to stop recording value added in dollars because these metrics are time consuming to gather, and managers at all levels were already convinced that the company’s CoPs had brought a lot of value added to customers and to the organization. Currently, more attention is being

**FIGURE 3.2 SCORECARD METRICS EXAMPLE**



given to measures of community activity because it has been well established that an active community improves business processes, which results in better service quality and the development of improved products and services. In fact, community activity has become the default metric. As 26 CoPs have been deployed, activity has increased dramatically.

Other measures are important as well, but they vary from community to community. Each CoP defines which metrics will best help management understand the value it creates. For example, the electronic technician community included the time to make an electronic repair. The technicians have reported time savings due to the community of approximately 20 percent, which has allowed the company to meet the demand of business growth without adding technicians. Today's technicians are also better trained and more effective than ever. They have reduced repeat repairs as measured through SAP work orders from 30 percent to near 0 percent. But the stories behind the numbers are what matter most in demonstrating the value of a CoP.

Consider a technician who was performing a repair in a location four hours away from the nearest shop. During the repair he discovered a problem that he had read about in the community collaboration tool. The repair required either another computer or a complex electronic calibration procedure that the technician could not remember. Rather than call for a new computer and wait four hours for it to be delivered, the technician called the community knowledge broker. The broker read the procedure to the technician, who completed the calibration in time for the job and at much less cost than transporting another computer.

## Ensuring Employee Engagement Through CoP Efforts

Although a small number of leaders or SMEs might commit some of their time to community roles, most members of a community dedicate discretionary time and effort. As a result, it is important for leaders to minimize obstacles to participation and ensure that the community engages the hearts and minds of its “volunteers.” Network analysis can provide structural and relational insight on this front.

**Reciprocity** First, reciprocity—or balance in the give-and-take in relationships—offers an important indicator of the health of voluntary groups. Network analysis can provide (1) visual assessments of reciprocated or one-way interactions highlighting specific people or relationships seemingly out of balance and (2) an index of group reciprocity by the ratio of reciprocated ties to total ties in the network as a measure of overall community health.

***Generative or Draining?*** In addition to examining the structure of exchanges in a network, a community leader can also look at specific kinds of relationships to determine the extent to which network connections are generative or draining. For example, network analysis can be used to assess energy or enthusiasm in networks and help make improvements at fragmentation points or areas of low connectivity through behavioral interventions. Though seemingly soft, it turns out that this view of enthusiasm in a network provides a great deal of insight into emerging pockets of innovation and is also a strong predictor of high performers (those in the top 20 percent are much more likely to energize others).

***Inside and Outside Forces for Engagement*** Finally, we often include an organizational context diagnostic questionnaire with our network assessments to determine the extent to which organizational forces inside and outside of the community influence employees' ability and willingness to engage in the efforts of the community. It does little good to make myriad changes within the community network itself if the organizational context will simply drive the community back to ineffective patterns over time. Exhibit 3.2 gives a sample of diagnostic questions for a community of Six Sigma practitioners (along with the other questions we often ask when assessing a CoP).

Exhibit 3.2 also includes a bar chart of results from an assessment conducted with a global CoP. For example, in the case illustrated by the chart, we find a high degree of consensus of a strong collaborative culture, whereas we find a low degree of ease with which people can find out who knows what, but with more variance in opinions. Although leaders may use all or part of this assessment, or create new items relevant to their own context, we advise them to pay attention to the five or six issues across cultural values, work practices, human resource policies, technologies, and formal structure/leadership that can disrupt a community. Because this kind of assessment is consistent with traditional organizational diagnostics, we will not review it in depth here.

At Halliburton, the CoP efforts focus on context and external stakeholders by engaging management at all levels. Normally surveys and interviews conducted during the development of a community uncover its specific context and culture; this context is then discussed with the relevant managers, who help develop a plan for addressing the elements that could impede effectiveness. Sometimes the issues are far too complex to be solved in the short term. Consider the chemistry community, whose members, by training or by nature, are loath to share intellectual property they have not yet patented. In other cases, however, issues can be resolved in a reasonable time frame.

For instance, members of the chemistry community resided in two technology centers. An ONA revealed that almost no sharing was taking place between

### Exhibit 3.2 Diagnostic Questions for a Six Sigma Community

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Business Unit: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Region: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Job Tenure (*months*): \_\_\_\_\_ Company Tenure (*months*): \_\_\_\_\_

**Demographic Information:** (*Please circle best description among options offered.*)

Gender: *Male Female* Education: *BA BS MS MBA PhD*

Nationality: *N. American European Asian S. American Other* Discipline: *Engineering Business Statistics Other*

Current Certification: *Black Belt Green Belt Other*

**Six Sigma Expertise:** (*Please circle the appropriate level for each competency area.*)

Seven Simple Quality Tools	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Process Mapping	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Basic Statistics ( <i>e.g., regression, t-tests</i> )	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Advanced Statistics ( <i>e.g., ANOVA</i> )	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Formal Experiments ( <i>e.g., DoE, Taguchi</i> )	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Team Facilitation	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Project Management Tools	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>
PowerPoint Presentations	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Financial Analysis	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Six Sigma in Manufacturing	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Six Sigma in Service Operations	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Six Sigma in Backroom Operations	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Experienced</i>	<i>Expert</i>

(continued)

### Exhibit 3.2 Diagnostic Questions (*continued*)

**Community Value:** (*Please circle appropriate choice.*)

Participation in the Six Sigma Community of Practice . . .

. . . improves customer satisfaction:	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Substantially</i>				
. . . enhances my job satisfaction:	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Substantially</i>				
. . . increases my career opportunities:	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Substantially</i>				
. . . saves me time personally:	0	1–2	3–5	6–10	11–20	20+	hours/month
. . . saves project team time:	0	1–2	3–5	6–10	11–20	20+	hours/month
. . . reduces project cycle time:	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	20%+	on average
. . . increases project savings:	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	20%+	on average

### Community Interaction

*In the following table, please indicate the quality of your interaction with members of the Six Sigma Community on the following four dimensions.*

**Frequency** Please indicate the frequency with which you typically turn to each person for assistance on work-related topics.

0 = I do not know this person      3 = At least quarterly

1 = Never      4 = At least monthly

2 = At least annually      5 = At least weekly

**Responsiveness** Please indicate the responsiveness of each individual in replying to your requests for work-related assistance.

0 = I do not know this person      3 = Generally responds within the week

1 = Often fails to respond      4 = Typically responds within 24 hours

2 = Usually responds but slowly      5 = Always responds same day

### Exhibit 3.2 Diagnostic Questions (*continued*)

**Effectiveness** How effective is each person in helping you solve work-related problems when they respond?

- 0 = I do not know this person      3 = Reasonably effective  
 1 = Very ineffective                      4 = Very effective  
 2 = Ineffective                              5 = Exceptionally effective

**Energy** When you interact with this person, how does it affect your energy level?

- 0 = I do not know this person      3 = No effect/Neutral  
 1 = Very de-energizing                4 = Slightly energizing  
 2 = Slightly de-energizing          5 = Very energizing

Community Member	Frequency	Responsiveness	Effectiveness	Energy
Ausidon, Andre				
Brown, Bill				
Chen, Charles				
Davies, Deborah				
Einstein, Elijah				
Friedman, Frank				
Gusthurst, Gustav				
Hellmann, Henri				
Isakson, Isaac				
Johnson, Jack				
Knocklesford, Karen				
Lee, Liu				
Menendez, Miguel				
Norabuto, Nogie				
Oman, Olivia				
Patel, Priyanka				

(*continued*)

### Exhibit 3.2 Diagnostic Questions (*continued*)

#### Organizational Context

Please indicate your agreement/disagreement with the following statements.

Response Options:

1 = Strongly disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Neutral    4 = Agree    5 = Strongly agree

Item	Statement	Response
1	Collaborative problem solving is part of our culture.	
2	People in this community are not afraid to admit they need help.	
3	People will share information in draft form rather than wait for perfection.	
4	People generally trust one another within our community.	
5	People are willing to admit mistakes.	
6	Executives support Six Sigma experts in our work with the business units.	
7	Executives monitor Six Sigma community performance and results.	
8	Sharing information across organizational boundaries is encouraged.	
9	Sharing information across hierarchical levels is encouraged.	
10	Sharing information across geographical boundaries is encouraged.	
11	Good balance exists between business unit/local tasks and global projects.	
12	Face-to-face forums regularly help build relationships.	

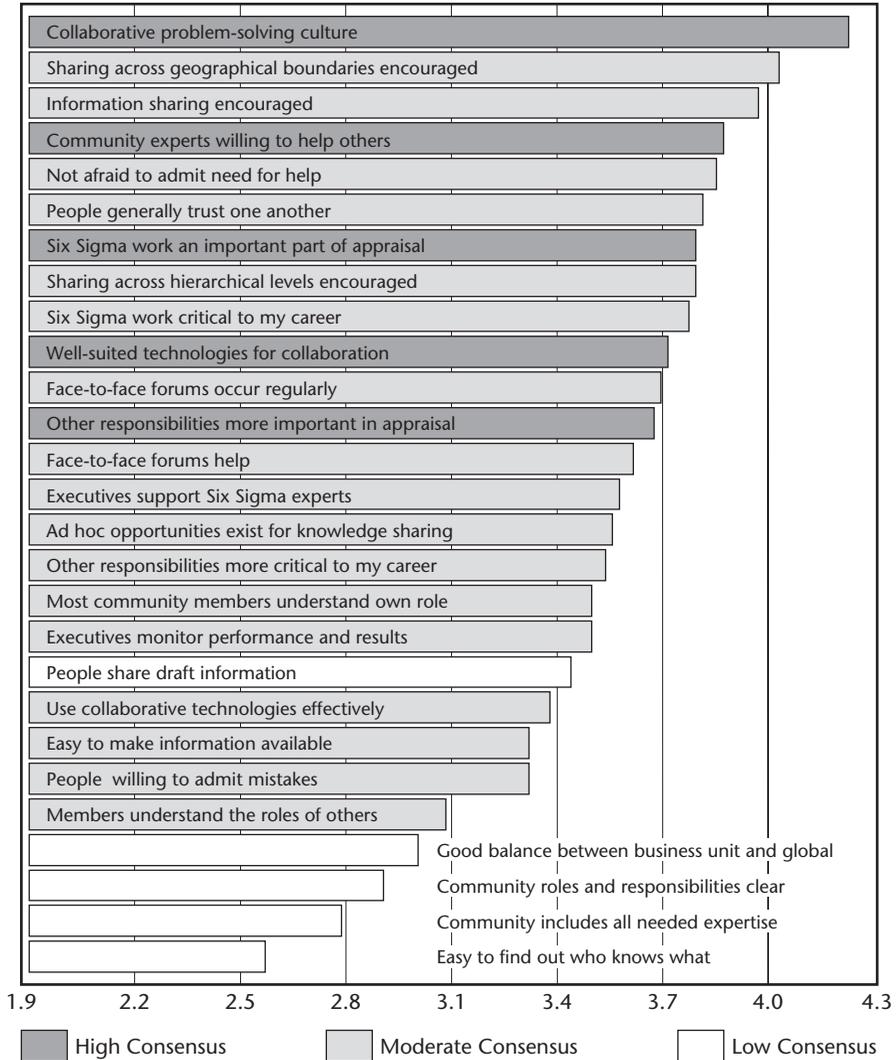
**Exhibit 3.2 Diagnostic Questions (continued)**

<b>13</b>	Face-to-face forums help to develop social ties and learn others' expertise.	
<b>14</b>	Opportunities exist for ad hoc meetings that promote knowledge sharing.	
<b>15</b>	The technologies provided for collaboration are suited to the work we do.	
<b>16</b>	Our community generally uses collaborative technologies effectively.	
<b>17</b>	It is easy to make information available for others who might need it.	
<b>18</b>	It is easy to find out who knows what, without having to ask superiors.	
<b>19</b>	Community experts are willing to help the other community members.	
<b>20</b>	Community roles and responsibilities are clearly identified.	
<b>21</b>	Most Six Sigma community members understand their own role.	
<b>22</b>	Most community members understand the roles of other members.	
<b>23</b>	The community includes all needed expertise to get the job done.	
<b>24</b>	Six Sigma project work is an important part of my performance appraisal.	
<b>25</b>	Other responsibilities are more important in my performance appraisal.	
<b>26</b>	Six Sigma project work is critical to my career development plan.	
<b>27</b>	Other responsibilities are more critical to my career development plan.	

*(continued)*

**Exhibit 3.2 Diagnostic Questions (continued)**

**Organizational Context Findings**



the two groups. To resolve this, management brought people from both centers together on various projects, which helped engage these employees in the life of the community and improved project outcomes.

We also saw a relatively straightforward solution to a cultural issue in the completions community. As mentioned earlier, members initially referred all requests to the three global advisors, whether they were asking for the part number of an assembly or for help designing a well completion. This was a natural behavior for these employees, who in the past had faced liabilities when they used unverified, secondhand information. After the community started functioning, however, members realized that many among them had valuable information to offer, and any incorrect or inaccurate information was quickly spotted by someone in the community. As a result, community members began to trust one another, and the global advisors were able to devote their time to more complex issues.

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## Endnote

1. Portions of the Halliburton example are reprinted with permission from *strategy+business*, published by Booz & Company, at [www.strategy-business.com](http://www.strategy-business.com), and from the *California Management Review*.

# MAPPING AND ENGAGING INFLUENCE NETWORKS

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Myra Norton

Organizations in many industries are searching for new sales and marketing models. As the number and variety of communication channels continue to multiply and the landscape becomes increasingly competitive, firms are looking for creative ways to acquire new customers, sell more to existing customers, and build long-term brand loyalty.

Talented sales professionals recognize that successful selling requires an understanding of the myriad relationships surrounding the individual or group that will ultimately decide whether to purchase the product or service. Indeed, customers live and work in “influence networks.” They turn to trusted colleagues for input and advice when evaluating new products, making critical business decisions, and formulating opinions on important issues.

But even the very best salespeople miss key components of those relationships that could help them with a current or future sale. In large part, that’s because of shortcomings in the traditional methods for uncovering influential relationships. Some methods, for instance, are based on the assumption that influence flows through the hierarchy of an organization or that highly influential individuals are those who are most visible. Other methods try to get at important relationships by relying on people to input accurate data. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, for example, may capture notes that a salesperson inserts about certain relationships, but they do not provide an overall understanding of the influence networks surrounding customers and prospects.

Organizational network analysis (ONA) techniques can help sales professionals see these networks. By mapping the influence networks within current or prospective clients, companies can get a more comprehensive view of the trust and advice-seeking relationships that inform purchasing decisions. Armed with this knowledge, a firm can align its sales and marketing resources to engage the most trusted individuals in the network.

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## An Influence Network Analysis at TechFirm

TechFirm, an information technology company that provides enterprise software solutions to the mid-market, is a good example of a firm that recognized the need to develop a new approach to its customers. TechFirm (whose name has been disguised) sells its products and services to senior technology executives—CIOs, CTOs, and VPs of technology—at firms ranging from \$50 million to \$1 billion in revenue. The company had relied on its geographically deployed sales force and an experienced marketing team, which leveraged print, online, and in-person methods of communication with current and prospective customers. Although TechFirm had maintained consistent growth in revenue and number of clients in recent years, the company recognized that to achieve its more ambitious growth goals for the coming years, it needed to increase the rate of new-client acquisition and revenue per customer through cross-selling and up-selling activities.

The company had made some attempts to identify and reach out to individuals who might influence client companies by, for instance, studying organizational titles and roles, and scanning publications, online forums, and event descriptions to note frequent contributors who might have a sizable following. But these efforts did not generate more customers or even more positive word-of-mouth for TechFirm. The company needed a new approach to collecting and using relationship data.

TechFirm's vice president of sales hired Community Analytics, the research and consulting firm for which I work, to help gather influence network information, analyze it, and integrate it into the company's sales and marketing strategies. While the sales team provided the impetus for adopting this influence network approach, the marketing and technical teams (product development and sales engineers) were involved throughout the process.

### Payoffs of the Study

The payoffs were tremendous. As a result of the influence network approach, TechFirm enjoyed the following measurable successes:

- 22 percent increase in new-customer acquisition in regions where the influence network approach was applied, while new-customer acquisition in comparable regions fell by more than 10 percent
- The launch of an online community with twice the targeted number of professionals participating
- Increase in lead generation from regional and national conferences as a result of basing the invitation strategy on influence network data
- 18 percent increase in new customers, directly attributed to using influence network data
- 20 percent increase in share among target audience
- Increase in positive press (unsolicited) through the work of influential network members invited to join an advisory board

We have seen companies adopt the influence network approach to achieve such tangible goals as moving into a new market, boosting market share in an existing product line, increasing sales in certain regions, improving yield through channel sales, shortening the average sales cycle, mitigating the impact of sales turnover, and improving cross-selling and up-selling.

### **A Four-Step Influence Network Approach to Sales and Marketing**

To help TechFirm uncover customers' influence networks and connect with customers and prospects in more meaningful and strategic ways, we started by identifying 3,000 current and potential customers for TechFirm in three geographic regions. Within each firm, we identified individuals who were responsible for deciding whether to purchase TechFirm's products. Thanks to TechFirm's previous research on organizational roles and titles, we had a good starting point, but we had to verify this information. Along the way we added many names to the list and eliminated others. We then conducted needs assessments with all identified individuals to understand two things:

- The decision-making process within the organization relative to the product of interest
- Whom the decision maker turned to for information and advice about the product of interest

From responses to the first question, we were able to identify others within the firm who were involved in the decision-making process and follow up with them to determine their responses to the second question. From responses to the second question, we were able to apply network analysis to identify the

individuals who were of critical importance to this audience and to reveal how they were connected to the broader population of customers and prospects. In addition to uncovering these relationships, we learned about the nature of the relationships, how individuals prefer to interact, and the challenges they face with data storage in their organizations.

On the basis of these results, we developed a four-step process for working with the data to engage influential network members and develop sustainable connections to them: (1) identify opportunities, (2) build partnerships, (3) facilitate connections, and (4) sustain relationships.

TechFirm worked through this process in a two-month period and then implemented the resulting strategies and tactics over the following year.

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## Step 1: Identify Opportunities

The first step was to use the influence network data to assess TechFirm's current level of engagement with influential people and discover opportunities for strengthening relationships that could help the firm achieve its business goals. TechFirm wanted to increase new-customer acquisition in three sales regions, improve customer satisfaction, and shorten the sales cycle for deals currently in the pipeline in those regions.

Opportunities were identified by the following:

- Performing a gap analysis
- Segmenting what we call key network members (KNMs)
- Forming cross-functional teams responsible for developing a strategy for engaging each group of KNMs

*Key network members*, as the name suggests, are those who are in the best position (because of their relationships, the nature of their network, and their overall role in the network or a subgroup of the network) to support the achievement of business goals. They are identified through a series of algorithms that take into account both relationship dynamics and business impact.

### Gap Analysis

We started by performing a simple gap analysis, comparing the list of KNMs identified through the influence network data to TechFirm's sales targeting list, the list of individuals the company used in marketing and communication

efforts, and its own internally generated list of “influencers.” We found that 65 percent of the KNMs identified through the network analysis were not on any TechFirm lists.

We then looked at the events that TechFirm had orchestrated during the previous year and compared the speakers and attendees to the list of KNMs. We also compared the list of KNMs to speakers or panelists lined up for events in the coming year. The purpose of this exercise was to assess TechFirm’s level of engagement with the KNMs. We found that 78 percent of the KNMs had *not* participated in any TechFirm events (either as speakers or attendees). More important, we found that 84 percent of the speakers TechFirm had engaged in the previous year were *not* mentioned by a single person as someone whose opinion was trusted or whose advice was sought.

## Segmentation

After identifying the KNMs, we segmented them in the following three ways to focus and prioritize our efforts:

- **Sales region**

We grouped them by the regions in which they worked and the regions where they were most trusted by decision makers. (Note: KNMs may or may not be actual purchasers. They also may work in one sales region but influence purchasing decisions in multiple regions.)

- **Potential sales impact**

High: The individual is trusted by a large number of decision makers with significant technology budgets.

Medium: The individual is trusted by a smaller number of decision makers with significant technology budgets or by a larger number of decision makers with mid-sized budgets.

Low: The individual is trusted by a smaller number of decision makers with smaller budgets.

- **Ease of building a relationship**

High: There is a current relationship between a TechFirm employee and the KNM.

Medium: A TechFirm employee has a relationship with an individual who is connected to the KNM.

Low: The only relationship paths between a TechFirm employee and the KNM require two or more intermediaries.

## Cross-Functional Team Assignments

To engage professionals within TechFirm more fully in this process, we then formed three cross-functional teams of three to four individuals representing sales, marketing, and technical expertise within TechFirm. On the basis of the segmentation conducted earlier, the teams grouped KNMs into the following three categories:

- High/Medium potential sales impact concentrated in one region
- High/Medium potential sales impact concentrated in more than one region
- Low potential sales impact

Each team was then assigned one of these groups and asked to research the following areas for each KNM in that group:

- Status of relationship with TechFirm
- Optimal path to engage with the KNM
- Level of advocacy or use of TechFirm's products

Each cross-functional team was given two weeks to complete the research and share its findings with the larger group.

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## Step 2: Build Partnerships

The goal of this step was to engage KNMs in a way that would encourage them to become advocates for TechFirm's products and services. We developed the strategies for this step during two half-day sessions with members of the cross-functional teams; senior sales, marketing, and communications executives; the regional sales managers for each of the three sales regions that were the focus of this intervention; and senior technical experts from TechFirm.

### Develop an Advisory Board

The first task for the strategy session was to select the KNMs best suited to serve on an Advisory Board for TechFirm. This Advisory Board would serve the following functions:

- Provide input for future product development
- Provide feedback on messaging and marketplace dynamics

- Participate in TechFirm events as speakers, small-group facilitators, and panelists

Prior to the first session, the cross-functional teams had developed the following recommendations:

- Ten individuals who should serve on the Advisory Board and why
- A recruitment strategy for those individuals
- Three ways in which TechFirm could compensate Advisory Board members for their participation
- A meeting schedule for the coming year
- Four activities or events that could leverage the input of this group

During the first two hours of the strategy session, each cross-functional team reported its recommendations and the research it had conducted. The group then finalized a 20-member Advisory Board, recruitment strategy, and planned involvement for the coming year, assigning responsibilities to appropriate team members.

## Reformulate Promotional Activities

During the second half of the first session, the group dug deeper into the events and outreach activities planned for the coming year. Each cross-functional team spent one hour brainstorming additional opportunities to involve identified KNMs and the networks that surround them. The following suggestions were provided to spark their thinking:

- In-person events:
  - Recruit speakers, panelists, and breakout session leaders for upcoming events.
  - Use information collected from clients and prospects to design programs on topics of greatest importance to them featuring trusted speakers.
  - Communicate to clients and prospects that TechFirm has incorporated their recommendations in the design of events.
- Online forums:
  - Recruit facilitators, guest bloggers, and so on.
  - Develop a recruitment strategy in which KNMs invite their networks to participate.

- Other forms of marketing and communications:
  - Identify local sources for media opportunities.
  - Develop educational programs.

In the last hour of the first session, each cross-functional team shared its ideas, and the group ranked the five most promising for implementation.

### **Adjust Sales Targeting**

The second strategy session was dedicated to sales targeting. The goal was to explore how the network data could be used by sales management and by the sales force in their daily activities. Each cross-functional team was assigned one of the three sales regions. Network maps were provided for the KNMs who were trusted by clients and prospects in each region. Each cross-functional team was tasked as shown in Table 4.1.

On the basis of the plans created by each cross-functional team, the larger group developed a comprehensive implementation strategy. The sales manager for each region had autonomy to determine which tactics to employ in his or her region, and a monthly call was established for the three sales managers to share their experiences and refine the approach.

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## **Step 3: Facilitate Connections**

The primary goal of this step was to create opportunities for KNM advocates to deliver a positive message about TechFirm to people in their networks. The initial planning meeting was a full-day strategy session with sales management, selected sales professionals from each region, and representatives from TechFirm's marketing team.

### **Develop Outreach Initiatives**

The first exercise was to develop tactical plans for connecting clients and prospects to one another in a meaningful way based on the issues of greatest importance to them and the individuals they trust on those issues. The first hour was spent reviewing the issues and challenges facing technology executives. The group was then divided into four subgroups, three of which focused on each of the three sales regions and one of which focused on the regions' aggregate responses to the earlier assessment. Each group was to develop three programs that would facilitate connections among members of the target audience. The following questions were used to spark ideas.

**TABLE 4.1 CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAM TASKS**

Task	Subtasks	Subtasks
Start with the KNMs who are not currently sales targets. Assess which are potential buyers and which are not.		
Develop a strategy for engaging KNMs who are potential buyers.	Review connections from TechFirm to the KNM. Assess whether there are connections between the KNM and current clients.	
Develop a strategy for involving KNMs who are not potential buyers in sales activity among the members of their networks who are potential buyers.		
For KNMs who are currently sales targets, assess whether the sales professional assigned to them is a good fit.		
Develop a call-planning strategy to be implemented by sales professionals in each region.	Pre-call planning: assess to whom target customers are going for advice and tailor sales message to address the messages they're likely hearing from those sources.	
	Time allocation: assess how frequently the company should communicate with KNMs to build a strong partnership.	Average number of calls for KNMs versus non-KNMs. Senior sales professionals and sales management focus on a list of top 5 or 10 KNMs—in particular, those who influence decision makers in multiple regions.

- Where might there be opportunities during events in the coming year to connect technology executives?
- How might a TechFirm sales professional informally connect respected technology executives who are current clients and/or advocates of TechFirm's products with others in their networks who have shared interests and are potential buyers?
- What existing communities sponsored by TechFirm could be leveraged to connect KNM advocates with prospective customers?

During a working lunch, each of the four groups shared the programs they had developed. The larger group then selected four of them—two to be implemented in each of the three regions and two to be implemented at a national level.

The afternoon was spent developing tactical plans for each of the programs. Responsibilities were assigned for each of them, and measures were developed to track their impact.

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## Step 4: Sustain Relationships

The fourth and final step was to sustain the relationships developed as a result of this network analysis. This was also the time to collect feedback and measure activities and levels of engagement. This step, intended to be part of an ongoing approach to nurturing relationships, was developed in a full-day strategy session with senior TechFirm finance, sales, and marketing executives.

### Develop and Track Performance Measures

During the morning, participants formed groups of two or three that were tasked with brainstorming how to measure the impact of the influence network approach on TechFirm's business. The following questions were provided to spark their thinking. Each group was to identify an approach to conducting the measurement, the key stakeholders who would need to be involved in conducting the measurement, potential barriers to proper measurement, and suggestions for how to deal with those barriers.

- How can we measure the impact of the influence network approach on our events?
  - Event attendance
  - Satisfaction scor.es

- Qualified leads generated—is there an increase in the “right” attendees?
- Revenue generated
- Length of sales cycle for leads generated through network-based events
- How can we measure increases in purchasing/revenue/profitability?
  - Comparisons with other regions
  - Changes over time (weekly, monthly, etc.)
  - Comparisons with previous year over same period
  - Comparisons with other regions during same period
- How is the network approach affecting the ability of the sales force to get in front of decision makers?
- How can we measure the impact of a network approach on sales cycles?
- How can we measure the impact of a network approach on new-client acquisition and improvement in the quality of clients acquired?

During a working lunch, each group shared the ideas it had generated, and five key performance indicators were developed to track the impact of the influence network approach in the coming year. Representatives from TechFirm’s finance department took responsibility for establishing the measurements, tracking them monthly, and reporting to the larger group.

### **Implement an Ongoing Feedback Loop**

The final exercise was designed to develop a consistent means of interaction with the networks revealed through this work. The goal was to develop a model that could be replicated in other sales regions and would allow TechFirm to continue to capitalize on the relationships developed as a result of the influence network approach. The representatives from the finance department did not participate in the afternoon session, which included only senior sales and marketing executives. This group separated into smaller teams of two or three individuals, who were given one and a half hours to brainstorm responses to the following questions:

- How can TechFirm sustain and invigorate the Advisory Board beyond the coming year?
- How can TechFirm build on the activities developed and planned for the coming year in a way that allows us to innovate based on feedback from the network and key learnings?
- How do we maintain accountability among the various TechFirm stakeholders for continuing the network approach?

- How do we ensure there is oversight for the overall influence network strategy and not limit our focus to the details of each initiative?
- Who from TechFirm should be involved in developing this approach as an internal competency?

For the final hour of the strategy session, each team shared its ideas, and the group agreed on three recommendations to take back to executive management for approval.

In the year following this initial work with influence network data, TechFirm realized substantial business gains, as highlighted earlier in this chapter. As a result, the firm is working to develop an ongoing process in the three participating sales regions for gathering influence network intelligence and incorporating it in sales, marketing, and product development activities on a quarterly basis. Simultaneously, the capability is being introduced to the remaining sales regions. The value of viewing and relating to customers through this lens is greatest when it is not an isolated project but a holistic way of understanding and engaging a market.



## PART TWO

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# BRIDGING ORGANIZATIONAL SILOS

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Managers looking for ways to strengthen connectivity in their organizations do not have to choose between undertaking a network-building initiative and getting work done. Some of the most effective interventions, the authors in this section point out, are those that help employees do their jobs, often by building bridges between disconnected groups. The practical nature of such interventions can be the selling point for busy professionals who wonder why they should take the time to address what seems like a “soft” issue.

Barry Dayton describes an approach that has become a popular knowledge management tool at 3M: assemble a small group of employees from various pockets of the organization and give them an actual business assignment. The company uses ONA results to ensure that each group includes both highly connected individuals and those on the periphery who need to be drawn in. The approach, 3M has found, helps knowledge cross organizational boundaries while employees make valuable contributions to the company.

The network-building activity described by Joe Blasnales is also informed by the belief that the concept must be introduced as an integral part of an organization’s work, not as a touchy-feely morale-building exercise. Blasnales, the head of a large department in a manufacturing company that had been four previously rival units, describes in detail how he used ONA to design a process for assembling and managing project teams in which the members built trusting ties, freely exchanged information, and got work done.

Christie Dowling, Betsy Smith Redfern, and Victor Gulas, all of the engineering consultancy MWH, tell the story of transforming the company's information technology division from a collection of geographically and functionally organized units into a cohesive global department. The company used ONA both to diagnose troubling fragmentation in the new department and to design interventions to build connectivity among leaders, develop a virtual leadership capability, and better integrate crucial components of this global department.

The link between network strength and performance is perhaps demonstrated most clearly in sales teams. Kate Ehrlich, Ivan Blum, and Inga Carboni lay out the steps they took in their organization to boost revenue growth in sales teams by focusing on the network characteristics that research has shown distinguish high-performing teams: robust external networks and high levels of trust and awareness of expertise internally. In their high-tech equipment and services company, the authors used ONA tools to assess sales teams along eight components of collaboration and to design workshops that strengthen teams and improve performance.

## NETWORK ANALYSIS FOR ENGINEERING SMALL PRACTICE GROUPS

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Barry Dayton

Organizational fragmentation and silos create huge challenges for large global companies. The integration of mergers and acquisitions, outsourcing, downsizing, the mass retirement of Baby Boomers—to name just a few factors—cause business-critical knowledge to get stuck before it can reach those who really need it.

Ensuring the flow of information across organizational boundaries is a major challenge at 3M, which provides solutions to customers in more than 60 countries and hundreds of markets by making connections across more than 40 technology platforms. We have more than 50,000 products and approximately 40 market-facing divisions organized into six businesses. Our complexity is one of our core organizational competencies and one of our biggest management challenges. Many of our customers are just as complex, and we are all striving to grow in the emerging markets of the world.

In this chapter, I will describe an intervention that helps bridge some of this complexity, accelerating the flow of business-critical knowledge while building organizational capability where needed. The intervention, which I call “ONA-Engineered Small Practice Groups,” is based on the Community of Practice (CoP) methodology, and it’s a good fit for geographically dispersed business teams that also span organizational (business unit) boundaries. The idea is that by assembling a small group of people who have a common interest from various disconnected pockets of the organization and assigning them an actual business challenge, you not only model desired cross-boundary collaboration but also strengthen the organization’s

network. Membership of the small practice group is “engineered” by using the results of ONA to select key experts, brokers, and peripheral network members. The goal of the small practice group is to improve business results by accelerating the flow of business-critical knowledge across organizational boundaries.

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## Small Practice Groups for a 3M Division

The culture of innovation and collaboration at 3M is well known. Although not referred to as “Communities of Practice” until the late 1990s, such collaborative groups have existed within the company for more than 50 years, starting with the R&D community’s Tech Forum. In 1996, 3M’s CTO, Bill Coyne, published the six imperatives to activate innovation. One of them is networking. Small practice groups have been introduced at 3M in the past two years and have been welcomed as an approach for improving networking effectiveness.

The small-practice-group approach is one of many used by 3M’s Knowledge Management (KM) Program Office, which strives to be a center of expertise for improving 3M’s KM effectiveness, thereby driving better business results. We develop and execute KM strategy and conduct various KM-improvement projects at the corporate, business, and division levels. At any given time, we have approximately 20 projects in various stages of engagement, the majority of which are global in nature. I’ll describe one project, in which we engineered small practice groups (in addition to several other approaches) in the Really Big Division (RBD), which generates a major portion of 3M’s global sales and profit. This example is real, but I’ve disguised the division’s name.

The RBD’s lab director came to the KM Program Office with a monumental challenge: over the coming five years or more, Baby Boomers would be retiring in droves in the United States, Europe, and Japan. Many of them were experts in the RBD’s technologies, products, and customers. At the same time, mass hiring would occur in the developing countries, especially China and India. Traditional education and training practices would be too slow and costly to meet business demands. There was no comprehensive, detailed picture of who knew what or who knew whom in this division, which consisted of 400 employees in three lab functions in 28 countries. The director suspected that the professionals in the RBD were not communicating across countries, but he had not quantified this.

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## A Four-Step Process Toward Small Practice Groups

The following is a process we followed in helping the RBD develop small practice groups.

## Step 1: Design and Conduct the Baseline ONA

A good baseline Organizational Network Analysis (ONA) should reveal experts, brokers, central connectors, peripheral players, and any fragmentation across groups. In the case of the RBD, the lab director was intent on getting a visual inventory of the network of his organization. We'd had good discussions with him about the overall business drivers and value proposition, but not down to a practical level for such a large, complex organization.

The maps that were generated by the ONA allowed us to examine the network by country, function, topic, and level of expertise, giving us a sound basis for meaningful analysis and planning of next steps. Figure 5.1 reveals unexpected fragmentation between Taiwan and its neighbors. It also indicated unexpected closeness between China and Korea, which later proved to be false. Maps such as this are generally too large for pinpointing opportunities for effective interventions, but they are valuable for demonstrating initial ONA capability to business leaders. More important, when shown live in the software, the networks can be dynamically navigated in ways that allow leaders to zoom in and out of the network while identifying key improvement opportunities.

The lab director and vice president of research and development (R&D) were very pleased with the results. For the first time, they had a picture of the connectedness of their organization. The vice president was motivated to proclaim that the goal should be “one big hairball.” We let him keep his vision for the time being, realizing that it was not realistic or even desirable to have already busy employees excessively consumed by the network.

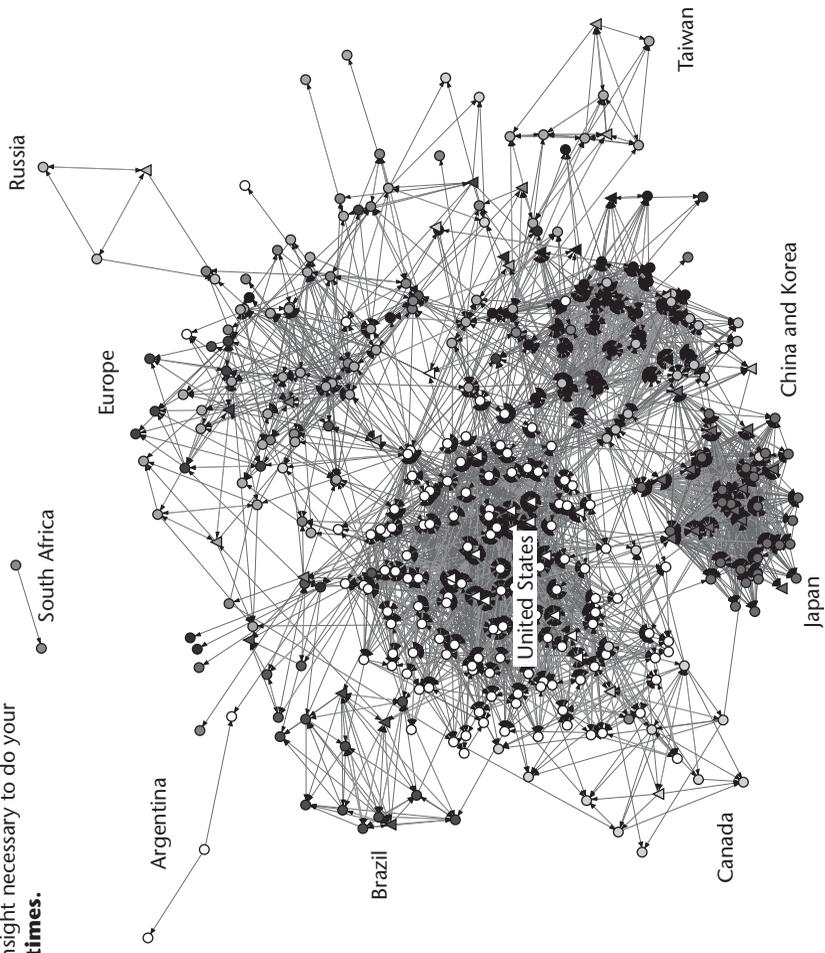
## Step 2: Identify Candidate Business Areas for ONA-Engineered Small Practice Groups

Ideally, target business areas for the small-practice-group approach are those that the organization is counting on to make its numbers, to meet and exceed the expectations of customers, shareholders, executives, and employees. Because of their strategic importance, these business areas can be quite large, involving multiple functions, markets, products, and countries. Trying to cover the entire landscape of a business area with one small practice group is generally unrealistic, owing to the highly varied nature of the knowledge needed across all these dimensions, so it's best to focus on a smaller yet significant challenge within a larger area.

RBD has thousands of products and literally thousands of customers in dozens of markets. Fortunately, the division had just completed its annual strategic planning, so consensus was reached rather quickly on two product lines for which ONA-engineered small practice groups would be appropriate. These product

**FIGURE 5.1 MAP OF RBD GLOBAL LAB**

"How many times in the last 12 months have you contacted this person for information or insight necessary to do your work?" **Answer: At least 12 times.**



lines were predicted to be major contributors to the division's business growth, especially in Asia. Again, while these product lines really exist, I'll call them Thick Sticky Stuff and Thin Sticky Stuff, or Thick and Thin for short.

RBD also wanted to focus on the technical service function. Technical service engineers work in close partnership with 3M sales reps to show customers how to solve their problems using 3M products. The function is a key differentiator for 3M's value to customers and is well recognized within the company as a critical success factor for our business. RBD's leaders knew that a highly capable technical service organization was critical to growing the core business, especially in Asia.

The RBD had hired many new technical service engineers in China, Korea, and Taiwan and were using the conventional approaches of extended business trips, mentoring, classroom training, and e-learning to develop their skills and expertise. But RBD's leaders also recognized that these traditional approaches were too slow and costly and would fall short of developing the workforce needed to capitalize on the business opportunities in this market. The ONA maps illustrated what RBD leaders had suspected: the technical service engineers were networking with their colleagues in their own countries and the United States but not so much across countries within Asia. Improving networking and collaboration across Asia, everyone agreed, would accelerate organizational capability and business growth.

The stage was set. We had two product lines, and we knew the division needed to ramp up technical service capability in Asia. We had a good baseline ONA that would allow us to zoom in on this situation. We were ready to start engineering the small practice groups.

Our goal was to consult with the RBD's technical service managers to start at least one small practice group for each of the two product lines. We accomplished half of our goal. It soon became apparent to us that the technical service manager for Thin was much more receptive to trying this intervention than the one for Thick, who was more inclined to "wait and see." The receptive manager, Roger, engaged his senior technical service engineer, Ted, to consider the small practice group concept. Ted quickly perceived much value in the approach.

The Thin Sticky Stuff product line has many applications in many markets. Roger and Ted selected mobile handheld devices as a focus market for the practice group. Several Thin products are sold to makers of handheld devices, such as mobile phones, to enable them to design thinner products packed with more features.

RBD's technical service engineers call on the various mobile phone makers and their subassembly suppliers to design Thin products into their phones. Customers and RBD's technical service engineers are dispersed across Asia. Many of the Asian engineers are relatively new to 3M, so they have much to learn from

the experts in the United States and Japan, and from one another. In this context, the small practice group's purpose was to distribute knowledge of mobile handheld customers' needs and Thin product applications from the developed countries to the developing countries in Asia, so its members could increase sales and improve their expertise and skills.

### **Step 3: Use ONA to Select a Practice Group of Six to Ten Members**

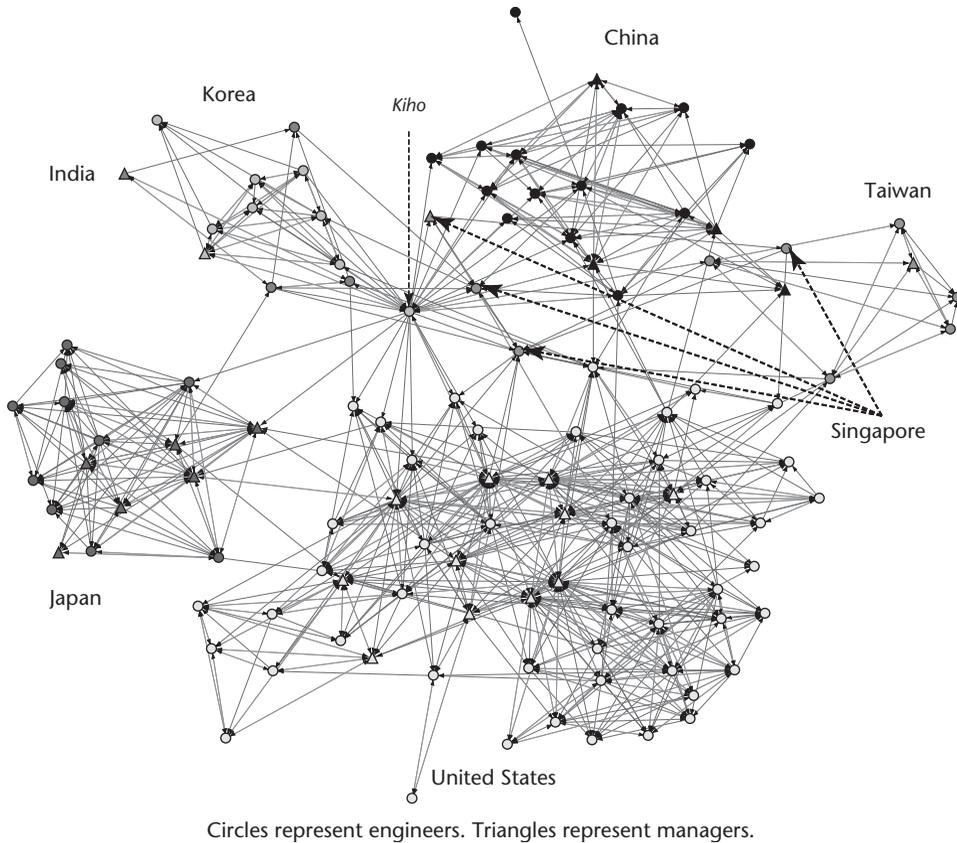
In forming a small practice group, the objective is to select 6 to 10 members. Keeping the number of members in this range is optimal but not critically important. If there are too many members, it's possible that not everyone will participate fully or be heard. If there are too few, the group might not be sustainable. Members should include a few experts and several learners (future experts) who are in strategic growth locations, including one or two brokers, as indicated by the ONA maps. In many cases, the brokers will also be the experts, as one might expect.

Learners are usually peripherals. Occasionally, however, a learner will be a broker. This situation is a real treasure. Learners provide the "pull," the energy for effective knowledge transfer, because they need to learn in order to be successful. They are quick to adopt new collaborative behaviors and spread those behaviors throughout their vast networks.

At this point, technical service engineer Ted and manager Roger began applying their personal knowledge of people in the network, their work, and the business. The maps, such as shown in Figure 5.2, were very enlightening for them, and they began to see opportunities for improvement. But in some cases, they also began to discount what the maps were showing. For example, they doubted that Kiho, the Korean super-broker near the center of the map, could be such a major connector, based on what they knew about him and his area of responsibility. We encouraged them to get more information by interviewing Kiho and a few of those in his network. They found that indeed Kiho was much more of a broker than they had originally thought.

Fourteen members were selected, slightly more than our recommendation (see Figure 5.3). Roger and Ted made the selection decisions with the help of some coaching from the KM Program Office. Ted and Roger believed that these members would greatly benefit from their participation in the group and that they represented the best coverage of big customers in their countries. A good mix of brokers, central connectors, and peripheral players was included. The Singapore and Taiwan members were good examples of learner/brokers. Notice that Kiho, the super-broker, was not selected because he was not as involved with the mobile

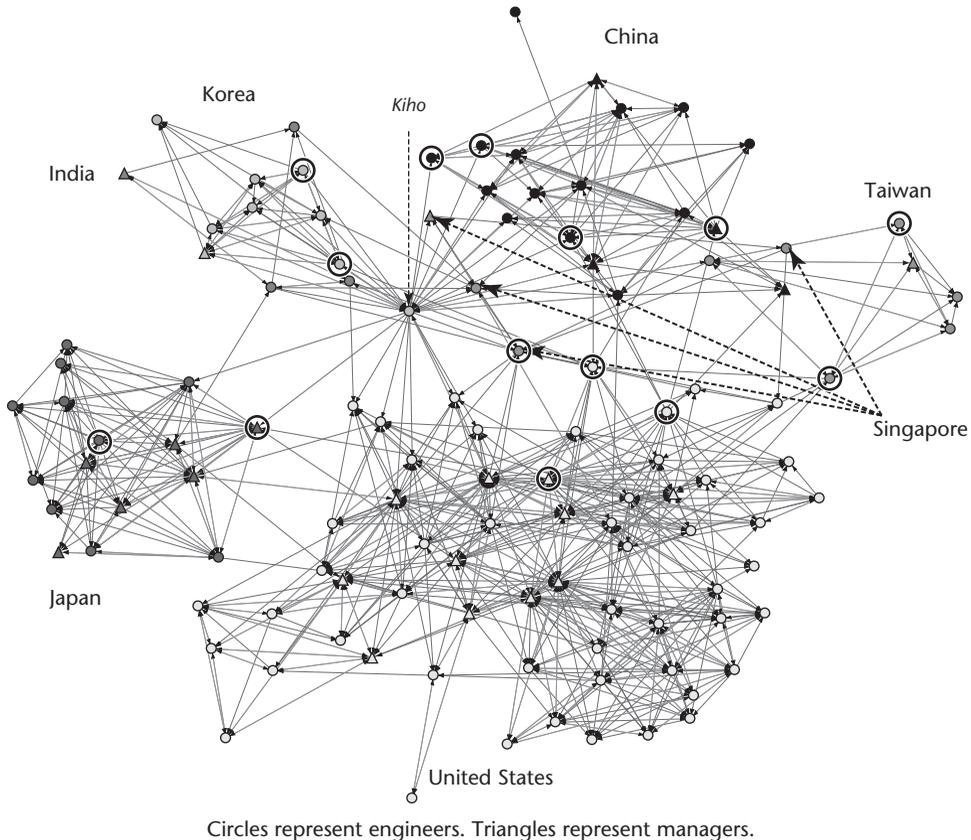
**FIGURE 5.2 MAP OF RBD LAB TECHNICAL SERVICE ENGINEERS IN ASIA AND THE UNITED STATES**



handheld device applications. Ted and Roger are well-recognized experts, and they very much wanted to participate, so they were also included.

The 14 members of Thin's small practice group report to managers in their countries, not to Roger, the technical service manager for Thin at headquarters. Their performance is assessed by their managers in their respective countries, in large part based on the new sales they help generate there. If they can learn from one another about how to sell more Thin products to the mobile handheld market, they can improve their performance reviews, earn bigger merit increases, get promoted faster, and experience, in general, more satisfying work lives.

**FIGURE 5.3 FOURTEEN MEMBERS SELECTED FOR THE SMALL PRACTICE GROUP**



#### **Step 4: Employ CoP Methodology to Establish and Sustain the Small Practice Group**

A CoP is a group of people who come together to share and learn from one another face to face and virtually. They have a common interest in a body of knowledge and are driven by a desire and need to share problems, experiences, insights, templates, tools, and best practices. CoPs typically span hierarchy and organizational boundaries. Community members deepen their knowledge by interacting on an ongoing basis, and they use their newly acquired knowledge to improve performance and results for their respective organizations.

At the risk of over-simplifying the process for starting this type of CoP, I'll describe eight steps that have served us well. As with many situations, these steps are not purely sequential, as the list might imply. Some can and should be started in parallel with others, and you will almost certainly need to go back and coach the small practice group to pay more attention to a few steps that have slipped.

1. Recruit a good leader.
2. Allow and encourage the group to own its purpose and name.
3. Encourage the appropriate rhythm and structure of meetings.
4. Encourage the group to capture key learnings.
5. Encourage the use of appropriate technology enablers.
6. Coach the group to go for WIIFM (What's In It For Me?) business opportunities.
7. Celebrate and publish success stories.
8. Coach positional leaders to recognize and reward practice group participation and contributions.

***Recruit a Good Leader*** Ideally, the leader should be one of the learners, preferably a broker. Typically, learners are more motivated to learn than experts are to teach. So they provide more energy to “pull” learning through the group. They are more inclined to elicit the expertise embedded in the experts because they have a more urgent need for it. Experts are typically more reluctant to document their expertise and “push” it out to the organization, not so much because they are hoarding their knowledge but because they are very busy. Pull is usually stronger than push.

In the case of RBD, Ted was the obvious leader for this small practice group. He was a strong broker and liked by his extensive global network, especially the Chinese. Ted was a well-recognized expert for the Thin product line and its hundreds of applications. He was also an avid teacher and coach, keen on applying new collaborative tools and techniques. So in this case, push was stronger than pull.

The leader of a small practice group sets the rhythm for the group, polls the members for valuable discussion topics, creates an environment in which everyone feels comfortable participating, manages membership as individuals move to new jobs, and helps the group capture and reuse its learning.

***Allow and Encourage the Group to Own Its Purpose and Name*** This is very important! The group members need a compelling reason to carve out time and energy from their hectic work lives to participate in the small practice group. We can propose a purpose for group members, but they must mold it into something that is truly meaningful and valuable for them. At this point, it is also important

to help the group understand that this is not just another project team that needs an objective statement; instead, this is a CoP designed to be a model for the productive flow of information and accelerated learning. The group should not be allowed to inadvertently become a full-blown project team, driven by Gantt charts, tasks, deadlines, and deliverables.

Ted scheduled the kick-off web-conference meeting and engaged the new group to define its own purpose and name. The group quickly came to be called the “Mobile Handheld Technical Service Collaboration Team,” or MHH Team for short. Its purpose is to share understandings of key account activities to drive business growth.

***Encourage the Appropriate Rhythm and Structure of Meetings*** Establishing the cadence and the basic structure for meetings gives members a framework for productive preparation and participation. They can think about their work experiences between meetings and determine how their news and needs can be shared within the typical meeting flow. We recommend monthly meetings.

The leader of the small practice group is responsible for developing the structure and agenda for its meetings. Each meeting should be structured around a few business-oriented topics, each of which has a “News” and “Needs” section. Members can then share items that they believe would be valuable to the group (news) and ask for help on problems or seek information and insights from the group (needs). During the News portion of the meeting, encourage the sharing of gains and successes that were a direct result of knowledge transferred among the group’s members. Establishing this routine will help measure the business benefits of the group and will give members successes to celebrate, thereby increasing their engagement.

Ted and the MHH Team decided to hold monthly one-hour meetings and to focus initially on “keep-account” activities. These are activities intended to strengthen customer satisfaction and loyalty, and sometimes to win back lost customers. Each member presents at least one activity for one of his or her accounts, keeping the presentation to three to five minutes. These presentations are even more effective when the activity for an account involves multiple members working together. Ted also encouraged the news and needs structure, but in more general descriptive terms that members from all countries could easily understand.

***Encourage the Group to Capture Key Learnings*** Initially, this happens primarily during meetings in the form of minutes. The leader and group members should be coached to organize such information as news, best practices, tips and tricks, and information about customers and competitors so that it can be found easily and quickly for reuse and updating. As members find more value in participating

and become more familiar with the rhythm and process, group momentum builds, participation becomes more spontaneous, and the group's documentation becomes more robust and continuous, well beyond the minutes of its first meetings.

***Encourage the Use of Appropriate Technology Enablers*** Most of us in this global economy collaborate every day with colleagues across many time zones, languages, and cultures, at all hours of the day and night. This is certainly the situation at 3M. Most collaboration happens asynchronously through e-mail and shared collaboration spaces such as SharePoint. Synchronous collaboration occurs through instant messaging and text messaging, especially among our Asian and European colleagues. One-on-one telephone conversations occur much less frequently, and they've become more planned and productive. Group meetings are usually geographically dispersed, require careful scheduling, employ the use of in-call and web-conference platforms, and dictate that some participants sacrifice their personal time, including sleep, to participate.

For the small practice groups, all asynchronous collaboration should occur in one "place," such as a SharePoint site or wiki. No e-mail! The leader should model this behavior and demand it of all members. Putting all discussion threads, meeting minutes, and other group-generated content in one place allows people to more easily and quickly search and reuse it to drive business results. In an e-mail culture like 3M's, this can take a little time and effort to achieve, but it's worth the investment.

In some cultures, it's very uncomfortable to post a question in a "public" place. The group leader should be sensitive to this and allow some one-on-one dialogue among trusted colleagues through the medium of their choice, including e-mail. But the members must then be encouraged to share the outcome with the group by posting a summary of the exchange on the group's site.

As we've all experienced, these sites can quickly become a mess. As a result, people abandon them and blame the technology. In most cases, it's not about the tools; it's about the people and processes. Design the site to support the small practice group's process structure. Most modern platforms have tagging (labeling) capability. Establish the practice of tagging all posted items according to a meaningful set of dimensions, such as news, needs, customer, country, competitor, and product. Tagging is rapidly replacing the more hierarchical practice of folders. Make the tag cloud prominent on the site's landing page. Finally, make sure to devote some group time to discuss the health of the site, and identify members interested in performing some occasional "gardening" on it.

***Coach the Group to Go for WIIFM (What's In It For Me?) Business Opportunities*** This may sound antithetical to true collaboration, but it's the essence of

a CoP. Members are drawn to participate in a CoP if they know they will learn things that help them in their jobs, thereby adding value to their respective organizations and ultimately showing up in their performance reviews, increasing their compensation and accelerating their career advancement. By sharing what they know with the group, members receive recognition and gratitude from their peers and become recognized as experts, all of which further enhances their performance reviews and career advancement.

***Celebrate and Publish Success Stories*** This is crucial for developing and sustaining a vibrant group. The leader plays a key role here because he may recognize a success that even those participating do not. Consider the example of John and Susan, who learned a valuable nugget from Simon that they applied to dazzle a global customer. Success! Celebrate! Repeat! Because members may not initially recognize their own successes, the leader must be on the lookout for successes and then illuminate them for the group and catalog them for publication. Coach the group to set up a widget on the front page of their collaboration site to list and highlight their successes.

Ted's group is spread across six countries, so the celebrations, which occur during the monthly meetings, are virtual and creative. It's too early for them to be publishing success stories in any widely circulated way, such as 3M's global intranet site. But the RBD and the countries all have their own intranet sites, which are good platforms for initial publication outside the small practice group.

***Coach Positional Leaders to Recognize and Reward Practice Group Participation and Contributions*** In the case of the MHH Team, all managers of the group's members were briefed on the small practice group and asked for their input, so they now have a stake in its success. Recognition comes in the form of acknowledgement and praise of the group's successes and their direct reports' role in them. Rewards are indirect, as participation is factored into the performance review process and resulting merit increases. The leader of the small practice group should occasionally send an e-mail to the members' formal leaders, highlighting the group's accomplishments, with a link to the group's site.

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## Results at 3M's Really Big Division

In the case of Really Big Division, there were several early signs of success. Roger and Ted were driving this effort, with virtually no coaching from the KM Program Office. They were confident that this business-focused small practice group would accelerate sales growth and the development of new technical service engineers.

The Asian members were excited and engaged because they were learning much more from one another, as well as from the U.S. and Japanese experts. The “wait-and-see” manager of the other product line began to feel left behind and wanted to catch up. The other three technical service managers were also aware of the early success and began thinking about starting their own small practice groups.

The RBD’s experience with ONA has encouraged others in the division to adopt a network perspective. The director and his leadership team have developed “should” ONA maps (representing the desired distribution and connectivity of experts). Interventions such as the small practice groups have started to close the gap between the “should” maps and the baseline ONA. Leaders are now thinking in terms of brokers, experts, central connectors, and peripheral players. ONA-engineered small practice groups are now in the Really Big Division’s playbook and in 3M’s knowledge management toolkit.

## BUILDING TRUSTED TIES IN A NEW ORGANIZATION

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Joe Blasnales

People who work in high-tech fields have a reputation for being uncomfortable with “soft” topics. The reality is, though, that trust (a quintessential soft topic) is crucial to the success of any organization. Distrust is sand in the organizational gears; it makes it difficult for the organization to function in a unified fashion, impedes the flow of information, and requires managers continually to intervene to resolve conflicts. One of a manager’s central tasks, therefore, is to nurture trust among employees. Trust building is always a challenge, but it’s more so for a fledgling organization, especially one that comprises individuals with a history of tension and conflict.

This was the situation I faced as head of the Information Security department (known internally as ITSec) in a large manufacturing company. The department had been formed by fusing four previously independent and at times rival units, and then had been moved into an entirely different part of the company. The dust had barely settled from these dizzying organizational changes when the department manager, who had designed and led the restructuring, resigned, and I, a relative outsider, was hired to replace him.

Because of these upheavals, ITSec, comprising roughly 40 technical experts in disciplines spanning computer networking, security, and compliance, was in a state of shell shock. The group had not yet developed an identity as ITSec, so people tended to identify instead with their previous groups and functional homes. As a result, the four subgroups were isolated from one another; information did

not flow well among them, and even small decisions were often escalated to senior management rather than being worked out among peers. This compartmentalization of information perpetuated the unhealthy lack of trust within the group.

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## An Approach Informed by Organizational Network Analysis (ONA)

My senior managers and I addressed this problem by guiding the department through a series of projects designed to encourage the formation of trusted ties, improve information flow, and accomplish important work-related tasks—a crucial concern for a group with a heavy workload and an aversion to touchy-feely team-building efforts. Our entire approach—both in accurately diagnosing the problem and then designing a solution—was informed by ONA. In fact, we found that simply conducting the ONA and sharing the results improved the group’s situation.

The steps we took are shown in Figure 6.1. We first conducted an expedited ONA to develop an initial diagnosis of the issues within the team. We then reviewed the results subgroup by subgroup to validate them and collect additional information. Following this, we held a workshop that was our one and only teamwide training session (which, as we’ll describe, was a training session only in part). Finally, we carried out a series of practical projects in three waves, designed simultaneously to address the lack of trust within the group and to accomplish real-life tasks.

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## Conducting the ONA

We conducted our ONA with the help of a management consulting firm. This not only gave us access to the consultant’s expertise but also created a neutral party. We found that people would speak candidly to a consultant, whereas in many cases they wouldn’t to their peers or managers.

**FIGURE 6.1 OVERALL APPROACH**



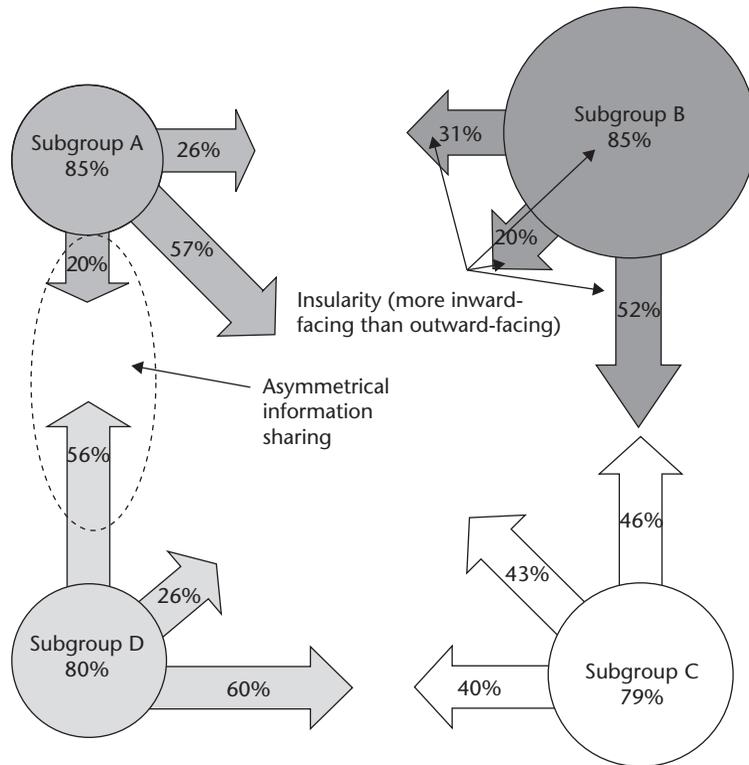
Because our department is relatively small, we were able to develop the ONA fairly quickly. The consultant conducted a series of short interviews with a cross-section of ITSec to hear what people thought were the department's key issues. Then, working with the department's senior managers, they developed a short automated survey for the full team. The goal was for the survey to take no more than 30 minutes to complete. In developing the survey, we needed to decide whether to make it anonymous. On the one hand, being able to identify the survey takers would let us follow up with them to ask deeper questions about their responses and understand the results more fully. On the other hand, we believed that people would be more candid if their responses were anonymous. Ultimately, we decided to make the survey anonymous.

The responses to the survey generated two reports: a personal results report showing the size and makeup of each person's social network within ITSec, and a departmentwide report that showed the overall network. In practice, the personal reports were not particularly useful. In a small unit like ours, everyone knows everyone else, and thus most people's social network diagrams looked exactly alike.

However, the departmentwide report was very useful and set the direction for the work that followed. In short, it confirmed what many people already felt in their bones. First, trust was high *within* the subgroups but low *between* them. Figure 6.2 shows the density of information-sharing links among people in the four subgroups. The size of the circles reflects the relative size of the groups (for example, Subgroup B is roughly twice the size of Subgroup A). The percentages within the circles show the information-sharing links that exist within subgroups out of a possible total of 100 percent (if everyone in the subgroup were connected to everyone else). The arrows extending from the circles show the percentages of information-sharing links between groups (e.g., of all the information-sharing relationships that Subgroup A could have with Subgroup B, 26 percent existed).

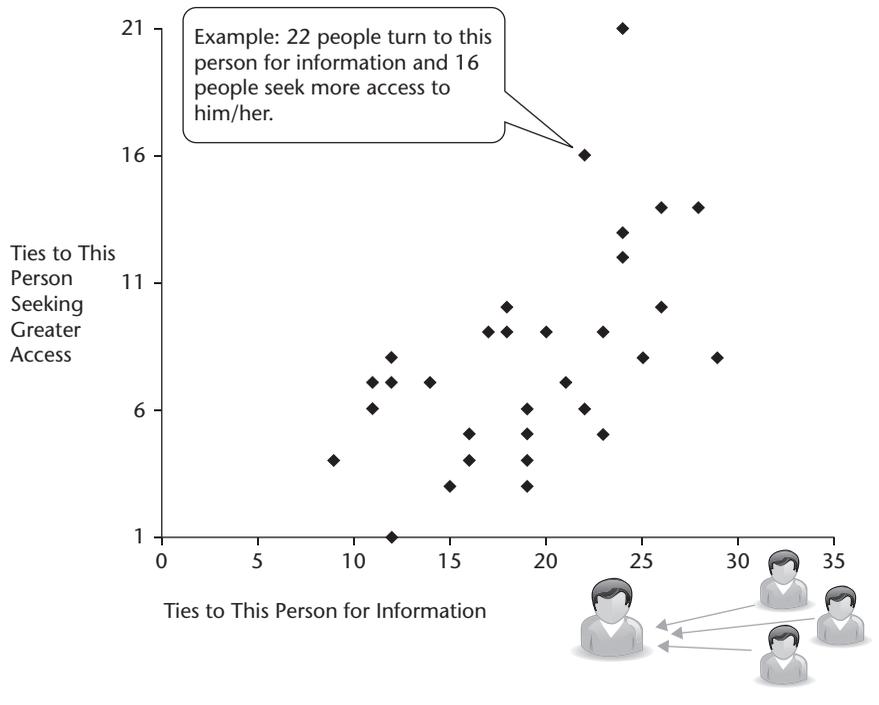
This diagram and others confirmed that insularity was a problem: Every group had dramatically better internal information-sharing networks than external ones. Such a finding would not be surprising in a large organization, but ours was a department of only 40 people, all working in the same hallway. The analysis demonstrated that people were unable or unwilling to engage peers who were located only a few doors away. This strongly suggested an overall lack of trust. Other analyses of the ONA data that directly measured trust (such as survey questions asking people to rate how much they trust each of their coworkers) confirmed this.<sup>1</sup>

Second, the study showed that we were not making efficient use of information "hubs"—people who serve as transmitters of information or guidance within the department. Figure 6.3, in which each diamond represents a person who

**FIGURE 6.2 INFORMATION SHARING WITHIN ITSEC**

serves as an information hub, depicts the number of people who named each individual as a key information source as well as the number who said they need even more access to the person.

The scatter-plot clearly shows that several information-sharing hubs in the group were overburdened. For instance, the person at the top of the chart was already a critical information source for 25 out of the 40 people in the department, yet 21 people reported that they needed even more from him or her! (Ideally, we would have known who the hubs were. However, because the survey was anonymous, we didn't have this information. The consultant did tell us, though, that managers were strongly represented among the most overburdened hubs.)

**FIGURE 6.3 INFORMATION HUBS IN ITSEC**

The small number of overburdened hubs told us that in the absence of trusting relationships among peers, people tended to over-rely on the formal management structure for information and guidance. Thus, information flow within ITSec needed to be democratized, and the department needed to rely less on a centralized command-and-control structure and more on a self-led structure.

## Reviewing the Results with the Department

Our next step was to review the ONA results with the entire group, but initially we were not sure of the best way to do that. The findings themselves suggested that a departmentwide meeting would be unproductive because people would be unlikely to speak their minds. So, we conducted reviews with each subgroup in isolation. Happily, what started out as a workaround turned out to be one of the most fruitful elements of the entire trust-building process.

Each review meeting was two hours long. In the first hour, the consultant reviewed the departmentwide findings. This was a very factual, rather than judgmental, session—the consultant simply showed the diagrams and explained what the numbers represented. Having the consultant, rather than management, present the numbers helped reinforce the neutrality of the presentation.

In the second hour, the consultant and the subgroup manager asked open-ended questions designed to elicit discussion. What did they think of the findings? Did they see anything in particular that they agreed with or disagreed with? Why did they think the results were what they were?

Free to speak their minds in the company of others from their own subgroups, people were a treasure trove of insights into how the trust problems had arisen and why they had persisted. One particularly interesting dynamic was what came to be known as “tribal blood feuds.” Every subgroup could tell a story involving some perceived slight that it had suffered at the hands of one of the other subgroups years before, which continued to color their relations. But in several cases, the incidents had occurred before any of the current members had joined the group! New employees had been indoctrinated into a distrusting relationship.

The sessions confirmed the basic findings of the ONA. But more important, the sessions themselves helped ITSec start to overcome its problems. Talking about the longstanding distrust among the subgroups was sometimes cathartic in its own right and helped people put the issue into a broader context. In one memorable case, a person described a minor skirmish between his subgroup and another, and said, “Now that I hear it out loud, I can’t believe we’re still nursing this grudge.”

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## The Workshop

Several weeks after the ONA reviews, we conducted a workshop involving the entire department. This was the only formal training session we held during the project, and we limited it to a half-day. To some extent, this was driven by the department’s low tolerance for such events, based on its unhappy experience with what were referred to as “shame and blame” workshops; but it was also driven by the practical fact that we could not disengage the entire department from its work for any longer than this.

The workshop had three objectives. The first was to make the business case for improving trust and collaboration between the subgroups. ITSec prides itself on being a hard-nosed technical and business organization, and so exhortations to work and play well together in the name of raising others’ self-esteem or improving their degree of emotional comfort simply would not have flown. People needed to hear a business-driven argument.

So we presented the findings of several academic studies showing that teams with high degrees of internal trust and highly effective communication channels are more productive, more innovative, and require less bureaucracy.<sup>2</sup> We then followed up with a series of testimonials by the senior managers, describing instances in their own careers when they had seen trust either contribute to or erode a group's effectiveness. The testimonials had the dual effect of reinforcing the academic studies and committing the managers to the process that was to follow.

The second purpose of the workshop was to conduct some practical skills-building exercises.<sup>3</sup> The department was randomly divided into working groups, each of which was asked to develop a solution to the same problem: how could information sharing and the assignment of tasks between two of the subgroups be improved? We deliberately avoided assigning any roles within the working groups—one of the goals was to see how the members would self-manage—and assigned a senior manager to each working group as an observer.

After about 30 minutes, we asked each group to describe its progress. Of particular importance, we asked the groups not to report what they had produced but instead to describe the meeting environment—the sub rosa dynamics that people often don't see or choose to ignore. These included topics such as what roles people were playing within the groups, whether people felt included in the work, and whether there seemed to be hidden agendas. The observers were then asked to chime in with their impressions.

After the reports from the working groups, the consultant presented some techniques for recognizing productive and unproductive group dynamics, and for using direct feedback to address unproductive ones. The working groups then resumed their work for another 30 minutes, after which they reported a second time, this time describing what they had done to address problems and encourage a productive discussion.

The third purpose of the workshop was to prepare ITSec for the work ahead. During the final half-hour of the workshop, we described the project-based approach we would be taking over the upcoming months, everyone's role in the work, and the high-level timeline.

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## The Projects

Soon after completing the workshop, we embarked on a series of projects designed to help build trust and collaboration within ITSec while solving actual business-related problems. The general strategy was for each project team to include a cross-section of the department, thereby forcing people to work with others whom they might not have otherwise, and provide an opportunity for people to

become more attentive to meeting dynamics and more skilled at keeping them productive.

## Some Basic Issues

As we planned and executed the projects, we found that several issues would be crucial to their success or failure.

**Scope** The first issue involved the scope of the projects. On the one hand, we needed them to be meaty enough that they would yield real results and give meeting dynamics (for better or worse) an opportunity to emerge. On the other hand, we needed to be attentive to the principal business of the department and not spend so much time on these projects that we neglected our day jobs.

We conducted the projects in series, so that only one project was under way at a time, and we settled on what came to be called the “3/3/2” formula: the projects should require roughly three team meetings, of roughly three hours each, over the course of no more than two weeks. This resulted in “sprints,” which were well suited to our purposes. The teams met often enough that the projects maintained good momentum. Furthermore, although the projects did create a “bulge” in people’s workloads, it was generally sustainable for the short duration of the project.

**Size of Teams** The second issue involved the size of the project teams. We decided, on the basis of some academic studies, that each team should include 6 to 10 people. In teams that have fewer than 6 members, there aren’t enough hands to help with the work; more than 10, and bureaucracy takes hold. But equally important, this size meant that only 20 to 25 percent of the entire department would be involved in a project at any given time.

**Accountability** A third issue involved accountability. It was tricky to find the right balance, and we experimented with different approaches. On the one hand, we wanted people to be free to experiment and make mistakes without fearing that their performance reviews would be affected; on the other hand, we expected serious participation. Ultimately, we chose to avoid grading the projects or including them in anyone’s performance commitments, but we did hold people accountable—principally through one-on-one feedback sessions with team members—for participating in and contributing to the projects.

**Acceptance Criteria** A fourth, particularly thorny, issue involved what we termed “acceptance criteria.” Many of the project topics involved changing some aspect

of the way ITSec did business. That is to say, the project teams were, by design, going to step on people's turf. A specific person—let's call him John—may be the authority on how a particular work function is executed, but one of the project teams may well recommend changing that function in some material way.

How should this be handled to be fair to both the project team and John? One approach would have been to include John in the project. However, we decided against this because we wanted fresh thinking and were concerned that the teams might simply defer to John. At the same time, though, it would be unfair to foist changes on John, especially ones that could affect his performance reviews, without giving him input into them.

In practice, we found that it was useful to make this issue a part of the problem statement for each project. That is, the project team was directed to determine the stakeholders and experts on the topic, propose how they would be consulted throughout the project, describe how the team would solicit and incorporate feedback, and determine who should be on a "review board" that would decide which recommendations to accept.

This turned out to be an extraordinarily valuable mechanism. It encouraged people to learn more about what others in ITSec do and their areas of expertise, which, of course, helped nurture the development of these experts as information hubs. It also supported our goal of democratizing the department, particularly after we implemented a rule that the "review boards" should be principally made up of nonmanagers.

## Topics for the Projects

We found that the best topics for the projects involved some aspect of the department's operation. Generally, these came down to issues of workflow or self-management. The projects in the former category usually involved identifying the "seams" between the four subgroups and considering how work should flow across them. For instance, one of the subgroups performs research into new technologies and practices, while another develops tools that automate our mission-critical tasks. A perennial question involved where each of these functions begins and ends, and how work transitions from one to the other.

For instance, if a person elsewhere in ITSec has a great idea, must he immediately turn it over to the research group, or can he pursue the idea for some time to assess its feasibility? If so, how far can he pursue it before declaring it a research project? Likewise, at what point is a research project complete, and what steps should be taken to ensure that it transitions smoothly into the queue to be formalized and turned into a production tool?

The projects involving self-management were aimed at getting managers to cede control over some functions to give the overall department more of a voice in its operations. For instance, ITSec is allocated a “morale budget” each year, which in past years management would decide how to spend. One project team was asked to solicit input from across the group and develop a plan for morale-building events throughout the year.

Successful topics had several criteria in common: they involved issues that people cared about; they didn’t require deep technical expertise, which is to say that everyone’s opinion was equally valid; and solving them would have a noticeable impact on the department. If we assigned the project teams unimportant tasks, we could have ensured that members focused on improving the way they collaborated instead of getting too caught up in the outcome. But ultimately, we concluded that in the absence of real-life topics, an air of artificiality would settle over the projects. Anyone can work collegially with their peers when they have no stake in the issue at hand—we considered it important that people work together on issues they cared about, sometimes passionately.

## Roles in the Project

In the interest of minimizing the number of people needed for projects and encouraging the projects to be self-led, we defined only three roles for them: observer, coach, and member.

**Observer** The *observer* is not technically on the project team. He or she is a disinterested party, sometimes not from the same part of the organization, whose role is to monitor meeting dynamics and provide occasional feedback to the team. That is to say, the observer is not involved in the actual project work but is instead focused on underlying issues like meeting dynamics, personal behavior, and how people are dealing with conflict.

The observers on our project teams typically provided feedback to the team at large, and to individual members as needed, at the scheduled 15-minute break halfway through each meeting and at the end. However, the observer could also declare a “meeting pause” if he or she observed a critical problem. The most common reason for declaring a meeting pause was to call attention to “elephants in the room.” For instance, a person might become frustrated with the discussion and disengage from it, and other people in the room might pretend not to notice. The observer might directly call attention to the problem or ask open-ended questions. By calling meeting pauses, the observer could remind people of the need to address trust and collaboration issues openly, as they emerged.

We found it particularly useful to spend the first five minutes of each meeting discussing what the team, and individual members, would like to accomplish in terms of meeting dynamics. This gave the observer specific things to watch for.

**Coach** The *coach* role has been described as being “of the team but not in the team.” In contrast to the observer, whose role is to observe the team in operation, and the members, whose job is to solve a problem, the coach is somewhere in-between. He or she gives the team its assignment, defines the boundaries around acceptable solutions, and answers questions. The coach also serves as a sounding board for potential solutions and is free to call attention to problems that the team is overlooking. But the coach does not actively direct the team or solve the problem.

This is an important distinction and one that we often found hard to maintain. In fact, people found the coach role to be the most difficult by far. Because of the need to give the project team some guidance and direction, the most appropriate candidates for this role tended to be managers and other senior leaders. These same people, however, were used to leading directly. Learning to lead gently through influence was a new and valuable experience for many people.

**Member** The *members* on project teams are responsible for direct leadership of the project and for delivering results. In contrast to team-building methodologies that advocate defining specific roles for each team member in advance, we chose to let the teams develop their own organizational models. Some teams did define formal roles, but most did not. The role of team leader was an interesting example. Some project teams selected a leader in advance through a formal vote, whereas in other cases one person came to assume the role over time. In yet other cases, project teams operated without a leader, arriving at decisions through consensus.

None of these models was a “silver bullet”; each could lead to success or failure, depending on the team. For instance, in some cases, formally selecting a leader gave that person authority and a mandate to lead; in others, people felt excluded and withdrew when the leader was established early on. The approach of letting a leader emerge organically worked in high-performing teams, but in other cases no leader stepped up, so the team drifted. Similarly, high-performing teams could make a consensus-based approach work, but in others it created chaos and led to interminable arguments.

Here is where a good coach is invaluable: he or she should be able to tell the difference between a team that is functioning well, even if it is using an unconventional leadership style, and one that is struggling and needs a gentle nudge.

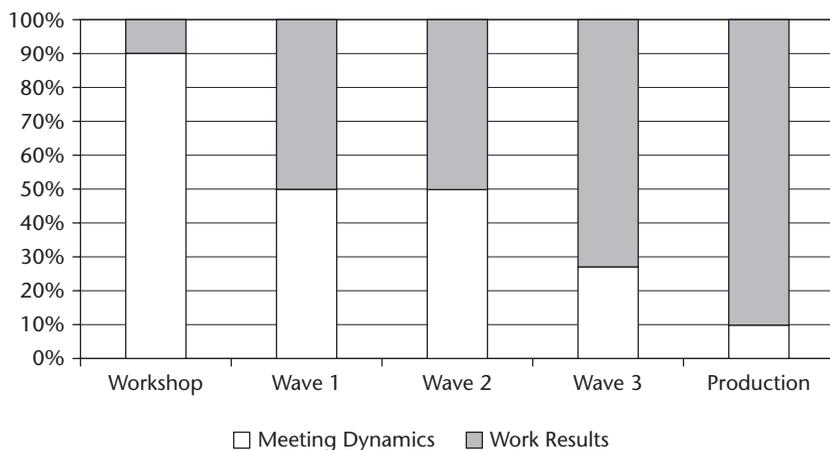
To be clear, “functioning well” doesn’t mean that there are no disagreements! Arguments, even passionate ones, are fine, as long as they’re kept civil and are driving the discussion in a positive direction. But teams in trouble often had difficulty recognizing their problems, and the coach would need to ask questions designed to help the team see that its leadership model wasn’t working.

## Project Waves

We organized our projects into three “waves.” Although the number and types of projects within each wave varied greatly, they shared similar goals and approaches. As shown in Figure 6.4, all of the work—from the workshop through the three project waves—was intended to progress from highly introspective meetings principally focused on meeting dynamics to a “production” state in which we would use self-led projects as a routine business tool, with only occasional tuning for meeting dynamics. As we will describe later, everyone on the team participated in at least two waves and some in all three.

**Wave 1** Wave 1 consisted of only one project, in which I served as the coach, the four ITSec subgroup managers were the members, and our human resources specialist was the observer. This made for a small project team; however, in this case it was unavoidable because there are only four subgroups, and we wanted only the managers of those subgroups to be members.

**FIGURE 6.4 MIX OF TIME WITHIN PROJECTS**



The goal of this project was to conduct foundational work for the waves to follow as well as, of course, to develop our trust and collaboration skills.

The team tackled topics such as behavioral norms and expectations for all the projects, and considered some of the issues discussed previously, such as accountability and project scope. In addition, it developed an initial list of project topics and selected the members for each project team. This required a very careful balancing act. We wanted each team to have a mix of people from all four subgroups, but we also needed to distribute senior people and relative newcomers across the projects and avoid placing people on projects led by their own managers or directly related to their work areas (as discussed earlier in the “John” problem).

This first project team also considered how to handle the case of people with known personality differences. In the interest of team harmony, should we separate them, or should we put them on the same teams to force them to work out their issues? Ultimately, we decided to separate them in the early projects and put them together in later ones, when they presumably would have learned how to coexist peacefully.

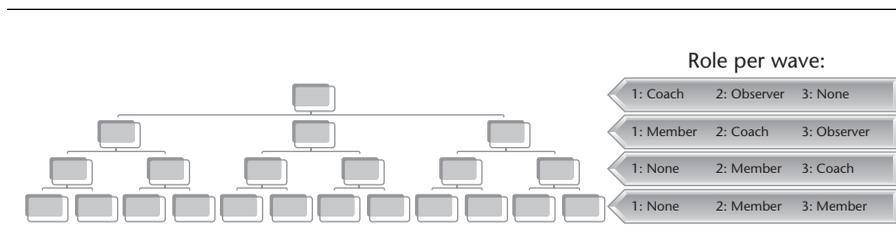
A final consideration was who should play the coach and observer roles in the Wave 2 and 3 projects.

As part of the Wave 1 project, we developed a strategy, illustrated in Figure 6.5, in which these roles would cascade down the management chain as the waves progressed. As noted previously, in Wave 1, I served as the coach, and the human resources specialist was the observer. In Wave 2, I became the observer, and each subgroup manager served as coach for one project. In Wave 3, the subgroup managers became observers, and the next-level managers were coaches.

This arrangement had the advantage of giving the entire management team the opportunity to play the coach role, and most managers got a turn at being an observer, too. It also gave us a simple way to determine how many projects should be in each wave.

In practice, we modified the model slightly because, as originally designed, it would have meant that I would have served as the observer in 12 three-hour meetings

**FIGURE 6.5 THE ROLE CASCADE**



held close together. This was simply more observing than one person could do effectively. Instead, I alternated with the human resources specialist and occasionally called in one of the subgroup managers to serve as an observer. This had the benefit of giving the project teams a variety of viewpoints from their observers and let the subgroup managers see how other project teams operated.<sup>4</sup>

**Wave 2** In Wave 2, we began the mainstream projects. As discussed previously, the topics involved either ITSec workflow, especially regarding the transitions across organizational boundaries, or efforts to democratize some element of ITSec management. Specifically, the Wave 1 team chose the following topics:

**Identifying research projects.** The goal here was to create benchmarks that would allow people to recognize when a nascent innovation warranted a dedicated research project to facilitate its further development and the exploration of potential applications.

**Clarifying the rules of engagement with other organizations.** We frequently work with other departments in the company. The goal here was to develop some rules that would help people distinguish between casual help (that they can provide at any time in the name of corporate good citizenship) and making a commitment on behalf of ITSec.

**Updating ITSec's workflow illustration.** During the ONA review meetings, several people singled out a slide used in briefings about ITSec's operations and noted that its layout reinforced stereotypes within the department about the relative importance of two of the subgroups. The goal of this project was to rework the illustration to convey the workflow information in a way that gave each subgroup equal representation.

**Building a morale budget plan.** ITSec is allocated a per-capita budget for morale-building events. Previously, management had decided how it would be spent; the goal of this project was to solicit ideas from all group members and build a morale plan for the year. Not surprisingly, this was the department's favorite Wave 2 project.

We asked the Wave 2 project teams to be equally attentive to meeting dynamics and making progress on the project objectives. As a result, the initial meetings for all four projects were awkward; indeed, every project team had a fairly slow take-off as people struggled to understand the coach and observer roles, and the meeting rules. We also found that people needed time to realize that the goal

was not avoiding disagreements but acknowledging them early, discussing them constructively, and reaching a sound resolution.

The importance of clear goals and assignments quickly became apparent. Although the Wave 1 team thought that it had devised well-defined topics, in fact project teams were often confused about their goals, deliverables, and the overall process. We learned that we needed to provide extremely specific direction; our failure to do this undoubtedly contributed to the slow pace of the project take-offs.

We also discovered that including remote team members added significant complexity to the projects. ITSec is international in scope, and we asked the teams to rotate their meeting times so that our members in the United Kingdom, India, and China would have a better chance of attending at least some meetings; not surprisingly, this complicated scheduling. Moreover, we found that even very good videoconferencing technology is no substitute for bringing people together in the same room. The people who were physically together during meetings had to work hard to decipher the body language of their remote teammates and to make sure they were fully included in the discussion. Nevertheless, we believe that it was vital to include overseas colleagues and that the challenges of doing so simply reflects the reality of working on an international team.

At the end of Wave 2, we concluded that the projects, despite the numerous challenges, met their goals of impelling people to work with colleagues from all four subgroups, incubating the skills they had been introduced to in the workshop, and solving business-relevant problems. In addition, we found that the projects were valuable as a talent-spotting tool. In several of the projects, people who had not previously assumed leadership positions stepped forward as highly capable project leaders.

**Wave 3** After the completion of Wave 2, the Wave 1 team reconvened to adjust the Wave 3 topics in light of observations and lessons learned from Wave 2. We tightened the topics, made the deliverables more tangible and clear, and focused them less on workflow issues and more on team self-management. We selected the following topics:

**Clarifying rules for an award program.** Our company's program for rewarding outstanding performance was governed by few rules. The intent was to allow flexibility, but in fact this created the impression that there were "secret rules" and raised questions about whether awards were being handled equitably and fairly. This project's goal was to clarify how ITSec would use the program by answering such questions as whether managers would be eligible for

awards, what sort of excellence would be recognized, and how candidates would be nominated.

**Interpreting company poll questions.** All employees in our company take an annual poll that measures workplace health. In previous years, we in ITSec had learned that some of the questions lent themselves to multiple interpretations, which made it difficult to derive clear meaning from the poll. The goal of this project was to identify the 10 questions most open to interpretation and settle on a standard interpretation ITSec would use when answering them. (Important to note: the goal was *not* to provide standard answers to the questions!)

**Reviving a Brown Bag series.** ITSec's brown-bag lecture series, which was meant to keep us abreast of emerging technologies and our partner team's work, had languished. This project was chartered to formulate some goals for the series and to develop a schedule of lectures for the coming year.

**Institutionalizing the self-led project process.** The goal of the final project was to institutionalize within ITSec the routine use of self-led projects, such as those carried out during the three project waves. The project involved developing guidelines for identifying issues that are good candidates for such projects and a process for chartering and executing them.

Despite our careful planning, events intervened in ways that caused us to change our plan radically. First, one of the subgroups was faced with a business decision involving a crucial software tool; in a nutshell, it needed to select one of two competing products and "lock in" that product for the next several years. This was such an obvious candidate for a self-led project that we scrapped the first of our intended topics in favor of this one. The project was a success and led to a sound buying decision.

Second, in the midst of our Wave 3 planning, ITSec made substantial changes to its model for conducting research. As a result, we needed to develop some departmentwide standards and workflows in short order, work that seemed custom-made for a Wave 3 project. We therefore scrapped the Brown Bag project and delayed the company poll project and the institutionalization of self-led projects. Ultimately, we may not need to conduct the latter project because we have been forced by circumstance to do much of the thinking that would have been part of it.

As we debated whether and how to change the Wave 3 plan, we often asked ourselves whether we were being flexible or merely chaotic. Perhaps a bit of both, we ultimately concluded, but we also recognized that given our desire to keep the ONA work very business-focused, we needed to be responsive to events.

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## Results in Progress

Our team-strengthening effort is a work in process. Nevertheless, we have seen noticeable changes for the better in the way people work with one another. Many old antagonisms between the subgroups have been resolved, members from different groups are more willing to depend on each other rather than insisting on completely owning their own destinies, and in general there is a renewed sense that ITSec belongs to all of us.

We plan to administer another ONA later this year, in the hope of confirming analytically what we have witnessed. A word of warning: we found that the hiatus between Waves 2 and 3, roughly six months, was too long. During that time, we saw that people occasionally slid back into their old habits. In a perfect world, we would have established a cadence for the projects early on and maintained it going forward.

The beauty of our approach was that we were simultaneously accomplishing important business tasks and addressing “soft” issues of trust and collaboration. Senior managers didn’t have to choose between these two imperatives. At a time when companies in many industries are under increasing pressure to be attentive to the bottom line, and therefore could be less inclined to invest time and energy in less-tangible issues such as team harmony, this project-based approach to strengthening networks could be a wise choice.

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## Endnotes

1. An interesting distinction emerged between “professional trust” (whether someone could be trusted to provide accurate technical information) and “personal trust” (whether someone had others’ best interests at heart). In our results, we found that professional trust was often predicated on personal trust; that is, unless people felt that a colleague could be personally trusted, they were reluctant to accept his or her professional recommendations.
2. One study we used was “A Comparison of Team Developmental Stages, Trust and Performance for Virtual versus Face-to-Face Teams,” Corbitt, Gardiner, and Wright, Proceedings of the 37th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, 2004.
3. Many of the skills were based on “The Leadership Triad: Knowledge, Trust, and Power,” Dale E. Zand, 1997.
4. We also considered making the observer a rotating role staffed by the project teams themselves (i.e., members would take turns being the observer for one meeting), in the interest of letting people step out of the activity of the project and observe meeting dynamics at close hand. Ultimately, we concluded that this might be confusing, so we did not implement it. Still, it would be an interesting experiment!

## CHAPTER SEVEN

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# FORGING GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

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Christie Dowling, Betsy Smith Redfern, and Victor Gulas

**D**uring a change effort, wouldn't it be convenient if executives could simply rearrange the organizational chart, map out required new work processes, send out a memo, and call it a day? Of course, all leaders realize that large-scale change is a highly complex undertaking, but many nevertheless rely on an overly simplified and orderly view of their organizations, particularly during times of change. What they may not pay enough attention to is the basic fact that no change in organization or operation can happen without changes in relationships. And changes in the way people collaborate and interact depend, in turn, on trust.

Our company, MWH, is considered a leader in wet infrastructure—water, hydropower, and environmental engineering—and manages thousands of projects each year, providing services to a wide array of institutions worldwide. In 2003, a group of employees at MWH was charged with creating a global Information Technology (IT) organization within the company. Our job was to take what had been a confused blend of geographically and functionally organized units with sites in the United States, Europe, and Asia and transform it into a global department that would deliver superior, standardized service to internal and external customers—and at much lower cost. This new global IT organization, called iNet, had to be set up and functional within six months (by January 2004), and we were worried. We felt the key to the successful development of a new global department, which comprised 185 people in 27 offices in 11 countries, would be

collaboration. But we had a sense that many of the people who would now be expected to work together seamlessly had never even exchanged e-mails, let alone met in person.

Our efforts to develop, build, and strengthen trusted relationships across the enterprise began with an organizational network analysis (ONA), which helped us design targeted interventions to build cohesive teams, develop leaders' ability to lead virtually, and connect professionals across functions and locations.

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## The Challenge of IT Reorganization

We set three goals for our globalization effort: reduce the cost of IT to the organization, increase the level of service and customer satisfaction, and create an attractive career environment for our IT professionals.

The challenge was bringing what had long been six separate entities into a cohesive group. Of those six groups, three had regional responsibility for providing the basic “dial tone” in the organization, such as networks and server up-time, help desk support, and provisioning of desktop and laptop computers. These groups reported to the respective geographic organizations located in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific.

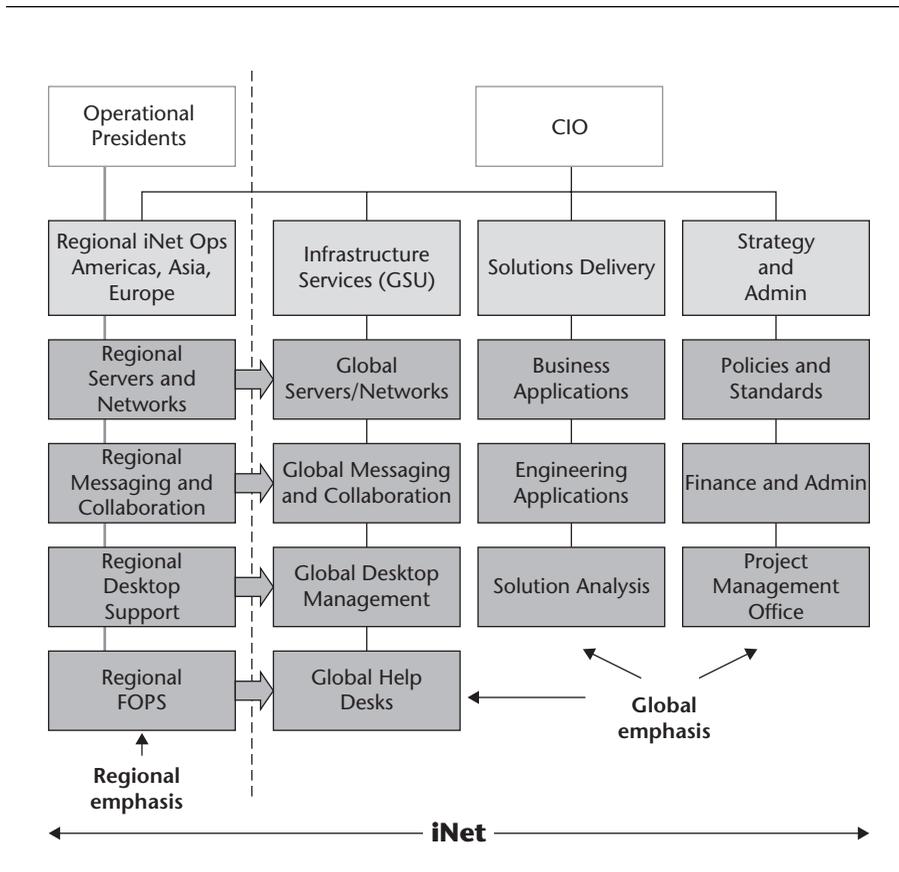
A fourth IT group—one managing the enterprise resource planning (ERP) system—was located in Pasadena, California, and reported directly to the finance organization; this was a very important team because it held the “mother databases” that would be needed to feed the rest of the IT applications worldwide. This team operated autonomously, separate from the rest of the IT organizations.

A fifth IT group was in charge of leveraging technology to support the core of MWH's design business; it was intently focused on looking at cutting-edge approaches for computer-aided design that could be incorporated into the design organizations, primarily in the Americas.

The sixth group was a small leadership team at the global level with three members in Denver, two in the United Kingdom, and one in New Zealand. This group set IT strategy and attempted to keep the disparate groups collaborating. Even with best efforts, though, agreeing to the common systems, processes, strategies, and standards was always difficult, and redundancies in capabilities were evident in this decentralized structure.

The new iNet global IT organization was a matrixed organization with a chief information officer managing three geographic groups (Americas, Europe, and Asia, grouped at the top of the left column in Figure 7.1) and three functional groups (under CIO in the right column): infrastructure services, solutions delivery, and strategy and administration. The leadership of the geographic areas was

**FIGURE 7.1 NEW INET ORGANIZATION  
IMPLEMENTED IN FY 2004**



responsible for client service, human resource management, and regional support. The functional leadership was responsible for standard delivery processes and practices and ensuring global consistency. Leadership selection for these first-tier leadership roles and the second-tier leadership roles took place in late 2003 and early 2004.

The culture at MWH was very relational. Because the employees had no strong process base to guide them, they got their work done by turning to other people for help. This tribal behavior was an artifact of a global merger-acquisition binge over the previous 15 years. We knew from our experience that building

trusting relationships took time. Relationships couldn't be built in a day, but after they existed, they could be the key to getting things done quickly and effectively.

This was why we began our efforts with an ONA: we were eager to find out what connections did—and did not—exist in the new iNet. We thought ONA would be a great way to map, display, and communicate how the IT organization was networked and then to chart our annual progress. We decided to conduct an ONA even before the final leadership teams were formed to gain a view of the existing collaborative environment (see Figure 7.2). Results from this survey mapping around information flow clearly revealed the silos and disconnects in the organization.

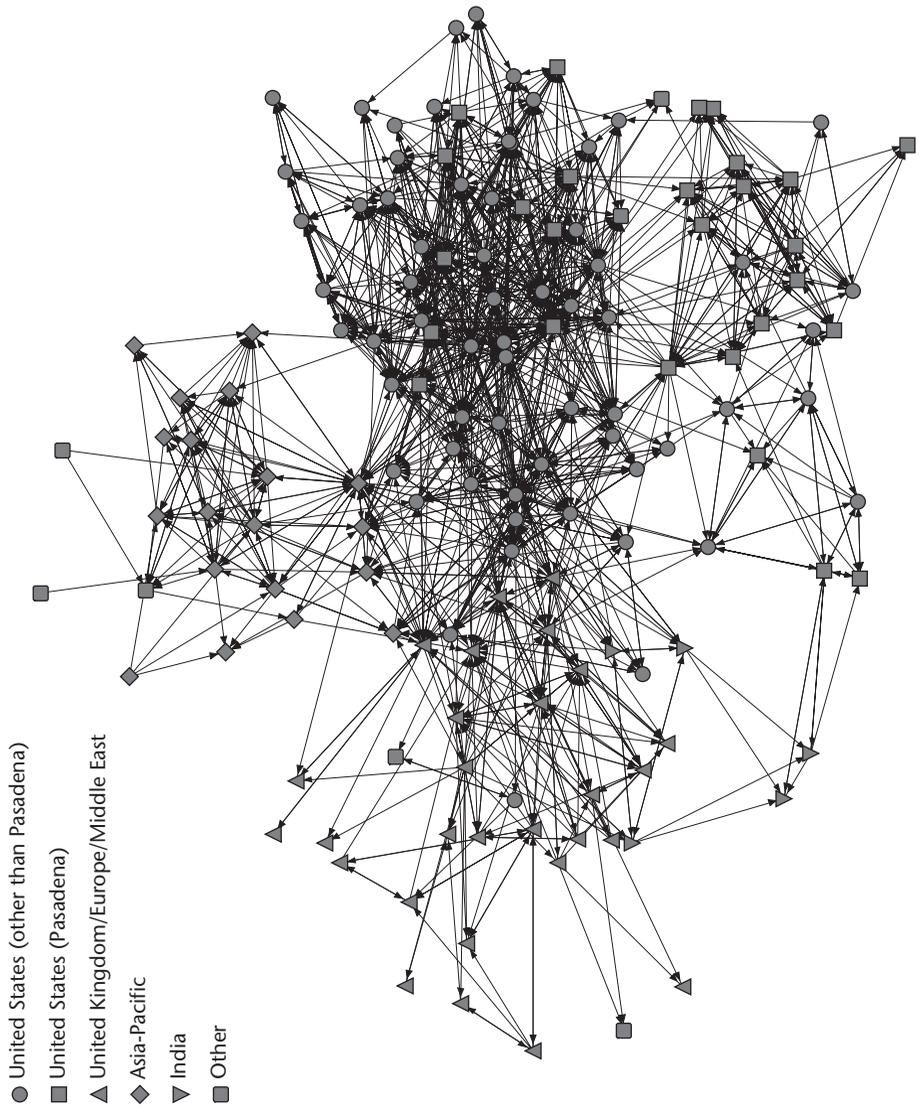
### What the Network Analysis Said to Us

As shown in Figure 7.2, the network analysis presented a sparse and fragmented information network. Of the possible connections (a 100 percent value would mean that everyone in iNet was connected to everyone else), only 6 percent existed—this percentage would be an important metric to monitor. Further observation of the network indicated clear geographic divides (New Zealand, Americas, and Europe), but several individuals seemed to provide strong bridging ties. The belief that the ERP team operated independently was borne out. Even though it was located in Pasadena, California, it was less connected to the American team than either the Asia-Pacific or the European teams. A couple of “gatekeepers” between the ERP team and the rest of the global IT professionals were evident.

Another troubling point highlighted by the ONA was that the common expertise groups in each of the geographic organizations were not as well connected as they needed to be. The network, server, and desktop groups—the keepers of the digital highway and service response for the company—were held together by a small number of individuals in the United States. Losing even one of these people would spell trouble for the fledgling organization. As a result, determining how to strengthen these expertise networks was important not only to enhance service but also to stimulate information flow and best practice transfer across the geographic divides.

Hierarchy within the network was a surprise finding to us (see Table 7.1, which shows the percent of collaborative ties within and between each hierarchical level). The senior leadership was well connected, but managers and supervisors were not. The lack of connective tissue between levels would make it difficult for people to adapt to iNet's requirements and to create buy-in for the restructuring throughout the organization. It also highlighted the need for effective leadership development for leaders managing global teams.

FIGURE 7.2 INITIAL ONA OF THE INET GROUP



**TABLE 7.1 THE IMPACT OF HIERARCHY ON THE INFORMATION FLOW IN THE NETWORK**

	Individual Contributor	Supervisor	Project Manager	Manager	Director
Individual Contributor	4%	6%	6%	6%	2%
Supervisor	5%	9%	8%	10%	7%
Project Manager	6%	9%	12%	11%	10%
Manager	6%	10%	11%	15%	18%
Director	3%	8%	12%	26%	67%

## Our Plan of Interventions

Armed with these insights, we designed interventions in three categories:

- **Team Building**—designed to strengthen the trust network between the expertise teams
- **Training in Virtual Leadership**—developed to build competency and awareness of how to lead people you don't see on a daily basis
- **Cross-Functional Team Design**—leveraged to break down existing silos through dedicated staffing on major project initiatives

All of these interventions were anticipated to build trusting relationships among the iNet staff. By design, they required some face-to-face meetings. Although it was an expensive proposition to fly people around the world, we anticipated that the return on the investment would be significant.

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## Team Building

We knew that building geographically dispersed teams was important; we also knew we had to build them one brick at a time, so we first focused on strengthening the first- and second-tier leadership teams.

### First-Tier Meetings

The senior leadership team (first tier) met four times face to face in FY 2004 at various locations. During the weeklong meetings, the second-tier leaders in the region were invited into the meetings and to evening events to nurture personal

connections between the teams. These meetings helped solidify the top two management tiers in the first year of iNet. However, the results from the ONA at the end of the first year showed that although team members were more aware of one another, the overall information network remained the same.

To correct this, a more directed effort was undertaken to build the teams at the second-tier leadership level downward.

## Second-Tier Meetings

In the second and third years, senior leaders decreased their meetings and used those funds to bring together the second-tier leaders and their respective functional teams. One meeting was held for each of the four global teams, such as global messaging and collaboration. Internal experts facilitated these meetings with a focus on understanding cultural differences, vocabulary, and value systems within the teams, and on building trust through various exercises and social interactions.

One such team-building meeting was held at an offsite location in California beginning on a Friday evening. The venue provided gathering spots (like fire pits) and connection with the outdoors (the Pacific Ocean) to foster a more relaxed and open atmosphere. It also was isolated, so participants had only one another for company. The participants had flown in from around the world and carried on through the weekend into Sunday night. Even though they had worked together virtually for almost a year, this was the first time they had connected face to face.

The first- and second-tier leaders along with the internal facilitator (who in this case was our chief learning officer) set the objectives for the meeting. They included the following:

- Build trust and gain further understanding of global teams.
- Understand the impact of personality and culture on team dynamics.
- Improve communication.
- Examine individual and group reaction to change.
- Strengthen the leadership relationship of the second-tier leader to his team.

Prior to all the participants arriving, the facilitator and the first-tier leader worked with the second-tier leader to set expectations and prepare him for the meeting.

***Arrival Evening—Welcome and Icebreaking*** On Friday evening, team members came together for the first time, welcomed by their supervisor

(second-tier leader). After his opening remarks, he led an icebreaker activity. Each table, which had pre-assigned seating to ensure diversity, was given five questions to answer, such as “What is the most unique thing in your refrigerator?” and “What is your pet’s name?” The exercise was designed to stimulate discussion, point out different culture norms, and build relationships; these simple topics were selected to provide nonthreatening ways to open dialogue. For example, a discussion about vegemite—a dark brown food paste made from yeast extract found in many households in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand—resulted in promises to send some of this “delicacy” to the U.S. contingent. After dinner, the group continued its discussions at the fire pit.

**Day 1 Morning—Myers-Briggs Training and Change Exercises** The second-tier leader began the morning with a 30-minute debrief of the previous night’s activities. At each table, people were to discuss the following:

- What did you learn about another culture?
- What did you learn about the person that gives you insight on how they work?
- What did you learn about how to communicate with a Brit, a Kiwi, an Aussie, or an American?
- What was something you didn’t know before you listened to the answers to these questions?

The leader then asked for examples from each table, which he used to lead a discussion with the entire group about how we are similar and how we differ. We have found that in sessions like this, people invariably conclude that we are more alike than not, and that most differences are cultural or cosmetic.

A two-hour Myers-Briggs training module then followed. The majority of the participants had never taken Myers-Briggs and so did not understand the power of personality types in their interactions. Prior to arrival at the meeting, each participant had filled out a Myers-Briggs test and sent it to the facilitator, who then scored the test. Their results were given to them at the beginning of this particular session. The facilitator, who led the session, focused on the following questions:

- What is a personality type, and which one am I?
- What does that mean for the way I work and how I work with others?
- How should I work with those who have certain personality traits?

Participants engaged in several exercises to accentuate differences among personality types. In one exercise, Introverted types and Extroverted types divided into separate groups to discuss how they wanted to be communicated to; each

group then had to present its wishes to the other group. Similarly, the Thinking and Feeling types discussed and then presented their preferred decision-making processes. These are always enlightening exercises for individuals who have never been exposed to this material.

As part of the session, the facilitator asked each type to write on a flip chart how they see the other type. For example, Feelers might see Thinkers as uncaring, focused only on results and disregarding the bigger picture; Thinkers might see Feelers as “bleeding hearts” and slow to make decisions. The goal was to elicit what was best about each type and marry those elements in more thoughtful yet efficient and productive processes.

The final exercise of the morning (45 minutes), which was meant to highlight the issue of change, was “Change Five Things.” Individuals were paired up and asked to look at each other for 5 minutes. They then turned their backs and were asked to change one thing on themselves, such as removing an earring or untying a shoelace. They then turned back toward each other and tried to figure out what had changed. They did this five more times. As one can imagine, making increasing changes felt awkward, uncomfortable, or fun depending on the participant. The participants were then asked to discuss at their tables their comfort level with change. The purpose of the exercise was to allow each individual to experience and articulate his or her tolerance for and attitude toward change.

**Day 1 Afternoon—Cruise** After lunch, the team took a harbor cruise. The purpose was to let people experience one another outside of their hierarchical status and in a fun environment. Each person was given \$10 to buy something for others on the team as a remembrance of their time together.

**Day 1 Evening—Dinner and Discussion** Upon their return from the excursion, dinner was provided, and then everyone adjourned to the fire pit for further discussions and relationship building. During the evening, the purchased gifts were exchanged.

**Day 2 Morning—Change Discussion and Trust-Building Exercise** The second day began with another 30-minute debrief of the previous day, led by the second-tier leader. Here, the leader focused the group on the topic that had ended the previous morning—change.

The leader explained to the group the human brain’s “fight or flight” response to sudden change. When faced with a sudden, stressful, or threatening change, our brains are wired to fight the situation or to flee and fight another day. The team separated into two groups: one discussed what would happen if people accepted the changes in the iNet reorganization—for instance, they might have

more opportunities to travel, develop new skills, and advance in the company. The other group discussed what would happen if people did not accept the changes, such as less stress in the team, fewer people leaving, and more personal security.

The two groups then presented some of the substance of their discussion to the whole team. By expressing their feelings and concerns about the change efforts, the team began to gain a collective sense of the issues surrounding their behaviors. The groups saw that a “no change” mentality would not benefit them personally in the long term, only in the short term.

Using this information, a one-hour exercise followed in which participants wrote various opinions, ideas, and issues concerning the reorganization on Post-it notes (one issue per note). The notes were then placed on a board at the front of the room. Many of the issues—whether systemic, interpersonal, or organizational—did not have easily identified solutions. The purpose was for participants to air their concerns and challenges and for the leader to acknowledge the many difficulties people would encounter during the change process.

It was important during this exercise to identify issues that could be resolved and those that would just have to be accepted for the time being. Some issues were taken up as goals for the group to solve at the end of the meeting, which gave the participants a sense of control. At the end of this session, the group was united, and individuals felt that they had been heard.

The last exercise of the morning (which takes about one hour), the “Blindfold Square,” challenged participants’ trust in one another. This experiential exercise has a number of variations. In the version we followed, every member of the group was blindfolded, placed in a circle, and asked to hold a portion of a rope that is tied at the ends to form a continuous loop. The group is then asked to form a perfect square. This challenges the team to communicate, to listen, and to trust whoever takes the lead in directing the team. After the team thinks it has created a square, everyone then places the rope on the floor and removes their blindfolds. A discussion ensues on how well the team performed and how well they interacted—that is, did they trust what was going on? Who played what roles? What personalities and behaviors surfaced based on the previous day’s Myers-Briggs analysis? How did this interaction mimic (or not) the interactions among team members in their jobs?

**Day 2 Afternoon—Hike** After lunch, the team was taken to a location for a nature hike. Prior to setting off on the hike, participants were given the following list of questions:

1. What is the value of being a member of this team?
2. What strength do I bring to the team?

3. What questions do I need answered to move forward as a contributing member of this team?
4. What prominent thought will I take away from this workshop?
5. Do I have faith in the leadership (on this hike and/or in this meeting)?

The purpose of this hike was to experience a period of reflection, to join in a group activity allowing for new skills to be observed (who is good at leading people on a path, who can use a compass, who knows flora and fauna, who engages in meaningful dialogue). During dinner that evening, participants discussed their responses to the preceding questions. After dinner, the fire pit was once again the focal point, where each person shared what he or she had learned about trust, change, and the relationship with teammates and then committed to a specific contribution to the team.

Feedback we received after these meetings indicated that participants appreciated the time away for relationship building and for gaining a deeper understanding of the restructuring. People commented that being with teammates away from the workplace revealed the team's strength.

To reinforce each team-building meeting, the second-tier leaders held the team to the commitments made during the retreat and made sure to visit, within a 12-month period, each office where any member of the team worked. The physical presence of the leader and his or her interest in team cohesiveness was positively received. After these efforts, we found that the iNet information network metrics improved significantly.

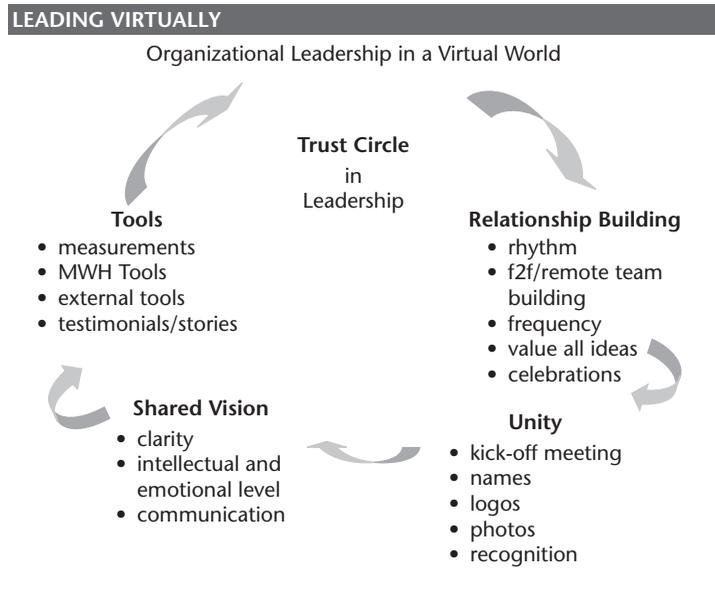
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## Virtual Leadership Training

As part of our effort to strengthen the iNet network in the wake of the restructuring, we also turned to a training tool developed several years earlier at MWH, when the company was investing in building a world-class knowledge system to connect virtual communities of knowledge workers worldwide. A key part of that effort was leadership training for the community managers. To that end, a course was developed by MWH's corporate university called *Leading Virtually*. The course content evolved to address all sorts of virtual teams. All first- and second-tier leaders were encouraged to take the course, and most did.

### The Basic Model

The course covers three days and is based on a virtual leadership model, the TRUST Model, developed at MWH. The model, shown in Figure 7.3, has four

**FIGURE 7.3 LEADING VIRTUALLY TRUST MODEL**

major areas: Relationship Building, Unity, Shared Vision, and Tools. The course builds on each area with focused learning modules providing philosophy, strategy, and practical methodologies for sound virtual leadership.

### Day by Day

The first day of the course takes place virtually—that is, people call in from around the world for a day of virtual interaction. The course is not designed for “death by PowerPoint”; instead, it uses creative approaches to build participants’ skills in virtual working and interactions. The use of the company’s virtual tools progressively builds through a series of exercises.

**Day 1 Morning—Introductions** The day begins with all participants (as many as 20) on the company’s teleconferencing site. Following a 15-minute introduction to the purpose of the course and the agenda for the day, each individual is given a couple of minutes to introduce himself or herself and to present reasons for taking the course. They are then asked to comment on what they are expecting from the course and present their biggest challenges to working virtually. This one-hour exercise is prefaced by setting up rules for the teleconference, such as

stating your name before speaking, keeping the telephone on mute if you have noise in the background, and not multitasking during other presentations. Then, the participants are asked to navigate to the online meeting center located in the company's knowledge portal, where they listen to and view a 15-minute presentation about virtual leadership and its importance to the company.

Next, we ask each participant to display on the virtual meeting site a picture of himself or herself in team or community environments (part of their assignment before the course is to find a picture). We then ask them to explain why this team or community is so important to them. This simple exercise, which takes about an hour and half, accomplishes a number of things. First, it makes the speakers "more real" to the listeners, connecting a face to the voice. Second, it forces participants to tell stories about themselves and what they care about—being transparent and self-revealing is an important characteristic in building the trust and credibility leaders need. Third, it shows that a conference call can be fun and interesting given a little forethought. Fourth, it builds participants' skill with the virtual technology.

***Day 1 Afternoon—Videoconference and Virtual Site Training*** After a one-hour lunch break, participants use a videoconferencing service linked to the teleconferencing company so that everyone is able to view each of the other participants online at the same time. We ask them to spend three or four minutes talking about a specific challenge they are facing with working and leading virtually in their teams. Again, use of the technology is a background objective, while the greater goal is to familiarize the participants with the power of the technology to build relationships.

The last exercise of the day familiarizes the team with the virtual site set up for the class and teaches them how to use it to hold discussions, access class materials, retrieve class work, and post information. This portion of the training takes about one hour. At the end of the day, participants are given an assignment to use this site to plan a soup to be served at lunch on the first day of the face-to-face course, held one week later. They are told to plan this task as a virtual team; upon arriving at the face-to-face session, the only thing they will be given is a slow cooker, seasonings, and the utensils to cut and prepare the ingredients. If they don't do this, they don't eat! The exercise challenges their newly developed skills to collaborate virtually before the face-to-face meetings. It also provides the facilitation team insight into the team dynamics. Afterward, the exercise is debriefed.

***Days 2 and 3—Face-to-Face Relationship Building*** These days are face-to-face meetings held on one of MWH's three corporate university campuses (Denver, Brussels, or Sydney) and built around the Trust Model. After a full discussion of

the model, each participant uses it to rate the performance of his or her virtual team. Modules, each of which lasts one or two hours, are taught around each model characteristic, tailored slightly to address concerns raised during the virtual sessions.

Generally, each module starts with a discussion of the basic premise and need for the topic, such as shared vision. Then the class is given a relevant exercise to work on either individually or collectively. As a relationship building exercise, for instance, the team is given a network diagram and a small vignette about a fictitious virtual team; the assignment is to design an approach for resolving the team's challenges. Then at each table, one person describes a virtual team he or she leads and draws the presumed network diagram. The other people at the table identify gaps in the team and ways to strengthen relationships in it.

For the Shared Vision module, each person is asked to put together a vision that would engage his or her virtual team. The class is trained on how to develop vision statements that engage people emotionally and intellectually. Participants work together on these statements, which they then use when they return to their offices.

To put participants' learning into practice, we end the course with a three-hour experiential exercise. One group is placed in a room with a complex model, and another group is placed in a separate room with all the parts to build the model. The second group must try to build the model, using virtual tools to communicate with the first group (see Figure 7.4). The tools change periodically, to introduce different constraints. At the beginning, group two can communicate with group one with a computer and a telephone. As time passes, we introduce cameras and allow a limited number of members to meet face to face. In a facilitated debriefing, the participants are asked the following:

- How did the teams form? Who took charge? Who took what roles? Why?
- How were communications established? How was vocabulary set?
- What personality traits were exhibited, and how were those engaged (or not)?
- What was happening when the team was most productive? What was happening when it was least productive?
- What was the most satisfying moment? The most dissatisfying? Why?

These classes were all very well received. For example, one second-tier leader reported that the classes completely changed his approach to leading his team. Prior to the class, many people on his team did not appreciate his management style and approach; after, he was praised for his ability to move the team forward. He began to communicate in different ways, tailored to the personalities on his team. He also articulated his expectations more clearly, thereby helping to

**FIGURE 7.4 MODEL-BUILDING EXERCISE**

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establish a shared vision. Efforts like this from all of the leaders began to have a striking effect in promoting cross-function collaboration throughout the network. Importantly, these efforts helped reduce the hierarchical nature of the network over time as well.

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## Cross-Functional Team Design

The ONA results clearly showed that the ERP team was very isolated and disconnected from the rest of iNet. The effective integration of this team was absolutely necessary because it was responsible for databases used across the company. This team, which reported to the finance function, was populated with long-term employees who had implemented the ERP system 10 years earlier and had deep knowledge of the system. Its leader was a well-respected individual who was very protective of the team and played a gatekeeper role. In addition, she had been the project manager for every major change and upgrade to the system. Given the history, it's not surprising that this team had become so isolated from the rest of the IT network.

An opportunity presented itself to begin the ERP team's integration, driven by the finance department, which was in the early stages of globalizing its team. As a preliminary step, the department wanted to upgrade the ERP system so that

it could be expanded to the European and Asian parts of the business (which were on two separate ERP systems). This effort would require significant resources. At the same time, the company was looking to globalize a project management approach, which required combining professionals from multiple areas. So, a set of core members from the ERP team joined with members of the infrastructure IT team; the combined team was led by a project manager from the Americas IT group, not the ERP leader. This new team was placed in a separate space to help it focus on the task at hand.

Initially, the ERP team and its leader struggled with the new arrangement; to ensure their deep expertise and knowledge were available, ERP subject matter experts (SMEs) were placed on the project team and given key technical and development support roles. However, they were not responsible for the ultimate project delivery—that responsibility sat with the project manager, who was not part of the ERP team. In addition, the ERP leader was asked to develop a support model separate from the upgrade project for the global implementation of the system, which kept her close and involved with the project efforts.

The team performed extremely well, and the next ONA, conducted a year later, showed better integration of the ERP team into iNet. It seems that forcing ERP professionals into intensive collaboration with people from different parts of the organization contributed to this improved network picture. Over the next few months, this approach was considered for other projects.

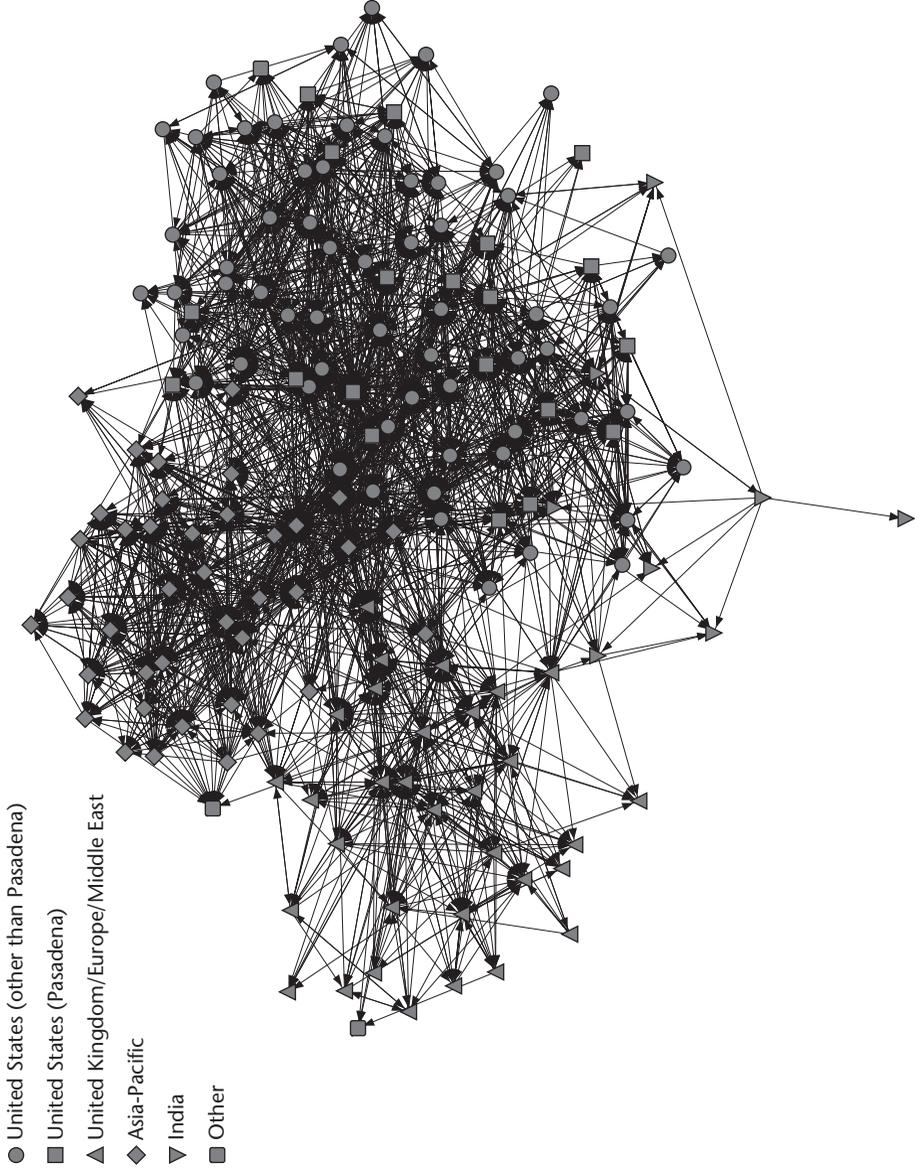
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## Results of these Efforts

Did these interventions build a more connected and integrated team? Figure 7.5 presents the ONA for iNet at the end of FY 2006. A quick visual observation shows a tighter network; network ties increased from the 2003 level of 6 percent to 10 percent in 2006. Connectivity between locations, offices, expertise groups, and hierarchy had all increased significantly.

The hard metrics support the fact that this function was operating in an effective and integrated manner. Through the end of 2006, IT costs in the company dropped by almost 20 percent. The number of iNet staffers needed to do the work went from 185 to approximately 150, resulting in a ratio of 1 iNet staff member to 35 employees. And customer satisfaction increased from 93 percent to 99 percent. At the time of this writing, the end of year (2008) values for the same metrics show IT costs at 3.6 percent of total revenue, 1/38 ratio of iNet staff to employees, and a continued 99 percent customer satisfaction rating. Although direct cause and effect cannot be measured, we strongly believe that the

FIGURE 7.5 INET ONA IN FY 2006



improvements within iNet's network were due in large part to the various efforts to strengthen relationships and foster collaboration and best practice transfer among employees.

### Note

Parts of this chapter have been adapted from a teaching case developed at the University of Virginia's Darden School, "Strategic Connections: Using Social Networks to Restructure the IT Department at MWH (A) and (B)" (UVA-S-0112; UVA-S-0153). Both are available through Darden Business Publishing.

# BUILDING HEALTHY TEAMS

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Kate Ehrlich, Ivan J. Blum, and Inga Carboni<sup>1</sup>

Sales teams face numerous obstacles to the internal sharing and coordination of information. They are often organized around customer accounts rather than functional groups and, as a result, are composed of people from multiple divisions, product groups, service lines, and specializations. Members have different reporting structures, which can fracture their loyalties and commitments. Also, people may be on two or more account teams, which further fragments their time and attention. And because they spend a lot of their time traveling, salespeople have few opportunities for the face-to-face meetings and direct phone calls that help keep them current with changes in status and information.

In addressing these challenges, many companies have stuck with outdated notions of what makes for a successful sales team. According to traditional thinking, high-performing sales teams are those that adopt the right account-planning practices and whose members have superior knowledge of their offerings. Building intra-team relationships is seen as a waste of time. We have met sales representatives who believe that working on a team sales proposal that may generate millions of dollars in revenue is less important than working with an individual client to win a narrower brand-specific deal worth a tenth as much.

However, recent research underscores the link between successful sales teams and their internal and external networks of relationships (Cross, Ehrlich, Dawson, and Helferich, 2008). Members of high-performing sales teams have close relationships with other team members as well as strategic relationships outside of the team (Ancona, Bresman, and Kaeufer, 2002), which helps them identify and seize opportunities. Members of high-performing teams trust one another (Jarvenpaa

and Leidner, 1999), which promotes information sharing and the discovery of cross-selling opportunities. And, perhaps most important, members of high-performing teams know who knows what within the team (Borgatti and Cross, 2003), which helps them assemble the right solutions for clients.

Although this research links success in teams to strategic relationships, it does not prescribe the steps teams can take to build those relationships, which is what we set out to accomplish in this chapter.

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## Building Teams at Knox

At Knox (the company's name has been disguised), a major provider of high-tech equipment and services, executives wanted to increase sales teams' revenue growth. Although leaders in the company generally believed that better teamwork and collaboration could help drive that growth, they had no evidence to support this belief. We got involved when senior managers decided to explore teamwork and collaboration as part of a phased approach to improving sales team performance.

The work began with a research study that used organizational network analysis (ONA) to identify the aspects of teamwork and collaboration most strongly correlated with revenue growth. Based on the results of the study, we developed a workshop, called a Clinic, in which we took teams, one at a time, through a series of exercises designed to build key aspects of teamwork and collaboration.

### The Research Study

We conducted research with 53 Knox sales teams identified for us by sales executives. We administered a survey to members of all the teams in which we asked the following:

- Network-related questions about communication, awareness, information seeking, and energy
- Demographic questions about location, number of teams, and tenure on teams
- General attitudes and perceptions about the team

For each team, we also collected measures of financial performance as well as independently derived qualitative ratings by executives of the individual teams. To examine whether teams that collaborate better also perform better,

we selected 10 high- and 10 low-performing teams from the original set of 53. The high-performing teams had exceeded the average revenue growth for their industry sector in at least two of the past three years and were rated as “well-positioned” by executives. The low-performing teams had failed to meet the average revenue growth in their industry for at least two of the past three years and were rated as “struggling” by executives.

We then looked at the results of the network questions and the perception questions for the 20 teams. We found that the high-performing teams had a higher density of ties in all their networks than the low-performing teams, which indicated more communication, awareness of expertise, information seeking, and energy. The high-performing teams also had more positive ratings on the perception questions than the low-performing teams. These results substantiated our belief in the link between collaboration and performance, and helped us design the Clinics, which constituted the next phase of work to improve sales team performance.

### The Health Check—A Diagnostic Instrument

Armed with data from the study, we created a diagnostic instrument, called a Health Check, which became a critical tool for the Clinics. Additional analysis of the data suggested that the perception and network questions map to eight components of collaboration. The Health Check instrument scored a team on the eight components:

1. **Shared strategy and execution.** The perception of shared goals and mutual accountability in the team.
2. **Client focus.** The perception and awareness of the client’s business issues and needs.
3. **Shared leadership.** The perception of a productive working relationship between the leader and the rest of the team and whether other team members occasionally took specific leadership roles.
4. **Trust.** The perception of open and honest dialogue in the team.
5. **Interactions.** The frequency and density of communication in the team.
6. **Knowledge.** The perception of how efficiently and frequently the team uses relevant information repositories and exchanges information.
7. **Tools.** The awareness of what tools are available to support collaboration and whether any are generally used.
8. **Leveraging Knox.** The perception of how well the team leverages resources, including people, in other parts of the company.

The Health Check allowed us to evaluate the level of collaboration in a team against a benchmark established by the high-performing teams in the research study. In the next section, we describe how we used the Health Check instrument to create personal teamwork profiles for each team.

## Clinic Workshops

Based on the insights into the characteristics of high-performing teams gained from the research study, we developed a set of Clinics, daylong workshops designed to improve collaboration within Knox sales teams. These Clinics brought together the members of a single team (from 10 to 16 people) at an offsite location. For some teams, this was the first time all members had been together.

Some of the teams had participated in our initial ONA but were not part of the group of 20 high- and low-performing teams. We selected these mid-range teams because they were deemed most likely to benefit from the exercises. We called these Phase One teams. A second group, Phase Two teams, had not participated in the study. We ran Clinics with 6 Phase One teams and 14 Phase Two teams. Each Clinic involved only one team. There were no important differences between the teams other than whether they had participated in our study.

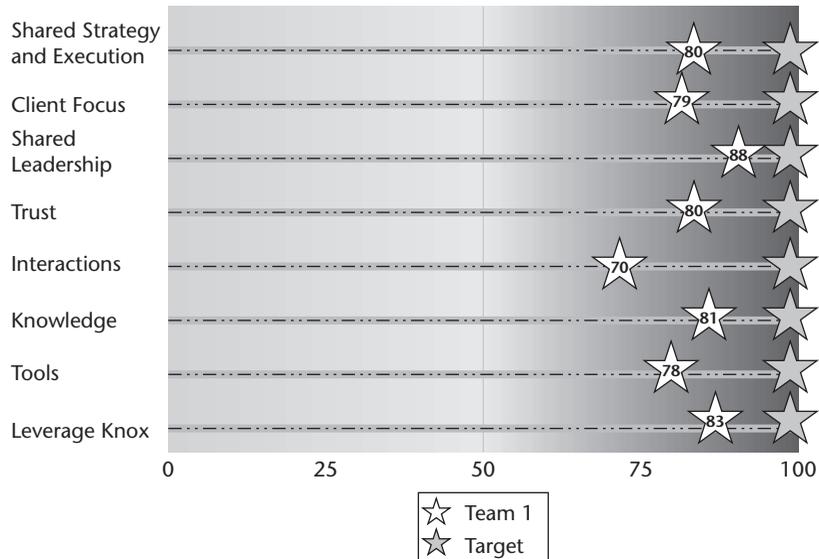
**Objectives** The Clinics had several objectives:

- Provide a foundational understanding of the team attributes associated with high performance, emphasizing the important role played by networks and communication.
- Gain consensus on the main actions that the team must take to enhance teamwork and collaboration.
- Develop a commitment to taking action and a sense of accountability for outcomes.
- Begin to build a community among team members.
- Develop individual- and team-based action plans for implementing changes.

**Preparation** Prior to a Clinic, all team members completed our survey. Members of Phase One teams had already completed it as part of the research study, so we were able to reuse their data. For the Phase Two teams, we administered a slightly abbreviated version. Clinic facilitators—each team had two—used the responses to construct personalized Health Checks for each team. A set of responses from a sample team mapped against the benchmark data from our high-performing teams is shown in Figure 8.1. The higher the score, the better the team is doing on that component.

**FIGURE 8.1 SAMPLE HEALTH CHECK**

## TEAM 1 Health Check Results



The facilitators then used the Health Check results to select exercises that would help each team in areas that revealed the most room for improvement. The team illustrated in Figure 8.1, for example, needed help on Interactions, Tools, and Client Focus. Overall, no single component was uniformly problematic for all teams. However, teams tended to score lowest on Trust and Interactions.

Clinic facilitators then conducted one-hour confidential interviews with each team member to gain additional understanding of team members' relationships with one another. In these semi-structured interviews, the facilitators asked about team dynamics, the behavior of other members, and any of the interviewee's survey responses that seemed interesting or unusual. Based on the survey responses and the interviews, the facilitators recommended a set of actions to improve the team's performance on each of the eight components.

As a final preparatory step, the facilitators discussed the information gleaned from the interviews and the results of the Health Checks with the team leaders to prioritize the areas of focus for the Clinic. The facilitators always worked together to conduct the interviews and the Health Check analysis to work more sensitively with the teams.

**Clinic Facilitation and Agenda** Each Clinic was led by the two facilitators who had gathered the initial data and conducted the interviews. One facilitator led off with a presentation of the research study, focusing on the characteristics of high-performing teams. The facilitators then shared the team’s Health Check results along with the planned team-building exercises. Each facilitator led a discussion on four of the Health Check components. The facilitators also divided up the exercises. While one facilitator took the lead, the other assisted and acted as scribe for anything that needed to be recorded. After every Clinic, the facilitators debriefed each other about what aspects worked well and what needed to be modified for the next Clinic. In some cases, team leaders also requested a debriefing with the facilitators.

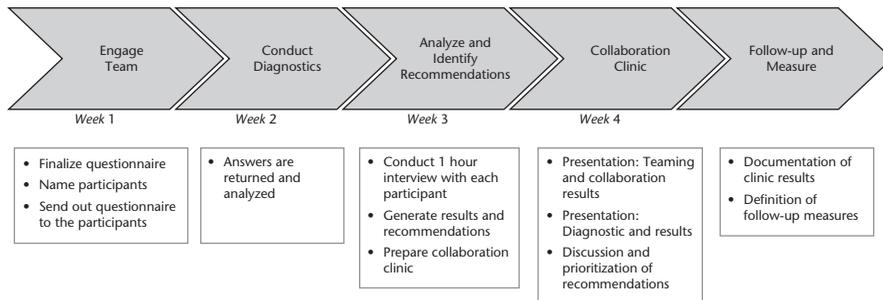
After each Clinic, one of the facilitators or the senior leader would send an e-mail thanking people for their participation and reiterating the actions that the team had committed to accomplishing. Figure 8.2 shows a timeline of a typical Clinic, from preparation through the Clinic itself and any follow-up.

The morning of each Clinic was devoted to a presentation of the research project and results. This was followed by a presentation and a discussion of the team’s Health Check results and team-relevant recommendations for each of the components. Finally, team members voted on three to five issues to focus on.

The afternoon was devoted to two to four additional exercises, selected from a set of six, that we believed would be most beneficial for that particular team. The selection was open to some modification based on the team’s discussion of its priorities. Sometimes exercises were replaced by a technology demonstration if the team needed a better understanding of potential knowledge repositories or the tools that were available to them. And not all teams had a working lunch.

All teams concluded with Exercise 6 (Improvement Road Map), which consolidated and prioritized the individual actions made during the day. Each Clinic

**FIGURE 8.2 TIMELINE OF A TYPICAL CLINIC**



## Exhibit 8.1 Sample Clinic Agenda

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9:00	Welcome, Introductions, and Objectives
9:15	Report of Initial Research Study
10:00	Break (15 minutes)
10:15	<b>Exercise 1:</b> Team Health Check Feedback and Recommendations
11:30	Working Lunch <b>Exercise 2:</b> Individual Roles and Metrics
12:30	<b>Exercise 4:</b> Strategic Action Plan
2:00	<b>Exercise 5:</b> Client Focus and Execution Plan
3:00	Break (15 minutes)
3:15	<b>Exercise 6:</b> Improvement Road Map
3:45	Commitments and Clinic Feedback
4:00	Adjourn

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This customized version of the agenda deliberately contains no Exercise 3.

went much more smoothly if we reviewed the Health Check results with the team leader before the Clinic and agreed on which exercises would be most appropriate for the team. We also learned to ask the team to provide us with its expectations for the Clinic during the introduction to manage expectations throughout the day. Exhibit 8.1 shows a sample customized agenda for a team that used four of the exercises in addition to the mandatory Health Check feedback.

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## The Six Exercises

In this section, we describe each of the six exercises. Although the Health Check was not strictly a remedial exercise, it did have its own structure and outcomes, so we have included it with the other exercises.

### Exercise 1: Team Health Check Feedback and Recommendations

**Time:** Approx. 75 minutes

**Purpose:** Use the results of the survey and the Health Check to highlight the team's current weaknesses and to consider actions the team will need to take to improve its performance. Results of this exercise are used in other exercises, especially Exercise 4: Strategic Action Plan.

**Materials:**

- Flip charts or overheads<sup>2</sup>
- Large sheets of butcher paper or a white board
- Markers for the facilitators

**Process:**

1. Present the Health Check overview table to the group (refer to Figure 8.1 for an example).
2. For each component, discuss the reasons for the team's score. Remind participants that the scores for each component were based on specific questions in the survey. While discussing each component, it is helpful also to review some of those questions and ask participants to share their responses and reactions to them.
3. Show network diagrams to augment the findings for some of the components. The data for the diagrams come from the analysis of responses to the network questions in the pre-Clinic survey. Network diagrams are always presented and discussed. They are never used for exercises around team dynamics or behavior because names are not revealed.
4. Present the recommendations from the Health Check. Stress that recommendations are based on survey results, coupled with known best practices, and may not reflect the consensus of the entire team. They are intended *only* as suggestions.
5. Present each component and provide recommendations for each. Here are some sample recommendations for each component:
  - **Shared strategy and execution.** Enhance team alignment by confirming that members' roles and metrics are well understood and that members are synchronized in terms of individual commitments, ownership of actions, responsibility for relationships, and other aspects of account development.
  - **Client focus.** Formulate a plan to monitor a client's supplier ecosystem; establish contacts in the client teams of these suppliers to receive (communications or signals) from the suppliers.
  - **Shared leadership.** Delegate selected responsibilities to the most appropriate team members and regularly rotate responsibilities.
  - **Trust.** Create opportunities for social interaction among team members.
  - **Interactions.** Establish and adhere to a team code of conduct on behaviors the team agrees are important.
  - **Knowledge.** Formalize the way the team exchanges knowledge by, for instance, publishing an agenda prior to team calls and ensuring all appropriate parties receive relevant materials before and after calls and meetings.
  - **Tools.** Agree on how the team will use collaborative tools.
6. Ask the group to vote on three to five top recommendations. In some cases, this voting leads to changes in exercises. If one of the prepared exercises addresses concerns that are not among the top recommendations, we eliminate it from the agenda and replace it with one that is more relevant, or devote more time to an exercise that is already on the agenda.

7. After the presentation of the Health Check, the facilitators share what other teams typically discuss during this exercise, which helps generate additional discussion.

## Exercise 2: Individual Roles and Metrics

**Time:** Approx. 60 minutes

**Purpose:** Improve awareness of the roles on the team, the performance measures for each role, and how people interact with one another.

**Materials:**

- Large sheets of butcher paper or a white board
- Markers for the facilitators

**Process:**

1. Ask participants to sit in small groups.
2. Facilitate a discussion regarding team performance by asking each participant the following questions:
  - What is your role on the XYZ account team? How are your performance on this account and your overall performance measured?
  - How much do these measures drive your actions and behaviors?  
Encourage other team members to question or comment.
3. Discuss how individual line reporting relationships may affect (positively or negatively) one's individual team performance.
4. Discuss any newly discovered information that may illuminate behavior that appeared unusual.
5. Discuss how interactions among specific team members (opportunities pursued, responsiveness, etc.) should be modified based on this full disclosure.
6. Capture discussion notes on flip charts and post them around the room.

## Exercise 3: Team Norms, Backgrounds, and Competencies

**Time:** Approx. 60 minutes

**Purpose:** Enhance interactions among team members by improving their knowledge about one another's key personal and business attributes. Discuss the desirable behaviors the team should exhibit, including specific new behaviors that should be adopted, deleterious behaviors that should be stopped, and constructive behaviors that should be encouraged.

**Materials:**

- Large sheets of butcher paper or a white board
- Markers for the facilitators

- Template marked with headings: Member, Primary Responsibility, Background and Interests, Core Competency

**Process:**

1. With the whole group in the room, ask each person to fill in his or her primary job responsibility on the team, background, interests, and core competencies on the template, which we call a Team Member Attribute Map.
2. Each person then reads aloud from his or her map. In some cases, each person's map is then posted on the wall; in other cases, it is then copied to a master map by the facilitator.
3. Each person is given a form with the headings Stop, Start, and Continue. Participants write down ideas about which behaviors should stop, which behaviors should start, and which should continue.<sup>3</sup> Members discuss what they like and don't like about others' behaviors; no names are used, and no one is identified.
4. The facilitators lead the discussion, taking each category—Start, Stop, and Continue—in turn. Each person who has something to say reads all the behaviors from his or her sheet for that category until everyone in the room has had a chance to present. The facilitators then move on to the next category. Participants can make comments at any time. Everyone's contribution is noted and used. Because there are no right or wrong answers, it isn't necessary for everyone to agree. When we ran the exercise, no disagreements came up. But if they had, the facilitators could guide the discussion.
5. The behaviors are written on a flip chart as they are generated.
6. The completed Stop/Start/Continue forms are shared with the group.
7. The facilitator creates a "straw man" list of Team Norms based on the previous discussion or sets up a new discussion with the group to formulate Team Norms. In addition, the facilitators might share other teams' norms to provoke discussion.
8. The Team Norms list is translated into a *Code of Conduct* (Exhibit 8.2). The *Code of Conduct* specifies behaviors that support the team's core values.

**Exercise 4: Strategic Action Plan**

**Time:** Approx. 90 minutes

**Purpose:** Using the top five recommendations from the Health Check, identify initial actions required to begin implementing each recommendation. The outcome of the exercise will be a road map with actions and owners.

### Exhibit 8.2 Sample Code of Conduct

Values	Code of Conduct
Respect	Listen quietly. Provide full attention. Conduct only one conversation at a time.
Trust	Tell it like it is. Give and receive feedback when appropriate.
Quality	Post meeting objectives and agendas in advance. Be sure “Final” means final—error free.
Timeliness	Arrive at meetings and conference calls on time. Submit deliverables according to your agreed due date.

### Exhibit 8.3 Sample Recommendations Template

#### Recommendation 1:

*Understand the roles, incentives, responsibilities, and unique capabilities of all your teammates. Share experiences.*

Actions	Owner	Dependencies or Resources Needed	Target Date
Group Meeting	Karen Close		June
Prepare Template	Dan Hardwick		

#### Materials:

- Post-it notes
- Templates marked up with the headings Recommendation, Owner, Dependencies or Resources Needed, and Target Date (Exhibit 8.3). The list of recommendations is based on the team’s votes of the top recommendations in Exercise 1: Team Health Check Feedback and Recommendations.

#### Process:

1. Together, the group reviews the five recommendations from Exercise 1. The list is displayed at the front of the room.
2. For each of the five recommendations, the group as a whole proposes actions and assigns owners; there is a partial example in the template. The Owner

is either someone who volunteers for the action or is selected by group consensus.

3. The Owner develops the dependencies and target dates with input from the group.
4. The facilitators capture discussion notes on flip charts and post them around the room.

### Exercise 5: Client Focus and Execution Plan

**Time:** Approx. 60 minutes

**Purpose:** Identify key executives at the client who are owners or stakeholders of major client initiatives and therefore should be known by everyone on the account team.

Document a plan to develop new business relationships and to improve key existing relationships, including identifying the main steps, specific people, and target dates.

Identify *strategic* actions required to implement the top five recommendations selected in Exercise 4: Strategic Action Plan.

**Materials:**

- Flip charts
- Overheads
- Account plan (The account plan is a strategic plan on how to serve the client for the year and what opportunities and actions exist. All teams develop this plan at the start of the fiscal year.)
- Template marked with the headings Business Initiative, Client Owner, Responsibility on Account Team, Key Action, Target Date (see Exhibit 8.4)

#### Exhibit 8.4 Sample Business Initiatives Template (partial example)

Business Initiative	Client Owner	Responsibility on Account		
		Team	Key Action	Target Date
Growth	Business Exec	Sean		
Cost Reduction	CFO	tbd		
Innovation and R&D	Chief Innovation Officer	Kathy		
Customer Insights	tbd	Kevin		

**Process:**

1. The facilitator displays to the group as a whole one slide showing a blank Business Initiative template. Using the account plan as a guide, the group suggests business initiatives key to the client, such as Growth or Cost Reduction (see Exhibit 8.4).
2. Each client business initiative is written at the top of a flip chart, using one flip chart page per business initiative.
3. Using the flip chart, the group generates key actions for each of the business initiatives as well as goals and issues.
4. The group discusses the actions for each business initiative, leading to the selection of one key action per initiative. The facilitator transcribes the actions from the flip charts onto the business initiatives template. The additional goals and issues are kept as notes.
5. When the actions are consolidated on the template, the group discusses owners and dates. These dates are targets that will be revised in the course of the ongoing sales activities.
6. The facilitators post the completed flip charts and template on a wall for later reference.

**Exercise 6: Improvement Road Map**

**Time:** Approx. 30 minutes

**Purpose:** Reach an agreement among team members on which strategies and activities the team will implement following the Clinic. Develop an awareness of the “triggers” that occur in the normal course of doing business that will prompt the team to test and revise its account plan. The triggers provide context for decisions about the selection and prioritization of activities following the Clinic.

Strategic-planning triggers include those that come from the account:

- Change in planning cycle
- Change in executives in key positions
- Change in business or IT strategies
- Change in budget or funding decisions
- Change in portfolio of business and IT initiatives
- Acquisition or divestiture

Other triggers include those that come from the account team’s company:

- Change in strategy or capabilities
- Change in client team personnel
- Significant win or loss

Market and external triggers include the following:

- Entry or exit of competitor
- Governmental policy, regulation, or relevant legislation

**Materials:**

- Post-it notes
- Flip charts or overheads
- Template marked with the headings Action, Dependencies, Owner, and Target Date

**Process:**

1. For the group as a whole, the leader moderates the discussion to reinforce his or her role and to provide continuity for actions taken after the Clinic concludes.
2. The leader reviews each set of triggers with the group and sets the context for discussion of prioritization of actions.
3. The template is used to guide discussion and consolidation of the actions to be followed after the meeting. The group also refers to the flip charts and other notes taken during the exercises and posted around the room.
4. The facilitators capture the group's discussion on flip charts.
5. The facilitators transcribe the flip charts onto the template as part of the consolidation of the results of the Clinic.

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## Evaluation

We ran 20 Clinics in the United States and Europe, and more than 90 percent of those completing feedback forms indicated that they thought the Clinic would enhance teamwork. A substantial proportion also said that they intended to follow the action plan that their team had generated and expected that it would help improve the team's performance. More than 80 percent also recommended the Clinic to other teams. In fact, we received many more requests for Clinics than we could fulfill.

We had hoped to conduct some follow-ups with teams after they had instituted their action plans. However, such monitoring required a level of commitment and effort that was difficult to sustain after the Clinics had concluded and people had been assigned to other projects. There was also some ambiguity about which organization would take responsibility for monitoring—a common problem in organizational change efforts. Nevertheless, we believe that it would be

interesting to track the benefits of the Clinics over time, on performance measures, including revenue growth, and on other measures deemed important by a sales organization.

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## Endnotes

1. Ivan Blum was part of the research team for the initial study and the development leader for the clinic-based remediation program, where he was one of the two facilitators in the clinics. Kate Ehrlich and Inga Carboni were leads on the research team.
2. Throughout the exercises, we use the term “slide” to refer to a prepared form. In some cases, printed copies were made of this form and handed out for use by each individual. In other cases, a slide was projected from a laptop to a screen at the front of the room. We use the term “flip chart” to refer to ad hoc materials generated in the course of the exercise and displayed on a large flip chart on one side of the room. We use the term, “overhead” to refer to material created by PowerPoint or a similar tool and projected to the front of the room.
3. Rather than asking the team to talk about existing norms, which they might not be aware of, we started with discussions of behaviors, from which the team was able to formulate a set of expected behaviors (norms).



## PART THREE

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# DRIVING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE THROUGH NETWORKS

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**T**op-down organizational change efforts that do not include explicit steps to work through informal networks are often doomed from the start. Interventions informed by ONA give executives a window into the organization, helping to reveal opinion leaders who can inspire others to support the change program and serve as communication channels during the process.

Two chapters in this section describe efforts to spread messages effectively throughout an organization. Steve Denning and Rob Cross explore the use of narrative, in combination with network analysis techniques, to facilitate culture change. Leaders can work through the organization's central connectors and brokers to spread a narrative that will engage the employees who must implement the change.

Terry Williams focuses on the need to make sure that critical messages are not just heard but also understood during times of upheaval. He describes in detail a "message monitoring" process at the Cleveland Clinic and Resurrection Health Care, in which both organizations identified highly connected and influential people and enlisted them in disseminating messages about the need for change and the requirements of the process.

Leaders attempting to implement a new strategy must ensure that the organization's informal networks are aligned with it. Sally Colella lays out the agenda for a workshop that a financial firm used to educate employees about a new strategy and to build the collaborative networks it required.

For a leader stepping into a new role, ONA tools can accelerate the transition, write Rob Cross, Robert Thomas, Ana Dutra, and Carrie Newberry. The leader they describe, who took over an underused unit in a consulting firm, used ONA to become familiar with collaboration patterns and then designed a suite of network-based interventions to improve connectivity, increase revenues, promote innovation, and improve talent management.

In the final chapter of this section, Rob Cross and Robert Thomas present the case of a pharmaceutical company whose decision-making processes had become highly inefficient as a result of its rapid growth. The solution was not to boost connectivity but to decrease it, which the company achieved by clarifying and codifying decision rights and responsibilities.

## CHANGING CULTURE THROUGH NETWORKS AND NARRATIVE

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Steve Denning and Rob Cross

Executives today must implement large-scale organizational change initiatives in ever-tighter time frames and with fewer and fewer resources. Advice for managers is increasingly available, but success in implementing change does not appear to be improving. One recent Gartner Group study found that although 90 percent of companies surveyed had undertaken significant organizational change within the previous two years, only 5 percent had avoided substantial disruptions and finished on time.

A shift in culture is one of the most difficult change processes an organization can undertake. Many organizations' approaches are largely impersonal. Typically, a small group of leaders and select members of the organization cluster offsite to define new beliefs and values. After they disperse, a splashy announcement of the "new culture" is made, messages are posted to communication vehicles such as intranet web sites, and motivational posters and slogans are circulated. This approach almost always fuels employees' skepticism, so little changes.

Part of the problem is that the right people may not be engaged in the communication process. Too often, only those at upper levels of the organization and the employees in direct contact with them hear about the new values—and the rationale underlying their pursuit—in a compelling way. As a result, context is lost, information distorted, and motives questioned as news of yet another change program travels through the organization. The most effective and efficient way to disseminate information about a culture change is instead to work through

influential members of an organization's informal structure, who have credibility at many levels.

An equally important part of the problem is that many traditional ways of communicating in organizations—telling people what to do and presenting the reasons for change—don't inspire enduring enthusiasm. Analysis might excite the mind, but it hardly offers a route to the heart. To motivate people not only to take action but also to do so with energy and enthusiasm, organizations have been introducing narrative techniques to their communication approaches. In fact, it is fast becoming conventional wisdom that leaders need to tell stories to communicate difficult and complex messages, motivate skeptical audiences, build trust, build brand authenticity, and enhance culture.

This chapter shows how leaders can enhance their culture change efforts by combining network analysis and storytelling techniques. Through ONA, an organization can identify its potential change agents and the areas that might be most resistant to change. These network findings can then help leaders design a program to disseminate compelling stories related to culture change to the people who most need to hear them.

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## Identifying Change Agents

Who influences you the most—a peer with whom you work on a day-to-day basis (and whose opinion you respect and friendship you value) or a superior you often do not see for days, weeks, and sometimes months at a time? The answer for most of us is both. We can never ignore that our boss maintains some degree of control over our destiny. However, it is also clear that accessible and valued peers have a considerable effect on our beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

Formal leaders and those in certain workflow positions are of course crucial to culture change. These individuals must be on board and engaged in any change program to signal its strategic importance and increase its visibility. People who are influential within the organization's informal networks are also crucial. Organizational network analysis can be used to identify several kinds of change agents—opinion leaders, culture carriers, and relationship brokers—through which leaders can drive effective narrative techniques.

### Opinion Leaders

Change programs can benefit from the active involvement of employees in two information network positions: central connectors and brokers. *Central connectors* are people who have a large number of direct relationships and tend to be in the

know in certain pockets of the organization. They are often highly central within a given unit or location and can have a good perspective on what will work in that corner of the organization. *Brokers* are those who have ties across subgroups in a network and are critical for change initiatives that cross organizational boundaries such as functional lines, physical distance, technical capabilities, and cultural values. Unfortunately, despite their influence, brokers tend to live in the white space of an organization and often are unrecognized and underused.

In most change programs, if leaders consider informal networks at all in deciding who should be on the design or implementation teams, they tend to think only of very popular employees or those with whom they have contact. As a result, teams end up being staffed heavily with people who are wed to the perspectives and motivations of one function or location and not necessarily with those who have effective ties across the organization.

Brokers provide this perspective. Because they tend to know what will work in various subpockets of a network, they can be valuable contributors to design and implementation teams. And because they have credibility across groups, they can be effective ambassadors for initiatives that span functional or geographic lines.

## Culture Carriers

Another category of people who can be leveraged for a culture change effort are those who are influential by virtue of their network position *and* either embrace or shun certain beliefs or ways of working. Again, these so-called *culture carriers* often remain invisible, but a combination of standard culture assessments and ONA can help reveal them and show how various components of culture are distributed throughout the network. Standard assessments reveal who holds certain beliefs (and how strongly), whereas the ONA demonstrates the relative influence of these people within the network (see Exhibit 9.1). This combined analysis can help change leaders ensure that the people most influential in the network are on board and communicating the change to others in an effective and engaging manner.

It often turns out that people who believe an organization's culture *is* positive on some dimension and those who believe it *is not* are both central players. As a result, the positive players are undermined or countered by the negative employees, who dogmatically persist in believing that things will never change. Figuring out the network positions of these culture carriers is important and can inform various approaches toward them: negative culture carriers who are highly central are prime candidates for coaching or other developmental experiences. As odd as it may seem, we have seen that turning these people into mentors can give them a greater sense of purpose and have a positive impact on their behaviors.

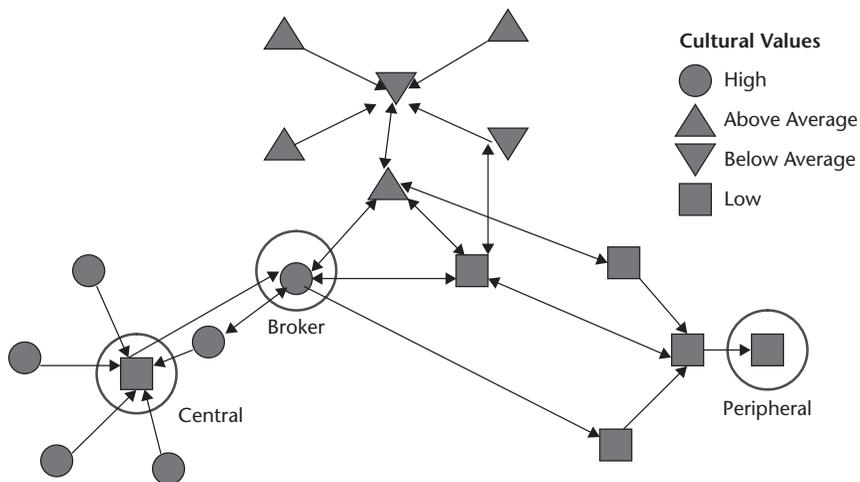
### Exhibit 9.1 Measuring Culture in Networks

One way of assessing values as distributed in a group is to combine a culture and network assessment in a single survey. Cultural items included in this kind of an assessment can either be established scales relevant for the organization or ethnographically generated via open-ended interviews. Regardless of approach, the key output is being able to generate network diagrams that show how culture (and its various dimensions) is distributed in a network.

The results of the social network analysis survey are used to create a network diagram, as shown in the figure below. We can then highlight nodes in the network by people's perception of the organization's culture. Typically we use either two levels of cultural values (above and below the organization mean) or four levels of cultural values (above and below one standard deviation from the organization mean) to reveal culture carriers and pockets within a network where culture is either strong or weak.

Another way to assess culture is to use network analysis to identify the people who all others in an organization feel most reflect or embody a given belief or set of values. For example, we often include this question in a network assessment: "Please indicate the people below whom you feel most represent and embody the values of your organization." Networks generated in this way help identify culture carriers in a given organization (but provide no information about the values themselves).

This approach is powerful in associations or other nonprofits where departures of key people (as defined by the network) might make it very difficult for a group to maintain its values. A common application of the ideas in these realms is to identify the key culture carriers, conduct interviews to determine what they represent, and then ensure that leaders represent these perspectives.



Of course, positive culture carriers are also very important to unearth and engage in a change process. We have seen organizations achieve great success by identifying positive culture carriers and reinforcing their behaviors through stories and formal mechanisms such as performance assessments. Another easy and high-impact approach is to bring these people together in a workshop, like the one we sketch out later in this chapter, to assess network results and brainstorm opportunities to promote more effective collaboration.

## Relationship Brokers

Culture, of course, has a deeply emotional component, so a third category of people to tap for a culture change effort refers to those people whose ties with others go beyond the exchange of knowledge and information. Put simply, we tend to share the opinions and views of the people we enjoy being around, trust, or consider to be friends. These emotion-laden ties turn out to be much more important in shifting cultural perceptions than those whom we turn to for work-related information.

Again, ONA can reveal the people who engage others on an emotional level. We often find these people with a simple network question:

Please indicate the people whom you consider to be an important source of energy and enthusiasm for you at work. In other words, the people who make you feel enthusiastic about your work and leave you with a heightened sense that what you do at your organization matters.

Engaging those who are a source of enthusiasm for a great many others can have a substantial impact in generating commitment to a new way of working.

Consider Table 9.1. This simple visual reveals the key opinion leaders in an organization across multiple network dimensions. We have selected the 21 most-connected people in the information network; their number of incoming ties (that is, how often they are sought for information) ranges from 34 to 52. Clearly these are all important people in the network, but some—such as Josh and Ivana—stand out. A high proportion of people in their network find them to be energizing and seek them out for problem-solving interactions. As a result, these two would be valuable change agents because they are more likely to capture the passion of others as well as engage in interactions that can inspire people to change their minds.

After they are identified, informal opinion leaders can have a dramatic impact on culture change efforts. Engaging them in narrative-building workshops, such as the one we will describe, helps them to better communicate a change initiative and builds energy and enthusiasm for it.

**TABLE 9.1 KEY RELATIONSHIP HOLDERS**

Name	# Incoming Ties	Department	Location	% Energizing Ties	% Problem Solving /Bus Opp Ties	% Cross-Dept Ties
George A	52	Investment Banking	Australia	42%	29%	56%
Sharon M	48	Operations	Other Asia	45%	40%	96%
Stephano C	46	Financing	North America	25%	49%	83%
Jessica S	46	Research	North America	26%	41%	87%
Michael G	46	Equities	North America	39%	46%	67%
Pat B	43	Currency & Commdts	Australia	30%	49%	91%
Deborah K	42	Financing	North America	33%	47%	83%
Roman N	41	Equities	South America	31%	43%	54%
Josh W	40	Asset Mgmt	North America	76%	60%	73%
Gene P	39	Investment Banking	Europe	45%	62%	44%
Birger S	39	Asset Mgmt	Europe	40%	33%	62%
Seth I	39	Equities	South America	38%	48%	49%
Dmitry K	38	Fixed Income	China	49%	61%	66%
Deborah K	38	Investment Banking	North America	45%	59%	39%
Johan W	37	Currency & Commdts	Australia	32%	64%	84%
Ivana L	36	Other	North America	64%	53%	94%
Ricardo I	36	Investment Banking	North America	30%	47%	31%
Sylvia E	35	Fixed Income	China	50%	63%	40%
Richard M	34	Investment Banking	Europe	48%	58%	15%
Vladimir T	34	Financial Adv Svcs	China	57%	52%	53%
Andrey K	34	Financing	North America	31%	54%	76%

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## Driving Change with Business Narrative

As network analysis helps unearth key opinion leaders, effective business narrative technique is critical to engaging them and teaching them how to engage others. Storytelling, because it is inherently compelling, can be especially effective for changing beliefs and behaviors and tends to forge trust and develop the types of connections that engender more effective networks throughout an organization.

### An Experience at the World Bank

Consider Steve Denning's experiences in the early 1990s, as he set out to persuade people at the World Bank to support efforts at knowledge management. At the time, knowledge management was a foreign notion in the organization. He offered cogent arguments about the need to gather the knowledge scattered throughout the bank. No one listened. He gave PowerPoint presentations that demonstrated the importance of sharing and leveraging this information. His audiences looked dazed. In desperation, he was ready to try almost anything.

Then in 1996 he began telling a story:

In June of last year, a health worker in a tiny town in Zambia went to the web site of the Centers for Disease Control and got the answer to a question about the treatment of malaria. Remember that this was in Zambia, one of the poorest countries in the world, and it took place in a tiny place 600 kilometers from the capital city. But the most striking thing about this picture, at least for us, is that the World Bank isn't in it. Despite our know-how on all kinds of poverty-related issues, that knowledge isn't available to the millions of people who could use it. Imagine if it were. Think what an organization we could become.

This simple story helped World Bank staff and managers envision a different kind of future for the organization. It helped move the idea of knowledge management from an abstract notion to a compelling way of working and reason for being at the World Bank. When knowledge management later became an official corporate priority, Steve used similar stories to maintain the momentum.

Despite the logic and evidence of the need to adopt knowledge management, before he resorted to storytelling, Steve couldn't get leaders to give him the time of day. After storytelling took hold and values began to shift, these same leaders were ready to pounce. One key to the story he used is that it depicts a past event: the health worker's visit to the Internet to access the needed information. A second key is that the story ends happily: the health worker gets the information. It's also important that the story is told very simply. By minimizing embellishment, this little story invites people to use their imagination: What if the World Bank

was able to share its knowledge with the millions who need it? As people considered this possibility and fleshed out the story in their minds, they began to make that idea their own.

Four years later, substantial progress had been made. Knowledge sharing was in the mission statement of the organization, on a par with the provision of financial resources. It was in the organizational chart. It was in the personnel system. It was in the budget, albeit still underfunded. And more than a hundred knowledge communities were in place, most of them energetically sharing innovations and best practices. There were measurements of the effectiveness of the communities of practice. And there was external recognition: the World Bank was benchmarked several times as a world leader in knowledge management and as one of the world's most admired knowledge enterprises.

Obviously, much still remained to be done. Budgets needed to be sorted out. The less effective knowledge communities and vice presidencies needed to be dealt with. The blemishes in technology had to be rectified. But these challenges were largely those of management. It was a matter of strengthening, refining, and reinforcing what was already mostly in place.

The period from 1996 to 2000 in the World Bank was thus quite remarkable for the change that took place. In the space of four years, a cultural and strategic shift had been achieved in one of the world's most change-resistant organizations. How could such a transformation have taken place? Why were so many people inspired to become champions when the obstacles to success were so huge? Clearly, effective storytelling played an extraordinary—and unexpected—role in the transformation at the World Bank by demonstrating the unexpected power to communicate a complex idea and spark action even in difficult, skeptical audiences.

## Springboard Stories

The preceding story is known as a “springboard story,” in which the desired change is seen in action, perhaps in another organization. For instance, if the idea is to introduce knowledge management, the story would be about someone—similar to the audience—who had successfully implemented knowledge management. If that story was in the same organization, that would be a plus. But if that isn't available, then a story in a similar organization could work.

If the change idea is to enhance the cognitive diversity of the teams in the organization, the story would be about a group or an organization that had introduced cognitive diversity into its teams and had experienced significant productivity improvements. If the change idea is to decentralize responsibility to the field offices, then the story would be about a firm that had done so and experienced substantial gains.

Such stories reflect the idea of the science fiction writer William Gibson: “The future is already here: it’s just very unevenly distributed.” You find an example in which the future has already happened and point the audience’s attention to it. The implicit argument is “If it’s already happened there, then why not here?”

### **No Single Right Way of Telling**

Managers interested in employing narrative techniques in their organizations should keep in mind that there is no single right way to tell a story. Narrative comprises an array of tools, each suitable to a different business purpose.

Thus a story to spark change is a true story, told very simply, that embodies the change idea and ends successfully. By contrast, a story to share knowledge has a great deal of detail so that the listener can determine to what extent his or her organization’s situation is comparable. A story that embodies a business model will be a story about the future—an imaginary story—that shows the underlying dynamic of how the company will make money. Understanding the differences between various narrative approaches is key to the effective use of narrative.

In the context of a network analysis, business narrative can help overcome ineffective collaborative archetypes, drive commitment to new ways of working, and build energized and knowledgeable relationships deep in an organization.

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## **Network Analysis and Business Narrative Change Program**

What follows is the skeleton of an approach for employing network analysis and narrative techniques in support of culture change. We’ve divided the approach into seven steps.

### **Step 1: Identify the Network That Most Needs to Shift to Support the Culture Change**

Leaders tend to focus on networks that fit one of the following descriptions: a group ranging in size from 30 to 500 people (such as a function, community, or the top three or four layers in an organization); a group that crosses functional and hierarchical boundaries, physical distance, projects or key accounts, and/or other potential impediments to collaboration; a group in which collaboration (not just more connectivity, but targeted collaboration) is critical to effectiveness; and a group in which one can get strong sponsorship to ensure easy data collection and intervention strategies.

## Step 2: Apply Network Analysis to the Group

The aim is to better understand where breakdowns in collaboration and practices are undermining effectiveness, assess the behavior and cultural norms distributed across the network, and identify desired cultural norms. Key questions about the network assessment should address its attributes, boundaries, and the personal networks within it.

**Attribute Questions** Questions here should focus on three areas:

1. Demographic identifiers, which can isolate breakdowns across gender, age, or ethnicity; formal structure, which can reveal fragmentation undermining culture change across function, hierarchy, organization, or project-based lines.
2. Cultural values and behaviors on two scales: the current existence of the value and the desired existence, with 5 to 10 values and behaviors rated.
3. Overlaying these ratings on the network will allow people to see how culture is distributed in the network and help identify pockets where stories need to be told.

**Bounded Network Questions** Questions here should also focus on three areas:

1. Awareness of who knows what, which reveals where collaborative breakdowns are occurring because people are not aware of colleagues' expertise.
2. Information flow, which reveals where network fragmentation is undermining organizational effectiveness (and potentially where certain stories might show the value of integrating certain people).
3. Who energizes others, which enables us to see a key motivating substrate of a network that dramatically influences culture.

**Personal Network Questions** Personal network profiles can be generated for each participant to enable the workshop leader to conclude the session with targeted action planning for each individual. Question types here should include (1) personal network structure and (2) relational reliance.

## Step 3: Use the Network Analysis to Identify Both Key Storytellers and Key Story Recipients

In this step, the *key storytellers* are those who should participate in the workshop.

**Selecting Workshop Participants** The preceding network analysis helps identify four categories of people who will be most effective at articulating stories in the organization and should be the workshop participants:

- Central connectors in the information network—the 5 percent to 10 percent of people who are most sought out for information
- Brokers in the information network— the roughly 5 percent of people who have the most bridging ties across subgroups and so disproportionately connect the entire network
- People central in certain cultural domains (when we overlay the culture values with network information)
- The high energizers, as defined by the energy network question

***Identifying People Who Need to Change*** In addition, the network analysis reveals three categories of people on whom a leader might want to lavish additional attention:

- Those to whom they are already connected
- Those who are in formal positions of influence but are not selected to participate in the workshop
- Those who are central in the network *and* hold negative or counterproductive cultural views

#### **Step 4: Interpret and Summarize Network Results**

Identify the principal patterns and themes that affect how the desired culture is reinforced or discouraged in the organization. These patterns and themes will inform the stories that need to be told as well as those that need to be downplayed or mitigated.

#### **Step 5: Conduct Narrative Workshop**

In this workshop, participants learn how to use stories to communicate why the organization's culture needs to change. The following is a sketch of a typical one-day workshop.

##### **8:00–9:00 Network Results Overview**

- A typical session begins with an overview of the organization's network analysis results and a presentation of the principal patterns and themes relating to the organization's culture.
- This session will conclude by brainstorming existing narratives that are undermining culture change. These narratives would be informed by the network results but based on the experiences of the participants. Common archetypes or underlying narratives might include the stories that we tell at all levels to

reinforce the limiting cultural values and behaviors. These stories may include examples of perceived hypocrisy of leaders in the organization or the potential risks of adopting and demonstrating different values and behaviors.

### **9:00–9:45 Introduction to Narrative Techniques for Leaders, Part 1**

- Begin introducing the concept of business narrative, showing what it is, how and why it works, and for what business purposes it is most useful.
- Give participants some hands-on practice crafting simple stories.
- Prepare participants for the task of crafting stories, through exercises focused on clarifying the story of the idea they are communicating, clarifying the story of the people they are communicating with, and clarifying their own story.

### **9:45–10:15 Break**

### **10:15–11:00 Introduction to Narrative Techniques for Leaders, Part 2**

- Familiarize participants with the narrative patterns relevant to the organization's culture change.
- Show participants how to use the Story-Building Guidelines as shown in Exhibit 9.2 to help craft suitable stories to address a shift in the culture.

## **Exhibit 9.2 Story-Building Guidelines**

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1. What is the *specific change* in the organization or community or group that you hope to spark with the story?
  2. Think of an *incident* (either inside or outside your organization, community, or group) where the change was in whole or in part successfully implemented. Describe it briefly.
  3. Who is the *single protagonist* in the story?
  4. What is the *date* and *place* where the *single protagonist* began the story?  
For example, "In July 2003, in London, Tony Smith. . . ."
  5. Is the single protagonist *typical* of your specific audience?  
If not, can the story be told from the point of view of such a protagonist?
  6. Does the story *fully embody the change idea*?  
If not, can it be extrapolated so that it does fully embody the change idea?
  7. Does the story make clear *what would have happened without the change idea*?
  8. Has the story been *stripped of any unnecessary detail*?  
Are there any scenes with more than two characters?
  9. Does the story have an *authentically happy ending*?  
Can it be told so that it does have such an ending?
  10. Does the story *link to the purpose* to be achieved in telling it?  
"What if . . . ?" or: "Just imagine. . . ." or: "Just think. . . ."
-

**11:00–12:00 Small-Group Crafting of Stories, Using the Story-Building GuideLines****12:00–1:00 Lunch****1:00–2:00 Story Presentation**

- Participants share the narratives they have crafted and get feedback from the others that will help them refine their stories.

**2:00–3:00 Table-Based Work**

- Participants refine stories and develop diffusion strategies as informed by the network results.
- This process would help to define (1) who would be the key tellers of which stories, and (2) who would be the key recipients, on the basis of the network parameters defined previously. During this session, participants also consider an action plan for implementing the storytelling, including dates, contacts, forums for telling the story, and the leveraging of networks.

**3:00–3:30 Break****3:30–4:30 Driving Change Through Personal Networks**

- Here we would use the personal network profiles generated for each person—along with the overall results—to help each person commit to an action plan. A simple template would be provided for participants to complete.

**4:30–5:00 Recap**

- The final part of the workshop involves a recap of what has been learned so far and the planning of next steps for the organization.

**Step 6: Program Follow-Up/Coaching**

Follow-up might include any or all of the following:

- Establishing discussion groups, support arrangements, mentoring, intranet web sites, chat rooms, competitions within the organization—all to enhance the organization's capacity to deliver business narrative
- Coaching specific individuals for particular communication challenges
- Conducting follow-up workshops on these or other relevant issues
- Establishing systematic training on business narrative in leadership programs for the organization

## Step 7: Assess Program Impact

Although direct feedback on individual storytelling sessions may be a preliminary indicator of whether progress is likely, the principal means of tracking progress is to assess whether the overall storytelling approach is having any influence on organizational culture. Conducting a network analysis six to nine months after the workshop can help managers see where values are diffusing well and where there is still work to be done. Similarly, given the quantitative nature of network analysis, managers can also correlate the network improvement with key business outcomes (such as revenue, innovation, cycle time, or cost reduction) depending on the group.

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## Where to Start

As leaders grapple with increasingly complex business and organizational issues—and the change initiatives that ensue—the need for clear, compelling, energizing communication has become urgent. That is why storytelling—with its emphasis on simple, inspiring accounts—is now a mainstream business management practice. We have seen organizations institute narrative training workshops first with the CEO and the senior leadership team and then with the rest of the organization. We have seen other organizations take a more targeted approach, selecting for such workshops only the people involved with an intractable, high-stakes business challenge. The approach we've presented here is somewhere in between. By using the insights that ONA can yield, leaders struggling with a culture change effort can make sure that all people who can be a positive force for change learn how to tell compelling stories to the people who need to hear them.

### Note

Portions of this chapter are drawn from Steve Denning's *A Leader's Guide to Storytelling* (Jossey-Bass, 2005) and *The Secret Language of Leadership* (Jossey-Bass, 2007).

## MESSAGE MONITORING TO ACCELERATE CHANGE

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Terry G. Williams

As a consultant, I have led the development of a process to help large organizations in the midst of change initiatives ensure that critical messages are heard and understood throughout the organization. The process, called *message monitoring*, enlists what I call key communicators, monitors their understanding of critical messages, and leverages the key communicators to accelerate both adoption and diffusion of the messages.

Organizational network analysis (ONA) can combine valuably with message monitoring, especially to identify people in the organization who are well connected and communicate frequently with many others (central connectors) and those who bridge otherwise disconnected pockets of the organization (brokers). By identifying these highly connected and influential people and targeting them in a communication strategy, organizations can more efficiently reach and influence a large population with their messages.

In this chapter, I will describe how I used this process with two organizations, the Cleveland Clinic Health System and Resurrection Health Care. I did not conduct a formal ONA as part of my work with the Cleveland Clinic because the field was so new, but I did use ONA with Resurrection Health Care.

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## Background to the Cleveland Clinic and to Resurrection Health Care

In 2002 and 2003, senior leaders at the Cleveland Clinic Health System—one of the largest and most highly regarded medical systems in the world—were trying to create buy-in and momentum among hundreds of physicians for a new information technology system. As the project manager for the adoption portion of the implementation, my role was to help identify the best methods for aligning the stakeholders (primarily physicians and nurses) with the process—ensuring their understanding of the benefits of the new system while motivating changes in their behavior, which were often inconvenient in the short term but valuable in the long run to them, the patients, and the health system. Certainly, one of the challenges both in implementing the new IT system and in communicating the need for this change was the scale of the organization, which comprised multiple hospitals across several campuses and offices.

At Resurrection Health Care, a large Catholic health care organization based in Chicago, the challenge was to quickly get hundreds of leaders across the 15,000-person organization to support several systemwide initiatives that would improve quality, service, and economic performance. This health system comprises eight hospitals, more than a dozen nursing homes, and many outpatient facilities and physician offices. My consulting colleagues and I were engaged by the incoming CEO to be involved in this effort. Starting the week before her first day on the job, we began framing an approach that could align people behind a successful transformation. Because we knew that this effort wasn't going to be a one-month project but many months of constant change, we needed a systematic way to monitor what people were hearing and their level of buy-in and to allow for feedback. We also wanted to track and continually improve all this communication. Given our awareness of ONA, we saw an opportunity to integrate network analysis and message monitoring.

Organizations are constantly changing, so it is valuable to have techniques for taking “snapshots” of the current knowledge, beliefs, and mental models that guide individuals. The message monitoring process, like ONA, is a way to take such snapshots. Continuous monitoring of the entire organization is prohibitively expensive; however, periodic monitoring of key communicators is feasible and has helped accelerate effective change.

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### Where Message Monitoring May Be Useful

Before we describe the steps involved in message monitoring, let's look at some situations in which the process is particularly useful.

**Key brokers and central connectors are known.** It is important to have identified or have the ability to identify which people (brokers, central connectors) to enlist to communicate certain messages and to provide feedback on the organizational understanding of some messages. This then allows the organization to more actively monitor and manage messaging and the level of understanding for key people within the organization.

For the Cleveland Clinic, we identified dozens of physicians and nurses who were highly influential in the flow of communication across the organization. At Resurrection, we sought the 300 leaders with the highest central connector and/or broker scores. We also cross-checked this list with the list of departments in the organization to make sure large sections of the organization were not left out. To ensure good coverage across virtually all departments and functions, we added about a dozen leaders (with somewhat lower broker and central connector scores) to our list of nearly 300 people for message monitoring.

**The organization needs to change very rapidly.** The desired pace of most large transformation efforts is faster than is comfortable, often creating angst and confusion. By ensuring that people throughout the organization understand the need for change, the message monitoring process and follow-up interventions can allow the change initiative to proceed at that rapid pace without outrunning the organization's ability to absorb the change.

**The network is large.** By clarifying the knowledge and awareness of change, as well as the mental models that guide behaviors, the message monitoring process can make very large networks (hundreds or thousands of individuals) seem smaller and less complex. For the Cleveland Clinic, we summarized and segmented the message monitoring insights by facility, specialty (ortho, cardiac, pulmonary), and roles (physician, nurses, case managers) so that we could see where in this very large organization message transfer was distorted or slow.

**The network is fragmented.** In change management, we talk of “tribes”—people who have similar roles and often filter what they hear in the same way. If you monitor messaging only within a single tribe, you could believe that understanding or buy-in is taking place universally when in fact it may vary widely across the organization. For example, at Resurrection there were more than 50 distinct groups that interpreted, embraced, and communicated information differently. Message monitoring allows you to look at a truly representative cross-section of an organization so that you can tailor communication appropriately.

**Change must occur in waves.** Message monitoring is particularly useful if an organization is going to pursue change in discrete projects or waves—new leadership,

new goals, new direction, new budget, new project—because the process can be activated only at specific points, if desired. For Resurrection, we activated the monitoring network both before and after major operational changes (reporting structure, quality, and productivity initiatives) were announced and completed.

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## The Message Monitoring Process

A good message monitoring process follows six main steps.

### Step 1. Identify Key Connectors (Communicators and Influencers)

The most comprehensive way to identify the key communicators and influencers in a network is to conduct an organizational network analysis (ONA). We used this approach at Resurrection, identifying the 300 key connectors in the organization by conducting an ONA with several hundred people from a cross-section of senior and mid-level leaders from various departments. As an alternative, you could survey several informed leaders to come up with their subjective list of the key connectors, but the list will probably not include about one-fourth of the most important people.

At the Cleveland Clinic, where we did not conduct an ONA, we used Everett Rogers’s “Diffusion of Innovation” concept (a 1962 theory of how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures). I conducted a segmentation meeting, bringing together executives from each hospital who knew the organization and posing a set of questions to sort and define physicians by social circle and personality. In doing this, certain individuals emerged as the most connected and influential. We then reviewed this list with several other well-informed leaders, ultimately settling on a group of about 150 people for message monitoring.

In addition to identifying connectors, we also poll them individually to determine the preferred and most effective means of communication with various areas of the organization. This helps us tailor communication to each population. For example, some surveyed physicians at several Cleveland Clinic hospitals were asked not only which individuals seemed to understand them but also whom they respected, from whom they would most like to receive information, and when was the most convenient time to communicate with them. Each person made a commitment to take the time to absorb and understand the information if it was presented to them in the way they desired and by people they trusted.

## Step 2. Monitor the Awareness and Impact of the Message

Change leaders often assume that the feedback they receive personally from a few departments reflects the attitudes of the entire organization. By tracking the understanding of various messages across time, an organization can better understand what specific segments (departments, functions, tribes) of the network think about the change process. The monitoring process can take place in several ways:

- An e-mail or online survey
- One-on-one phone interviews (5 to 10 minutes)
- A paper-based survey (not our recommended approach, owing to the work required to distribute, collect, and tabulate the surveys)

These general types of information can be tracked:

- Level of clarity about specific communication
- Level of clarity about response to specific communication
- Rate of spread of particular messages
- Scenario-based decisions (For example, if you are asked to shift your work from Tuesday to Thursday mornings for the described reasons, would you be willing to do so? If a “history and physical” will take you an extra five minutes for the first month of a new computer system, are you willing to invest the time to learn and get better?)

Specific topics that can be tracked include awareness of budget logic, changing goals or decision criteria for the organization, breakthroughs, benefits and concerns regarding pending changes, or even potential rumors that have very large, and sometimes unpredictable, impact on the focus of an organization.

For the Cleveland Clinic, message monitoring took place through one-on-one conversations between the physicians we had identified as key connectors and individuals we had chosen, on the basis of their access to or influence with the key connectors, to conduct periodic monitoring. These monitors would ask three to eight questions that would reveal the level of understanding of specific messages.

Example questions include the following (for all, use a simple Likert scale of 1–5 to collect responses):

- How well do you understand the need for \_\_\_\_\_ change in our organization?
- How well do you understand the specific benefits of using a Computerized Physician Order entry system?

- How well do your peers understand the specific benefits to them of changing the way they deliver care at the bedside by more fully integrating the use of a computer?
- To what extent does your department (or peer group) believe the work environment will improve as a result of the outlined changes?
- What is the level of support within your department for the \_\_\_\_\_ improvements/changes that have been outlined to take place in the next 30 days?

The monitoring process seeks to accomplish two things: (1) confirm the acceptance of messages that have been *pushed* out to the organization and (2) *pull* feedback regarding misinformation and misunderstandings that have developed.

Although some segments of an organization, particularly in tech-savvy companies, might relish the chance to give regular feedback to a senior monitoring group and so would not object to being surveyed every week or two, in general we encourage message monitoring surveys (online or face-to-face) every four to eight weeks to provide reasonably frequent feedback without causing “survey fatigue.” The format and content of the survey could vary across time to correspond to the most recent communication emphases. In the modern era of blogs, online polling, and “almost real time” feedback from some demographics regarding political issues, world events, and even fashion, it is feasible to think about surveying connectors and brokers much more frequently, perhaps every few days instead of every few weeks.

### Step 3. Analyze Results

One of the keys to this process is to conduct good analysis that distinguishes the variances in understanding and buy-in across the organization. The main goal of any analysis is to identify scores from the Likert scales that show where understanding and/or buy-in are low. It’s important to sort the scores for each department by question to determine which departments score the lowest. Remember to look beyond the individual who submitted the rating to understand the distinct segments or “tribes” they represent (such as night-shift cleaning staff, low-volume orthopedic surgeons, short-tenure leaders in off-campus facilities, physicians who split their outpatient surgical volume with other organizations).

Good analysis enables you to rapidly and effectively grasp organizational understanding based on the awareness and perceived implications of various messages across the network. These monitoring techniques provide a rapid feedback loop following various types of outbound mass communication in the organization. For example, after a letter was distributed to physicians at the Cleveland Clinic, we quickly identified that the level of understanding of planned changes was still too low. We then used other vehicles to reach the physicians, such as CEO

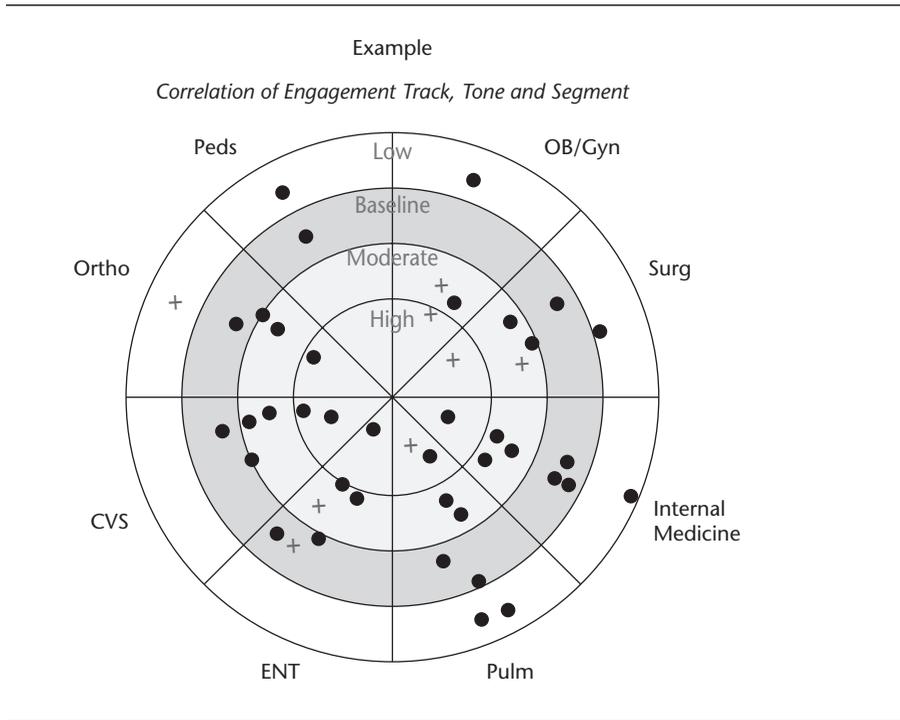
forums, communication through medical staff leadership, and visits by project leaders to physician practices.

If results indicate that buy-in is too low in specific parts of the organization, you can immediately make intentional adjustments to emphasize, re-spin, or deemphasize specific messages networkwide or to certain groups. At Resurrection, analysis of the monitoring surveys revealed that portions of the organization really did not understand why key aspects of the revenue cycle process needed to change to improve reimbursement. We were able to make changes in our communication strategy right away that had a significant effect on acceptance.

#### Step 4. Translate Results into a Message Monitoring Dashboard

The next step is to distill the analysis so that executives, change leaders, and communication planners can easily grasp the key insights. For this purpose, I use a “message monitoring dashboard,” (see Figure 10.1) which is a diagram that demonstrates the level of understanding and perception (attitude) of segmented populations of

**FIGURE 10.1 MESSAGE MONITORING DASHBOARD**



the organization. I have found that leaders who study a good dashboard for only 5 to 10 minutes become convinced of certain issues and mobilized to take action.

The dots and “+” signs represent key connectors (central connectors and brokers). The “+” signs further represent individuals who average two or less on a five-point Likert scale for key questions. As you can see, they represent a cross-section of the organization, falling across what we call “segments” and along “engagement tracks.”

The pie slices are the segments. In health care, organizations are often segmented by clinical specialty, but segments may also represent other kinds of groups such as affinity groups, role within the company, departments, and personality types. Each segment received communication tailored in terms of frequency (weekly, monthly, quarterly); method (face-to-face updates, written communication, or a combination of both); and messaging emphasis.

The engagement tracks are the bands in the dashboard, labeled from High in the center of the circle to Low around the outside. The tracks denote the level of engagement assigned to key connectors at the Cleveland Clinic. Those in the center were selected to be engaged most frequently and intensely because of their influence, the respect they command, and their connectedness.

At the Cleveland Clinic, the physicians chosen for a high level of engagement received weekly one-on-one communication at a time of their choosing and biweekly update e-mails. The weekly meetings were used not only to communicate various messages but also to monitor the physicians’ understanding of them. The people in the moderate engagement track received a monthly update through medical staff meetings and a monthly medical staff newsletter.

If high engagement would be expected to yield the most effective message transfer and adoption of ideas, why didn’t we just assign all key connectors to that track? For this project at the Cleveland Clinic, as at any organization, it’s simply not realistic to include everyone at that very highest level of engagement (individuals are busy, or they don’t tolerate frequent communication). It’s much more efficient and effective to tailor communication to suit various segments.

One of the challenges of large-scale corporate transformation is the high level of complexity. To successfully undertake change, you need to be able to distill the complexity. The dashboard does that by visually illustrating the level of understanding of a given concept across the organization. In this dashboard, for example, there is a dominant negative attitude within OB/GYN and Surgery (indicated with the “+”). Because the negativity existed toward the center, even though those people had been targeted for fairly high levels of engagement, follow-up communication needed to take place very quickly, before these influential leaders spread this attitude to others.

## Step 5. Share Dashboard with Leaders

Key leaders must be kept informed about the state of understanding not only across the organization but also within specific segments.

At Resurrection and the Cleveland Clinic, we shared message monitoring dashboards with key leaders every 4 to 10 weeks, depending on the rate of changes in the organization. Executives were able to see the dashboard and quickly make decisions about whether the engagement methods and tracks should be refined and individual assignments should be altered. They could also clearly evaluate which segments were understanding messages better than others.

## Step 6. Refine or Alter the Message and the Mode of Communication

After examining a message monitoring dashboard, executives may decide that the message itself needs to be altered, along with the methods used to communicate it. They then must decide which communication channel is best for issuing an updated message, either to a particular segment or across the organization. Example communication options include the following:

- Organizationwide e-mail (which cannot be targeted and risks overuse)
- Targeted communication campaign in which leaders speak to certain groups, perhaps using slides or other graphics
- Town-hall meeting targeted to area of misinformation
- Targeted e-mail or physical posting of information

At Resurrection, we kept a record of each change in messaging and approach to which we agreed, and we ensured that the changes in communication were implemented. Over time we were able to learn which interventions (such as a personal call from an executive to a physician or the provision of better scripting for key communicators) had the greatest impact.

## Use Connectors to Deliver Messages, Not Just Monitor

While I have mainly discussed how to “pull” perspectives from the organization through an established set of connecting individuals, our experience shows that the same people can simultaneously “push” messages and perspectives into the organization. We believe that participants will be more committed to the overall process (to push and pull messages) as they become convinced that leadership will sincerely capture and use their opinions. Therefore, be sure to provide feedback to the connectors about the actions that have been taken as a result of their input. It is also important to clarify what level of anonymity will be maintained regarding the participants who help with message monitoring.

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## Additional Lessons for Large Transformational Efforts

Particularly in the early phases of innovation or transformation, such as those we experienced at Resurrection, the pacing and sequencing of message dissemination are crucial. The first messages are what we call Confronting Reality messages, which answer the question, “Why change?” If you omit this kind of messaging (or the message is not embraced), the change won’t stick. And if you wait too long between delivering Confronting Reality messages and those that prescribe a solution, fear can develop. The earliest monitoring should be focused on ensuring not only that people *heard* the Confronting Reality message but also that they *accepted* it.

After we had confirmed that key segments understood the need for a new reality, we could then move forward with messages about how the organization would need to change as a result. At Resurrection, we saw that some segments understood the need for change but not the role they would play in it. If we had not identified and addressed these misunderstandings early on, people throughout the organization might have lost trust in the leadership.

A key factor that determines the effectiveness of a message monitoring approach is whether the organization is able to survey and follow up in a more targeted and rapid manner as a result of the process. The targeting of messaging to the most needy areas (each of which may need to hear a slightly different kind of message) is much more effective than relying on mass communication methods such as e-mail or letters from a senior executive, which can lead to “message fatigue” across the organization.

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## Outcomes at the Cleveland Clinic and Resurrection Health

The Cleveland Clinic project implementation launch was enhanced by the use of message monitoring. We are convinced that the methods of engaging and monitoring physicians shaved several months off the acceptance timeline for the new information technology system.

In addition, message monitoring helped Resurrection Health Care achieve buy-in for its large-scale transformation. The connectors and brokers of the organization represented hundreds of leaders and thousands of employees through effective message monitoring and feedback loops. The organization was able to achieve simultaneous improvements in quality, service, and economics. Message monitoring was used throughout the project to accelerate change, improve the use of targeted communication, and solicit feedback.

## A WORKSHOP FOR ALIGNING NETWORKS WITH STRATEGY

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Sally Colella

Consider this familiar scenario: a leader has an idea for a new business strategy that could substantially boost performance—an idea that requires previously isolated groups to coordinate their efforts. Excited by the possibilities, he spends a lot of time thinking through the details and scripting his remarks to the employees who will be implementing the strategy. But after the big announcement, nothing much happens. Those on the receiving end are confused. They know that they're supposed to be doing something—and something different from before—but they may not understand how they fit into the larger plan or how to collaborate with people they don't know well to deliver on the promise of the new strategy. So they shake their heads and revert to the tried and true, leaving the leader to wonder why nothing is changing.

I encountered just such a challenge when I was an internal organization development consultant in a large financial firm. I was working closely with a leader I'll call Bill, who had joined the firm about a year earlier and was working with the management team of the division he led, which I'll call BizTech, to create a new strategy for serving clients.

The various product-development teams within BizTech were used to working on their own standalone products, which they sold individually to clients. Under the new strategy, those teams would be expected to integrate their products and services into end-to-end solutions. Moreover, employees in marketing and

client-facing roles would need to work closely with analysts and programmers to translate clients' needs into product solutions. The result of this holistic approach, Bill hoped, would be increased revenue and customer satisfaction.

Bill, who was very enthusiastic about the new strategy, proclaimed its virtues at multiple town-hall-style meetings with BizTech employees and had begun to describe the new approach to other leaders at the firm. He found, however, that employees did not understand what he was trying to describe. At meetings, he was peppered with questions about the strategy that reflected employees' confusion in translating his strategic language, such as "end-to-end solutions," into a new way of working. They seemed lost, and some seemed skeptical, rolling their eyes whenever the topic came up. Bill suspected that these employees thought the talk about a new strategy was all hype, a bunch of buzz words. Despite his efforts, Bill observed that most people clung to their individual teams and work processes—the exact opposite of the cross-product and cross-disciplinary collaboration the strategy required.

Of course, Bill and his management team needed to institute various organizational design and process changes to execute the new strategy, but we both thought that the most essential changes needed to take place inside employees' heads and in their relationships with one another. Before they could fully embrace any new work processes or restructuring, they needed a solid understanding of the goals of the new strategy and of the collaborative ties they would need—ties that crossed product and functional lines—to make it a success.

So, Bill and I worked together to create a day-long workshop designed both to educate employees about the concepts behind the strategy and to help them begin building the collaborative networks necessary for implementing it. To cover the entire BizTech division, which had roughly 250 employees, we conducted 10 of these workshops over several weeks with groups of about 25 people. This design could work well for divisions with as many as 300 employees.

Because one of the primary goals of the workshop was to introduce BizTech employees from different teams who would need to start working together, we wanted each workshop group to include people from various pockets of the division who did not already know one another. Ideally, we would have conducted a network analysis of the entire division and used the results to hand pick the attendees for each workshop. With information about what cross-team ties did and did not already exist, we could have created highly targeted workshop groups. Because we did not conduct an ONA—although participants did take a personal network assessment (PNA) before the workshop—we instead made sure to include in each workshop people from different product groups, hierarchical levels, tenure bands, and disciplines.

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## Workshop Overview

The first half of the workshop was designed to help participants understand the new BizTech strategy and the specific role they would play in implementing it. We asked the executives who reported directly to Bill to take turns leading this part of the workshop to demonstrate that the entire management team supported the new strategy. Because some of these business leaders had been with BizTech for many years, their opinions carried more weight with long-term employees. Bill also wanted to give his direct reports experience in presenting the strategy to prepare them for future presentations they would make to clients and other stakeholders. In their presentations, the leaders made the overarching business case for the strategy, explaining in very concrete terms the need for a different way of working at BizTech. They also spelled out the need for individuals to move beyond their established teams and patterns of interaction, and pushed them to articulate exactly how they would need to alter their approaches to work and workplace interactions to contribute to the strategy.

Members of the organization development team facilitated the second half of the workshop, which was devoted to fostering the different patterns of collaboration required for end-to-end product integration. In this session, we shared recent research demonstrating the importance of robust social networks for individual and organizational performance. We then engaged participants in analyzing their own personal networks by reviewing their PNA reports and considering those networks relative to the vision and strategy. Finally, each participant created an individual action plan for developing relationships that would lead to improved collaboration and product integration.

The day concluded with a happy hour, which provided a relaxed environment for continuing to connect with others.

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## Preparation

Prior to the workshop each participant completed a PNA.

We found the workshops to be most effective if participants sat at round tables of 8 to 10 people. We placed a flip chart and markers by each table and two at the front of the room. There were one or two facilitators present from the organization development team.

We planned the table groups in advance (each half of the workshop had different table groups) so that those who didn't know one another were seated together. For organizations that conduct an ONA before such a workshop, it would make sense to use the results to plan the seating arrangements.

At its opening, the executive hosting the workshop welcomed participants and reviewed the objectives for the day.

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## Part 1: Strategy Discussion

The first activities focused on introducing people to one another and getting them to talk about their reactions to the strategy.

### Initial Table Introductions

Each table group selected a discussion leader and a scribe. We decided to kick off with “getting to know you” questions so that people would begin to learn about one another in work-related and more personal ways. The groups then moved on to generating questions about the strategy. Following are the questions we included:

1. What is your name and role?
2. What is your favorite reality TV show, or what you do when everyone else is watching reality TV?
3. Describe a project you have worked on at BizTech that was particularly rewarding. What made it so?
4. What questions do you have about the strategy and your team’s role in executing it?

Table groups then identified the “burning” questions that had been raised about the strategy and individuals’ role in it, and the scribe recorded these on the flip charts by the tables. Burning questions often related to the following:

- Workload and how the new products could be developed, given the current pace and work demands
- The feasibility of developing technical solutions for processes that are traditionally paper based
- IT systems integration challenges

### Strategy Presentation

The executive hosting the workshop walked around the room and engaged in brief conversations with each of the table groups to gain a sense of the questions that were on employees’ minds.

The executive then gave a concise presentation of the new strategy, including the business case, the desired outcomes, and the necessity of enhanced collaboration. After covering these basic points, the executive then addressed some of the questions posted around the room and engaged with the participants in a relaxed, open manner.

The next step was for table groups to delve into the connection between the new strategy and their day-to-day work. Each individual discussed the following questions with his or her table group:

1. How does what I do contribute to the strategy?
2. What challenges does BizTech have in implementing the strategy?
3. How could BizTech address those challenges?
4. What could I do differently to help execute the new strategy?

As each participant addressed these questions, the scribe at each table noted recurring themes and topics. Recurring themes included the following:

- Technology integration
- Market strategy
- Customer interface
- Implementation resources
- Structure and rewards
- Communication and networking

Table groups then reported the themes from their conversations and continued to explore these topics with the executive host for 30 to 45 minutes. The executive took notes on key suggestions. At this point we took a break.

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## Part 2: Network Perspective and Action Planning

With a better understanding of the strategy, participants were ready to evaluate how their networks would help them to support it and to identify ways in which they needed to alter their networks for the new demands.

### Initial Table Introductions

Participants were assigned to new table groups to provide an opportunity for even more connections. Once again, the results of an ONA would have helped us design the most effective seating arrangements.

Again, the session began with some ice-breaker questions:

1. What is your name and role?
2. What is your favorite vacation spot?
3. What is one thing you have achieved inside or outside of work over the past year that makes you proud?

## **PNA Presentation**

We then gave a presentation on the value of a network perspective. Key points included the following:

- Research findings linking robust networks to higher individual and organizational performance.
- The basics of network analysis: network structures and implications for people who are central, boundary spanners, and peripheral
- Instruction on how to read network diagrams

For those companies that conduct an ONA prior to the workshop, this is the time to share key findings, particularly those demonstrating how the current patterns within the group either support or hinder the new strategy.

I then distributed the results of the PNA to each participant.

## **Interpreting Results of PNA Reports**

After participants received their reports, we walked the full group through the PNA and indicated why each section is important and what to look for in their own results. We then instructed individuals to work independently for 20 minutes to review their PNA reports. As they did so, we asked them to consider the following questions about their network, in light of the new vision and strategy for BizTech:

1. How do the connections I rely on most tend to be similar in various ways—for instance, by type of expertise (product or discipline), hierarchical level, boundary (organization, work group, division), time known, method of communicating, race, gender, age?
2. What connections do not support my role in the new strategy and therefore deserve less of my time and attention?
3. What new connections should I develop to support my role in the new strategy? What ideas do I have for developing new relationships? Have I met people today with whom I should stay in touch about work-related issues?

As participants reviewed their reports, the facilitators moved from table to table, answering questions and guiding participants.

### **Network Action Planning: Paired Coaching Sessions**

We then invited individuals to work in pairs for 30 minutes to coach each other on ways to extend their networks to include ties that cross various groups—to bring their networks into alignment with the requirements of the new strategy. We urged each peer coach to challenge his or her partner’s thinking and to provide the names of people the partner should get to know. Each member of the pair took 15 minutes to respond to the following questions:

1. Describe your existing network. What are its strengths? What changes would you like to make?
2. What are two actions you will take following this workshop to enhance your network and align it to support the new BizTech strategy?

Many participants discovered during this part of the workshop that their networks were insular—that most of their work-related interactions were with members of their immediate teams. One programmer realized that he rarely, if ever, interacted with programmers who worked on different products and so did not understand their perspectives. Many technologists and marketing professionals found that they interacted primarily with others from the same discipline, which limited the development of technology that would truly meet clients’ needs. Others found that they were connected mostly with those who had joined the firm at around the same time, particularly those who had been with the company longer than 10 years or less than 1 year.

On the basis of these network conversations, each person created an action plan and began to consider who in the group could help them expand their network.

### **Closing**

We closed the sessions by asking participants to report something they had learned about their role in the new strategy and an action they planned to take in the next week to align their network with the strategy’s requirements. In the course of this discussion, the group developed a sense of the aggregate changes that needed to be made. For the most part, these changes related to taking direct action to enhance communication between different disciplines within BizTech.

Following the workshops, we hosted a reception where people continued to get to know one another.

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## Next Steps

The issues raised during the workshops were brought to the attention of the management team, which assigned each issue to one of the team members. In addition, we gave each participant a list of the others' contact information and key areas of expertise. Several months following the initial workshop, we began to bring each workshop group together for lunch sessions with the executive who had addressed the group. These sessions, which included updates on strategy implementation and issues raised by participants, continued to assuage skepticism and involved employees in deepening the networks that would support the new strategy.

As a result of other, unrelated changes in this financial firm, it was very difficult for us to gauge the long-term success of the workshops. It seemed clear to us during the workshops, however, that participants appreciated the time set aside for voicing their concerns and working to understand how they could contribute to the new strategy. It also seemed clear that efforts to align organizational networks with a new strategy could not be limited to these workshops, however much we packed into each session. This kind of alignment and network building is a process that requires continued executive-level attention.

## POSITIONING A NEW LEADER FOR SUCCESS THROUGH NETWORK FINE-TUNING

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Rob Cross, Robert J. Thomas, Ana Dutra,  
and Carrie Newberry

Anne Downing had her hands full (names of people and organizations have been changed). She had recently been tapped to head NorthStar Management Consulting's newly formed Organizational Strategy unit (part of the company's Strategy practice), a role she had inherited from Chris Smith. Energetic and savvy, Smith had built the unit quickly, outfitting it with specialty subgroups such as Joint-Venture Management and Transformational Change. Just 18 months after forming the unit, Smith was promoted into NorthStar's executive ranks. Downing, highly regarded at NorthStar for her leadership and organization-building skills, was tapped to head the fledgling unit.

Downing had stepped into a complex situation. The unit was part of a functional practice that, along with other practices (such as Talent, Supply Chain, and Process Improvement), constituted one dimension in NorthStar's matrixed structure. Industry groups (such as Natural Resources, High Tech, Chemicals, Consumer Products, Banking, and Government) were the second dimension. The third dimension consisted of geographic regions. Typically, executives in functional practices or industry groups initiated client engagements, which often involved teams of executives and consultants assembled from one or more functional practices, industry groups, and geographies.

For instance, a global client of the Consumer Products industry group that wanted to divest one of its businesses would need help on numerous fronts, such as analyzing the value of the business and managing the many changes that would accompany the divestment (reductions in workforces, untangling of IT systems). The executive in Consumer Products who worked most closely with the client would begin mobilizing experts in NorthStar's various functional practices who could provide the right mix of skills.

As a large consultancy with offices throughout the world, NorthStar had proved its mettle in the two decades since its inception. However, things in the Organizational Strategy unit weren't so rosy. To be sure, Smith had built the unit with the goal of initiating engagements with clients who had a specific need for its services, and those deals had come in a steady stream. The staff had grown from 50 to 150 in the year and a half since Smith created the unit. But he had also envisioned other practices, units, and industry groups drawing extensively on Organizational Strategy's experts. Through its many specialty subgroups, the unit offered an array of skills that could be put to good use by other parts of the company in full-service, long-term (and thus more lucrative) client engagements. Yet such cross-organizational collaborations had proved scantier than Smith had anticipated. For the most part, just a few industry groups and regions called on the unit. It had the potential to be far more useful to the company.

To help the unit fulfill that potential, Downing knew she would have to transition into her new role quickly. She decided that analyzing the unit's various networks (such as advice and information) would enable her to swiftly identify the causes of the unit's underuse and begin developing interventions.

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## Four Challenging Objectives

Downing began by conducting an organizational network analysis (ONA) of the unit. Her goal was to use the results of the analysis to accomplish four objectives:

1. Improve collaboration and information sharing within her unit's subgroups and between her unit and other parts of NorthStar to ensure that the best expertise was more systematically brought to bear on client engagements—no matter where they originated.
2. Generate revenue growth through improved connectivity within the Organizational Strategy unit and between the unit and other parts of the company.

3. Enhance innovation of services and cross-selling of key services and expertise by using unique skills in the unit more effectively.
4. Embed network-development practices into the unit's talent-management processes to improve individual performance, retention, and recruitment in the unit.

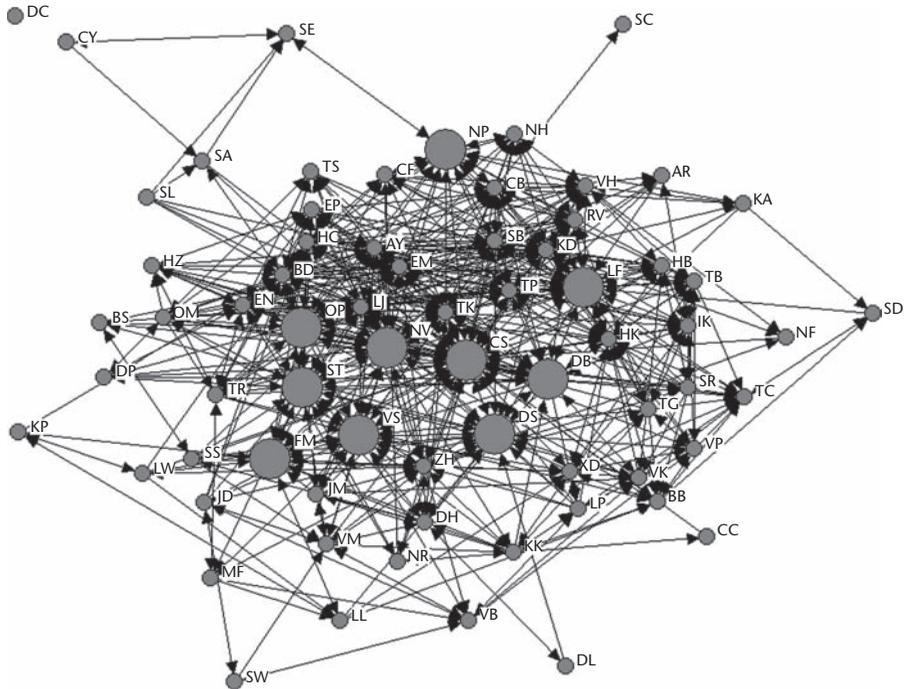
The ONA revealed several surprises—along with a few harsh truths. For one thing, some people lower in the unit's hierarchy (such as the administrative person responsible for staffing client engagements) turned out to be more central in the network than Downing had anticipated. That is, this person might easily have been confused for a very senior decision maker if judged only by the number of people who regarded her as central to getting their work done. Downing knew she would need to make better use of senior people to drive revenue growth. In addition, several key experts in the unit were unexpectedly peripheral in the network: they weren't being tapped as much as they could (and should) be. Thus the unit, as well as the overall Strategy practice within which it was embedded, were missing out on opportunities to use these experts' knowledge and skills.

The analysis also revealed that consultants in the unit were collaborating most often with people they already knew, rather than tapping the best expertise for each engagement. Overall, people were less connected than Downing had hoped. For example, of all the possible collaborations that *could* exist in the information network, just 12 percent *did* exist (see Figure 12.1). Downing had learned that a range of 25 percent to 35 percent of possible collaborations would be ideal.

Finally, the ONA indicated a disturbing disconnection among the unit's staff. Each employee was 2.7 degrees of separation away from every other employee. That is, to get an answer to a question, people had to traverse about three links in their chains of acquaintances. For example, Jonas asks Marta, "Do you have the market analysis that NorthStar produced for Client A a couple years ago?" Marta says, "No, but I think Paul has it." When Jonas calls Paul to investigate, Paul sends him to yet another contact—who finally produces the document Jonas needs. Yet many of Downing's employees weren't willing—or felt they didn't have time—to go more than two steps in this process. Consequently, they often weren't getting the information they needed to serve clients quickly and effectively.

An additional explanation for this unwillingness to take more steps was that, according to the ONA results, people in Organizational Strategy weren't aware of the relevant expertise and knowledge housed within the unit. As a result, consultants were missing out on sales opportunities and were forced to expend a great deal of extra energy to deliver high-quality service to clients. Indeed, Downing's unit had lower billing and lower revenues than other units in the Strategy practice and

**FIGURE 12.1 THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY UNIT'S INFORMATION NETWORK**



other practices. Yet its people possessed deep expertise, had a solid work ethic, and wanted to do more.

Armed with the analysis findings, Downing decided to fine-tune network ties throughout her unit. Rather than adopt a one-size-fits-all approach (such as simply insisting that people use collaborative technology or start attending more meetings), she focused on the four objectives. In the following pages, we'll examine the changes she undertook and their results. The interventions she executed provide valuable lessons for any incoming leader seeking to transition swiftly into a new role to help an organization surmount similar challenges.

## Objective 1: Improve Overall Collaboration

By examining her unit's information-sharing network, Downing recognized opportunities to improve collaboration overall—especially if she drew on her growing knowledge of the personalities, expertise, and histories of the people in

the network. To seize these opportunities, she developed network interventions focused on broadcasting her people's expertise, managing the leadership transition, rewarding collaborative behavior, and building bridges.

## **Broadcast Your Expertise**

The ONA identified 10 senior executives in Downing's unit who had become central in the information-sharing network. These executives were well-connected opinion leaders on specific topics, such as post-merger integration (PMI) and cultural change. In an e-mail to all managers in the unit, Downing publicized the executives as the "go to" experts on topics they were known for.

In addition, through a biweekly phone conference attended by all members of the unit, she encouraged these central executives to connect with just one peripheral member of the network over lunch or through a phone call to discuss their work history and interests. The goal? To enable executives to better understand how these individuals might fit into an existing or upcoming client engagement.

Downing also worked to raise her unit's profile in the minds of executives elsewhere in the company. She invited key account executives from NorthStar's industry groups to take part in her unit's biweekly calls and to talk about developments in their industry and in their clients' businesses. She asked them questions such as, "Who are your typical clients? What challenges are they facing? What services have you already sold them? How can the experts in our unit help?" Through these conversations, account executives got to know more people (and their areas of expertise) in the Organizational Strategy unit. Meanwhile, consultants in the unit saw that they could provide value for more than just a few industry groups.

To further broadcast the expertise of the consultants in her unit, Downing distributed concise profiles of each person's background and skill set to her peers throughout the Strategy practice by means of a site on the company's intranet. These profiles also contained information on each person's recent project experiences, along with a few personal details (such as universities attended or hobbies) that triggered conversations between people who previously had been strangers.

Downing also made some low-tech changes, democratizing meetings and phone conferences to expose her people's expertise. During face-to-face meetings with managers and senior managers in the unit, she removed conference tables and set up chairs in a circle, thereby eliminating the inner and outer circle or "head of the table." This new arrangement helped put quiet participants who held peripheral positions in the network on equal footing with more central participants. As a result, their voices were more likely to be heard. Likewise, Downing

democratized phone conferences—tracking who was speaking most and least, and calling on the quieter participants to chime in. In both kinds of meetings, peripheral people who had important knowledge or skills began participating more, which further increased general awareness of the expertise available in the unit.

Finally, Downing moved to inject transparency into project staffing. In some parts of NorthStar, account executives had developed a habit of hoarding consultants whose expertise they prized, rather than encouraging executives in other units, subgroups, or practices to staff client projects with the best possible talent—wherever it could be found in the company. Such executives feared that if they let others in the organization snap up their favorite specialists, those experts might not be available to them when needed. In some cases, executives even invented busywork to keep prized experts close by. This tactic not only led to reduced billing and boredom among hoarded consultants; it also prevented people throughout NorthStar from seeing the full array of available expertise.

To address this situation, Downing presented spreadsheets during her unit's biweekly meetings showing which projects each employee was currently working on and how long he or she had been on those project staffs. If she detected possible signs of hoarding (such as excessive time spent on nonbillable work), she pointed it out and suggested moving the person to another engagement.

## Manage the Leadership Transition

The PMI subgroup within Downing's unit was very cohesive, according to the network diagram. However, people in the subgroup felt somewhat lacking in leadership and strategic direction. Smith, Downing's predecessor, who had extensive experience in merger integration, had helped the subgroup win numerous major engagements—projects that had garnered rave reviews from clients.

But because Downing was relatively new to the company and her background lay in transformational change, she was not strongly connected to the PMI network. To correct this, she developed a roster of people who could fill the gap left by her predecessor.

She did this by raising the topic during the unit's biweekly phone conference, where managers provided project updates and reported on engagement leads and bids. During these sessions, she probed participants for information on who was using merger-management techniques that could prove valuable in new client engagements. Through one such conversation, for example, she discovered that a consultant in the unit had developed an approach that helped companies assess a potential acquisition's financial performance during the due diligence stage

while keeping the information confidential. Downing invited phone-conference participants to brainstorm ways this approach might be used in other industries.

Downing's predecessor, as he had advanced in the organization, had also built close relationships with executives in other practices and industry groups within NorthStar. Downing moved to establish bonds with those same executives. After introducing herself, she asked them questions such as, "Whom did you seek out to find the right expertise for particular client projects? How can I connect with those people?" By building these relationships, Downing sweetened the odds of keeping existing clients who might otherwise have drifted away after Smith's departure.

### **Reward Valuable Collaboration**

When Downing evaluated her unit's performance management system, she saw that consultants were recognized and rewarded primarily for how much billable time they logged. They weren't rewarded for supporting colleagues in other parts of the organization through nonbillable time; for example, providing materials that a consultant in one of the industry groups could use in a sales presentation, or pointing a colleague to a white paper or research report that would help him or her win a new client.

Also, when people from Downing's unit were deployed on client engagements originated through industry-group executives, they often didn't get noticed by those executives. That's because they usually consisted of just a few consultants from the unit—perhaps 2 on a client team totaling as many as 60 people.

Not surprisingly, Downing's people felt little motivation to help colleagues in the industry groups or to actively seek out deployments to the groups' client-project teams. After all, the promotional opportunities to shine in front of one's unit leaders just weren't there. And account executives who were selling new projects weren't likely to think of or remember specific members of Downing's unit when building their project teams.

To break down these barriers to cross-organizational collaboration, Downing told the consultants in her unit that, in the future, a major criterion in their annual performance reviews would be their personal impact in one of the industry groups. This impact would be measured by reviews from industry-group executives showing that someone from Downing's unit had added value to a project or had been a significant contributor to growing revenue with particular clients. Consultants with positive reviews would get a higher annual rating and pay increase commensurate with the value they added. This move not only motivated consultants to work across organizational borders; it also enhanced industry-group executives' awareness of the value of Downing's people.

## Build Bridges

Downing sought to build bridges between her unit's experts and the industry groups that called on them least frequently for client projects. To that end, she assigned liaisons—people from within her unit who had strong track records of selling complex services—to enlighten the industry groups on how her unit's expertise could help them offer more comprehensive assistance to clients. For example, a liaison might point out that an Organizational Strategy consultant who specializes in cultural change could be the Natural Resources industry group's "go to" expert on its next engagement.

With their success in selling complex services, liaisons could also help industry groups understand how to express what the Organizational Strategy unit had to offer in language that resonated with clients—thus upping the odds that the groups would select people from Downing's unit to serve on client teams. For instance, a client company considering making an acquisition might not frame the problems it would soon be facing in language matching the formal names of the Organizational Strategy unit's various service lines. The liaisons helped the industry-group executives map clients' requests to offerings the unit could deliver.

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## Objective 2: Drive Revenue Growth Through Improved Connectivity

Downing knew that to be sustainable, the changes she made in her unit's networks to improve collaboration had to produce measurable business value in the form of revenue as well as billable hours and client satisfaction and retention. She made several further adjustments to the networks to drive value growth.

### Foster Cross-Company Sales Efforts

Downing identified situations in which executives throughout the company were aware of the expertise housed in her unit but didn't see opportunities to collaborate on sales efforts. She asked consultants and executives how they could work together across more parts of the company.

For example, an expert in her unit's Joint Ventures subgroup had worked on several client engagements for the Natural Resources industry group and was called on frequently to participate in client engagements for that group. Though he knew a few executives in the High Tech industry group, he didn't see an immediate opportunity for collaborating with them on client projects. Downing asked him whether the process for organizing, staffing, and governing a joint venture

used in the Natural Resources industry could also be useful for a High Tech client. Through a brainstorming session involving Downing, her joint-ventures expert, and key account executives from the High Tech industry group, three new client opportunities were discovered; one of those led to a major new contract for NorthStar three months later.

## **Make Everyone Responsible for Revenue Generation**

Downing also sifted through the company to identify “sweet spot” collaborations—those that had generated sizeable revenue. She analyzed who in her unit had participated in the highest-value collaborations (revenues of \$2 million or more) and who had participated in lower-value collaborations (revenues under \$250,000). She found that the 10 most-connected people in her unit had participated in collaborations yielding 60 percent of the unit’s revenues. The top 5 most-connected people accounted for nearly 40 percent of the unit’s revenues. Some of these high earners were well-recognized leaders; others were not. But both types would place the unit’s revenues at risk if they were to leave.

To mitigate this risk, Downing set out to make everyone responsible for revenue generation. She asked the high earners to take junior people with them on client calls, so the novices would be trained by the best and could step in if the high performer defected. This action also helped the junior consultants forge more connections throughout the firm as well as learn specifically how to connect with others.

## **Channel Time Savings into New Revenue**

If Downing could increase the number of collaborations that saved her consultants time, she would position those consultants to participate in more revenue-generating projects throughout NorthStar. With this in mind, she asked people in her unit to estimate how much time they saved every month as a result of using information, advice, or other resources received from each other person in the unit. (Responses took forms such as, “When I go to Sara for advice on how to close a sale, I save three days of effort I would have had to put in to get the information I need and to use it.”)

The survey revealed that the top 10 people in the unit’s advice network (those who were called on most frequently for advice) returned 48 percent of value generated through time savings. The top 5 accounted for 32 percent of the total value.

One person who turned out to play a surprisingly large role in saving time for consultants (and thus freeing them to rack up billable hours) was Pat Stone,

the staffing coordinator. Executives from various parts of the company came to Stone when they needed to assemble engagement teams, and consultants came to her when looking for opportunities to be put on a team. Though Stone was relatively low in the unit's hierarchy, her role was essential for saving time: if she became overloaded (which occurred frequently), staffing client engagements took longer. Time was wasted, leading to lower billing, decreased revenue, and lower operating margins.

To guard against this problem in the future, Downing added two support staff to the staffing-coordination office. In addition, she identified the individuals in her unit whose collaborative behaviors helped create the most efficiencies (such as the people who quickly responded to e-mailed or phone requests for documents or information needed in a client engagement). She made these people more visible to others throughout the unit by calling them out in unit conference calls and quarterly all-hands meetings.

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### **Objective 3: Drive Service Innovation and Cross-Selling**

Downing was keenly interested in better leveraging the expertise and relationships embodied in her unit's senior executives. This would enable them to develop new client offerings, and it would help them cross-sell the array of services available throughout her unit's subgroups as well as in other units within the Strategy practice. She was convinced that achieving this goal would hinge on her ability to integrate her people's unique skill sets and knowledge in ways the unit's competitors couldn't copy. With this objective in mind, she made the following changes to her unit's networks.

#### **Publicize External Sources of Knowledge**

In assessing the ONA results, Downing noticed that roughly 20 percent of the ties critical to her unit's performance involved people outside the company, such as contacts at professional associations, clients, external subject matter experts (SMEs), and former colleagues. These ties constituted an important source of innovation. For instance, consultants in her unit might read a white paper on a new strategy-formulation framework published by a university researcher and think of fresh ways to use the framework in a client engagement.

Downing figured that if more of her people knew about these kinds of external resources and understood how valuable such resources could be for innovating new services, they would be more likely to use them. So, she asked one of her best-connected consultants to create a site on the intranet that identified key external relationships and how they had been used over the past two years.

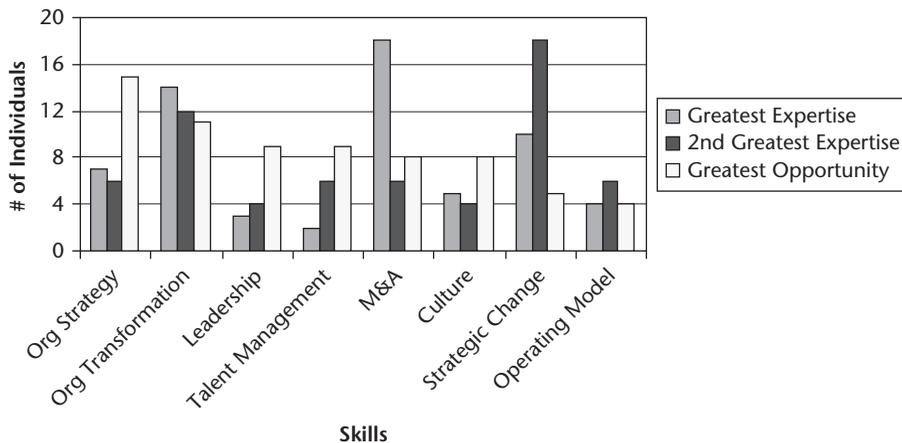
## Recombine Skill Sets

The remaining 80 percent of the ties in the unit's networks presented additional opportunities to combine people's skills and knowledge in new ways to create innovative offerings and to cross-sell services. To seize these opportunities, Downing took the following actions:

1. She compiled a list of competencies most often used in the key engagements carried out by subgroups, for example, the competencies most important to the success of work in joint ventures or PMI situations.
2. She asked people which competencies they had and would be willing to share in the interest of developing new services, and which competencies they wanted to develop to increase their range of offerings and their perceived value in the organization. This survey resulted in a profile showing areas of strength and areas for improvement in the network's organization and change strategy skills (see Figure 12.2).
3. She established mentoring relationships to match people who possessed skills of interest to those who wanted to develop those skills.
4. She identified skill sets of the most central players in her unit—those with the most connections to others. (Downing saw that some skill sets, such as PMI, were so dominant that the Organizational Strategy unit was overly reliant on them for revenue. This put the unit in a vulnerable position should the market change.)

She also connected people who had skills that were less dominant yet could serve as potential sources of future growth (such as leadership

**FIGURE 12.2 DISTRIBUTION OF EXPERTISE IN THE NETWORK**



development, talent management, and business operating models) with those who wanted to develop those skills. (Downing did this by giving people from both groups assignments they could work on together, such as writing a white paper, research report, or journal article, or developing a presentation to be used in a client retreat.)

5. She increased the visibility of people with important skills who had become peripheral in the network. (For example, one consultant had developed an innovative approach to building a change-communication strategy, but it had been used primarily on joint-venture-related engagements.) Downing had these individuals publish a monthly postcard touting their client experiences and recent publications. The postcard was distributed to account executives in NorthStar's various practices and industry groups who were managing projects requiring the skills in question.

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## Objective 4: Improve Talent Management

Downing sought to enable people in her unit—whether they were seasoned or new—to manage their networks more effectively, thereby maximizing their productivity and loyalty to the unit. To help them identify and address problems in their networks, she made the following changes.

### Show People the State of Their Networks

Downing asked an operations manager to create an internal web site for each person in her unit, showing the current state of his or her network. These sites helped people spot and correct problems in their networks—such as the fact that they were spending too much time interacting with people who weren't helping them generate more billable sales.

### Connect New Hires to the Right People

To help newcomers get up to speed quickly and immediately begin building and leveraging relationships, Downing plotted established employees' connectivity against their tenure and then used those findings to teach more recent hires how to get connected. For example, she gave each new hire the names of 10 well-connected people and suggested that he or she go to those individuals for information needed on client engagements.

She also established a network comprising entry-level employees who participated in a biweekly teleconference to discuss common career issues, such as “How

can I gain recognition for going the extra mile for colleagues?” and “How can I better manage the demands of my job?”

Finally, Downing set up a job shadowing program, in which new hires were put on a client project for three weeks at no cost to the client other than travel and hotel expenses.

## Identify and Document Important Knowledge

To protect her unit from the costs of knowledge lost when employees left, Downing identified the kinds of knowledge embodied in people in central, broker, and peripheral networks. She then identified the people whose departure would prove costliest in terms of lost expertise (and the resulting decrease in the unit’s profitability). She assigned the staffing coordinator the task of using staffing, mentoring, and internal projects to promote knowledge sharing by these individuals.

In addition, Downing identified skill areas (such as leadership development) where there were only a few well-connected people in the unit. She documented their knowledge by having analysts listen to and script their client presentations. Then she trained others on the unit’s offering in this skill area, using presentations delivered by experts and virtual training seminars. She also got high performers interested in these areas to work on projects with the SMEs, for instance, by developing a new compensation model or collaborating on writing an article. After they had enough experience under their belts, she recommended them for other similar projects and published their achievements on their profiles.

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## Reaping the Rewards

Thanks to her thorough assessments of the unit’s networks, Downing made a quick and smooth transition into her new role and was able to rapidly implement changes that yielded business results. For example:

**Improved collaboration.** Because Downing had deeper insight into where various types of expertise were housed in her unit, she could respond more quickly to requests for proposals and develop higher-quality proposals. This helped her triple the unit’s reach into different client engagements. That is, the number of proposals that drew on staff from her unit or that listed staff from her unit as assets to be deployed should the work be won was tripled within six months.

**Higher productivity.** The Organizational Strategy unit’s productivity increased as measured by sales and the number of billable hours racked up by consultants.

(In fact, the percentage of the unit's time billable to clients more than doubled.) Client impact also increased, as measured by client satisfaction surveys.

**Improved use.** The experts in Downing's unit were regularly sought out for their knowledge and skill. This led to increased sales opportunities and delivery of higher-quality services to clients. In fact, her unit won several engagements that generated more than \$1 million in revenue as well as some small but high-impact engagements with great potential to generate follow-on work.

**Greater connectivity.** Another ONA conducted a year after the first one revealed that 74 percent of Downing's unit was now connected, a major improvement over the first analysis.

For any leader transitioning into a new role, it's vital to quickly assess the organization's strengths and challenges and to design change initiatives supporting strategic goals. As Anne Downing's story reveals, analyzing and fine-tuning advice, information, and other organizational networks can position new leaders to take swift, effective action during their first weeks and months on the job.

## IMPROVING DECISION MAKING THROUGH NETWORK RECONSTRUCTION

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Rob Cross and Robert J. Thomas

It comes as a surprise to many executives that improving collaboration in their organizations does not necessarily mean increasing it. In fact, too much connectivity can be as problematic as too little. In organizations that have experienced rapid growth, such as through mergers and acquisitions, and in those whose processes and workflows have not kept pace with the changes, employees at all levels may not know how to get things done. So they reach out to others, in particular to those above them in the hierarchy, for advice, clarification, approvals, and decisions. All that connectivity is costly and inefficient. Sometimes the solution to network problems is to decrease and streamline collaborative exchanges.

Consider the situation at Cedarwood Pharmaceuticals (the company's and CEO's names have been disguised). In just 10 years, the company had grown from a 5-person, single-product start-up into a major, multidivisional player that developed and sold a wide range of drugs and boasted a 3,000-strong workforce. Proud of Cedarwood's success and culture—which had long emphasized collaboration, informality, and entrepreneurialism—CEO James Estes nevertheless sensed trouble brewing.

He knew that by most measures—financial performance, new-product pipeline, onboarding of talent, operational expenses—Cedarwood was doing fine. But the latest annual workforce survey had revealed growing frustration among employees with the company's decision-making processes. Specifically, employees at numerous levels complained about how long it took to make decisions and

get things done. They also expressed concern that their previously consensual, empowering culture had given way to a bureaucratic one. Interestingly, satisfaction levels among the executive ranks remained high.

Estes suspected that inefficiencies were clogging decision making at the company. For example, meetings lacked clear agendas, and many action items generated at meetings never saw the light of day. Also, decisions often got bogged down as people from different parts of the company struggled to resolve conflicting priorities. The legal department, for example, insisted on monitoring every decision and mitigating even the smallest risk, which frustrated R&D experts seeking to move new products to the next stage of development.

So far, at least, employees' frustrations hadn't translated into higher turnover rates or defections of top talent to competitors. But Estes knew that if those developments came to pass, Cedarwood might have difficulty achieving the additional growth it needed to remain competitive in a tough industry. He wanted to practice preventive medicine. To that end, he assembled a cross-section of director-level employees from the company's divisions and tasked them with establishing a decision-making process that would produce sound—and more timely—decisions.

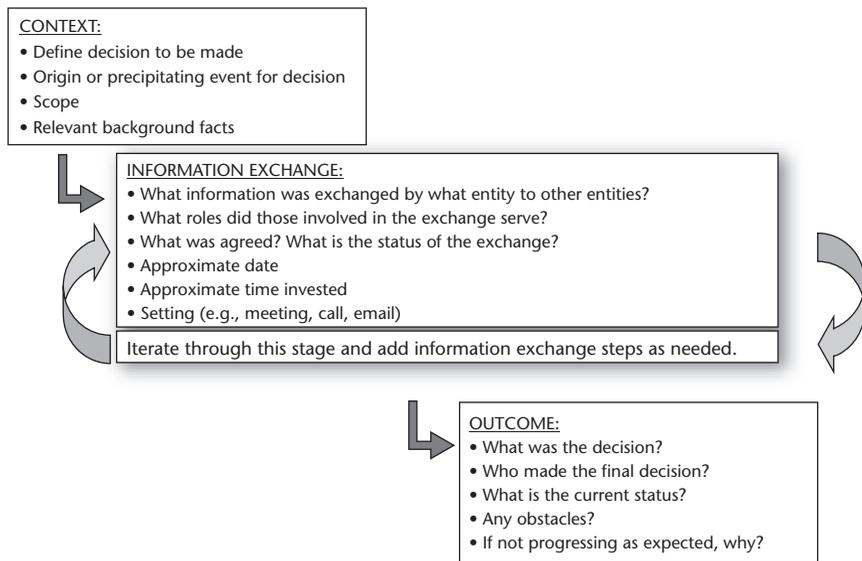
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## Diagnosing the Problem

The team began by tracking a series of decisions (related to matters ranging from strategy and operations to talent management and pricing) as they made their way through the organization. All the while, the team recorded the duration and ultimate result of each participant's involvement in these strategic decisions. The team then built decision-process maps based on the findings. Figure 13.1 depicts the kinds of information gained from this process.

These efforts revealed troubling news. For one thing, decisions at Cedarwood tended to involve too many people—perhaps a legacy from the company's start-up days, when everyone had a hand in all decisions. In addition, many decisions (minor and major alike) escalated to the highest levels in the organization. Finally, decisions were revisited frequently, suggesting that although participants may have thought they had reached agreement, they in fact had not.

The examples were disturbing. One capital-expenditure decision that originated during a conversation among four directors wasn't resolved for five months. The decision embarked on a long journey that re-involved the four directors at several points—and consumed the time of two lower-level managers, a director in yet another department, two executives, and analysts who felt compelled to run and rerun numbers several times. What was the ultimate result of this investment

**FIGURE 13.1 MAPPING THE DECISION STAGES**

of time? The approval of a decision that had been amended only slightly from its original version.

This kind of inefficiency permeated decisions ranging from pricing and hiring to promotion and even trivial travel approvals. On minor approvals, the extensive collaboration racked up staggering costs. As just one example, a decision regarding a \$39,000 purchase ate up \$17,000 in labor costs (participant time consumed) over two months. Another decision that dragged on for months involved 25 people in one month alone and incurred labor costs of more than \$60,000.

But labor costs were just part of the damage wrought by Cedarwood's flawed decision processes. Opportunity costs were also unacceptably high. In the pharmaceutical industry, even a one-day delay in introducing a new product to market can cost \$1 million in lost revenues. And when managers are spending most of their time grappling with trivial or routine decisions—not on moving products through the pipeline—the risk of product delays soars.

The team theorized that decision-making inefficiencies may have stemmed in part from Cedarwood's rapid growth. As the company quickly added new hires to support its growth, many of them came from larger organizations that had more-formalized decision protocols. Newcomers unfamiliar with Cedarwood's

culture wondered, “How do they do things *here?*” Unable to find any clear documentation about how decisions should be made, employees lobbed questions not only to peers around them but also to leaders above them—escalating decisions to higher and higher ranks. Furthermore, there were no processes in place for enabling new hires to get to know veterans in the company. Thus recent recruits didn’t know whom to go to for advice.

With these problems in mind, the team set out to conduct an organizational network analysis (ONA), which could reveal how networks might be reshaped to improve decision-making efficiency. While many organizations’ troubles stem from insufficient connectivity in their information, advice, and decision-making networks, the team’s findings so far suggested that the solution to Cedarwood’s problems might lie in *reducing* connectivity.

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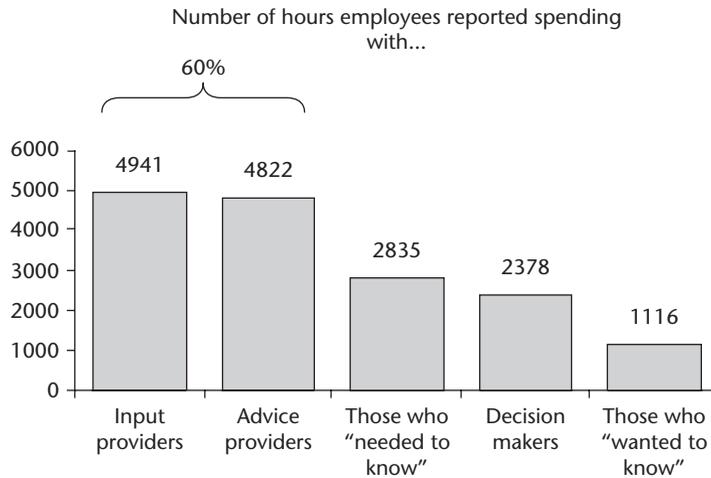
## Examining Organizational Networks

The team used the ONA to examine Cedarwood’s information-flow network and discovered substantial over-communication, compared with networks in other organizations. It then assessed time spent in decision-making interactions, as well as the decision-making roles (decision maker, input provider, advice provider, desire to know, need to know) in which participants were investing most of their time. By conducting these assessments, the team could quantify the costs of over-inclusion and isolate where costs could be taken out of the network.

For example, as shown in Figure 13.2, 60 percent of the time that employees reported spending with colleagues on decision making was with colleagues whom they identified as either input or advice providers. Yet most of these decisions (which centered on matters covered by existing policies and small dollar expenditures) didn’t require consensus at anywhere near that level. Similarly, many interactions were driven by a desire to pacify people who “wanted to know” or felt they “needed to know” about a decision—a legacy of Cedarwood’s historically collaborative culture.

The network analysis also showed that the approval processes for many routine decisions involved many more people than necessary. For instance, the average employee at or above the level of manager involved 13 people in his or her decisions each week—9 of whom were providing input or advice. In contrast, in similar benchmark organizations, the average person involved just 5 to 7 others.

As one illustration of the over-involvement plaguing decision making at Cedarwood, the legal department participated too frequently in routine decisions (such as well-defined labeling questions) as well as nonroutine ones (including the selection of subcontractors). Owing to previous sanctions from the FDA over

**FIGURE 13.2 DECISION-MAKING ROLES AT CEDARWOOD**

ONA Questions: What roles do the following people most typically perform when involved with *your* decision-making processes? In a typical month, please provide an estimate for the total number of hours you spend actively involved in decision making with this person.

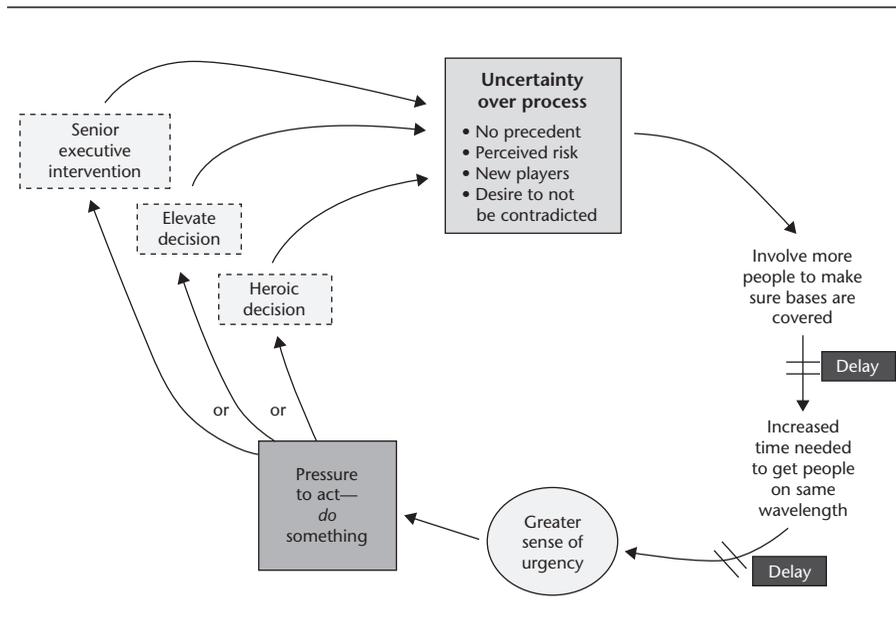
mistakes that the company had made in new-product filings, the organization overall had grown excessively cautious. As a result, the legal department had its hand in virtually all decisions—further slowing down the process.

Finally, the ONA revealed a hierarchical decision-making network. For example, almost 71 percent of employees relied on executives at the vice-president level or higher for decision making, and 22 percent relied on those at the associate-director or director level.

This finding surprised executives, who viewed their leadership style and the company's culture as egalitarian and empowering. But because decision rights were not clear at Cedarwood, people escalated decisions up the chain of command—turning executives at the vice-president level and higher into bottlenecks.

Clearly, decision-making authority had become concentrated in the hands of high-level managers, despite the company's professed egalitarian values. But executives themselves had contributed to the problem. With the well-intended goal of being thorough, they quizzed and challenged employees about every assumption behind a proposed decision; for example, telling them to "run the numbers a different way" to calculate a new product's potential profitability. They unwittingly sent the message that employees could not (and should not) make decisions on their own. Having learned that their proposals would come under scrutiny from

FIGURE 13.3 A VICIOUS CYCLE



top leaders and likely even be rejected, employees (not surprisingly) abdicated decision-making responsibility.

Figure 13.3 shows how these complex factors—including employees’ uncertainty over how to make decisions, the delays created by this uncertainty, and executives’ sense that they “must do something *now*”—interacted to create a vicious cycle that had increasingly pushed decision making into higher-ups’ hands.

The multidivisional team knew that before proceeding to reverse this vicious cycle, it had to quantify its costs for executives. Only then would top leaders get on board with the changes needed to address the problem.

## Quantifying the Costs of Inefficient Decision Making

The team had to convince top leaders at Cedarwood that concentrating decision making at the VP level was hurting—not helping—the company. Team members knew that most of the company’s executives had strong backgrounds in science or marketing and thus would be particularly receptive to graphic and numerical representations of the problem.

The team began by showing Cedarwood’s decision-making network maps to executives and pointing out their centrality in the networks.

The message was: “The good news is that you’re clearly important to the business. However, your centrality is also creating a problem.” One VP remarked:

It wasn’t until I saw myself and my fellow VPs at the center of these networks that I realized just how reliant other positions were on us. I feel like I’m making things happen all the time, but that really isn’t true. It’s just a bubble of activity around me. I was missing a lot of things on the edge of the network, where key innovations should be happening. I suddenly felt horrible about . . . holding up a tremendous amount of activity.

The team then translated the impact of inefficient, overly hierarchical decision processes into sobering numbers that executives could understand and appreciate. For example, it aggregated and converted time spent in decision making into “interaction costs” (by multiplying time in collaborations by loaded compensation figures). These calculations showed that inefficient decision making consumed 17,400 hours of people’s time each month, which translated into a staggering \$1.4 million per month in labor costs (see Figure 13.4). The team also quantified the opportunity costs of sluggish decision processes, including revenues lost because of delayed new-product introductions.

By quantifying these costs, the team showed senior leaders that they needed to begin distancing themselves from some decisions. At the same time, they had to

**FIGURE 13.4 THE HIGH PRICE OF INEFFICIENT DECISION MAKING**

Hours and associated labor costs of decision-making interactions

		To		
		Senior Manager	Director	VP or Higher
From	Senior Manager	4380 \$254,040	3712 \$334,035	660 \$94,968
	Director	3131 \$181,569	2971 \$267,390	912 \$131,328
	VP or Higher	347 \$20,097	772 \$69,435	540 \$77,760

Total cost: \$1.4 million

ONA Question: In a typical month, please provide an estimate for the total number of hours you spend actively involved in decision making with this person. (Associated dollar amount is based on average loaded cost by role for those who responded to the ONA survey.)

empower others in the organization to take responsibility for decisions they were best positioned to handle. This delegating of decision-making authority would not only speed up decision processes but also develop employees' leadership skills—creating a deeper bench that Cedarwood could draw from in the future.

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## Designing and Executing Interventions

Armed with hard data and a commitment from executives to support much-needed change, Cedarwood's team, with help from top leaders in the company, designed a series of interventions aimed at speeding decision execution and removing inefficiencies from decision-making processes.

### 1. Codify Decision Protocols and Rights

To reduce people's over-reliance on the legal department for routine decisions, the team had that department develop written guidelines for such decisions as joint marketing campaigns, summer hours for the R&D lab, and dress codes. Legal set out to formalize routine decision-making protocols in as simple a format as possible. It began by documenting the different stages in the drug-development process, such as discovery, clinical trial, manufacturing, and distribution. This made the stages more visible throughout the organization. Then it clarified decision rights for each stage, such as who had final approval on decisions in that stage and who had spending authority.

This codification process served two purposes: documentation and education. To make the guidelines easy to use, legal incorporated the decision-making protocols and rights into Cedarwood's intranet. The company had computerized many processes (such as early-stage FDA applications), with the goal of eventually becoming "paperless." Now, when employees generated a form online for, say, creating a request for proposal from vendors, a selection of drop-down menus, rollover screens, and highlighted words helped them find such information as the criteria for making a particular decision or who had the authority to approve it.

### 2. Assign Ownership for Important Decisions

When Cedarwood was small, most decisions—big and small—had been made informally, by whoever was available. As the company grew, no one had codified who was supposed to make which kinds of decisions. Thus they escalated to the higher-ups. Even minor operational questions—such as whether employees could work flexible schedules during the summer—often ended up on top executives' desks.

To remove the temptation for high-level executives to take on any and all decisions that were dropped in their laps, the CEO and his direct reports established a steering committee comprising representative executives from the next level down in the organization (the operational level). Top leaders asked committee members which types of decisions they should own and which should be owned by the operational leaders. Members agreed that higher-level executives should own decisions related to strategy and policy, while lower-level ones should take responsibility for decisions related to operations.

Steering-committee members also discussed matters such as how much time executives should be spending on certain types of decisions. For instance, they determined that a senior executive should spend roughly 50 percent of his or her time on strategy-related decisions, and 50 percent on exceptions and unusual circumstances. But many were spending the majority of their time putting out operational fires. This was restricting the time available for them to focus on the strategy and policy decisions that they had agreed to own.

Drawing from these discussions, the multidivisional team developed decision-flow models showing which types of decisions were to be owned by executives and managers at each level in the organization. The newly published models and the formalized distinction between executive-owned and manager-owned decisions helped leaders at all levels in the organization immediately determine whether to take on a particular decision. And it reduced the number of people who felt compelled to “touch” each decision.

### **3. Decrease the Density of the Decision-Making Network**

To further simplify decision making as well as delegate and communicate decision roles and rights, the team decreased the density of Cedarwood’s decision-making network by combining committees that had become redundant, such as the pricing and distribution committees.

Previously, there had been some overlap in membership across the two committees. Thus, decisions about pricing or distribution would often be sent to people in both groups—creating over-involvement and slowing down the decision process. By integrating the committees and streamlining membership to only those people who had to be involved in pricing- and distribution-related decisions (according to the recently published protocols), the team reduced the number of people touching each decision and the number of steps it had to travel before being approved.

The CEO explicitly mandated newly integrated and streamlined committees to accelerate their decision processes. As a result, some individuals’ decision-making authority was taken away, but team members explained that the change would

create needed speed and efficiency and thus save money for the organization. Thanks to their ability to specify the benefits of the change, they encountered little resistance from these individuals.

#### 4. Improve Meeting-Management Practices

The steering committee established by the top executive team also instituted new practices for ensuring that meetings ran more smoothly and efficiently. Some of these practices reflected simple common sense, but executives hadn't yet taken the time to adopt them.

For instance, the committee codified the format for meeting agendas, which now had to contain information such as what type of meeting was planned (information-sharing? decision-making?), who "owned" the meeting topic, and who had to attend. Also, the committee instituted a rule that anyone invited to a meeting had to attend personally. No longer could invitees send someone in their stead who might not have decision authority regarding the issue under discussion. (This often-used tactic had become notorious for causing delays.)

#### 5. Strengthen Conflict-Resolution Skills

Some of Cedarwood's decision-process woes stemmed from the culture of "niceness" that had developed at the company. People were hesitant to disagree with one another and sought to avoid confrontation.

During decision-making meetings, if several participants disagreed with what someone else in the room had proposed, they'd decline to voice their concerns. The meeting leader would naturally assume that consensus had been achieved. After the meeting, however, dissenters would try to reverse the decision through back channels. Consequently, decisions often ended up reappearing on meeting agendas, even though leaders thought the decisions had been finalized. Not surprisingly, these behaviors wasted enormous amounts of time.

To correct the situation, the CEO required all managers at the director level and above to attend conflict-resolution training sessions, during which participants mastered skills for communicating differences of opinion. In particular, they learned how to clearly express what they wanted and to clarify one another's commitment; for example, "I want this clinical trial conducted. Will you commit to doing this? When will you have it done?"

When people began communicating in this way, meeting participants found it easier to determine whether they had in fact arrived at a decision. People began making decisions during the meeting, rather than using back channels to try to influence decisions afterward.

## 6. Reinforce Decision-Making Proficiency Through Performance Management

To reinforce the message that decision-making proficiency mattered, Cedarwood evaluated executives and managers on this skill in their annual performance evaluations. Leaders were assessed on how well they adhered to their assigned decision-making roles and authority. They were also evaluated on the extent to which they helped minimize the time consumed by routine decisions and the number of interactions involved. To determine their performance on these criteria, a director reporting to the chief operations officer continued tracking decisions through the organization and tabulating the number of people who “touched” them.

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### Reaping Rewards

The interventions Cedarwood executed began generating impressive results. For example, the average number of costly and time-consuming interactions decreased by 33 percent on a monthly basis and by almost 40 percent on a weekly basis. As the CEO noted:

The project was a huge success based on savings generated on a handful of decisions—not to mention the impact on the organization’s culture and behavior. It’s also going to prove invaluable as we prepare for aggressive growth in the near future.

The changes also lifted employees’ spirits. Employees saw these changes as the first steps toward rekindling the company’s egalitarian culture. Senior leaders, for their part, were reassured that the company’s continued growth would not destroy a strong and attractive culture of collaboration and empowerment. They knew that Cedarwood’s prized culture could survive, even as the organization grew in size and complexity.



## PART FOUR

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# CONNECTING PEOPLE FOR INNOVATION

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A tangible outcome that managers often hope to achieve as the result of network-building activities is an increase in innovation. As the authors in this section emphasize, strengthening networks to promote innovation requires looking both inward at how people within the company connect, and outward, beyond the organization's boundaries. In many industries, the most innovative work is being done not by the largest players but by small, emerging enterprises. A company's performance may depend on the ability to tap into new ideas, wherever they are.

Jean Singer and Kristi Droppers describe an intervention they designed and helped to implement, called the Innovation Lab, to open up idea-sharing channels within and beyond the information technology department of a large pharmaceutical company. Through a series of workshops that included an array of network-building exercises, which Singer and Droppers present here in detail, employees in the department discovered new ways to connect with one another and boosted the company's capacity for innovation.

In narrating the story of the Myelin Repair Foundation (MRF), Wendi Backler stresses the importance of external connectivity. The MRF was formed to accelerate advances in myelin repair—an area that has recently been the focus of multiple sclerosis research—by creating a network of scientists who would share even their earliest findings. Starting with a core group of researchers committed

to such collaboration, the MRF grew into a broad network through a careful process, which Backler describes.

Christiane Frischmuth focuses on how people can learn the sorts of behaviors necessary for innovation—the ability to build on other people’s contributions, to change course, and to be fully present in interactions. She lays out 11 exercises, similar to those actors use to develop their craft, which can be used in network-building workshops.

Sally Colella describes a simple exercise that can leverage the network opportunities inherent in any leadership development program. Colella has used this Hidden Assets exercise, in which participants both request and offer specific kinds of help and expertise, in many settings, including groups of professionals looking for ways to achieve a more fruitful exchange of ideas with one another.

## THE INNOVATION LAB: BUILDING IDEA-SHARING NETWORKS

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Jean Singer and Kristi Droppers

Too often, a firm's potential for innovation goes unrealized because it is unable to combine the ideas, energies, and skills of people working in disconnected pockets of the organization. Differences in function or region, or even in demographics such as age and gender, can separate people into homogeneous pools and inhibit the stimulating exchange of ideas. Whether it involves an R&D scientist and a member of the company's real estate department who together recognize an opportunity to turn empty office space into sites for start-up companies, or a Gen-Xer and a senior manager who figure out how to use Facebook to reduce employee turnover, the ability to cross boundaries and share skills and experiences can unleash unexpected and potentially powerful ideas. The challenge for many companies is facilitating such diverse and fruitful cross-boundary exchanges.

That was precisely the challenge for the Information Technology and Services (IT&S) group in a large pharmaceutical company, which we will call Pharmanetics, as it launched a strategic focus on innovation. The company as a whole had embarked on an initiative to accelerate the time to market of new, innovative medicines in the quest to recapture the leading market position it had once held. To achieve its goals for the new-product pipeline, the company needed to rethink all aspects of its operations, from the discovery of new molecules in research to their full-scale production in manufacturing. Innovative new *products* were the ultimate goal, but the company realized that the timely discovery and

development of those products would require innovation to be an integral part of everyday *processes*.

One of the company's core strengths was its workforce. Most Pharmanetics employees possessed top-flight academic credentials, seemingly inexhaustible drive, and intellect of the highest caliber. However, the company was not able to realize the full value of these talents. People operated within fairly segregated organizational units and lacked systems and practices for easily sharing knowledge across organizational lines.

The IT&S group took the lead on opening up the organization's knowledge-sharing channels with an intervention called the Innovation Lab. The purpose of the Innovation Lab was to facilitate cross-boundary interaction and fuel the company's innovation process by building idea-sharing networks among creative people working in diverse corners of the organization. Although not a permanent physical space, it was intended to function as a laboratory where, in a series of facilitated workshops, people who wouldn't typically encounter one another in their day-to-day jobs could experiment with novel ways of working together.

The Innovation Lab accomplished two goals at once. First, it built community among a core group of creative thinkers residing in different parts of the company. Second, it unleashed the group's talents to help solve a real-world problem—namely, increasing the organization's capacity for innovation. As group members worked together on shared problem solving, they forged ties of familiarity and trust. The end result was both a well-connected base of innovators and a set of recommendations for promoting innovation throughout Pharmanetics. Also, the impact of the Innovation Lab continued after the initial set of workshops, as group members “virally” promoted a creative mindset and new methods for idea generation; continued to extend and strengthen their networks; and acted as champions for the recommended changes in work processes and policies.

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## Innovation Lab Overview

The Innovation Lab consisted of a series of five workshops in which we engaged a group of creative thinkers in educational, brainstorming, and hands-on problem-solving activities. Through the workshops, participants learned about the principles of innovation, flexed their creative muscles with new idea-generating techniques, and applied their collective intelligence to develop recommended courses of action for IT&S—all the while building up their networks for continued innovation.

The key players in the Innovation Lab were a core group of “innovators,” a sponsor, subject matter experts (SMEs) on innovation and networks, and facilitators.

We, the authors of this chapter, were external consultants engaged to design the Lab and act as SMEs and facilitators.

We chose as participants people who were considered particularly innovative and represented a cross-section of the organization. A network analysis can aid the selection process by identifying people who not only have a reputation for being innovative but also hold influential network positions (such as brokers or central connectors) or bridge otherwise fragmented parts of the organization. In this particular case, we did not perform a network analysis but instead used manager and peer recommendations. In compiling the final list of participants, we made sure that they represented a variety of functions, regions, and levels of seniority.

The Innovation Lab sessions were each conducted roughly two weeks apart. Each session was a half day, typically in the afternoon, followed by a social hour. We conducted the workshops offsite. The ideal situation is to hold the workshops at a venue that is in some way original and consistent with the theme of innovation while removing people from their routine environments. The venue we chose was an Adirondack-style lodge with a soaring ceiling supported by massive wooden beams and an expansive view of the surrounding countryside. It was decidedly low-tech, embedded in the creations of nature rather than those of humans, and a far cry from the ordered rows of offices and labs in which people worked day-to-day. (The lodge also provided no Internet access, an unintentional but effective means of breaking ingrained behavior.)

To create continuity between the workshops and an opportunity for informal conversation, we provided a virtual home space for participants. The space had the capability for discussion threads, photos and biographical information on the members, and the posting of documents such as workshop outputs and interesting articles.

What follows is an outline of the five workshops we conducted, followed by detailed descriptions of selected exercises. Although we started with a high-level design for the series, we remained open to changes from one workshop to the next. The following description contains a number of options and can easily be adapted to suit a particular group.

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## **Workshop I: Building Blocks of Innovation**

### **Objectives**

Our goal for the first meeting was to kick off the project in a way that embodied innovation and generated a positive buzz about the Lab's activities. We wanted

people to recognize that the Innovation Lab was truly a lab in which we would mix things together and see what we got, sometimes confirming our predictions but at other times sending us back to the drawing board. We had a plan but would be ready to change course along the way.

The group first needed an understanding of the theories of innovation, with an emphasis on the important role played by networks. Everyone entered the meeting with his or her own concept of innovation—which may or may not have acknowledged the role of networks—and we needed to establish some common ground and a shared language. We could then work to gain consensus on the main “building blocks” of innovation. That theme helped us approach the wide-ranging goal of innovation in a manageable way and focus on interlocking pieces that we could examine both individually and as a whole.

Lastly, but of equal importance, in this session we would begin to build a community among Lab members, acquainting them with one another professionally and personally, and working together on common goals.

## Main Activities

A senior sponsor opened the meeting with a description of what the concept of innovation meant to him. The sponsor had formal responsibilities for promoting innovation in the company and was respected for his ideas and abilities. We played jazz music as participants entered the room, and the sponsor talked about his musical hobby and the way that he relates to innovation as a close cousin of jazz. The sponsor also talked about the mission of the Innovation Lab, provided an overview of the five workshops, and described how our effort fit with the company’s larger strategy.

Next, the facilitator reviewed the plan for the day and asked if there were any questions. We then launched into the day’s activities.

***Exercise 1: Collective Resume*** In our first exercise, the *Collective Resume*, participants gained familiarity with one another on both a professional and personal level by building a group “resume” describing their education, talents, and project work. We hung a huge sheet of fabric between the pillars in our meeting room on which participants posted short descriptions of their background and experience. They then gathered around to see who they were in the aggregate. People are invariably surprised by the talents and skills that this exercise reveals. In this group, participants found common interests such as gourmet cooking and were surprised by skills in areas as varied as stone work and financial derivatives. Particularly striking was the variety of nontechnical strengths we found—while in

college, some of these IT professionals had excelled in fields such as philosophy and literature. At the conclusion of the exercise, participants could see how working together would bring a powerful mix of skills and abilities to the initiative. (Details of the exercise are provided in a later section.)

**Presentation: Elements of Innovation** Next we gave a presentation on the *Elements of Innovation*, providing the group with a foundational understanding of the dynamics of innovation, including the following:

- Definitions of creativity and an explanation of creativity as a fundamentally social process.
- The role of social networks in the generation of ideas and in converting those ideas into products and processes.
- Typical organizational barriers to innovation.
- A model of innovation that the group can use as the basis for discussion, for example, Hansen and Birkenshaw's three-step model of ideation, conversion, and diffusion (Hansen & Birkenshaw, 2007).

**Exercise 2: Lego Modeling of Innovation** Our second exercise of the day was a *Lego Modeling of Innovation*. Participants used Lego blocks to build models of the innovation process as they wanted it to function in their organization. By using Lego blocks, people were able to express ideas that might have been difficult to convey using words, such as how to facilitate the commercialization of new ideas and how to bridge disconnected islands in the organization. The exercise also contributed to the sense of creativity in the room. In a full group discussion, we distilled the models into key themes and issues that the group would tackle in the weeks to come. (Details of the exercise are provided in a later section.)

**Wrap-Up and Social Hour** We wrapped up with a summary of outcomes from the day and identified anything that was immediately actionable. We also set the group's priorities for the next four meetings, agreed on how the group would work between meetings, and reflected on things that went well in the current meeting and things to change.

We provided free time at the end of each session for people to mingle in a relaxed setting. Although participation was optional, most people took advantage of the time to conduct follow-up conversations and get to know their colleagues better. Not surprisingly, this atmosphere encouraged the continued generation of creative ideas.

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## Workshop II: External Connectivity

### Objectives

The focus of our second session shifted to the world outside of Pharmanetics. Our goals were to understand how participants' external connectivity supported or limited their ability to contribute to innovation, and how similar opportunities or constraints affected the company in general. Participants would use these insights to identify how they could foster external networks and to develop a series of action items to recommend to management.

In each session we also wanted to equip the group with new hands-on skills. Workshop II gave participants a tool for ideation and a greater understanding of the behaviors needed to work with ideation successfully. We also introduced a new collaborative technology for the group's evaluation. As always, one of our goals was to continue to build ties among Innovation Lab members.

### Main Activities

A member of the Lab opened the meeting by talking about something he had learned about innovation during the last session.

The facilitator provided a recap of the previous meeting and reviewed a mind map summarizing the outcomes from the Lego modeling. The mind map provided a visual of the elements of innovation and how they interconnect, highlighting barriers that the company needed to address. The facilitator also reviewed the plan for the day.

***Exercise 3: Mapping Our External Networks*** We gave the group a short introduction to external networks, covering the important role that external networks play in the innovation process and some of the behavioral factors that can interfere with the formation of external ties.

The group mapped out its external networks along two dimensions. One dimension was the type of institution where the contact worked, such as a pharmaceutical company, a university, a consulting firm, and so on; the second was a dimension of the group's choosing. Working on the first dimension, we constructed a "low-tech" network diagram, hanging a large sheet of fabric between the pillars once more and segmenting it by type of institution. Participants placed cards in the appropriate segment, indicating the people outside the company they turned to most often for information, advice, ideas, or other types of work-related assistance. Stepping back to see the collective results, the impact at first was visual: some corners of the network were crowded with contacts, and others were practically empty. Results were tallied and graphed as in Figure 14.1, providing the group with clear targets for improving external ties.

Participants performed a second analysis in small groups, this time regrouping their external contacts along another dimension of their choosing. For example, in one group participants segmented their contacts on the basis of whether they were “digital natives” (people who have grown up with digital technologies) versus “digital immigrants” (people who have learned digital technologies later in life). Their analysis showed a clear concentration of ties with their own peer group of digital immigrants and, again, a clear opportunity to improve the diversity of their external networks. (Details of the exercise are provided in a later section.)

**Exercise 4: Stepping Stones to Better Networks** We provided the group with a short review of best practices for ideation. Keeping in mind the results from Exercise 3, participants then used a brainstorming technique called *Stepping Stones* to identify ways that individuals and the company as a whole could extend and enhance external networks. In the Stepping Stones technique, the facilitator asks each person to provide one idea—big, small, crazy, or even nonsensical—just to get the creative ball rolling. People then build off of the original ideas, changing them, expanding on them, and using them to stimulate new thought. Using this technique, the Innovation Lab participants developed and prioritized a set of action items and quick hits that leveraged new technologies and strategic initiatives to build external networks. Importantly, the Stepping Stones method gave all participants a sense of investment in the ideas and generated a high level of support for the targeted actions.

**Presentation: A New Collaborative Technology** An invited speaker gave a presentation on a new technology that the company could use to facilitate the innovation process. The speaker was a member of the company (not a vendor) who was experimenting with the technology. All parties benefited: the speaker gained new insights about how to apply the technology more effectively, and the audience learned about a new tool.

We then gave participants a structured assignment for testing out the new technology prior to the next meeting. As we did for each workshop, we ended with a wrap-up and social hour.

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## Workshop III: Internal Connectivity

### Objectives

The primary objective of Workshop III was to increase participants’ knowledge about effective behaviors for building networks. We took a hands-on approach, enabling participants to assess themselves and develop strategies for enhancing

their network-building abilities. The session was also designed to generate practical ideas about how the company could foster the formation of networks across organizational lines.

Following up on the technology presentation from Workshop II, we gave participants the opportunity to identify how the company could best leverage the new collaborative technology for the purpose of innovation.

## Main Activities

As always, we began with a welcome and plan for the day.

***Collective Reflection on the New Collaborative Technology*** Participants shared their experiences using the new technology, developed recommendations for how the company might best leverage it, and formulated plans for how they personally could use it or share it with others.

***Presentation: Building Connectivity*** We provided the group with a short introduction to network development, including the concepts of human and social capital, the network characteristics of high performers, and ways to separate the hype of networking from the well-researched behaviors and techniques that promote network formation.

***Exercise 5: The Network Development Board Game*** Innovation Lab members performed a self-assessment of their network-building behaviors using a board game format. With a deck of “network-building behavior cards” in hand, they each decided which behaviors they displayed often, sometimes, or rarely. They placed the cards on corresponding spots on the game board and, while eyeing the size of the piles, chose network-building strengths and areas of improvement to discuss with a partner. Partners coached each other to develop network development action plans. (Details of the exercise are provided in a later section.)

***Exercise 6: Network Metaphors*** The group brainstormed ways that the company could support the formation of internal networks, using the Metaphor technique. This technique unleashes creativity by asking participants to compare network building to a selected metaphor. When participants approached network building from a completely different angle—say, comparing it to flower arranging or starting a revolution—they were able to recognize challenges and envision solutions that would not otherwise have occurred to them. (Details of the exercise are provided in a later section.)

---

## Workshop IV: Converting Ideas to Products and Practices

### Objectives

The goal of Workshop IV was to develop a general scheme and as many specifics as possible describing a process for taking ideas and transforming them into real products or work practices. While doing so, we continued to develop the group's collective ideation skills and build the group into a community.

### Main Activities

The plan for the day entailed one activity to envision and test out a process for converting ideas to products and work practices.

***Exercise 7: Organic Ideation and Test Drive of Conversion Process*** The group leveraged analogous thinking to design processes for converting novel ideas to new products and practices. Participants took naturally occurring processes, such as the metamorphosis of a butterfly, and after identifying what makes them repeatable and enduring in the earth's environment, designed new-idea conversion processes tailored to the company's environment. They then tested a prototype conversion process and developed a set of recommendations for management. (Details of the exercise are provided in a later section.)

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## Workshop V: Diffusion of the Innovation Process

### Objectives

The final building block of innovation is the ability to diffuse new ideas, products, and practices throughout the organization. The purpose of Workshop V was to develop a set of success factors for making this happen. The workshop was also designed to help participants determine the ongoing role of the Innovation Lab and how the Lab members could continue to be connected with one another.

### Main Activities

We started as usual with a welcome and plan for the day.

***Presentation: The Diffusion of Ideas*** We provided the group with a review of Rogers's (2003) theory on the diffusion of innovations and selected theories of organizational change, for example, Lewin's "ice cube" model of episodic change (Lewin, 1947, 1951).

**Exercise 8: Diffusion Case Studies** The group worked with case studies to identify the factors that can encourage or impair the successful diffusion of innovations. The case studies were taken from both the literature and actual company experiences, in a range of situations from AIDS prevention to the implementation of a new IT system. Participants found in the case studies many of the pitfalls faced by innovators, such as overestimating the organization's readiness for change or failing to understand influence systems. They also recognized success factors, such as the use of credible messengers and ensuring adequate follow-through. Participants then agreed on success factors for the diffusion of innovations at Pharmaceuticals and created a set of recommendations for management.

**Final Reflection** We conducted a final reflection on how participants wanted to take the Innovation Lab forward, particularly in terms of their role in "seeding" innovative practices throughout the organization, and how they would maintain connections among members. They also discussed the role they wished to play in following up on recommendations to management. Group members expressed a clear desire to continue their role as "innovation activists," working together to solve real problems and evangelizing the Innovation Lab beliefs and behaviors throughout the company.

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## The Exercises

The following is a detailed description of selected exercises.

### Exercise 1: Collective Resume

The purpose was to enable participants to gain familiarity with one another on both a professional and personal level by building a group "resume" describing their education, talents, and project work. The exercise takes about 30 minutes to complete.

Materials:

- Large sheets of butcher paper or a "magic board" (a large sheet of rip-stop fabric sprayed with adhesive so that pieces of paper stick to it)
- Slips of colored paper (approximately 4.25" × 5.5", or an 8.5 × 11" sheet cut the long way)
- Masking tape, to adhere slips of paper if large sheets of butcher paper are used
- Flip chart and markers for the facilitator

Facilitator preparation:

- Write out interview questions on the flip chart.
- Hang sheets of butcher paper or magic board, and place the headings “education,” “skills,” and “experience” along the top.

### **Process**

1. Ask participants to work in pairs by sitting next to someone they don't know very well.
2. Each person in the pair interviews his or her partner using a set of prescribed interview questions. The questions should draw out professional and personal information about the person. Sample questions:
  - While at college or graduate school, what subject area was your best?
  - What one hidden talent (skill, knowledge, hobby) do you have that most people at work don't know about?
  - What is the most successful project you have ever worked on, and what was your role in it?

The interviewers should take notes so that they will have an accurate recollection about the people they have interviewed.

3. After both people have been interviewed, each writes out on slips of colored paper two or three things that he or she learned about the partner. Each then places the slips of paper on the butcher paper or magic board, under one of the headings of “education,” “skills,” or “experience.” After the board is filled, the facilitator prompts discussion. Sample questions:
  - If you were hiring this group, what potential would you see in it?
  - What makes this group a good candidate for innovation within the company?
  - How are group members the same? How are they different?

## **Exercise 2: Lego Modeling of Innovation**

Using Lego pieces, build models of the innovation process as the participants would like to see it functioning in their organization. The exercise takes about 75 minutes, depending on how many groups need to be interviewed.

Materials:

- Large size cases of Lego pieces, one for each team
- Permanent markers that will write on the plastic Legos
- Pieces of foam board to use as bases for the models
- Handheld voice recorder
- Flip chart and markers for the facilitator

Facilitator preparation (requires *two facilitators*):

- On each table, put one case of Legos, a base, and a set of markers.

### **Process**

1. Separate the group into teams of up to six people. Mix them up so people work with colleagues they don't know very well.
2. Explain that their job is to build a model using the Lego blocks that describes how innovation should occur in the organization. Note that there is no right or wrong way of doing this. They can include things they could implement tomorrow, things that they have no idea how to execute, and things that challenge existing notions about how the organization operates.
3. While the teams are working, one facilitator acts as a "roving reporter." He or she stops by and interviews the teams, using a handheld device to record their comments. When the teams are done, the facilitator interviews each one in turn, in front of the group as a whole, again using the recording device. The second facilitator takes notes on a flip chart. Sample interview questions:
  - What's going on in this model?
  - What's different between this model and our company today? Does the model break any rules or shift any frames?
  - What approach does the model take to building networks across organizational boundaries?
  - What are some of the ideas that people are most passionate about?
4. After each group is interviewed, the groups work together to identify where they have common ideas and different but interesting and potentially useful ideas. These become the basis for a core set of elements of innovation that they will examine in further detail in the upcoming meetings, and a part of the recommendations to management.
5. After the meeting, the facilitator arranges the main ideas in a "mind map," which provides a visual depiction of the elements of innovation and how they connect, and highlights barriers that the company needs to address.

### **Exercise 3: Mapping Our External Networks**

The purpose was to map the group's external networks and examine how they fall into patterns along two dimensions. One dimension is the type of institution where the contact works, and the second dimension is chosen by the group. In their analysis of the networks, group members determine how their contacts may facilitate or limit their innovative capacity, and they develop implications for building more effective external networks for the organization as a whole. The exercise should take two hours.

### Materials:

- Large sheets of butcher paper or two to three “magic boards” (large sheet of rip-stop fabric sprayed with adhesive so that pieces of paper stick to it), depending on the size of the group
- Slips of colored paper (approximately 4.25" x 5.5", or an 8.5" x 11" sheet cut the long way)
- Masking tape, to adhere slips of paper if large sheets of butcher paper are used
- Colored Post-it dots
- Flip charts and markers for each team and for the facilitator
- A laptop, projector, and screen

### Facilitator preparation (requires *two facilitators*):

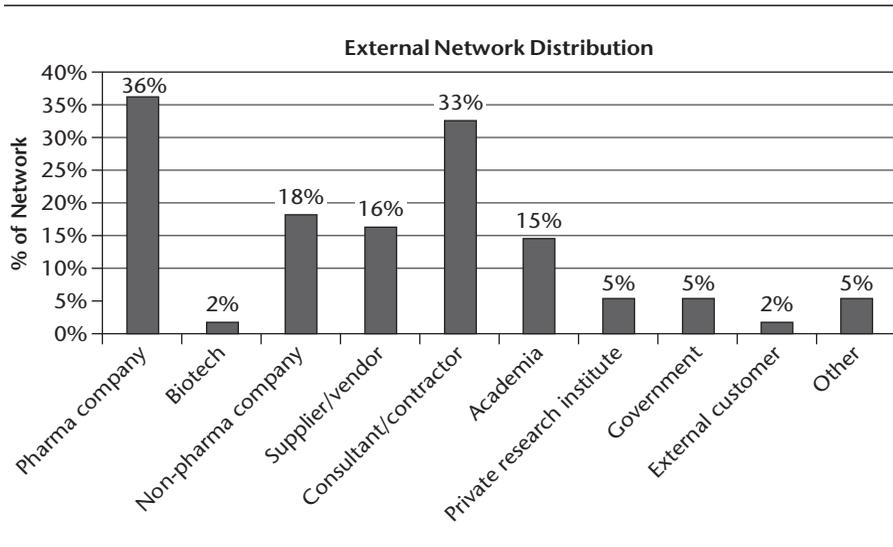
- Hang sheets of butcher paper or magic boards. Place the label “Our External Network” in the center of each, and arrange labels for organizational categories in a “solar system” around it.
- Put out slips of colored paper and pens at tables, along with a flip chart for each team.

### **Process**

1. Divide the group into teams of up to six people, shifting people around so they work with new colleagues.
2. Ask each person to write on slips of colored paper the first names and last initials of up to 10 people outside the company whom they turn to for information, advice, ideas, or other types of work-related assistance. It’s fine to list fewer than 10 people. If there are more than 10, participants should choose the ones they turn to most frequently.
3. When they are done, each person should go to the team’s sheets of butcher paper or magic board and place their slips of paper in the band corresponding to the appropriate organizational category. Sample of organizational categories:
  - Academia
  - Government
  - Company—in our industry
  - Company—outside our industry
  - Start-up company
  - Supplier/vendor
  - Consultant
  - External customer

4. Ask each team to discuss and be prepared to share with the larger group their collective insights on their external network.
5. While the teams are in discussion, the cofacilitator counts the number of people in each organizational category and creates a bar chart of these, which is projected on the screen. This enables the teams to see their collective data in summary form (see Figure 14.1).
6. The teams come together and reflect on their external networks. Sample discussion questions are as follows:
  - What patterns do you see? Why do you think they exist?
  - What are the major opportunities to expand our networks in ways that will give us better access to different perspectives?
  - Does this group reflect the company as a whole? If so, how and why?
7. Following the full-group reflection, send people back to their teams and ask them to think about a *different* way to depict their network—that is, a different set of categories that could be used to distinguish the network members (such as generation, nationality, or where they first met). Have them use the flip chart to depict their network in this new way, using Post-it dots to represent people in the network. Ask the group to look at their networks and see where they have “dominant voices” of high influence and where there are “minority

**FIGURE 14.1 STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS IN THE GROUP’S EXTERNAL NETWORK**



(Data are illustrative.)

voices” that could use better representation. They should record their reflections on flip charts. During the team discussion, the cofacilitator again creates bar charts showing the external network distributions for each team using their new categories.

8. Each team presents its analysis to the group. As a group, ask teams to perform a gap analysis, identifying network strengths and weaknesses, incorporating both the initial categorizations and the different perspective.

### **Exercise 5: The Network Development Board Game**

The aim is to enable Innovation Lab members to learn about success factors for building networks by performing a self-assessment of their own behaviors using a board game format. This exercise should take one hour.

Materials:

- A deck of “network-building behavior cards” for each participant. The deck consists of approximately 20 cards. Each card describes an important network-building behavior, for example, “I seek out and volunteer for assignments that are cross-functional or in other ways involve people outside my organization” or “Instead of thinking that building a network is something that takes time away from my work, I consider building my network to be an integral and important part of doing my work.” Network-building behaviors can be found in resources such as Cross, Davenport, & Cantrell (2003).
- A game board for each participant with spaces for “Behaviors you often exhibit,” “Behaviors you sometimes exhibit,” and “Behaviors you seldom or never exhibit.”

Facilitator preparation:

- Distribute cards and game boards to each participant.

#### ***Process***

1. Each person assesses his or her network-building behaviors by using the game board to divide the 20 cards into three piles. One pile is for behaviors they often exhibit, one is for behaviors they sometimes exhibit, and one is for behaviors they seldom or never exhibit.
2. After the participants have completed their piles, they each find a partner in the room.
3. The partners then share one or two of the behaviors they exhibit most often and feel are strengths as well as one or two behaviors that they rarely or never

exhibit. The partners discuss these behaviors, and each acts as a “coach” to the other, suggesting ways to improve network-building behaviors and enhance their internal connectivity.

4. The group reconvenes for a collective reflection and sharing of insights gained from the “coaching” sessions. Participants are encouraged to keep their network-building behavior cards to help them remember and build the desired behaviors.

### **Exercise 6: Network Metaphors**

The purpose is to brainstorm ways that the company can support the formation of internal networks, using the Metaphor technique. This exercise takes approximately 75 minutes.

Materials:

- A list of sample metaphors
- Flip charts and markers for each team and for the facilitator
- Colored Post-it dots

Facilitator preparation:

- Write out a list of sample metaphors on a flip chart.
- Set up flip charts and markers for each team.

#### ***Process***

1. Divide the group into teams of up to six people, again shifting people around so they work with new colleagues.
2. Ask each team to choose a metaphor and explain how it exemplifies the process and challenges of building internal connectivity in the company. The exploration of a metaphor provides the group with insight into the complexities of any goal-directed process, stimulates ideas, and provides a new way of looking at a challenge.
3. Share with the teams a sample list of metaphors and explain that they can use one of these or create their own. Examples of metaphors that can be used:
  - Going on a diet
  - Colonizing a territory
  - Starting a revolution
  - Going fishing
  - Arranging flowers
  - Running for political office

4. Each group selects a metaphor and discusses how it is—or is not—a way to represent internal network building in the organization. In addition, each team generates and records a list of ideas about how the company can foster internal network building. While doing so, the teams should keep in mind the issues and concerns raised during earlier meetings, including those generated during the Lego modeling and recorded in the mind map.
5. Each group presents its ideas. The facilitator looks for shared or common ideas as well as those that generate group energy and support, and records these on a flip chart.
6. The group prioritizes the ideas to recommend to management by “dot-voting.” Each person gets three colored Post-it dots and places them by the three ideas that they think have the greatest worth. The group then discusses the outcome and agrees on its main recommendations.
7. Following the meeting, recommendations are recorded in an “Idea Bank,” which is posted online.

### **Exercise 7: Organic Ideation and Test Drive of Conversion Process**

The purpose is to generate ideas about how to construct a process for converting ideas to new products and practices, using as analogies processes that occur in nature, and then test a prototype conversion process to identify strengths and weaknesses and refine it into a set of recommendations for management. The exercise takes three hours.

Materials:

- One-page handouts describing the steps in a few organic processes, such as butterfly metamorphosis, plant propagation, and composting. For instance, the steps of the composting process are as follows:
  1. Organic matter is piled together or put in a bin.
  2. Organisms metabolize the matter, breaking it down with the help of heat, moisture, and oxygen.
  3. Worms and bugs consume the broken-down organic matter.
  4. Those invertebrates eliminate their waste, which is compost, also known as “black gold.”
  5. Vegetation grows in the compost, drawing nutrients from it.

Facilitator preparation:

- Set up flip charts and markers for each team.

### Process

1. Divide the group into teams of up to six people, again shifting people around so they work with new colleagues.
2. Assign each group one of the organic process prototypes. The team's job is to identify the catalysts of the organic process and determine why it occurs in a repeatable and enduring fashion.
3. The teams then leverage the organic process to create a "conversion" process for their organization, that is, a process through which ideas can be converted to real products and work practices. While doing so, they should keep in mind the issues and concerns raised during earlier meetings, including those generated during the Lego modeling and recorded in the mind map.
4. The group reconvenes and shares its proposed processes, looking to see where there are common elements or elements that generate enthusiasm. From this discussion, the group constructs a single process or identifies the key elements that have consensus support. Slight differences of opinion can be recognized and written on a flip chart labeled "parking lot" for the time being.
5. Participants return to their original teams and perform a "test drive" of the conversion process. They select one of the ideas that have been recorded in the Idea Bank and take it hypothetically through the steps in the conversion process. While doing so, they note strengths and weaknesses of the process, and record ways that it can be improved.
6. The full group convenes once again to share insights and agree on process refinements.

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## BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION NETWORK

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Wendi Backler<sup>1</sup>

Most innovation happens outside the boundaries of a single organization. In the vast majority of industries, less than 30 percent of all patents on new inventions belong to the top 10 competitors in the industry. For example, the top 10 pharmaceutical companies, with tens of thousands of researchers and billions of dollars invested in research, account for only 12 percent of all pharmaceutical patents filed.<sup>2</sup> The remaining 88 percent belong to smaller companies, niche players, individual scientists, academics or their institutions, start-ups, and “garage” inventors, with many players holding only one or two patents—a manifestation of Chris Anderson’s “long tail” of innovation.

Figuring out how to build a collaborative innovation network that taps into this long tail is a strategic imperative for all companies that depend on innovation for a competitive advantage. In fact, evidence is rapidly building that firms that have recognized this fact are outperforming those that have not.

Procter & Gamble has embraced the long tail of innovation. In 2001, P&G set out to build a collaborative innovation network with the lofty goal of sourcing 50 percent of all new innovations externally. By 2007, P&G had doubled the size of its innovation portfolio and increased its innovation yield 3.5 times. Now 35 percent of all projects in its innovation portfolio result in successful new profit-earning products. (Compare this to just 10 percent back in 2001, when P&G relied exclusively on internal innovation.) In 2008, 51 percent of all new ideas developed at P&G originated externally, from customers, suppliers, or communities

such as NineSigma. Insiders boast of better processes, faster development times, and superior ideas.

A collaborative innovation network reaches beyond a firm's boundaries; it taps into and connects talent regardless of where it dwells; it is diverse and often cross-disciplinary; and it builds relationships in which knowledge and discovery are shared so that learning is both fostered and accelerated.

How does an organization build, sustain, and manage a collaborative innovation network? What are some of the challenges and issues to watch for along the way? What does the process look like, and how do you know you're getting it right?

This chapter illustrates one approach through the example of the Myelin Repair Foundation (MRF), an innovative nonprofit biotech research organization that was founded to manage and nurture a collaborative innovation network. We will follow the development of the MRF from its inception and describe how it initially overcame a number of key challenges to catalyze and establish the core of the network. We will look at the actions taken by the founders to build and nurture it, and ensure its successful functioning. We will then take an in-depth look at the specific processes and methods used to extend the network for greater success—and to evaluate the effectiveness of its collaboration model. In particular, we will detail a process, culminating in a workshop, that helped the MRF navigate, understand, and leverage the scientific networks that existed beyond its core network.

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## The Myelin Repair Foundation

At the age of 20, Scott Johnson was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS), a degenerative neurological disorder that affects more than 2.5 million people worldwide. At the time, he was told he would have to wait 30 to 50 years for an effective therapy. Frustrated by the slow pace of research and treatment development, Scott founded the MRF in 2002.

MRF states that its primary goals are to “speed the time it takes to discover, develop, and deliver treatments to multiple sclerosis patients who simply can't afford to wait.”<sup>3</sup> The focus of the MRF is myelin repair, a promising new area in MS research that was receiving little attention or funding. Myelin, a substance that coats nerve axons and facilitates electrical conductivity, deteriorates in patients with MS.

The challenges facing Scott Johnson and others searching for a treatment for MS are complex and multifaceted—not unlike those in most early-stage research in biomedicine. Biomedical R&D outputs have been flat, if not decreasing, in

recent years. The average cost to develop a new drug has increased from under \$500 million to over \$1.2 billion, while the time to market has doubled to 12 years. But before potential new drugs or therapies make it to the commercial labs of the big pharmaceutical companies for development and trials, viable drug targets must be identified.

Much of this early-stage research to identify promising targets takes place in the labs of academia. Organized for creativity in fundamental research—and established within the context of the academic career path—these labs can inadvertently slow the pace of innovation. Because academics are rewarded for being the first to publish original ideas, there is little incentive to share findings. This system has encouraged isolation and a lack of trust, driving some scientists to withhold publication of important intermediate results, sometimes for years, until the time is “right.” As a result, innovation and discoveries happen sequentially, with scientists able to build on each other’s ideas only after they have been fully tested, published in a peer reviewed journal, or patented. This process can take years.

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## Laying the Basis of a Collaborative Innovation Network

Scott Johnson recognized that no one firm, institution, or scientist was going to solve the problem anytime soon. He resolved to find a way to narrow the gap between academic research and new cures for MS by building a network of leading scientists willing to collaborate. The process he followed provides a road map for organizations seeking to build a collaborative innovation network. It comprises five key steps.

### 1. Identify and Catalyze the Core

Scott’s first step was to understand the network of MS scientists and science and to use this knowledge to build the MRF core network. To that end, he set up a business advisory council—mostly friends and acquaintances who formed the inner core of the network in its early days. He created a vision for the organization that was to become the MRF and set out to share his ideas with the leading scientists in the field of MS.

A turning point in his efforts to gain access to this network came in 2002, when Scott had the good fortune of attending a Gordon Research Conference on myelin. The Gordon Research Conferences are small gatherings of top scientists that provide an international forum for the presentation and discussion of frontier research in the biological, chemical, and physical sciences, and their related

technologies.<sup>4</sup> Attendance at such a conference is by invitation only, but the chairman, intrigued by Scott's vision, agreed that Scott should join the meeting. This gave him an opportunity to identify some of the most influential researchers in the field and assess who might share his vision of a collaborative approach.

Following the conference, Scott reached out to 40 of these researchers to share his vision for the MRF and invite input on who should be included on the core team. He received feedback from an encouraging 32 researchers with an average three-and-a-half-page response. Scott used the feedback to create a matrix of who was connected to whom, assessed individuals' propensity to collaborate, and reviewed the scientists' published literature to fully understand their areas of focus. From this crude network analysis, he short-listed 7 scientists and then selected 5 whom he would approach.

## 2. Align on a Common Vision

All five scientists agreed to participate in a meeting with the MRF advisory board convened by Scott and Dr. Martin Raff, an internationally renowned neuroscientist who is on the jury of the prestigious Lasker Award, a member of the National Academy of Science, and coauthor of *Molecular Biology of the Cell*, the seminal text on the subject. At this meeting, Scott shared his vision for the MRF and rallied the scientists around a goal to cut the estimated time to develop viable treatment targets from 15 to 20 years down to 5 years through scientific collaboration.

No one had asked the scientists to step up to a tangible goal like that before. Although the possibility of funding was laid on the table, what intrigued and captured the imagination of the scientists was Scott's vision of accelerating their learning and the research process through collaboration.

## 3. Build Trust

In the following months and into the fall of 2003, numerous opportunities were created to bring the scientists together so that they could build personal relationships and iron out the details of their collaborative undertaking. Meanwhile, Scott developed a strategic plan for the MRF and raised seed money.

Despite the participants' alignment around the goal, there was some initial resistance to the proposed collaborative research process. This was an entirely new approach, and the scientists were not fully ready to adhere to some essential working guidelines and mechanisms for collaborating, sharing knowledge, learning, and protecting their intellectual property (IP). Fortunately, one of the researchers, Bob Miller, was able to help convince the others of the value of signing on to such a progressive endeavor.

By June 2004, the MRF had raised \$1 million in seed capital, and the group formally initiated its research program. The core group of scientists (now referred to as principal investigators, or PIs) and the graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and technicians involved in their respective labs gathered at the kick-off meeting. The PIs shared their current and unpublished research—a highly unusual practice for scientists. In fact, some participants from the labs expressed concern at the level of sharing. The MRF was prepared for this reaction: it had invested significantly in educating the PIs on the importance of confidentiality and how IP could and must be protected in the context of a collaborative undertaking. The MRF also implemented a formal framework to facilitate and ensure this protection.

The meeting set the tone for the network. At the time of the formal kick-off, the group of researchers had spent two years building trust and creating opportunities for interaction. By the time the scientists finally began working together and funding was distributed, they were confident that their ideas would be protected and that they would all benefit from the collaboration. This foundation of trust among the leading researchers enabled the labs to work together on an ongoing basis. Such collaboration, across disciplines and across institutions, is highly unusual in the research world.

When encouraging collaboration of this kind, it is critical to remember that IP is an extremely important, but often overlooked, aspect of trust in collaborative innovation networks. The fear of stolen ideas or unfair compensation or recognition can cause scientists to avoid sharing discoveries and collaborating with others. A key to the MRF's success was its robust approach to protecting IP to foster an environment of trust and transparency among its researchers. The MRF hired lawyers to identify and assess critical IP and then archive it for patent protection, and developed agreements with participating institutions to share royalties on patents filed on any of the discoveries funded by the MRF.

#### **4. Share Leadership and Accountability**

One of the key determinants of the success of collaborative innovation networks is shared leadership and accountability. MRF researchers jointly develop the MRF research plan. They iterate rapidly on the plan, reviewing their results as a group three times a year and refining their approach as necessary, on the basis of progress and any new discoveries. This process both allows and requires them to play a leadership role in setting the MRF's overall direction and research agenda. Further, everyone shares accountability for the results.

This progressive and collaborative approach allows the scientists to work in parallel to solve problems and simultaneously build on one another's progress;

each is aware of the work of the other researchers in the network and how it may inform the course of his or her own investigation. This, in turn, accelerates the research process.

## 5. Establish Norms of Interaction

How does the MRF work in practice? What are the norms of interaction and communication that enable it to resolve management and communication challenges in academic research and to encourage scientists to collaborate across institutions and disciplines?

MRF's collaborative approach, which it calls the Accelerated Research Collaboration (ARC) model, incorporates a number of mechanisms to ensure that interactions between network members are frequent, easy, and low cost. It does this both by establishing norms of interaction and by facilitating the technology-enabled exchange of rich information. These interaction mechanisms include the following:

- A shared technology platform that links all participants.
- A practice of sharing results in real time—as soon as a discovery is made, the results are shared with the other members of the network. Transparency and visibility into one another's work reinforce trust and serve as a form of reputational motivation.
- Monthly conference calls.
- Daily interaction, often facilitated by MRF COO Rusty Bromley and VP for Drug Discovery Jay Tung, who are in constant contact with the labs. Rusty and Jay act as hubs, or bridges, in the network, spanning different groups and facilitating the communication of their diverse ideas among the network members. The existence of network enablers such as Rusty and Jay—senior, well-respected individuals who facilitate the flow of ideas in the network—is also a feature of other successful collaborative innovation networks. For example, at P&G, individuals known as “receptors” help new ideas from outside the organization navigate the requisite internal systems and processes, including senior decision-making forums.

By 2007, it was clear that the MRF's ARC model was highly productive. In less than five years the group had identified 19 potential therapeutic targets, 12 of which are being advanced in further studies.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the MRF recognized the need to look at ways to support an accelerated process for validation and commercialization of these targets.

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## Extending the Network

In 2007, the MRF was poised to build on its early successes. It set out to do three things: (1) take stock of its progress, (2) enhance its network for basic research, and (3) begin exploring ways to extend the collaborative approach downstream toward clinical testing and, ultimately, bringing new treatments to market.

It was at this time that the MRF turned to my colleagues and me at The Boston Consulting Group (BCG). Scott Johnson, an alumnus of the consulting firm, had tapped into the BCG network for support and advice on and off over the years of MRF's development. And Scott felt that at this stage in the MRF's evolution, BCG could add value in addressing these three strategic objectives.

We agreed on a scope of work that would touch on all three, with a special focus on the third. Much of BCG's work with the MRF focused on understanding whether the established ARC approach could be extended and replicated into the different environment of later-stage research and preclinical testing. As an adjunct to this analysis, we conducted a detailed examination of how the ARC approach worked in practice and if it could be improved even further.

This module of work broke down into major streams: a *discovery process* to explore enhancements to the MRF's network and a *validation process* to explore the effectiveness of the MRF's ARC model.

### The Discovery Process

This work stream leveraged the MRF's rich domain knowledge and BCG's proprietary network visualization tools and process expertise to map, navigate, and analyze existing innovation networks—and to reveal critical opportunities. In particular, we worked together to answer the following questions:

- Who are the potential industry partners for downstream activity, such as validation and commercialization?
- Which companies have existing expertise in R&D related to central nervous system issues?
- Who might be promising adjacent space collaborators?
- Are there other researchers beyond those in MRF's existing network that would add value to the organization's research agenda?
- Are there relevant activities that are not currently on our radar screen?

The discovery process culminated in a day-long Discovery Workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to scout for and assess key players—to understand

what they were working on and how collaborating with them would further the MRF's own research agenda.

To lay the foundation for a successful workshop, we kicked off an intensive two-week preparatory effort to build trust and engagement with MRF staff, to generate hypotheses and refine the discovery scope, and to develop the relevant datasets for the Discovery Workshop.

This preparatory phase comprised four elements that are common to efforts to understand and enhance collaborative innovation networks. The work was designed to achieve results in a very short period of time, without a huge investment of resources.

**1. *Fostering Trust and Engagement*** The first step is to directly engage senior management and scientist teams in the process, including setting the overall objectives and time frame. At the MRF, we met with senior managers to demonstrate the approach and methodology by running through a sample discovery process using a narrowly defined set of preliminary data in a related technology area. This not only gave the MRF a feel for the process but also built confidence while illustrating the kinds of insights the process could yield. Once engaged, managers enthusiastically contributed to shaping the MRF-specific network analysis.

**2. *Defining the Scope*** Another important success factor was achieving consensus rapidly on the scope of the scouting effort. How broadly would we define the research interests and technologies that were relevant to the MRF's mission? Getting the scope right is a crucial and often very technical step in the process, requiring input from specialists in the scientific domain under investigation. If done correctly, scoping the discovery process not only saves time and multiple iterations but also determines whether you are able to uncover important innovations and achieve significant results.

In the case of the MRF, we decided that the most direct approach would be to focus on specific protein targets with relevance to MS, identified with help from the MRF researchers. The team then worked closely with scientist teams to develop a range of search parameters and strategies. Importantly, rather than looking exclusively at myelin-related research connected to the chosen targets, we broadened the scope to include adjacent spaces associated with neurodegenerative disease on the hypothesis that some of the work would have applicability to the MRF's mission. This decision proved to be very fruitful.

**3. *Taking an Analytic, Data-Driven Approach*** The Discovery Workshop process involves sifting through huge quantities of often very technical data, which can be very time consuming and complex. In some cases, it involves including primary

data gleaned from discussions with leading practitioners in the field. The only way to distill these mountains of data into meaningful insights is to apply a heavily analytic, data-driven approach that leverages sophisticated tools.

The team used multiple sources of innovation data (including patent filings and scientific journal articles). Because we were mapping scientific collaboration networks, these secondary sources of information were deemed to provide a fairly accurate representation of the collaboration taking place in the fields under investigation. In other innovation scouting work in health care, especially when it focuses more on downstream technologies, a range of additional data sources have been leveraged, including FDA approvals, press releases, and clinical trials data. We refined the underlying datasets throughout the process, working closely with MRF scientific consultants who helped with validation and triangulation of the results. The outcome included a series of focused maps of complex networks as well as various overviews and landscapes in the areas of deep interest to the MRF (see Figures 15.1, 15.2, and 15.3).

**4. *Envisioning and Exploring Preliminary Networks*** The next step in the discovery process involved exploring multiple types of collaboration networks: individual scientist collaboration (coauthorship) networks, institutional and organizational collaboration networks, citation networks, idea networks, and technology networks. The MRF team followed connections in the data to understand collaboration patterns, technology leadership (who was citing whom), and what scientists were working on similar or related topics but weren't necessarily working together. Network analytics and metrics were applied to understand the most central players. However, much of the attention was focused on understanding the periphery because MRF was either aware of or already heavily involved at the core.

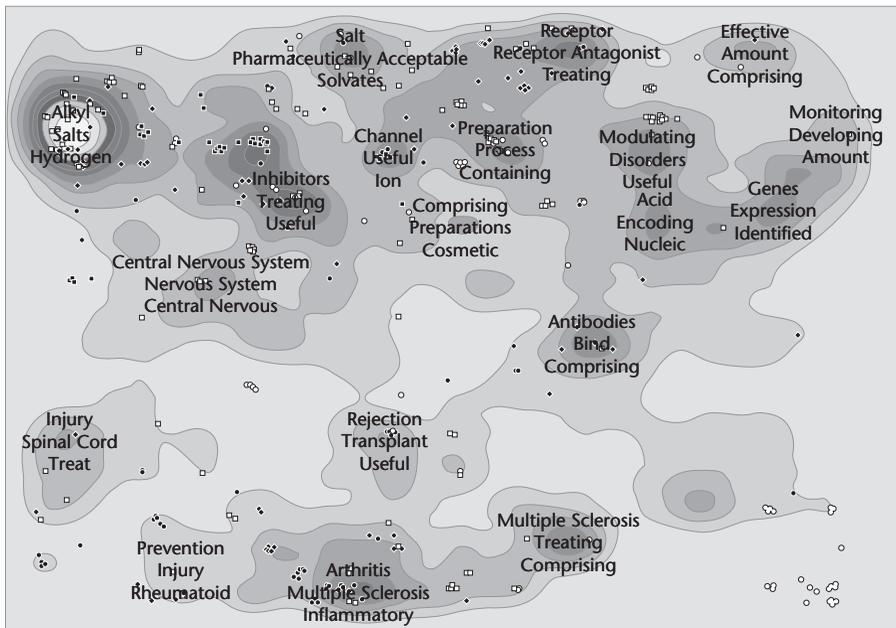
It was this focus on the periphery, or the “long tail” of innovation, that ultimately provided the most rewarding results.

## Conducting the Discovery Workshop

With all of the preparation complete, we were ready for the Discovery Workshop. In addition to the BCG team, there were eight participants—a mixture of MRF staff and scientific consultants. Although the day-long session began with a carefully scripted overview, it was designed to be highly interactive, with participants able to explore various networks and landscapes live and in real time.

After the overview, which provided participants with a map to the general findings and the breadth of the underlying network data on which they could draw, we gave a quick primer on how to interpret various network visuals and content visualizations.

FIGURE 15.1 TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPES



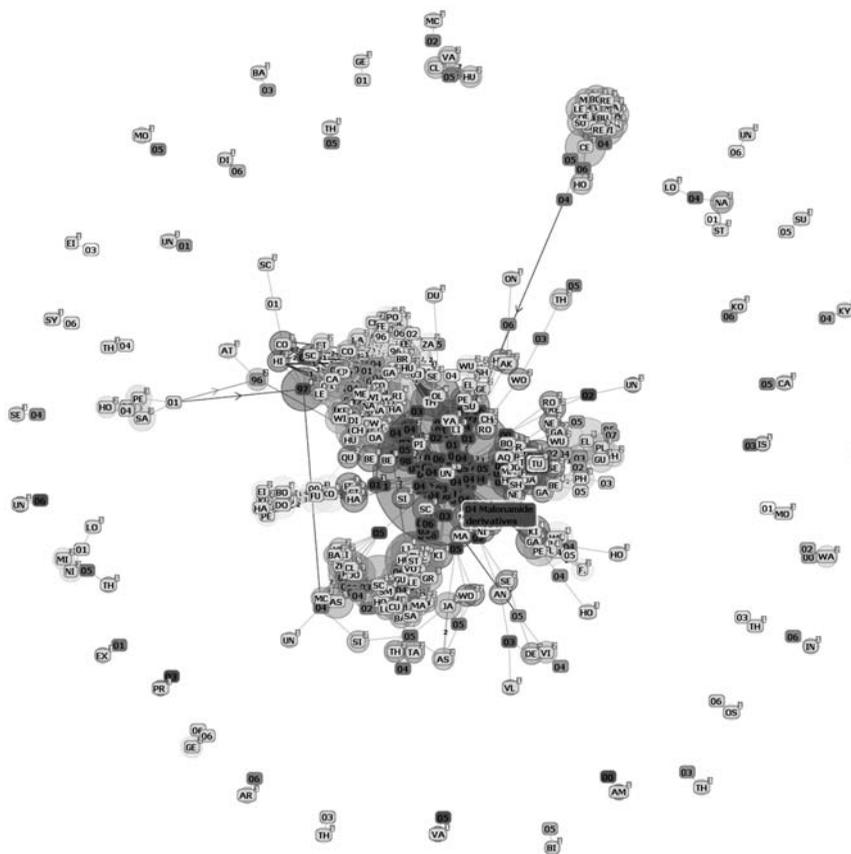
"Themescape"<sup>1</sup> maps cluster patents or publications on the basis of shared semantics in their titles, abstracts, or full text. This map, for example, thematically clusters information associated with nearly 5,000 patents selected because they contained keywords associated with multiple sclerosis as well as with related drug treatments and mechanisms of action. The dots represent patents held by top pharmaceutical companies.

<sup>1</sup> Developed using Aureka software from Thomson Innovation.

We then moved into the interactive portion of the workshop, in which participants explored the data in real time. The tools enabled them to zoom in on specific players, technologies, or other topics that were either unfamiliar or of particular interest.

This real-time exploration was made possible by three things. First, the process, roles, and expectations were defined in advance. Second, participants were given a demonstration of how to interpret and what to look for in the various visuals and maps. Third, innovative interactive tools were used to let participants explore the networks and semantic maps in varying levels of detail. This allowed for deeper exploration, for example, of areas such as the claims of a specific patent or article abstracts for an author.

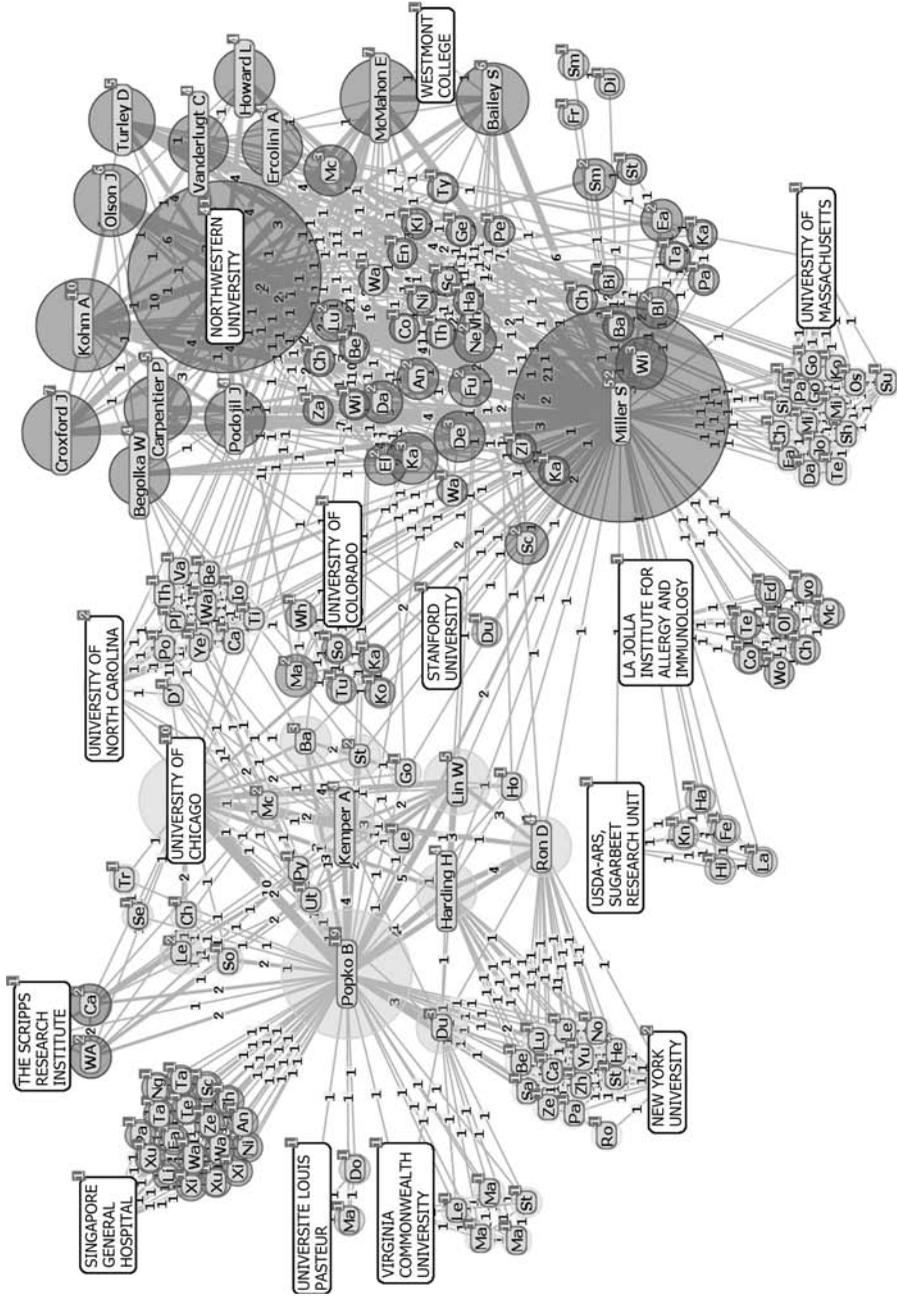
FIGURE 15.2 LONG TAIL ANALYSIS



A key goal of the network analysis was to identify novel approaches and new or previously unknown players. Shown here is the patent citation map of inventors and assignees for all patents filed in the past several years relating to one of the specific protein targets of interest to MRF researchers. The network map shows who is citing or being cited by whom. The findings on the periphery of this network proved to be most valuable to MRF.

The MRF Discovery Workshop was very much an MRF-directed investigation, in which the BCG team played a navigational role. The team was careful to document the process in detail, capturing findings, observations, and areas for further investigation, and synthesizing these for distribution to participants. The group also developed action steps, which were assigned to individuals during the workshop. We worked with the MRF team for another week to pull together the findings and implications and to detail an action plan for follow-up.

FIGURE 15.3 NETWORK HUBS AND LEADERS



This network map shows the collaboration network in 2007 of two key MRF researchers, Brian Popko and Steven Miller. It is evident from this map, as well as from the larger context of work being done in this area, that these two researchers are major hubs in research related to myelin repair. (To view a brief video of the Popko/Miller network over time, and the outcomes of the Discovery process, please visit <http://mrf.bcg.com>.)

## Outcomes

The three-week Discovery process yielded a number of important and very tangible outcomes, including the identification of new and emerging technologies and approaches that could potentially be applied to the science and treatment of MS. Several firms were pinpointed as potential commercial partners on the basis of their other research investments. Notably, one important Japanese biotech firm was revealed to have filed patents related to a key protein target, which the MRF was interested in but had only just begun to pursue. The Japanese firm was at least two years ahead, and the learnings from the patents allowed the MRF to accelerate its own investigations and avoid a potentially time-consuming and expensive duplication of effort. It was also clear that the Japanese firm should be on the list of companies to approach as potential partners.

Stepping back from the details, it became apparent very early on that had the methodologies and tools we used been available to the MRF in 2002, Scott would have been able to catalyze the initial MRF network much more rapidly.

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## How Has the MRF's Model Performed?

MRF's researchers believe that the most significant outcome of the MRF model of collaborative innovation has been accelerated learning. By sharing discoveries in real time among network members, the scientists can leverage one another's learning in an iterative way, without having to wait months and years for these discoveries to be formally published or patented.

Network analysis enables us to measure this progress. Prior to becoming part of the MRF innovation network, the core labs in the network had not published any patents. Today, five years after the launch of the MRF, the labs have filed 13 patents, and 5 or 6 additional patent applications are being prepared. There has been a similar growth in the publication of academic papers. In the five years prior to becoming part of the MRF, the PIs had published 62 papers. In the five years since the establishment of the MRF, this number has grown to 174, a nearly threefold increase.

But even more striking is the growth in the collaboration networks of the PIs. In the five years prior to the establishment of the MRF, the individual PIs (who were not yet members of this network) had copublished with 147 different collaborators, 45 percent of whom were outside their core institutions, and none of the PIs had worked together. In the five years since, the network has grown to 576 collaborators, 48 percent of whom are outside the PIs' core organizations. On average, each PI has published with more than 90 coauthors. In addition, they are collaborating directly with one another.

Indeed, the map of collaboration networks of MRF scientists since the founding of the MRF shows a dramatic picture of the evolution and growth in collaboration networks. The findings show that not only are MRF scientists working more closely with one another, but they are also expanding their own collaboration networks to encompass other institutions and researchers. The network lens clearly verifies the effectiveness of the MRF's collaboration model and helps them communicate this to stakeholders and funders.

Some of this success might be attributed to the natural evolution of the careers of talented academics. But how much is due to their involvement in the MRF collaboration network? To begin to answer this question, it is useful to compare MRF's PIs with a comparable group of scientists working in related scientific areas. We examined five eminent scientists who did not become part of the MRF but were present at the 2002 Gordon Research Conference on myelin attended by Scott Johnson. In the five years from 1999 to 2004, the combined publication activity of this group was 52 articles. In the past five years, this group has published 124 papers, which represents a respectable increase of more than 200 percent but falls short of the nearly 300 percent increase achieved by MRF scientists. The average number of papers published per year by the MRF network increased from 12 per scientist in 2004 to 36 per year by the end of 2005. For the non-MRF group, this number went from 10 per year to 25. And, with the exception of one individual, the non-MRF group is collaborating on average with a much smaller network of scientists.

But perhaps the most enduring legacy of the MRF case is its clear demonstration of the power of networks for managing science-based organizations. The network lens can create considerable value as a means for building, managing, monitoring, and measuring the success of collaborative innovation models, and for communicating the value of these models to stakeholders.

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## Lessons for Other Organizations

The process employed by the MRF can provide significant upside for nonprofit and for-profit organizations alike. Potential benefits include optimizing the return on R&D and innovation investments by leveraging potentially lower-cost external resources, refocusing resources, accelerating the discovery process, and achieving more and better innovation.

These guidelines can help organizations attempting a similar approach increase their chances of achieving the desired results:

**Get buy-in and involvement from scientific experts.** For scientists, it is a point of pride to know who the key players are in their area of expertise, and

often a large share of the findings from the workshop process confirm their existing knowledge. This confirmation makes them more receptive to network insights in areas less familiar to them.

**Leverage external perspectives to help envisage and navigate the network.** Whether this takes the form of bringing in an outside advisor as the MRF did, or involving experts from outside the organization in problem definition and scoping, there is demonstrable value in accessing external topic and process knowledge.

**Avoid boiling the ocean.** Careful technology scoping and definition of the underlying dataset are the first steps to avoid becoming awash in a sea of complex data.

**Conduct pre-work, and script the Discovery Workshop in advance.** The Discovery Workshop process is not just a random walk through networks. The team that gathers and analyzes the data and generates the networks as part of the preparation phase has a critical role in hypothesis generation, navigation, and group facilitation. It is essential for the team to provide an overview and to have some initial pathways of inquiry clearly defined to inspire the team's creativity. As participants become familiar with the space and the tools, they can begin to steer the investigation, particularly when they come across companies, institutions, individuals, or science that spark their interest or are unfamiliar.

**Be rigorous about defining follow-up actions.** In the course of the workshop, it is essential to establish a clear follow-up plan. Ideally, those responsible for follow-up are engaged in the process from the beginning and will be taking part in the workshop.

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## Endnotes

1. The author thanks Rusty Bromley, Simon Goodall, and Matthew Clark for their contributions to this chapter.
2. BCG research, October 2007.
3. [www.myelinrepair.org](http://www.myelinrepair.org).
4. [www.grc.org](http://www.grc.org).
5. [www.myelinrepair.org/myelin\\_repair/five\\_years\\_of\\_progress.shtml](http://www.myelinrepair.org/myelin_repair/five_years_of_progress.shtml).

## CONNECTING THROUGH IMPROVISATION

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Christiane Frischmuth

Networking is the art of building relationships. It requires self-awareness, an understanding of the general patterns of interaction, and the ability to react, in the moment, to both the expected and the unexpected. It requires improvisation. Most of us respond to the ever-shifting nature of human interaction instinctively, with little awareness of how we are doing it. Sometimes our habitual, unselfconscious behavior helps us build productive relationships; sometimes it does not. If we develop an awareness of how we respond to others and how they respond to us—an awareness of the emotions and reactions that people bring to relationships and how we build on them—we can demonstrate a core principle of networking: in every relationship is the potential for cocreating something new.

I have helped people in organizations increase their awareness of the patterns of human interaction and improve the quality of the connections they make through various exercises that incorporate improvisation techniques. These techniques, which are similar to those used to train improvisation actors, can be thought of as a rehearsal for real life.

By bringing people together without a script or even much of a plan, these improv exercises force participants to be fully present in the moment, to listen attentively and respond appreciatively to one another, and to recognize that every interaction offers unlimited possibilities for creative responses. Through these exercises, participants become more aware of the many subconscious choices they make as they react to others and the emotions behind those reactions.

As they build off of one another's actions and emotions in real time, they may broaden their own repertoire of responses and develop the capability to adapt to all kinds of situations. In addition, they learn that approaching relationships from a position of acceptance and appreciation leads to positive emotions and powerful connections.

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## Getting Started

The improv exercises I describe in this chapter can be used on their own or woven into workshops and meetings designed to strengthen networks and relationships. They also work well in leadership development programs that focus not just on the quantity of connections a leader requires but on the quality of those ties. Many of the exercises reinforce the behaviors Rob Cross and others have identified as creating energy in networks, such as being fully present in conversations and building on other people's ideas.<sup>1</sup> Some of the exercises also provide opportunities for participants to practice some of the behaviors necessary for innovation: the ability to drastically change course or incrementally build on what currently exists.

### Rules for Participants

Participants should follow a few simple rules:

- Focus on seeing and building relationships.
- Look for patterns and then heighten them by doing more of the same or the opposite.
- Jump into each exercise wholeheartedly and align yourself with the other participants.
- Support the efforts of other participants and help them succeed instead of trying to grab the spotlight and be the “funny star performer.”
- Understand, explore, and stay with the problem, the situation. Moving to the solution kills the scene.
- Approach each exercise with the mindset that you are the expert at whatever you do. In improv, doing something confidently, no matter how right or wrong it is, allows for creativity. In improv, nothing has to be as it is in real life—if you are joining your partners in building a rocket ship to the moon, approach the task as if all of you know exactly what you are doing.
- Assertively state what is going on to build momentum and produce clarity.
- Have fun—there is no such thing as failure or mistakes.

## Debriefing

Participants will get the most out of these exercises if you allow some time at the end for debriefing. A debriefing can be a short, light group discussion or a more intensive session in which participants first spend some time in solo reflection and then share their insights with a partner. Debriefings can also include feedback from the facilitator and peer feedback among participants.

To warm people up, it is best to start with a general question, such as “What was the experience like?” You can either hear from as many people as possible, asking them to keep their comments short, or move on to another question after just a few people offer their reflections.

The debriefing questions and learning points I’ve provided can be used in various ways. You can go through all of them or only one or two, depending on your objectives for the session and the time available. If you choose to focus on just one question or learning point—such as “What is the most important insight I’ve gained from this exercise?”—you can ask participants to discuss this in pairs or small groups and then report to the larger group. You could also guide such a discussion by asking participants to engage with one another in a group setting by first taking an answer from one participant and then asking others to comment on it (“How does his or her answer relate to your experience? Did you notice something different?”) before moving on to another answer and a potentially different learning point.

Try to stick with one theme, calling for participants to build on it, before moving on to another point. It is a good practice to finish a debriefing by asking participants how the exercise and the insights gained from it relate to their work and the dynamics in their organization or work group. If you are continuing with more improv exercises, you can also ask participants what they want to try to incorporate into subsequent exercises, based on what they have learned so far.

## A Word to Facilitators About Scene Exercises

Scene exercises are usually done in pairs or with up to four people. Players in the scene perform it in the middle of the room while the others sit or stand to the sides or in a circle around them. The audience shows its support by listening, laughing, and applauding. After the scene is done, the next pair or group of four is called up.

In a large group, scenes can be run simultaneously, with no participants acting as an audience. In this situation, participants might have more time to run their scenes and experiment with variations. The facilitator’s job would be to explain the instructions, call time, and conduct the debriefing. If there is more

than one facilitator, they can split the group in half for the debriefing, thereby giving participants more of a chance to share their observations.

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## The Plan of Exercises

The exercises are grouped as follows:

**Warming up and generating group energy.** These exercises help people get to know one another and begin to develop a group identity. They are best at the start of a workshop or meeting. They introduce the principles of improv and generate light, fun, collaborative, and action-oriented energy.

**Moving toward and moving away from.** These are more elaborate exercises, conducted mostly in pairs. They focus on various aspects of relationships, such as creating alliances and collaborating productively with opponents. They are best done after some warm-up exercises.

**Building synergy.** These focus on creating synergy within a group and are best done after the exercises in either of the prior groups.

**Relationships within hierarchy.** These should follow exercises from either of the two preceding sets. They explore participants' awareness of and reaction to others' hierarchical status.

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## Warming Up and Generating Group Energy

The next three exercises set the right tone at the beginning of an improv workshop or group session. The job of the facilitator is to keep the experience light and fun so participants begin to relax, feel at ease, and take risks.

### Exercise 1. Learning Names

This is a great opening activity to help participants learn one another's names and build confidence for subsequent exercises. This works for groups of up to 15 people.

**Instructions** Participants stand in a circle. The exercise is conducted in rounds, each of which requires participants to be increasingly alert and attentive. Do as many rounds as you feel the group can do without getting bored. Rounds

do not have to occur in a sequence; you can jump from Round 1 to Round 4 or do Rounds 1 and 2 only or Rounds 1 and 3.

**Round 1** Moving clockwise around the circle, each person says his or her name.

**Round 2** Moving clockwise around the circle, each person says his or her name and adds a “trademark” movement and expression (such as a facial expression or a certain tone of voice). Everybody in the circle then repeats that person’s name, along with the trademark movement and expression. The next person in the circle then says his name and adds a trademark movement and expression. Again, everybody repeats it. Continue around the circle.

**Round 3** One person says his or her name with the movement and expression and then says the name, including the trademark movement and expression, of the person to the left. That person then says his name with the movement and expression and then says the name, including the movement and expression, of the person to the left. Rather than continuing to go around the circle in one direction, a participant can change direction by saying the name of the person to the right. The movement then continues to the right, until someone decides to change the direction again. Anyone can change the direction at any time, so participants must be ready to respond.

**Round 4** This is like Round 3, but instead of moving in a circle, each person can call the name (using the movement and expression) of anyone in the circle.

**Debrief** What did participants need to do to keep each round moving along?

**Learning Points** The more complex rounds require all participants to pay attention at all times, making eye contact with others to make sure the person is ready for his or her turn.

In conversations, presentations, and any kind of collaboration, we tend to communicate our points of view and then stop listening until it’s our turn to contribute again. If we don’t get a chance to make what we think is an important point, we often get upset and stop paying attention. We also tend to focus on speaking, not on making sure that what we have to say has been received and understood. This exercise requires participants to listen constantly and be ready to respond and receive.

## Exercise 2. Stage Presence

This exercise introduces people to the group in a fun way. It is a great way to break the ice and get people off their chairs. While it might make some people

uncomfortable at first, most participants find that the exercise gets increasingly easy because everyone is joining in.

**Instructions** Participants stand in a circle. The facilitator explains that each person will introduce the person to the left by name and assign a task for the person to perform immediately.

For example, the facilitator is next to John, who is next Alice, who is next to Sally.

The facilitator says, “Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce John. He will be your flight attendant.” John then must do a short pantomime in which he is a flight attendant. The introduction and pantomime should take no more than one minute.

John then introduces Alice: “Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce Alice. She is the president of your company and will give you an inspiring message for your future.” Alice must then give a short message.

Alice then introduces Sally: “Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce Sally. Sally will show you her ice-skating talents.” Sally then has to demonstrate her ice-skating talent. And so on.

### **Debrief**

- What was it like to be “on stage”?
- Did it get easier? Why or why not?
- What did the group do to make it easier or harder to be “on stage”?
- How does this relate to your life and work?

**Learning Points** This exercise invites participants to be aware of their “presence,” the way they appear to others. If through your presence you emit productive and positive energy, you will draw others to you and inspire their admiration and trust. One way to develop a strong presence in this exercise, and in any activity, is to step into what you do with gusto, even when you are required to do something new and even uncomfortable. This does not mean that you must try hard to be funny and over the top. All that’s required is serious engagement. In this exercise, as in so many instances of human interaction, participants can set one another up to succeed by not making the task too hard or embarrassing.

## **Exercise 3. Have You Ever?**

This exercise helps people become acquainted. It generates lots of energy and laughter, quickly helping participants overcome any initial hesitation they might have to engage with others. This activity has been used all over the world, in different settings, cultures, and languages.

**Instructions** This exercise is similar to musical chairs. Facilitators make a circle, either with chairs or with spots of tape on the floor—there should end up being one spot less than the number of participants. Each participant takes a spot around the circle except for one, who stands in the middle. That person asks a “have you ever” question, such as “Have you ever gone fishing?” All those who have gone fishing must then change places with one another. All those who haven’t gone fishing stay put. The person in the middle tries to claim the spot of someone who is changing places, who then becomes the person in the middle.

I find that initially, questions tend to be quite tame, such as “Have you ever been to Paris?” or “Have you ever been to a pro basketball game?” The longer it runs, the more daring the questions usually become: “Have you ever been in love?” or “Have you ever been afraid to speak in public?” This helps break down barriers and quickly creates a comfort level within the group.

**Debrief** What do you know about one another now that you did not know before?

**Learning Points** The main point of this exercise is to have fun and get to know the participants. A facilitator could make a deeper point about the various emotions and responses (anger, frustration, excitement) that can go along with being in the center and losing one’s spot.

#### Exercise 4. Yes, Let’s

This exercise works with any group of four or more. It can be used at the start of a workshop, following a warm-up exercise, or in the middle to reenergize participants and remind them of general collaboration principles.

**Instructions** Participants stand in a circle. One person starts by saying “Let’s . . .” and then names an activity. All others say in unison, “Yes, let’s” and then engage in that activity together. For example, one person says, “Let’s build a campfire.” All others then rush to build the campfire together. One person might pretend to bring logs, another mimic folding paper, another striking a match, and so on.

Whenever another person thinks the current activity has gone on long enough (there is no right or wrong timing), he or she says, “Let’s . . . :” and names a new activity, which the others immediately start doing together.

In a large group, participants can do the activity on their own instead of as a group—for example, building a campfire alone instead of working with all the other participants to do so.

The goal is to move fast, be prepared to be a leader and follower, and engage wholeheartedly in whatever is proposed.

### **Debrief**

- What was it like to be a leader or initiator? What was it like to be a follower? What was it like to move without hesitation and fully commit energy to the activity?
- What was it like not to commit fully?
- Did your commitment change depending on who proposed an activity?
- How did you know when it was time to suggest another activity? Were there times when the initiation of a new activity was too slow, too fast? What was the impact?
- Did you notice yourself doing anything new or familiar, such as initiating often or seldom, committing fully or not?

**Learning Points** People often play roles either consciously or unconsciously. Those roles can be exactly right in a given situation or not. Being aware of those roles and their impact is essential to the ability to influence the outcome of a conversation or a group effort. The greater range of roles a person plays, the more he or she can adjust to a given situation and reach a desired outcome. Roles can be leader, follower, catalyst, mediator, peacemaker, and so on.

It is important for participants to notice not only the roles with which they are more comfortable but also the dynamics of the group setting. For instance, some people might find it easier to jump into an activity that someone else suggested, which indicates an ability to trust others and put the group's objectives above their own. They also might notice that their ability to engage wholeheartedly in an activity depends on who proposed it, which indicates that they may hold some assumptions about certain people that could interfere with the functioning of the group.

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## **Moving Toward and Moving Away From**

In relationships with those in our network, we constantly choose whom we engage and how we interact. We select our friends and allies and then take actions that either bring us together or move us apart. These two exercises heighten this experience so that participants can be more aware of how they manage their networks and create close and distant relationships with others.

### **Exercise 5. Allies and Opponents**

This activity can generate lots of energy very quickly.

**Instructions** Each person chooses someone to be close to (an ally) and someone to stay away from (an opponent). They do not reveal their choices. They then move around the room, trying to stay away from the opponent and close to the ally. Most likely, someone's ally is someone else's opponent, so the result will be rather chaotic, with rapid movement around the room and creative maneuvering. Make sure nobody gets hurt on furniture in the room.

Stop the activity after five or six minutes.

### **Debrief**

- What was the experience like?
- What was hard? What was easy?
- Did you know who had chosen you as an ally or an opponent?
- What does that mean in terms of life and work?
- How do you develop the capacity to deal with chaos?

**Learning Points** This exercise can help expose the ever-shifting dynamics in the workplace. It's not possible or even desirable to stay away from opponents and close to allies at all times. And it's impossible to track these dynamics.

## **Exercise 6. Scene Work**

This exercise can be used after a warm-up exercise, in preparation for a group conversation, or to provide a break for a group or pair stuck in an unproductive pattern. It helps a group develop an awareness of relationship building, communication, and emotional intelligence. It works best in groups with fewer than 10 people.

**Instructions** Two people enter a scene. Either person can start the scene anyway he or she likes—by imagining a particular setting (a café, a PTA meeting) or by assuming different characters (a doctor, a parent). One person starts by saying a sentence with a clearly expressed emotion. If the other person experiences the emotion as positive, he or she takes a step toward the partner and then responds. If the emotion is experienced as negative, the person takes a step away and then responds. For example:

John starts by saying, “When you look at me like that, I want to scream.”  
(anger).

Alice listens, pauses, steps back, and responds, “I can't wait to throw my glasses at you.”

John listens, pauses, steps back, and responds, “I would pick them up and put them back on your nose.”

Alice listens, pauses, steps forward, and so on.

Encourage the participants: Each pair can experiment with heightening negative emotions, such as anger and sadness, which would lead to a continuous stepping back. They could also play with opposites—one round consisting of all negative emotions and the next of all positive. Or one person could use negative emotions and the other positive, which would mean that one person would always step forward and the other would always step back. The important point is to listen carefully, pause, step, and then respond.

To practice innovation, a scene exercise such as this can include various rounds. For instance, John and Alice, described previously, could assume different characters or different situations for each round and see how the experience changes.

### ***Debrief***

- What was the experience like as an individual and as a pair?
- What did you notice about taking a pause and the physical movement before responding?
- How quickly did a pattern emerge, and what did it take to change it?
- What can you learn from this?

***Learning Points*** Emotions play a crucial role in communication. It’s important for participants to note that they have a choice in the emotions they bring to their interactions and in how they react to others’ emotions. They can change the dynamics of a conversation by listening carefully, pausing, and then choosing how to respond. It’s often important to slow down and gather your energy before responding verbally.

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## **Building Synergy**

Now that the participants have experienced moving toward and away from other individuals, it is a good time to bring the entire group together. The next three exercises build a sense of connection between the members of the overall group. The facilitator should invite the group to participate in one or more, depending on how important it is for the particular group to continue to build connection and trust.

## Exercise 7. Machine

This exercise can be used with a group of any size. It usually generates very optimistic feelings that translate into subsequent conversations and group work.

**Instructions** One person starts a repetitive movement. The next person comes in and fits a new movement to the initial movement, the next person adds to that, and so on until the entire group is moving in what looks like a machine. For example, one person could start raising and lowering his or her right arm. The next person could move both hands underneath every time the first person's arm is lowered, as if catching something. The third person could stand opposite them and raise and lower his or her left arm.

The facilitator can ask the group to maintain the pattern but slow it down, speed it up, and then return to the original speed. The facilitator can also ask the group to settle on just one movement and keep it going without using any verbal communication. The result would be everyone doing exactly the same movement at the same speed.

### **Debrief**

- What was the experience like?
- What was it like to slow down or speed up?
- What enabled you to come to one movement without communicating verbally?
- What can we learn from this that might help our work as a group?

**Learning Points** After this exercise, participants generally are impressed that they were able to be in sync with one another and maintain their “machine.” It's important to note that this required them to pay more attention to others than to themselves. They needed to think in terms of the “system” the group had become and pay attention to many nonverbal cues to maintain it.

## Exercise 8. Yes, And

This is a useful exercise for leadership training because it demonstrates the power of aligning members of a group and inspiring them to act as one. This can work for groups as large as 20 people.

**Instructions** Participants form two parallel lines so that each person stands across from a partner in the opposite line. One person starts by making a statement.

The partner must then build on that statement, starting the sentence with “Yes, and.” For example, the first person starts by saying, “I love ice cream.” The person across from him or her then says, “Yes, and I love ice cream with the waffle cone on top” or “Yes, and I love eating ice cream on the beach.” The person diagonally across from him or her says “Yes, and I can’t wait to run into the water.” The partner who stands across from the speaker continues with a “yes, and” statement, and so on.

Partners can also do this exercise in a dialogue, starting each sentence with “Yes, and.” Each pair can take a turn doing this while the other participants watch, or the pairs can conduct their dialogues simultaneously. During this exercise, it is easy to slip in “Yes, but” responses. The facilitator should correct this and point out how that response feels different from “Yes, and.”

### **Debrief**

- What was the energy like?
- Is this a familiar pattern of conversation?
- What energy, mood, and possibilities are generated when people say “Yes, and.”
- How is saying “Yes, and” different from saying “Yes, but” or simply saying “No”?

**Learning Points** It’s important to note that responding to someone by saying “Yes, and” does not mean that you are relinquishing your own point of view. Instead, you are validating the other person’s perspective and then building on it. This kind of exchange integrates various points of view, whereas saying “no” shuts down other voices and halts a conversation.

## **Exercise 9. 21s**

This exercise works well in a group whose members have already developed some trust in one another, so it could fit on the second day or session of a workshop. It works best in groups no larger than 12 people.

**Instructions** Participants stand in a circle. The task is for the group to count collectively to 21, but not in an orderly way around the circle. Someone starts, and then another person says the next number, and so on until the group reaches 21. If two people say the same number at the same time, the group must immediately start over. This exercise is difficult. The facilitator must keep track of time and gauge whether the group should keep trying to reach 21 or not.

**Debrief**

- If your group succeeded, what made that possible?
- If your group did not succeed, why not?
- What was hard? What was easy?
- What changed over the course of the exercise?
- What generates the energy and commitment to keep the group going?

**Learning Points** This can be a frustrating exercise. Participants should note if the same people were persistent in starting over—this is an important role in any group effort. The group might want to consider what other roles are necessary to sustain its work. Some groups experiment with certain techniques, such as saying numbers very quickly or pausing for a long time between numbers. I generally see that neither technique leads to success, but groups that do succeed tend to develop a rhythm, as if people are breathing together.

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## Relationships Within Hierarchy

The next two exercises reveal how someone else's role or perceived power may influence our behaviors toward them and whether we include or exclude them from our networks. The facilitator may want to use one or both of these exercises for groups that will benefit from more diversity in their network hierarchy.

### Exercise 10. Status Scene

This exercise will progress more smoothly with participants who have already tried scene work, so it is an ideal follow-up to the scene work exercise described earlier.

**Instructions** This scene is with four players. Each of the four participants assigns one of the other people a higher status and one a lower status. They do not reveal these assignments. Now the group plays its scene, incorporating those dynamics.

The facilitator gives them a start, such as “You are a group of babysitters, teachers, and doctors sitting in a café.” Participants then begin their conversation.

**Debrief**

- Were you able to pick up who had assigned which status to whom?

- What emerged in the scene?
- What did you notice about your reactions to the statuses that you were conferring onto others and that were conferred onto you?

**Learning Points** Our reactions to people may have less to do with them and more to do with their role and status. For instance, we might be uneasy about approaching someone in a position of power, and we might neglect those at a lower level in the hierarchy. We all need to be able to work effectively with people at all hierarchical levels, and we need to include a diversity of levels in our personal networks.

### Exercise 11. Mirroring

This exercise is particularly useful in a leadership development program and in team-building sessions. It can also set the tone for any meeting or process in which participants must collaborate and move to action.

**Instructions** Participants stand in pairs. The exercise is conducted in three rounds.

**Round 1** Both people put their hands up and hold them as if they were mirror images of each other. One is the leader; the other is the follower. The leader determines the hand movement, which the other person must follow.

Participants are usually cautious in this round.

**Round 2** Now they switch roles. The leader becomes the follower, and the follower becomes the leader.

In this round, participants explore more with either faster or bigger movements, and they realize that the follower must be ready to follow and that the leader must gauge the follower's ability to respond and keep pace.

**Round 3** In this round, no one is the follower or the leader. The pair has to figure out how to be in sync.

This round is usually difficult. Often there is no movement for a while, but lots of eye contact and laughter.

#### **Debrief**

- What happened in Round 1?

- What happened in Round 2? What did you learn between the rounds?
- What happened in Round 3?
- What do you learn about leading and following?

**Learning Points** This exercise explores the responsibilities of a leader and a follower and the ease with which participants can step into either role. Sometimes in organizational work, there is no assigned leader, or roles are unclear or informal. From their experiences in Round 3, participants can explore how in those situations they can still work productively with others.

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## Endnote

- 1 Cross, R., Baker, W. & Parker, A. (2003). What Creates Energy in Organizations? *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 44(4), pp. 51–57.

## HELPING LEADERS UNCOVER HIDDEN ASSETS

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Sally Colella

Leadership development programs present the perfect opportunity for strengthening an organization's networks. Network analysis and network-building activities can be incorporated into existing leadership development programs in ways that will give participants insight into their own personal webs of relationships and forge ties that strengthen the connectivity of the leadership cohort and the organization at large.

Because participants in such a workshop may come from different geographic locations and divisions, and represent a wide range of expertise and professional experience, any ties that develop among them can help bridge disconnected parts of an organization. And as participants share business challenges and support one another in their development activities, they often form the kind of enduring relationships that result in ongoing knowledge sharing, which also benefits not just the individuals involved but the entire organization.

My colleagues and I have found that the formation of relationships in most leadership development programs is left to chance. Participants naturally get to know one another in the course of the program on both a personal and professional level, but they won't necessarily be thinking about how to leverage those ties after the program is over or how to use the program as an opportunity for the kind of network building that can yield valuable returns.

Hidden Assets is a simple activity that, when incorporated into the network component of a leadership development curriculum, can help transform the

program into a network incubator. By articulating both what kind of information and assistance they need and what they can offer to others, participants engage in targeted network building that can help them meet business challenges and advance their professional development goals.

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## A Hidden Assets Program

We have used the Hidden Assets activity in many leadership development programs, with groups of 15 to 125 participants. One instance was in our work with a global environmental not-for-profit we will call Saving Nature, an organization committed to preserving a diversity of natural environments and endangered species around the globe.

Saving Nature operated semi-autonomous offices in various locations, staffed with professionals who rarely traveled to headquarters. This field-based model helped the organization respond to a state's or country's specific dynamics and politics, but it also created network challenges, making it difficult for those who worked in different locations to learn from one another. This strong local identity also led to disconnects between those operating at headquarters and those in the field. As one sees in many organizations structured this way, headquarters often introduces programs and processes that those in the field resist or ignore. In the case of Saving Nature, we used Hidden Assets to help broker introductions that could begin to address the organization's network challenges.

The week-long leadership program in which we introduced the activity was designed to provide participants with skills for communicating and for managing change. The senior executives of Saving Nature also hoped that the program would encourage leaders to form more productive relationships, so the 24 participants were chosen from a mix of departments and from headquarters and the field offices. While many of them had heard each other's names, most had not met in person.

The Hidden Assets activity was part of a network component that was approximately three and a half hours long. We began the component with an hour-long introduction to network thinking and the power of networks in driving individual and organizational performance. After that we did the following:

1. Led each participant through the results of the personal network assessment (PNA) they had taken online before the program (1.5 hours).
2. Took a break (15 minutes).
3. Conducted the Hidden Assets activity (30 minutes).
4. Held a final debriefing discussion to consolidate learning from the entire workshop (15 minutes).

The following sections give details.

## Review of Personal Network Analysis

We distributed hard copies of participants' individualized reports, which had been automatically generated after they had completed the online PNA. We then spent about an hour and a half walking participants through three network dimensions discussed in the reports—structure, relationships, and behavior. These are based on research by Rob Cross, Bob Thomas, Sue Cantrell, and Tom Davenport on the networks of high performers (Cross et al, 2003; Cross & Thomas, 2008).

**Structure** The personalized reports included a diagram of each participant's network, which we used as a graphic illustration of the concept of “open” and “closed” network structures. Open networks are those that include people from a wide range of functions and geographic locations, who do not necessarily have many ties among them and so can offer a great diversity of ideas and opinions. Networks with a closed structure, on the other hand, are composed of people who are themselves tightly connected and so are already working together and most likely represent a much narrower set of insights and views. Not surprisingly, many of the participants who had long worked in a Saving Nature field office had relatively closed networks.

In this conversation, we shared research clearly demonstrating that those with open networks outperform those with closed networks—an idea that was counterintuitive to a number of participants, particularly those leading relatively small groups in front-line positions. Many of these individuals had achieved their current level of success by working in a highly connected group. We emphasized that if they hoped to move into roles with greater responsibility, they would need a broad network that gave them access to information about the different aspects of Saving Nature and its constituents.

We then pushed participants to consider why one would want an open network. Some said that a network with an open structure could help them locate information more quickly when they were faced with a new situation or challenge and give them access to a wealth of perspectives. Some participants also considered the relationship between an open network and complex thinking, noting that conversing with people who hold different and potentially conflicting points of view forces you to juggle and appreciate those divergent outlooks and multiple realities.

**Relationships** When they completed the PNA, participants had been asked to identify three development opportunities and three business goals. The report then helped them to assess whether their networks gave them access to the expertise and support that could help them achieve those objectives.

In this segment of the program, we discussed the finding that high performers make a point of reaching out to people who can help them in various ways; instead of waiting for a new white paper or a class, they are intentional about learning from others, whether the topic is highly technical or more personal in nature. We stressed the important point that the high performer identifies what he or she needs and then seeks those who can provide it.

We then asked participants to consider if their own networks were aligned with their professional and personal needs—both in their current roles and in those to which they aspired. Do their current relationships give them access to the expertise and assistance they need? Where might there be gaps?

One participant noted a consistent element of human nature: we tend to be comfortable with close connections to others who “get it,” or share our world view. The challenge is to reach out and remain connected to those whose views are very different. Often these are the relationships that push us to grow, develop, and be more effective leaders.

**Behaviors** In the final part of the personal network review, we discussed the behaviors that build trusting relationships. We debunked some traditional networking approaches, which focus on building large, superficial networks, and discussed the mindsets and behaviors that help high performers build and maintain productive networks.

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## Hidden Assets Activity

During the next phase of the workshop, the role of the facilitator was to support participants in being very concrete about how they wanted to change their networks and specific actions they could take to achieve those results.

### Preparation: Identifying Strategic Network Opportunities

After working through their personalized reports and discussing the network characteristics of high performers, the participants had begun to identify ways that their networks were limiting their ability to achieve professional and personal objectives. Naturally, different participants found different challenges and made specific commitments to connect with others on a targeted basis.

**Julie** Julie’s biggest challenge was her network structure. She had worked for five years in a New England chapter of Saving Nature. As she interpreted her results, it became obvious to her that she relied on relationships that were almost exclusively

within her state. In some ways, this network was incredibly efficient: she was able to reach out to a broad range of individuals. As a locally oriented fundraiser, this trusted network was critical to her success and that of Saving Nature.

However, Julie realized she was missing key connections to fundraisers in the Western United States and in countries outside of the United States. This was limiting her ability to learn about new, innovative approaches. To continue to develop new ideas, she needed to build geographic diversity into her network.

**Jim** Jim needed to develop a network to support a technology change project. He was seeking to introduce a new software application to both headquarters and regional staff. After examining his network in light of his business goals, he realized that his current network was not sufficiently aligned with this effort. Jim, who worked at headquarters, had joined Saving Nature six months earlier from a large IT consulting firm. He brought considerable project management expertise to the table, and many were thrilled with the discipline he had introduced. Since Jim had arrived, his team was meeting all milestones to deliver on time and within budget. However, when he compared his current network to his goal of a successful regional implementation, he realized he had a gap. He had invested his time building relationships at headquarters but had not cultivated ties to tap the insights of those in the field.

**Susan** Susan recognized she needed support to develop the new capabilities that would be essential to reaching her long-term career goals. Her network did not currently provide the feedback and coaching she needed. A manager in the marketing department, Susan was a passionate believer in Saving Nature's mission. Her clients loved working with her and found she was able to deliver original and creative marketing materials. Her manager was thrilled with the amount of high-quality work she produced each year.

As part of the overall leadership development program, Saving Nature participants received anonymous "360-degree" feedback from their managers, peers, and direct reports. Through this process, Susan became aware that others thought she fell short in terms of developing strategy and vision. Because she wanted to lead an environmental organization some day, she realized this was an area where she wanted to be perceived as highly capable.

When assessing her personal network results, Susan recognized that she did not have anyone in her network outside of Saving Nature who could support her in developing this capability. Because Saving Nature tends to have a short-term focus, she realized she was moving from fire to fire, putting out the blaze. She did not know how to create the time and space for more generative, long-term thinking about vision and strategy. She decided that she wanted to find a mentor

outside of the organization who could support her in developing this aspect of leadership.

## The Activity

After participants had each identified how they wanted to extend their personal networks, it was time to start the Hidden Assets activity. We find this activity useful because it shifts from analyzing one's network to an actual experience of working with others to identify concrete possibilities for new relationships.

Hidden Assets also underscores a network teaching point shared earlier—by reaching out to a diverse group, one is likely to find connections that can provide insights one is seeking. In this setting, the Hidden Assets activity almost always generates leads that enhance network diversity because participants are offering one another connections from far-flung parts of the organization.

**Step 1** We gave each participant a formatted 3 x 5-inch card with “Request” printed at the top. (See Exhibit 17.1 for examples of both Request and Offer cards.) We invited each participant to write on the card his or her contact information, a brief description of a current work challenge or developmental goal, and information or expertise they are seeking relative to that challenge or goal. For work challenges, people often seek the names of those with a particular network dimension (geographic location, function, hierarchical level, area of expertise). As an alternative to the work challenge, we suggested that participants identify the areas of expertise they are seeking to develop and request information about those who could support them. The connection could be someone who is highly proficient at the desired skill, or it could be a mentor who could provide coaching.

**Step 2** We then asked each participant to post his or her Request card across the top of a large piece of butcher paper we had posted on the wall. (The butcher paper needs to be long enough to accommodate all Requests in a row across the top.)

**Step 3** We then gave all participants several formatted “Offer” cards that included space for them to enter their contact information and the connection or type of expertise or insight they can offer. We invited participants to scan all of the Request cards. As participants found a Request to which they could respond by offering information or a contact, they posted an Offer card with corresponding network contacts or other information they were willing to share. Each Offer card is posted directly beneath the relevant Request card.

**Exhibit 17.1 Request and Offer Cards**

**Request**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of Work Challenge:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What would you like to request? (contacts, information, other resources)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Offer**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

What would you like to offer? (contacts, information, other resources)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If someone is offering to connect the requestor to a new contact, the person making the offer shares his or her own information and can then broker an introduction between the two parties.

**Step 4** It is ideal to leave the cards on the wall for the remainder of the day or week and encourage participants to browse the wall and post additional or refined Requests and Offers when they have a few free moments. At the end of the week, each participant takes all of the Offer cards that were posted beneath his or her Request.

## Results

Here are individual results for Julie, Jim, and Susan.

**Julie** Colleagues from New Mexico and California jumped at Julie's request by offering new connections and insights. Over dinner that night, these colleagues began to share innovative approaches to fundraising and partnership strategies. They also introduced Julie to others in their offices. These connections helped to inform Julie as she planned her overall strategy for the coming year, and the new ideas she was exposed to led her to include a number of nontraditional partners, including a military base, in a successful fundraising initiative in her state.

Julie was also able to leverage the activity to expand her connections to colleagues outside the United States. Participants in the program were able to make an introduction to a Saving Nature employee in the Philippines, who helped a donor in Julie's home state develop a strategy for leveraging U.S. funds to support endangered habitats and species outside of its borders.

**Jim** Jim found that the Hidden Assets activity quickly put him in touch with colleagues who could help him plan a successful rollout of the new software in the locations outside of headquarters. He was able to connect with veterans of lackluster attempts to engage the field in such initiatives in the past and learned about pitfalls to avoid. He received a number of pointers on how to communicate to engage his audience.

**Susan** Susan had posted a request for mentors outside the organization who could help her articulate a strategic vision and at first received very few offers. She then added to her Request card that she was seeking a mentor who had founded and successfully grown a not-for-profit organization. This additional information prompted several of her colleagues to suggest potential contacts. Within several weeks, she had found a mentor—an individual who was retiring from one of

Saving Nature's local boards of directors and happened to live in the same state as Susan.

## Debriefing

We closed the session by asking participants two questions:

1. What have you learned about your network?
2. What actions will you take?

We asked people to answer both of these questions at their table groups (four groups of six each), and we then had each table share one or two highlights for each question. It is ideal to conduct this activity in smaller groups so that each person is compelled to state the actions he or she plans to take. This builds a shared sense of the importance of taking action and an awareness of what the full group is doing. It also helps participants identify additional actions they might take and can spur them to support their colleagues.

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## The Activity in Other Settings

We have used the Hidden Assets activity in settings other than leadership development programs. For example, we used it with a group of research and development professionals scattered around the globe, many of whom were looking for connections that could expand the focus of their work and increase innovation. Similarly, we have used this activity with far-flung design professionals seeking to make connections with colleagues who could share particular types of design expertise. In a broad range of settings, we have found that this simple activity always helps a diverse gathering of individuals make the most of their time together, helping one another gain access both to specific information and resources as well as broader career and professional support.

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## References

- Cross, R., Davenport, T. H., & Cantrell, S. (2003). The social side of high performance. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 45(1), 20–24.
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## PART FIVE

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# DEVELOPING TALENT THROUGH NETWORKS

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The ability to understand and work through organizational networks and to build effective personal networks has become a requirement for leaders in organizations of all kinds. That is why, as the contributors to this section emphasize, network issues must be included in all phases of talent management, from the onboarding of new hires to the preparation of high-potential employees for major leadership roles.

Michael Chavez and Mara Green describe three practices they use to help clients develop the mindset, skills, and tools to operate in today's complex business world. The practices include building strong, enduring ties instead of many superficial ones and using network analysis tools to develop an understanding of who key stakeholders are and how to reach them.

Rob Cross provides a template for an in-depth network presentation that he has used with high-potential employees at *Fortune* 500 companies. In the presentation, which is part of a broader leadership development program, he focuses on group connectivity as well as personal networks, drawing from his research on the network characteristics of high performers.

Katy Strei and Sally Colella write about a workshop they used at MedImmune, a unit of AstraZeneca, to help leaders identify and engage internal and external stakeholders—an approach that is particularly valuable during a change initiative.

Christie Dowling and Victor Gulas describe MWH's development of an informal mentoring program that helps employees get a feel for the company's culture and begin to build the relationships they need to be fully productive.

Carlota Vollhardt and Brigitte Lippmann focus on the importance of maintaining contact with external stakeholders. In their chapter, they describe how a global pharmaceutical company responded when an employee who had served as the bridge between the company and the World Health Organization announced his retirement.

Several contributors to this section focus on the network-building needs of new employees. Adrian (Zeke) Wolfberg writes about a program at the Defense Intelligence Agency that connects highly central people with those on the outskirts of the network—many of whom are newcomers. Betsy Hudson provides the agenda for a program in a government agency that helps integrate new hires into the organization. The goal of both programs is to bring new employees up to speed as quickly as possible.

Finally, Michel Buffet, Gregory Janicik, Maria Gallegos, Giulio Quaggiotto, and Lauren Ashwell provide detailed examples of onboarding exercises and more comprehensive onboarding programs that teach new hires at various levels to focus from the start on building and learning to manage an effective network. The result of such approaches is often increased productivity and job satisfaction for the new employees.

## EMBEDDING A NETWORK PERSPECTIVE INTO LEADERSHIP

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Michael Chavez and Mara Green

“**O**ur leaders and managers need help developing effective networks.” We hear this quite a bit nowadays from our clients. In our work designing leadership development programs for organizations, it is becoming clear that large companies now consider the ability to create effective networks to be key to the development of talent at all levels: senior leaders, high-potential employees, and new hires. Our clients increasingly ask us to create educational experiences that enable participants to explore the impact of networks on their thinking, performance, and leadership.

In this chapter, we will share some of our approaches to embedding networks—as a *practice*—into leadership at all levels, from executive teams to new hires. We call them “practices” because they are intended not only to allow participants to learn about the power of networks but also to provide a foundation for them to continue their leadership development long after a formal program ends.

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### Leadership Challenges and the Place of Networking

First, we must share the bias in our approach to leadership development: we think in terms of challenges, not competencies. Instead of helping new leaders develop specific competencies, which may or may not lead to desired business outcomes,

we design programs that make it easier for key talent to address the most pressing challenges facing them and the organization as a whole. As a result, we begin by working with clients to articulate those challenges, and we find that many of them lead us to networks. For senior leaders and high-potentials, several themes emerge:<sup>1</sup>

- **Complexity.** This challenge comes up so often that it is a cliché. We continually hear that leaders must be comfortable operating in an environment where value drivers are aligned in a complex manner, problems are not predictable, relationships among problems are often unclear, and answers are not already understood.
- **Business acumen.** It is no longer sufficient to be good at part of the business; you must understand it end-to-end, whatever your area of functional expertise.
- **Cross-silo thinking.** CEOs consistently complain that their senior-most leaders must learn to work across boundaries to achieve the results they want in the marketplace.
- **Innovation.** This poorly understood term seems to be a catchall for the need to get managers and leaders to “create solutions” that have not yet been created or to come up with new channels of value that have not yet been found. It is about finding the unfindable.
- **Decision making.** The challenge is how to increase the speed, quality, and commitment of decisions in an environment where the answer is unclear, ambiguous, or even paradoxical.
- **Leading with ambiguous authority.** Many organizations have tried to respond to the inherent complexity of their business by reflecting that complexity in a matrix structure. A side effect is that authority is often unclear or ambiguous, even for senior leaders. The challenge is leading adaptively and without clear lines of authority while ensuring that the organization remains committed to and energized around key messages and priorities.

For new hires, specifically for Gen-Y entrants, a few additional challenges arise:

- **Engagement.** An enormous challenge among our clients is figuring out how to satisfy and energize a generation that is well educated, technologically savvy, and well connected in an organization that still uses e-mail as its principal communication vehicle.
- **Connection.** “It’s not what you know, but who you know” is often heard among GenY hires upon landing an entry-level job in a large organization.

Most everyone knows that they need to “work the system” to advance their careers. But Gen-Yers soon find that social networking tools like Facebook and LinkedIn do not give them the edge they need.<sup>2</sup>

In *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge helped us appreciate the nature of complex systems. Now, it seems to us, these insights have worked their way into leadership and management challenges. It’s clear from the preceding themes that leaders and their HR business partners are seeing complex systems clearly enough to know that their biggest challenge is not just dealing effectively with this complexity but navigating and leading a complex organization that is trying to deal with it.

They are also realizing that just because you understand complexity doesn’t mean you can handle it all by yourself. Our clients are quickly becoming aware that for their leaders to function effectively in a complex business that does complex things within a complex organization structure, they must let go of some long-held assumptions:

1. The organization itself will be able to provide absolute clarity on how work must get done.
2. Successful innovation can happen in isolated labs and teams and with lone individuals.
3. Understanding only your part of the business is sufficient for delivering superior results.
4. As a leader, the impact you can have on the motivation and energy of the organization is limited to your direct reports.
5. If you collect names and e-mail addresses and spend more time pressing the flesh, you’ll have a more successful career.

Many leaders are gaining an appreciation for the limitations of their individual perspectives, mindsets, and skill sets. They are also gaining an equivalent or greater appreciation for the power of the collective intelligence of the organization, which resides in the networks of relationships running through it. In response, we have been developing educational programs that help leaders leverage networks by making the following shifts:

- **Mindset shift.** “How do I see the organization—and how I fit in it—as the holistic, connected, complex social system that it is? How do I gain a deeper appreciation for how work really gets done?”
- **Skill set shift.** “What skills and capabilities do I need to function effectively in this complex social system?”

- **Toolset shift.** “What new frameworks and methods belong in my toolkit to help me navigate this complexity?”

What follows are several of our favorite practices for accelerating the shifts in mindset, skill set, and toolset required to tap networks most effectively to meet the challenges of working in a complex world.

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## Practice 1. Authenticity as the Leader’s Lever for Building Effective Networks

The highest-performing managers and leaders don’t approach network building by developing a lot of superficial ties; instead, they build strong and enduring relationships with people who can broaden their perspectives and increase their access to information and other people and groups. For most of these leaders, developing an understanding of the importance of strong, trusted ties required a mindset shift. At some point in their careers, they realized that they had to bring their own values, strengths, and even shortcomings to their relationships instead of striving to fit into an externally defined template of an effective leader. The following practice is intended to help leaders be authentic in their approach to relationship building. The practice takes an hour to complete.

### Key Learning Points

- **Mindset shift.** Many leaders define a network in terms of how many people they know rather than the quality of the relationships or the benefits they yield. The following structured discussion on authenticity enables leaders to appreciate how their self-awareness affects the quality of their relationships and thus leadership effectiveness.
- **Skill set built.** Self-reflection; an awareness of how one’s own limiting beliefs or self-orientation can constrain authenticity.
- **Toolset used.** Authentic Leadership framework; peer coaching.

### Overview

This exercise can be applied to myriad audiences, from high-potential employees to those new to their roles, and it can be used at all leadership levels. The overall approach involves debriefing authenticity as a leadership concept and extending it to a key point of leverage for building effective networks. Participants are then given some structured reflections and peer coaching to help them uncover what

might be constraining them—usually unwittingly—from more authentic behavior and thus from building more effective networks.

## Preparation

It is helpful to use a few conceptual slides or flip charts to set up the leadership concept of authenticity. Case studies or stories relevant to the organization are also helpful. Participants should have blank paper or a notebook or journal to capture their responses to the questions posed by the facilitator. Be prepared with at least two flip charts. On one, write “Behaviors” in large letters across the top. On the second, write “Relationships.” These can be covered by a blank page until you are ready to debrief the first paired discussion we describe later.

## STEP 1: Introducing Authenticity

Identify what leadership authenticity is and why it is important for building effective networks.

**Authenticity** Start the session by establishing what is meant by “authentic leadership.”

- 1. Pair or triad discussion.** Ask participants to reflect on a person they have worked with whom they would describe as an authentic leader (whether or not the person had any direct reports). Ask the participants to capture the following on a sheet of paper:
  - The actions that contributed to his or her authenticity
  - The quality of his or her relationshipsAsk participants to reflect for one or two minutes on that person and then to turn to their neighbor (in pairs or triads) to share the results from the two reflections just mentioned for six to eight minutes total (approximately three to four minutes each).
- 2. Debrief.** Ask participants to call out some of the key things that their “exemplar leaders” did that made them authentic. Capture four or five on the first flip chart under “Behaviors.” Then ask participants to call out the qualities of these exemplars’ relationships, and capture four or five on the second flip chart under “Relationships.”
- 3. Definition.** Give participants the following definition, which can be written on a slide projected overhead.

“Authenticity is the degree to which you are true to your own personality, spirit, or character—despite pressures from others to behave differently—and

occurs when you realistically manage your fears of being left out, unloved, or out of control.” —*Bill George, former chairman and CEO of Medtronic.*

Note how their definitions match or differ from George’s definition.

- 4. Link the definition to the exercise.** Although every conversation is different, several points typically emerge again and again in highlighting what authentic leaders do and what kind of relationships they maintain. The following points may help pull out some key themes. Authentic leaders
- **Are “other-centric.”** They typically show a genuine interest in other people’s interests and problems because they value doing what is right for the whole.
  - **Are self-aware and transparent.** Although they *focus* on others, they *know* themselves, what they are good at and what they are not, and they are not afraid of sharing that insight with others.
  - **Value people who are different from themselves and have a diverse network.** Many people tend to say through their examples that authentic leaders are those who are not afraid of people who think differently than they do, because they are cued into what they do not know.
  - **Have trust-based relationships.** Trust can mean many things, but most participants zero in on the notion of the degree to which another person has an “agenda.” Transparency is key to building long-term, enduring relationships.
  - **Are willing to share their time and knowledge.** This is related to being other-centric. The point is that authentic leaders are not afraid of being generous with what they know and making it available to others because they realize such knowledge sharing helps build strong relationships and will benefit the broader organization.

**Why Authenticity Is Critical** Several points can be made to help participants understand why they should follow the example of authentic leaders to maximize the effectiveness of their networks. However, it is optimal to use the previous steps to generate a learner-led answer to the question. Try to identify, using the participants’ output, how authenticity relates to stronger and more enduring relationships. Key words and phrases to highlight from the previous discussion might include “Trust,” “Transparency,” “No Agenda,” “Clear values,” “Open,” and “Generous with Time and Knowledge.”

## STEP 2: Reflecting on Your Own Behavior

In this exercise, participants reflect on their current and past networking interactions and assess what they do that contributes or detracts from their authenticity.

Start by asking participants to pair up or form a triad with new people for this round to enhance the networks established in the room. Each participant will be a peer coach for his or her partner. The role of a peer coach is to help the other person clarify his or her behaviors and motivations. Before beginning the numbered steps, consider sharing the following peer coaching guidelines with the group:

- Listen carefully and ask questions to help your partner gain clarity on his or her observations.
- Remember that the purpose of coaching is to help your partner gain clarity, not to make him or her feel good or solve problems. Avoid reinforcing statements or offering expressions of empathy (such as, “Oh, yes, I have exactly the same problem!”). These statements tend to divert attention from understanding and action.
- Repeat what you heard to ensure understanding.

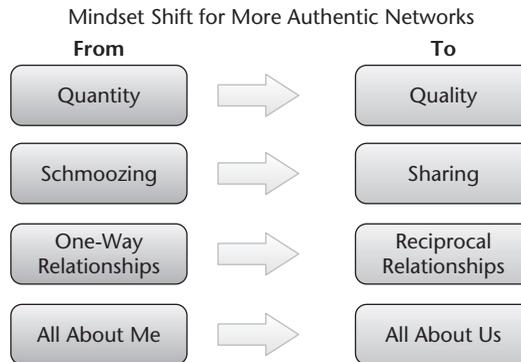
**1. How I Have Contributed to Authentic Interactions** Ask participants to reflect on the following, which may be projected or written on a flip chart: describe a networking interaction you had recently that you would describe as authentic. What did you do that contributed to the authenticity of the interaction? Ask participants to reflect for 1 or 2 minutes and then to share their ideas with their peer coaches for another 10 minutes.

**2. How I Have Detracted from Authentic Interactions** Ask participants to reflect on the following and conduct the same peer coaching conversation just outlined: describe a networking interaction you had recently that you would describe as inauthentic. What might have caused you to appear inauthentic in the conversation (even if you didn’t intend to)? Note that the assumption in this second question is that people rarely try to be inauthentic, but our fears or limiting beliefs cause us to behave in ways that result in inauthentic interactions. What is critical is to become aware of those behaviors so that we can try to avoid them.

### STEP 3: Summary and Action Planning

The final step is intended to build authenticity by translating new insights about current behaviors into different actions that are more authentic.

**1. Wrap-up** It is important to return to the idea that networking isn’t about listing 20, 40, or 50 acquaintances; it is about developing a mindset geared toward building high-quality and enduring relationships. Authenticity is a key lever for developing this mindset and for practicing the behavior that reinforces it. A helpful

**FIGURE 18.1 MINDSET SHIFT FOR MORE AUTHENTIC NETWORKS**

way to summarize the exercise is to show a “from-to” slide describing the mindset shift required for leaders to move toward more authenticity and higher-quality relationships (see Figure 18.1).

What stands out in the figure is the suggestion that leaders must shift the focus to the collective, to openness and transparency, and away from individual concerns, fears, and agendas.

**2. Action Planning** To conclude this exercise, ask participants to review insights from the previous peer-coaching conversations, and ask them to reflect on what they can do to increase their authenticity.

**Summary of actions.** Ask participants to take two to five minutes to capture in their notes their *insights* from the session.

**Start, Stop, Continue.** Next, ask participants to think about what *actions* they might take to ensure that they bring more authenticity to their networking interactions. A handy way to allow participants to capture their action plan is to have them draw three columns on a piece of paper with “Start,” “Stop,” and “Continue” as the respective headers for each column:

- **Start.** Which behaviors should I adopt to increase my authenticity?
- **Stop.** Which behaviors should I stop because they are impeding my ability to be more authentic?
- **Continue.** Which behaviors that have helped me create authentic interactions should I continue?

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## Practice 2. Network Mapping and Stakeholder Analysis

Although there is enormous benefit to conducting a full organizational network analysis (ONA) to determine workflow, bottlenecks, and knowledge opportunities and risks, team managers and leaders can apply a simpler network analysis to improve their understanding of their key stakeholders. The result is a more comprehensive understanding of exactly who stakeholders are and how best to reach and influence them. This practice takes about an hour to complete.

### Key Learning Points

- **Mindset shift.** Stakeholder analysis can help identify some of your current stakeholder barriers and opportunities, but this traditional approach often falls short in offering the best approaches for accessing and managing stakeholders. By applying a network map approach to stakeholder analysis, you can gain a clearer—and perhaps surprising—view of who your stakeholders actually are. And you can develop a deeper appreciation for how they are connected to the organization, which can help you manage them more effectively.
- **Skill set built.** The ability to develop a more comprehensive view of your stakeholders, along with those who influence them, and develop a plan for managing stakeholders that is consistent with the way work naturally gets done in the organization.
- **Toolset used.** “Rough cut” network analysis.

### Overview

Most leaders and managers have conducted a stakeholder analysis, usually in the context of a team they led or a project they directed. In most of these analyses, you name a key project, issue, or initiative and then list that project’s stakeholders—that is, the individuals or groups who are affected by the project and have a vested interest in it. The purpose of this analysis is to figure out how to gain the support of these individuals or groups and how to eliminate any obstacles they present.

Stakeholder analysis is challenging, in large part because there are all sorts of stakeholders that can exist just about anywhere. Stakeholders may play large or small roles in influencing the outcome of a project or providing resources; they may play no direct role at all but have a strong interest in the outcome and influence others’ opinions. Stakeholders may be in your department or function, or in other units, departments, or locations, which means that you must manage

relationships across formal boundaries. Stakeholders can also be external and internal clients, staff members, managers, partners, and customers.

The key point is that stakeholders exist in a complex organization made up of complex relationships. Some may connect directly to your work; while others may not but may be able to connect you to other people who can help you navigate the organization and systems. This is the key to understanding why network analysis can greatly increase the effectiveness of stakeholder analysis.

## Preparation

This exercise is best accomplished with a group of about five to seven people. For larger groups, it is best to start with a small subgroup and then complement the analysis with additional members' perspectives after the first round. To begin, it is critical to make sure that the participants have access to a stakeholder management framework. Figure 18.2 is a simple but good example of the kind of initial analysis that the team might have done.

### STEP 1: Clarify Stakeholder Connections to Each Team Member

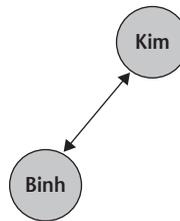
Start with the standard stakeholder analysis conducted by the team, such as the one in Figure 18.2. It's a good idea to post it on the wall or project it onto a screen that everyone can see.

**FIGURE 18.2 AN INITIAL STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS**

Stakeholder	Strongly Against	Moderately Against	Neutral	Moderately Supportive	Strongly Supportive
Ian	X	→	○		
Craig		X	→	○	
Binh				⊗	

X = Where they are today

○ = Where we need them to be  
(at a minimum)

**FIGURE 18.3 ONLY ONE PERSON IS CRITICAL TO KIM**

Now the challenge is to determine how the stakeholders are connected to each team member. To get at this, ask team members, “Whom do you rely on most in the organization for the resources, knowledge, and support you need to be an effective contributor to this project?” By asking the question in this way, each person should be able to construct, on the fly, a rough-cut network map of his or her own. Participants can list people who were not on the original analysis, and they are not required to show direct connections to all the names on the original analysis.

Next, ask team members to graphically depict their connections. They do so on a flip chart or white board by writing the stakeholders’ names and their own name on sticky notes (one name per sticky note) and then drawing arrows from the sticky note representing themselves to each stakeholder. This should be done individually by each member on his or her own flip chart paper or section of a white board. (Note: arrows can be drawn in a unidirectional manner ( $\rightarrow$ ) or in a bidirectional manner ( $\leftrightarrow$ ) to indicate whether critical project information flows principally from the stakeholder to the team member or fluidly between both members.)

In the example in Figure 18.3, Kim determined that there is really only one other person in the organization, Binh, who is critical to her for this project. She also determined that information flows from Binh to her as well as from her to Binh. Note that Binh had been identified as a stakeholder in the group’s original analysis.

## **STEP 2: Connections to the Team as a Whole**

Group the team around a flip chart or large piece of butcher paper attached to the wall. It’s a good idea to write the original question prominently on the paper

to remind the members what we mean by “connection” to stakeholders. In this example, the facilitator would write on the paper, “Whom do you rely on most in the organization for the resources, knowledge, and support you need to be an effective contributor to this project?”

Ask each team member to transfer the sticky notes with their names from their individual work area to the center of the butcher paper or white board, leaving plenty of room between names.

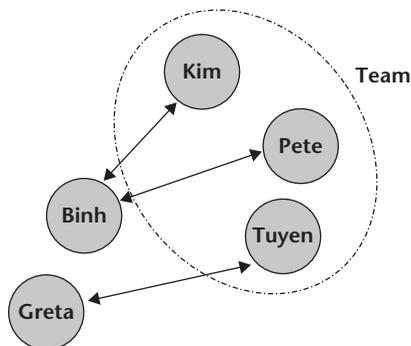
Next, ask one team member to add his or her stakeholder sticky notes to the paper, leaving plenty of space for the other team members’ additions. The team member should again draw arrows from his or her own name to those stakeholders after all his or her sticky notes are on the flip chart or butcher paper.

Ask the next team member to repeat the process, transferring his or her stakeholder sticky notes to the butcher paper, but *only* if those sticky notes represent new names. Duplicate sticky notes should be eliminated. This team member should also draw arrows from his or her name, as appropriate, to any and all stakeholders to whom he or she is connected according to the question written on the paper. For now, the arrows should only be drawn between a team member name and a stakeholder name, not between stakeholders or team members.

Ask each remaining team member to follow the steps just outlined. Once complete, the end result might look something like Figure 18.4.

In this simple example, the three-person team has worked out that it is critically connected to Binh and Greta. So far, it is notable that Binh is the only project stakeholder who had been identified in the original analysis. Also, none of the three has named Ian or Craig, whose names came up in the earlier analysis. A

**FIGURE 18.4 A VIEW OF CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS**



new person, Greta, emerges, but it is a bit early to call her a stakeholder because she may wield little to no influence in directing the course of the project and may even have very little interest in it.

### STEP 3: Connections Among Stakeholders

Ask a team member to volunteer to put the stakeholders from the original analysis on the map (remember Ian and Craig?) in the form of sticky notes.

Here's where the exercise gets interesting. Ask the participants to use what they know about the stakeholders named on the butcher paper to estimate whether those individuals rely on one another for information and resources related to this project.<sup>3</sup>

To indicate the relationships between individual stakeholders, ask team members to draw arrows between them. It's a good idea to use a pencil or to re-create the map on a white board so that items can be moved to create a "clean" view of the network. Team members can do this in turn or can discuss what they think as a group before drawing.

Additionally, if team members know that a named stakeholder is connected to another stakeholder only through a previously unnamed person, they should add a sticky note with the new person's name on it and represent this *indirect* connection using arrows.

As an example of the step overall, imagine that the team came up with the composite rough-cut network map in Figure 18.5.

It becomes immediately clear that to gain the support of both Ian and Craig, the team must work through other people in the organization—namely Isabel, Miguel, and Greta. The good news is that Binh, who was already identified as a stakeholder and has a direct connection to team members, becomes a valuable connector to Ian and Craig, though not directly. Very quickly the team sees that Isabel, Miguel, and Greta might actually be stakeholders: they might provide access to Ian and Craig and serve as intermediaries between the team's work and Ian and Craig's concerns. In essence, the indirect ties among the stakeholders point to the importance of people whom the team might have missed in its initial analysis.

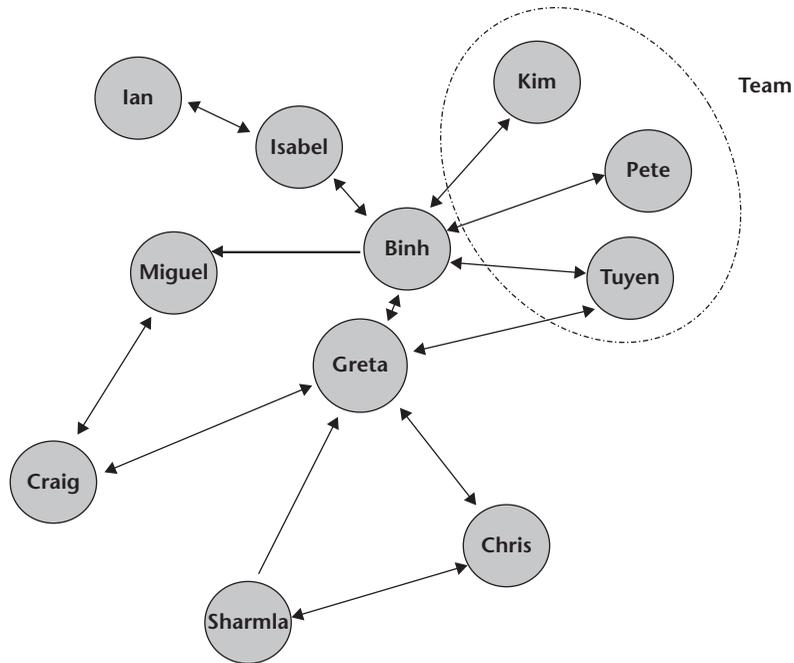
### STEP 4: Action Planning

Now the team is ready to conduct its action planning. Ask team members to consider what the new list of stakeholders looks like. Create the following columns, one at a time:

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**FIGURE 18.5 A ROUGH-CUT NETWORK MAP**


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**Stakeholder Column** List stakeholder on a separate flip chart in a single column on the left side of the page marked STAKEHOLDERS

**Action Column** Place this column to the right of the STAKEHOLDERS column. In the ACTION column, the team will capture all actions that need to be taken for each stakeholder. Using the preceding example, next to the name Binh, a critical action could be “Request that Binh introduce the project initiative to Isabel, Miguel, and Greta on behalf of the team.” Another action, next to Binh and Greta, might read, “Provide update on current project deliverables, milestones, timelines, and resources needed.”

**Accountable Column** Place this column to the right of the ACTION column. In the ACCOUNTABLE column, the team will capture who is accountable for the various actions.

**By When column** Use this column to capture deadlines for the actions listed. Because this exercise often reveals new stakeholders and more complex actions, time frames may be initially unclear. Agree as a team how to make those time frames explicit.

If the team had relied purely on its initial “flat” analysis of stakeholders, team members might never have learned how to reach their most important stakeholders, and they might never have realized that others in the organization play critical supporting roles in their projects. By remembering the way the work flows in the organization—not just where stakeholders sit in the org chart—teams can greatly improve the degree to which they garner the support and commitment they need to execute their most important initiatives.

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## Practice 3. Speed Networking

This exercise creates an immediate appreciation among participants of the power of networks by demonstrating that any group contains the potential for meaningful and useful connections—as long as those connections are based on a clear need and purpose. This exercise takes 45 to 60 minutes to complete.

### Key Learning Points

- **Mindset shift.** Although the potential for a network exists in any group, effective networks are not the result of the random social connections of the kind made at a cocktail party or on a social networking site. Effective networks are established when people actively seek specific solutions to their problems.
- **Skill set built.** The ability to quickly establish meaningful, useful issue-related or work-related connections.
- **Toolset used.** Networking card.

### Overview

This exercise borrows its name from the famous “speed dating” events that have become popular among dating professionals. It is an excellent way to create an immediate awareness of the power of networks. Participants usually leave with valuable contacts relating to the key issues they face. The exercise works best for groups ranging from 20 to about 100 participants, but we have used it with groups as large as 250. We have conducted it in an open-enrollment setting at large conferences as well as among very tightly connected teams of senior leaders at *Fortune* 500 companies.

## Preparation

The most important preparatory task is to determine the focusing question of the exercise. This will serve as the starting point of each networking conversation and ensure that the exercise stays focused on topics that are most likely to generate meaningful connections for the participants. Some sample focusing questions we have used include the following:

- What business challenge are you facing for which you need help or insight from someone in the organization?
- Name an issue that you suspect other people might be able to help you resolve.
- What knowledge do you wish you had to best address a critical challenge? Be as specific as possible about the knowledge and the challenge.

Answering the focusing question is the first step in filling out a networking card, which participants use during the exercise to capture information they gain during their conversations. The cards can be printed on card stock and cut to the size of a standard index card.

Figure 18.6 shows a networking card we have used for large groups that engage in three conversation rounds.

**FIGURE 18.6 A NETWORKING CARD**

Networking Card		
<b>Brief Description of Work Challenge:</b>		
<b>I Need...</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Contacts <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		
1. Contact Name and Info	2. Contact Name and Info	3. Contact Name and Info

Participants are asked to discuss their challenge in pairs. If one person has an answer to the other person's challenge or knows someone who might be able to help, the one offering help should give his or her contact information to the recipient. A "round" consists of a single pair conversation, whether or not information is exchanged. The facilitator ends each round with a chime, bell, or other noise-making device and asks participants to move to the next round.

In large groups, participants pair off randomly for each round. In smaller groups (20 to 30 people), the facilitator can create "Networking Stations" around the room. Each station should be marked by a large flip chart or piece of paper on the wall with a number. There should be half as many stations as there are participants. For example, if the group has 24 participants, there are 12 stations. Twelve members stay at their stations for the entire exercise while the 12 others move clockwise from station to station. The benefit of this structure is that team members who already know each other well can be in the same circle, either inner or outer, so that they spend time talking to those with whom they do not already have a strong connection.

### Step 1: Setting Up the Exercise

- 1. Fill out the card.** Ask each member to fill out the issue or challenge on their networking card.
- 2. Explain the process.** Members will have three rounds, each lasting approximately seven minutes, to discuss the challenge they've noted on their card. They should share their challenge with each other and capture their partner's contact information if the partner can help with the challenge or offer a connection to someone who might be able to help. (Note: the number of rounds and the time per round can be varied as needed.)
- 3. Remind people about the goal.** The goal is to have a purposeful exchange of challenges and of information, not to socialize.
- 4. Explain what happens at the end of each round.** Indicate that each round will end with a chime or bell. Say that participants will then be invited to get up out of their seats to find another person to talk to (if it is a smaller group and you are using the Networking Stations, remind them that they will be on their feet and that the outer circle will stay at the stations while the inner circle moves for each round).

### Step 2: Conducting the Rounds

- 1. Ask participants to find a partner.** Give them one to two minutes to do so, depending on the size of the group.

2. **Begin round 1.** Strike the chime or bell and say “Begin!” Time the round. For the first round, give members a two-minute warning so they can gauge the length of each round.
3. **End round 1 and prepare round 2.** At the end of the allotted time for round 1, strike the chime. Say “Find a new networking partner!” Give members about a minute to do so before tracking the time. Some will find a new partner and begin talking right away, while others might still be looking.
4. **Do round 2 and prepare for round 3.** Strike the chime to begin round 2. Say “If you have not already done so, begin networking!” At the end of the allotted time, strike the chime and say “Find a new networking partner!” Again, give members about a minute to do so before tracking the time.
5. **Do round 3.** Say “Last round! Begin networking!” If you are conducting more than three rounds, repeat the preceding steps as needed.
6. **Close the rounds.** For the final round, give members a one-minute warning by saying “Please finish up! One minute left!” After that minute, strike the chime and ask participants to be seated.

### Step 3: Debrief

After all participants have returned to their original seats, ask several questions:

**“How many of you found someone who could help directly with your challenge or issue?”** Ask for a show of hands. In our experience, for larger groups (more than 100), at least 25 percent of participants are likely to raise their hands. The facilitator should comment on how many hands he or she sees. Ask if those who raised their hands were surprised at the help they found. Ask for comments. In our experience, there are usually one or two people who note that, even in a random process, they made a very useful connection to someone who knows something about their challenge. This reflection is critical to establish the notion that networking is partially about uncovering *latent* networks, that is, networks that exist in a potential state and must be activated to provide benefits.

**“How many found someone who knows someone else who might be able to help you?”** Again, ask for a show of hands. Debrief as for the first question. Reinforce the point that networks include “weak links,” that is, indirect connections. Again, ask if anyone had an intriguing or surprising connection they want to share.

**Ask for reflection.** “How did this practice feel different from a cocktail party or a social networking site.” Typical responses to listen for:

- “This conversation had more purpose behind it.”
- “It was more efficient than typical networking conversations.”
- “I was more focused.”
- “It felt more genuine.”

If you receive this last response, it’s a good idea to ask if anyone thought that the conversation felt forced. Most would agree that while networking events can feel forced, this experience actually felt more genuine because the group was agreeing to keep each conversation short and focused; there was no expectation of small talk or that people had to stay in conversations that were not helpful.

Reinforce that the goal in future conversations is to be explicit about challenges for which you seek help. Emphasize that two people who meet can agree to have a short conversation focused on individual challenges and on the mutually beneficial goal of expanding and strengthening social networks. Stress the value of the networking card. Remind participants that their network card is now a resource that can help them activate the part of their network that they just built.

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## Endnotes

1. We define high-potential employees as director level to vice-president level in *Fortune* 500 organizations and, roughly, manager to director in mid-market companies.
2. Ironically, it was the study of the Internet that precipitated much of the recent research on the behavior of networks from a mathematical perspective.
3. If the stakeholders do not rely on one another for their contributions to the project, the group can consider instead whether they rely on one another in general to get their work done.

## IMPROVING LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH PERSONAL NETWORK ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT

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Rob Cross

Even though leaders increasingly realize that they must attend to the informal connections by which much work gets done, most have never systematically analyzed the networks and assessed collaboration in their own organizations. In fact, most leaders have only a vague idea of the networks around them and often don't consider the possibility of trying to manage them to boost their organizations' performance. Leadership development programs are perfect opportunities to introduce the network perspective, which leaders at all levels will need to understand to be effective in guiding groups of employees and managing their own careers.

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### A Workshop on Networks

Over the past several years, colleagues and I have conducted workshops for senior leaders, leaders in transition, and high potentials in more than 50 *Fortune* 500 organizations and government agencies in a wide range of industries. To engage participants, I focus on the networks of high performers and how they can be replicated. Workshops must be tailored to an organization's needs, but some themes and topics are universal.

Typically the first part of a workshop or module in an executive program focuses on full groups and the way in which network analysis identifies performance improvement opportunities that leaders miss if they focus exclusively on formal structure, process maps, budget reports, or even culture assessments. In our research over the past decade on leaders who get in and stay in their organizations' top performer category, we have learned that these high-performing leaders manage their groups in ways that yield more effective networks on five key dimensions. We explore those dimensions in this first part of the workshop.

The second part of a typical program then helps participants assess their personal network connectivity. Our research and that of many others has long shown that effective personal networks are associated with rapid promotion, higher pay, increased job mobility, and better performance evaluations. Yet it is not a big network that distinguishes high performers but rather the ability to manage connectivity in three ways:

- **A network's structure is critical.** Top performers have a greater tendency to minimize insularity and position themselves at key points in a network.
- **The nature of the relationships in the network is important to performance.** Top performers tend to invest in relationships that extend their expertise and help them avoid or correct learning biases.
- **Specific behaviors are necessary to build an effective network.** Top performers engage in behaviors that lead to high-quality relationships—not just big networks.

A workshop like this is usually a three- to four-hour segment in a broader leadership program. However, the material can be expanded to a full day or even more if we have conducted a network analysis of the entire group and are hoping to use the data to encourage the group to work together in different ways. Table 19.1 provides an outline of a typical workshop. The remainder of this chapter presents the concepts and templates that guide each session.

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## Session 1: Promoting Leaders' Effectiveness Through Full Group Networks

We open the session emphasizing the degree to which networks have become important today given technical trends, globalization, and decades of restructuring efforts that have pushed work and the coordination of work into employee networks.

TABLE 19.1 STANDARD WORKSHOP FORMAT

Timing	Topic	Content/Process	Materials
15 Minutes	Why Networks Now and Network Interpretation	An upfront framing discussion to convey the performance and innovation benefits senior leaders can realize from a network perspective (that they cannot get from other tools or frameworks). This discussion also allows me to level set in the room so that people are seeing the same things in the network diagrams.	Four slides
30 Minutes	Managing Networks in Organizations	A short caselette to compare formal and informal structure to drive the discussion on things leaders can see and take action on with network results/thinking.  A short presentation on common actions and results leaders obtain when working through a network perspective (via three common roles, a pre- and post-change assessment, and ways the network ideas complement other tools of process mapping and culture inventories).	A series of six slides with the formal/informal slide used very interactively
30 Minutes	Implications For Leadership Effectiveness	Specifically, in contrast to those whose careers plateau and fade, the more successful leaders in our research:  <b>Manage the center of the network.</b> They minimize collaborative bottlenecks and acknowledge/develop high performers who also make their colleagues more effective.  <b>Leverage the periphery of the network.</b> They rapidly integrate newcomers and reengage underconnected high performers.  <b>Selectively bridge organizational silos.</b> They facilitate effective collaboration at key intersections in the network (such as across functional lines and physical distance).	

TABLE 19.1 STANDARD WORKSHOP FORMAT (CONTINUED)

		<p><b>Develop awareness of colleagues' expertise throughout the network.</b> They ensure that the best expertise in a network is known and brought to bear on new problems and opportunities.</p> <p><b>Minimize insularity.</b> They manage targeted relations with key internal and external clients and stakeholders.</p>	
60 Minutes	Managing Personal Connectivity	<p>This section reviews personal networks as a means of driving leadership effectiveness and talent management. It will specifically focus on two dimensions of networks (relational and structural) that our work shows distinguishes high performers, as well as common traps that leaders fall into if not managing their own connectivity at some level.</p> <p>I will first characterize the important network dimension, then describe two traps that rising stars/leaders fall into, then explain how they should review their own assessments, and provide 10 minutes of processing time (we will move through this cycle twice—once for the structural piece and once for the relational piece).</p>	<p>A series of 12 slides An Internet connection</p>
45 Minutes	Energizing Networks	<p>This section first describes (through a case example) the substantial performance and innovation impact we have seen from the energy ideas. I will then use a video clip and an activity to drive these ideas into specific behaviors and a concluding point for people in the room to consider how they can improve behaviorally (and at this point will turn them back to the last section of their personal network report as they review the behavioral component).</p>	<p>A series of slides and two video clips (Braveheart and Lucy) Audio and video capability</p>

## A Comparison of Formal and Informal Structure

After stressing the importance of networks in general, we move to a specific example comparing an organization's formal and informal structure. The story is borrowed from my first book, *The Hidden Power of Social Networks*.

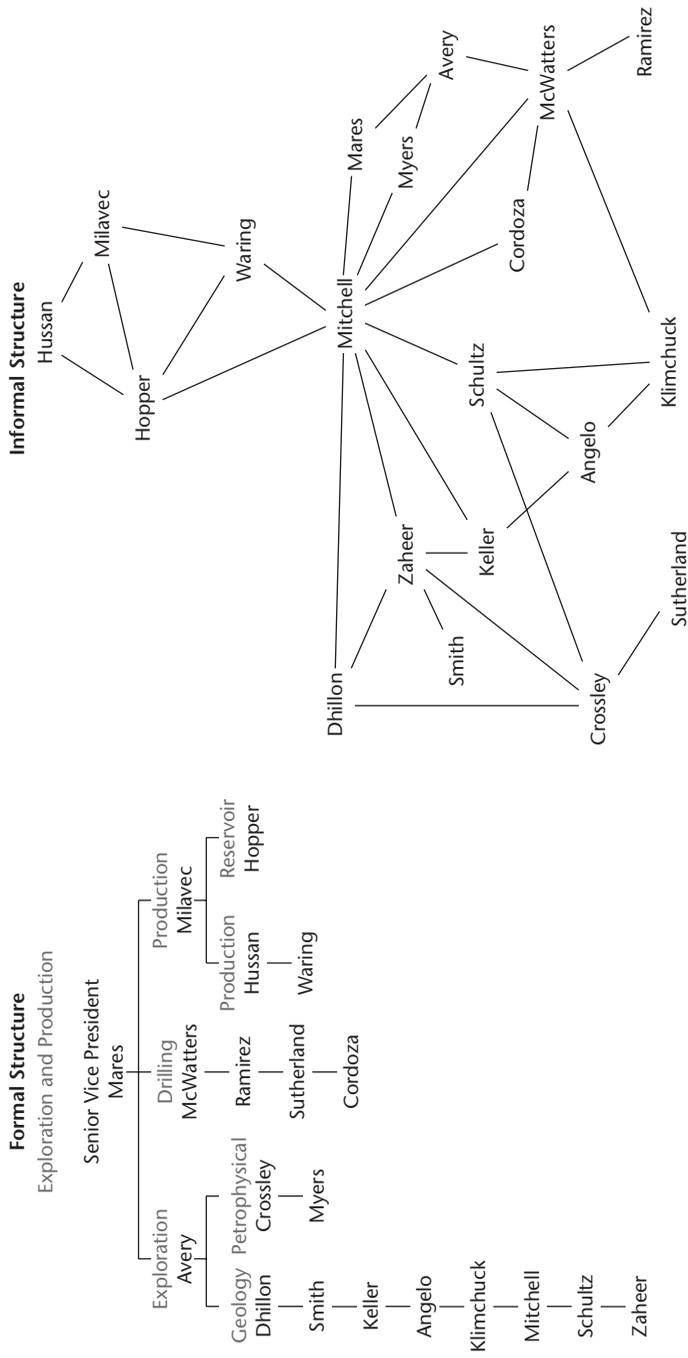
After providing a little context, I project two figures (see Figure 19.1) side-by-side and ask the workshop participants what they notice when comparing the formal and informal structure. Almost always, someone will first identify Mitchell as being either a key player who needs a raise or, less frequently, as the biggest bottleneck of all time. Building from this comment, I indicate that it is typical to see only 3 percent to 5 percent of the people account for 25 percent to 35 percent of the value-added collaborations. Though leaders often think they know who these key players are, they are often surprised when a network analysis identifies those who are truly crucial to the network.

Then I ask participants to think of five reasons that people like Mitchell—employees who may not be high in the hierarchy but have become very influential in the network—emerge in their own organizations. Typically participants will indicate some combination of these points: (1) expertise (technical or organizational); (2) tenure; (3) relationship with the boss; (4) good person/likable/accessible/trustworthy; (5) formal role or point in a process flow; or (6) a tendency to hoard information. I then make the point that being central is not always a good thing. The goal here is for the group to understand the various ways people can become prominent in a network and how leaders can work with central players to improve the group's performance and reduce its susceptibility should these individuals leave.<sup>1</sup>

In comparing this formal and informal structure, participants often notice that the production division is not well integrated into the informal network. In response to this observation, I often make a lighthearted comment that surely the participants' organization has no collaborative silos like this one. In this case I describe that the production division had simply moved up two floors in a building and because of this loss of serendipitous interaction had become inefficient in executing on core decisions. This lack of coordination, made visible by the network analysis, was extremely expensive: the lack of connection to the production division created substantial additional expenses due to the organization's heavy fixed-asset cost structure. I then often ask the group to consider the drivers of collaborative silos in their own organizations: typical points identified include time zone differences, incentives, cultural values, functional lines, and physical distance.

In a discussion of collaborative silos, it's important to emphasize that leaders never want everyone in a group connected to everyone else—that kind of collaboration would be a waste of time. But silos at points in a network where leadership

**FIGURE 19.1 FORMAL AND INFORMAL STRUCTURE**



Adapted from *The Hidden Power of Social Networks*.

is counting on integration—in a large group we might find as many as five to eight—invisibly and dramatically undermine performance. Being able to see these breakdowns helps leaders unite well-connected people on either side of the divide through such simple efforts as project staffing, job rotations, and internal committee assignments. Rather than engaging in broad programs—such as a technology deployment, a move to a matrix structure, or a cultural change effort—a network perspective allows leaders to take targeted action in circumventing ineffective points of formal structure.

Next, workshop participants often point out that the Senior Vice President—Mares—is too peripheral in the informal network. At this point I emphasize that we are looking at the *most effective* relationships in the network. If we loosened this constraint to include relationships people indicated as *somewhat effective*, we would see more ties connecting the group. However, even with that caveat, I note that there are two important points about Mares.

First, he was not as engaged as he needed to be in decision-making interactions. His lack of accessibility cost the organization substantially given the heavy fixed-asset cost structure, which racked up significant expenses when decisions were not made and executed in a timely fashion. He also imposed a secondary cost on his employees, who spent too much time preparing for and trying to get meetings with him. As a result, many were demoralized and did not bring new ideas forward given the work it took to get them introduced in the organization. This is, of course, a scenario that almost all workshop participants will have experienced. As a result, a discussion tends to evolve around ways of formalizing decision points to avoid this kind of inefficiency.

Second, if not mentioned in the discussion, I prompt participants to indicate who Mares is connected to in the network. They point out Mitchell and Avery. I then ask, “Where do these people work?” They quickly indicate exploration, at which point I ask a final question: “Where do you think Mares came from in the organization?” Of course the answer is exploration, which allows me to make a quick point about how networks can become biased and affect a leader’s creativity and decision making. Research shows that a huge proportion of what leaders think and do is driven by the trusted relationships in their network. Often, as leaders rise in an organization, 60 percent to 70 percent of their trusted ties tend to remain with people in the function from which they emerged. At the precise point that they need greater diversity in their network—through ties bridging functional lines, geographical sites, and cultural perspectives—they too often allow familiar voices and perspectives to influence the information they receive and the decisions they make.

The preceding points are the ones I most want participants to see in the comparison of formal and informal structure. But they might notice others.

In the discussion, I try to stick to the leadership angle—why it’s important for leaders to have this network perspective and the various ways they can act on this information. For example, participants might note how peripheral Sutherland and Ramirez are. Working from this point, I explain different ways to onboard new employees (who are often on the fringes of the network) to help them build connections and speed their productivity. Participants might also notice that the top team is not well connected. I often make the point that it’s important for a leader to see how information is entering and leaving a team through networks.

I wrap up this part of the session by bringing up a couple of tactical points. For example, I mention that network analysis can allow a leader to see external connections, which are very important when looking at sales force effectiveness, mergers, alliances, and R&D productivity. Network displays can also be modified—by varying the thickness of connecting lines, for instance—to indicate the quality of relationships or the frequency of interactions.

## Self-Assessment

I then move to another slide (you could also use a flip chart) and indicate that now that we have a sense of how networks can be visualized, we will turn to the ways in which high-performing leaders use them to achieve results.

Our research over the past decade has shown that leaders who manage the informal networks in their organizations are more successful over time. Specifically, in contrast to those whose careers plateau and fade, the more successful leaders in our research do the following:

- **Manage the center of the network.** They minimize collaborative bottlenecks and acknowledge and develop high performers who do not act solely as individual stars but also make their colleagues more effective.
- **Leverage the periphery of the network.** They rapidly integrate newcomers and reengage underconnected high performers (which happens a lot more than leaders acknowledge).
- **Selectively bridge organizational silos.** They facilitate effective collaboration at key intersections in the network (such as across functional lines or physical distance).
- **Develop awareness of colleagues’ expertise throughout the network.** They ensure that the best expertise in a network is known and brought to bear on new problems and opportunities.
- **Minimize insularity.** They manage relations with key internal and external clients and stakeholders.

In this portion of the session, I use a set of slides and case examples from my own work to clarify why each network dimension matters and the performance and innovation results leaders can attain by attending to networks on that front. Colleagues achieve the same success using a set of flip charts to describe each dimension and then brainstorming with participants the business impact from managing networks well (or poorly) on each. Regardless of approach, the objective is to help participants understand the network dimensions and why they matter.

Participants then take a self-rating diagnostic (see a high-level summary in Exhibit 19.1)<sup>2</sup> either as a leader or as a member of a network they care about in the organization (this second approach is important if workshop participants are high-potential employees who do not yet have many direct reports).

### **Exhibit 19.1 Promoting Leaders' Effectiveness Through Organizational Networks**

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**Instructions:** Please take a moment and identify (1) the practice you think you do most effectively and might be willing to comment on what seems to work for you and (2) the practice you think has the most room for improvement in your group (and things you might consider doing).

1. I make sure that people or roles within my group do not become so overloaded with collaborative demands that they are unable to support their colleagues in a timely fashion.
  2. I scan for, identify, and reward employees who frequently engage in collaborative behaviors—offering resources, help, information, and contacts—that make their colleagues more effective.
  3. I ensure that newcomers—either new hires or those from other parts of the organization—are integrated rapidly into my group and know whom to turn to for information, expertise, resources, and decision approvals.
  4. I make sure that subject matter experts and high performers in my group are available to help their colleagues in a timely manner on appropriate issues.
  5. I facilitate effective collaboration at specific points in my group—across functional lines, physical distance, hierarchical levels, core projects, or expertise domains—where informal networks are critical to performance and innovation.
  6. I facilitate innovation and organizational change by engaging employees with significant relationships across functional lines, physical distance, expertise domains, and demographic populations.
  7. I make sure that employees in my group are aware of one another's expertise, contacts, and resources and know whom to turn to for help when opportunities and problems arise.
  8. I make sure that my group collaborates effectively with appropriate functions/divisions within the organization and with relevant stakeholders outside of the organization (such as key customers, vendors, and associations).
-

After they have completed the diagnostic, I have them focus on one or two opportunities for improvement and review the relevant text in the appendix in greater detail. I then ask them to identify *and write down* two to four things they could do more effectively as a leader (or a group they are a part of could do more effectively). From there I have them break into groups of two or three and spend five minutes identifying one or two core actions that could have a significant impact on both the leader's and the organization's effectiveness. I then debrief with the entire group. With smaller groups, this might entail going around to each table. With larger groups, I gather five core actions from around the room and discuss them with the larger group.

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## **Session 2: Promoting Effectiveness Through Personal Networks**

I usually open the second half of a leadership workshop by describing the link between personal networks and performance. Research over the past couple of decades has demonstrated that the quality and scope of an employee's network have a substantial impact on that person's ability to solve problems, learn when transitioning into new roles, and implement plans of any substance. In opening this segment of the workshop, I indicate that we will focus on networks from a performance perspective and not from the more traditional self-help approach, which advises us to build big networks. I make sure to emphasize that our research calls into question the more-is-better approach to networking—we find that big networks often diminish performance and productivity.

In the first part of this session, we focus on two characteristics of high performers' networks. The first is that high performers tend to have networks rich with bridging ties often positioned at key points in a network so they hear about opportunities earlier than others do. The second is that high performers tend to invest in relationships that extend their expertise and help them avoid learning biases and career traps.

### **Bridging Relationships in Networks**

High performers tend to occupy network positions that bridge otherwise disconnected subgroups. People with networks rich in bridging ties are more successful than those with more closed networks, even though they maintain the same number of ties. People with more insular networks tend to be circulating with others who are aware of similar opportunities. For the same investment of time, those with more diverse networks get a much greater return because they hear a variety

of information and are able to capitalize on opportunities that require disparate expertise and insights.

Fighting off insularity in your network requires effort and runs contrary to most organizations, whose formal structure, incentive schemes, physical layout, cultural values, and other forces tend to encourage closed networks. But rather than fall into a comfortable trap of connecting with people who are themselves heavily interconnected, high performers tend to forge ties across important subgroups. As a result, they are better able to capitalize on opportunities in the “white space” of a network than peers with more closed networks. Our research has confirmed that people who bridge subgroups are much more likely to be in the top 20 percent (as determined by performance reviews) of an organization. Others have also shown that these bridge builders tend to be promoted more rapidly, enjoy greater career mobility, and adapt to changing environments more successfully.<sup>3</sup>

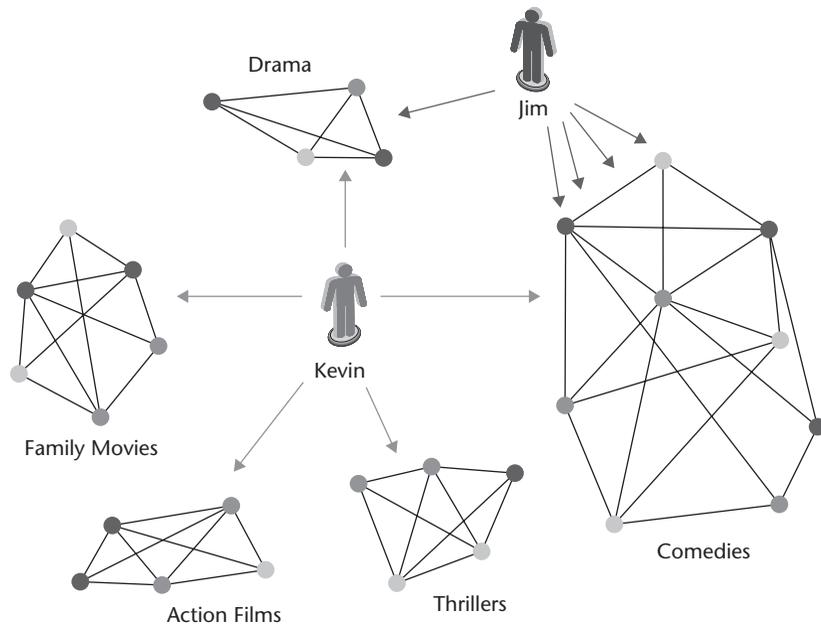
One way to visualize this kind of network is by considering the game “Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon,” named for an actor who has appeared in a great variety of films in the course of his career. Players in the game attempt to name actors who are the most steps away from appearing with Bacon in a film. An actor who has actually appeared with Bacon is one step away, whereas an actor such as Michael Douglas is two steps away. Douglas has never been in a movie with Bacon, but he appeared with Benjamin Bratt in *Traffic*, and Bratt appeared with Bacon in *The Woodsman*.

It turns out that it is difficult to name any actor from the history of film who is more than three steps away from Bacon. But the magic in Bacon’s network is not its size but his position in it. He is central—though not the most central—because he has starred in a number of different genres and so has ties spanning action, comedy, thrillers, dramas, and family movies. By contrast, an actor such as Jim Carrey has made as many movies but has focused primarily on comedies with some exploration into drama as well. Although many actors are highly connected within a genre, their lack of ties that bridge genres makes them much less central in the entire movie network.

Figure 19.2 provides a visual of this idea. I take workshop participants live to the *Oracle of Bacon* Web site referenced in Figure 19.2 to see if they can name an actor or actress more than three steps away from Kevin Bacon. This is a fun way to both reenergize the audience and convey the notion of bridging ties in a way that they can all relate to.

I am always quick to point out that I am not commenting on Kevin Bacon’s acting skills—participants can make that call on their own. Rather, we are just using his movie coappearances as an example of a certain kind of network. In the workplace, people with networks like Kevin Bacon’s do better than those with

FIGURE 19.2 THE SIX DEGREES OF KEVIN BACON



To try your luck at naming actors far from Kevin Bacon visit: <http://oracleofbacon.org/>

more closed networks. For the same investment of time, the Bacons of the world, with their more open networks, get a much greater return.

Measuring the degree to which one's network is open or closed is difficult in the absence of a full network analysis. As a result, in most leadership programs we ask participants to reflect on certain kinds of bridging ties that our work has shown to be key in differentiating high performers. These individuals distinguish themselves through networks rich in ties bridging various dimensions of formal structure. Specifically, our research reveals the importance of three kinds of bridging ties:

**Ties bridging hierarchical levels.** A large proportion of high performers' ties extend across hierarchical levels. People who are higher up in an organization can help a high performer make decisions, acquire resources, develop political awareness, and gain awareness of what's going on in the company. Those at the same level are generally most useful for brainstorming and providing specific help or information. And those at lower levels are often the best source of technical information and expertise.

**Ties bridging functional and organizational lines.** High performers are also much more likely than others to have ties outside their function (but inside the organization) and ties outside the organization. Further, they also have a strong tendency to cultivate these relationships before they are needed. Then, when new opportunities come along, they are better able to visualize how they might integrate people in their network to provide a more comprehensive solution than are their peers with less far-ranging networks.

**Ties bridging physical distance.** The likelihood of collaborating with someone decreases substantially the farther one is from that person. Although collaborative tools such as e-mail, instant messaging, and videoconferencing can bridge some physical gaps, proximity still frequently dictates people's networks. Often this means that people allow proximate others—not those with the best expertise—to influence their thinking. High performers are much more likely to reach out across physical distance to connect with relevant expertise.

I tend to use slides and specific examples to enrich the preceding dimensions. Other facilitators ask participants to reflect on each kind of bridging relationship and provide examples of where success (their own or others') resulted from certain kinds of connections. In addition, I often ask a group to consider where opportunities were not realized (or realized only with a lot of effort) owing to the lack of certain kinds of connections. After this discussion concludes, I ask participants to spend 10 minutes individually completing the template in Exhibit 19.2. In doing this, it is important to let people know that if they cannot think of a specific person, they should consider groups or kinds of people (e.g., certain kinds of experts).

After participants have completed this activity, I ask them to get into new discussion groups of two or three people. I instruct them to share one strength from their network and one opportunity to improve their connectivity that they will act on after the program. Sharing in small groups like this often helps leaders consider benefits others are getting from their network that they had not thought of. Because new insights tend to arise in these interactions, I ask participants to note on Exhibit 19.2 one more kind of relationship they will reach out to before moving to the next section of the workshop.

## Relationships That Extend Expertise

In addition to being positioned well within an overall network, high performers cultivate personal networks that extend their abilities and help them continually learn and develop at work. Unfortunately, in the workplace, people often seek

### Exhibit 19.2 Building Bridging Ties

<p><b>External Peer or Subject Matter Expert Networks for Process or Product Innovation</b></p>	<p><b>Client Ties (Internal or External) Ensure Satisfied Profitable Relationships</b></p>
<p>Ties to Initiate, Strengthen, or Rejuvenate</p>	<p>Ties to Initiate, Strengthen, or Rejuvenate</p>
<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Reaching Up Provides Info, Political Support, and Resources</b></p>	<p><b>Effective Network Inside Function Enables Coordinated Effort</b></p>
<p>Ties to Initiate, Strengthen, or Rejuvenate</p>	<p>Ties to Initiate, Strengthen, or Rejuvenate</p>
<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p><b>Reaching Diagonally and Up Provides Integration Opportunities and Resources</b></p>	<p><b>Outside Function Ties for Brainstorming and “White Space” Opportunities</b></p>
<p>Ties to Initiate, Strengthen, or Rejuvenate</p>	<p>Ties to Initiate, Strengthen, or Rejuvenate</p>
<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>



out others who see the world as they do. It’s comforting, validating, and easy to interact with people who think as we do. Such tendencies, however, can prevent leaders from extending their abilities and decrease the odds of their developing truly innovative insights outside of their domain of expertise. In general, we find that high performers distinguish themselves by including people in their network who provide complementary (not similar) expertise.

But high performers, if they are not careful, can fall into certain network traps that impede their effectiveness and derail their careers. For example, an otherwise high performer might allow certain voices—such as those who are physically

nearby or who have a similar functional background or common values—to disproportionately influence learning and decision making. In addition, most high performers face transition points in their careers, when they need to develop new skills to thrive at the next level. Unfortunately, skill gaps—whether related to technical knowledge, decision-making ability or interpersonal influence—often manifest themselves when an emerging leader has little time to devote to learning. Those who keep moving and enjoying success find ways to augment individual abilities through their network.

Network analysis helps reveal targeted actions high performers can take to create a network that extends their expertise and so helps move them beyond their original network, which merely reinforced old skills. Two views are helpful on this front. The first comes from overlaying one’s network on skills demanded by a current or future role. Doing so reveals weak spots, where one needs to initiate or deepen relationships. The second comes from assessing the specific kinds of expertise that each person provides to ensure that one is not ignoring those with relevant expertise in favor of familiar but less knowledgeable colleagues. After these points have been made, I ask participants to spend five minutes individually completing the template in Exhibit 19.3. As with Exhibit 19.2, I instruct them that if they cannot think of a specific person, they should consider groups or kinds of people.

### Exhibit 19.3 Leveraging Networks to Extend Expertise and Augment Skill Gaps

List three key development objectives—Where can you renew or add connections to support your development objectives? If you don’t have specific names, identify categories such as customers, specialists, peers etc.

Development Objectives	Connections to Renew/Add

List three key goals, projects or objectives you have for the coming year. Where can you build/strengthen/renew ties to support your goals? If you don’t have specific names, identify categories such as customers, specialists, peers etc.

Goals, Projects or Objectives	Connections to Renew/Add

After people have completed the preceding activity, I ask them to regroup in the same small discussion groups they were in for the last activity. I then instruct them to share the actions they plan to take and solicit feedback and ideas from their group members. This peer-level coaching often helps people figure out how to gain access to relationships, expertise, and resources that they would have otherwise struggled to attain. Because new insights tend to arise in these interactions, I ask people to write down additional action items on Exhibit 19.3 at the end of the small-group discussion.

## Behaviors That Energize a Network

One of the most important characteristics of high performers is their ability to generate energy and enthusiasm among those in their network. In fact, our research has shown that the ability to energize others predicts the likelihood of being a high performer four times more than any other network factor and also is a strong predictor of where innovations emerge and take hold in organizations. Most networking self-help books focus on how people can build large networks of loose affiliations; unfortunately, these networks do not generally yield opportunities or support. High performers, in contrast, tend to create energized, high-quality relationships that are a valuable resource for them.

To introduce workshop participants to the importance of behaviors that create enthusiasm, I split participants into two groups, one focused on energizers and the other on deenergizers. I then give the participants this assignment to consider in groups of two or three:

**Group 1.** Describe energizers—people who leave you feeling better about what you are doing. Discuss:

- What do energizers do in interactions that creates energy?
- Beyond specific behaviors, what are energizers like as people?

**Group 2.** Describe deenergizers—people who can suck the life out of the room in a heartbeat. Discuss:

- What do deenergizers do in interactions that destroy energy?
- Beyond specific behaviors, what are deenergizers like as people?

I then lead a 5- to 10-minute discussion on each topic—energizers and deenergizers—capturing behaviors on a flip chart at the front of the room. This helps to show participants that energy derives from fairly simple behaviors that we all exhibit sometimes but not necessarily consistently. I then introduce the nine energizing behaviors that distinguish high performers, shown in Exhibit 19.4. The first four are foundational—things energizers do that inspire other people

### Exhibit 19.4 Driving Energy into Networks

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**Instructions:** Please review the following statements and select two or three that you think you do least effectively or consistently. When you are finished, please consider possible actions you might take. Our intent is to help you identify a manageable set of opportunities to increase your effectiveness. Please don't gloss over descriptions because they may not at first glance seem very important: energizers often do seemingly small things that yield big returns over time.

1. I strike an effective balance between reaching out to people in my network to get work done and connecting with these people on a personal level (i.e., conversations not related to tasks).
  2. I maintain a good balance between what I ask for and what I contribute to those in my network.
  3. I consistently do what I say I am going to do and follow through on commitments I make to people in my network.
  4. I am committed (and show this commitment) to principles or goals that are larger than my self-interest.
  5. In meetings and one-on-one conversations, I engage others in realistic possibilities that capture their imaginations and hearts.
  6. I am typically fully engaged in meetings and one-on-one conversations and show my interest in others and their ideas.
  7. I create room for others to be a meaningful part of conversations or make sure they see how their efforts will contribute to an evolving plan in the future.
  8. When I disagree with someone's plan or a course of action, I do so in a way that focuses attention on the issue at hand and not the individual contributing the idea.
  9. I maintain an effective balance between pushing toward a goal and welcoming new ideas that improve on a project or process for getting to a goal.
- 

to dedicate time to their ideas and initiatives. The remaining five behaviors are interaction skills—things energizers have a greater tendency to do in meetings and conversations that create and spur enthusiasm.

I then ask participants to rate themselves on each behavior and select the two or three that they want to exhibit more consistently. Participants, still in their two groups, then spend 10 minutes on the following question: What things can you do as leaders to promote energy throughout the organization? This session concludes with each group sharing with the larger workshop the various responses to that question.

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## Endnotes

1. The specific story behind this example can be found on pages 4–7 of *The Hidden Power of Social Networks* (Harvard Business School Press, 2004).
2. I use a more sophisticated electronic network profiling instrument with peer feedback in it, which can be found on [www.robcross.org](http://www.robcross.org).
3. Daniel Brass, “Structural Relationships, Job Characteristics and Work Satisfaction and Performance,” *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1981; Ronald Burt, *Structural Holes*; Ronald Burt, “The Network Structure of Social Capital”; Martin Gargiulo and Mario Benassi, “Trapped in Your Own Net? Network Cohesion, Structural Holes, and the Adaptation of Social Capital”; Joel Podolny and James Baron, “Resources and Relationships: Social Networks and Mobility in the Workplace”; Raymond T. Sparrowe, Robert C. Liden, Sandy J. Wayne and Maria L. Kraimer, “Social Networks and the Performance of Individuals and Groups,” *Academy of Management Journal*, March 2001.

## **DEVELOPING LEADERS' NETWORKS THROUGH A STAKEHOLDER MAPPING AND ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP**

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Katy Strei and Sally Colella

**L**ook behind any successful change initiative, and you'll find that its leaders actively leveraged their personal networks to involve stakeholders in shaping, approving, and adopting the change. Stakeholders are the individuals and groups who will be affected by the change, including all who influence those who must take action to implement it. Stakeholders can be specific leaders, key customers, end users, and employees who are opinion leaders in their groups. They are usually spread across an organization's departments, work groups, and external clients and partners.

Managers often jump into action on new change initiatives without considering how to identify and engage this crucial network. As a result, opposition gradually begins to emerge and may increase as the implementation date draws near. Individuals or groups of stakeholders can easily block success by outright resistance or by simply ignoring the new system, technology, process, or behaviors.

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### **Devising the Workshop**

We developed a tool, which we call Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement, to help leaders develop a personal network that informs and supports the implementation

of a change initiative. One example was with a group of leaders responsible for change efforts at MedImmune, the biotechnology arm of AstraZeneca.

MedImmune launched its first significant revenue-generating product in 1998. In those days, the company was still small enough that when decisions needed to be made or changes implemented, the key players simply huddled together and emerged with clear directives. All stakeholders affected by any change in direction participated directly in it. Differences of opinion were worked out in real time. As the company grew—at the time of this writing it employs more than 3,000 people worldwide—it tried to maintain its nimbleness while adding the structure and discipline a larger business needs. This required changes in process, systems, and leadership behavior.

The Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement workshop we designed and facilitated at MedImmune was intended to give rising leaders a common approach and language to navigate the organization as their responsibilities increased. It gave participants a process for identifying and engaging stakeholders early in the life of a change initiative, keeping communication open during its implementation and responding to different stakeholders' needs.

This workshop was part of the company's Leadership Development Program. The goal of the workshop was to help participants, in their role as change leaders, apply the lessons of network and stakeholder management to their business challenges. Many of the participants were overseeing the changes in process, structure, and systems required to operate an increasingly complex, global organization. Because the organization valued rapid decision making and execution, change leaders could easily neglect the need to manage stakeholders more deliberately. As a result, they could put their efforts at risk.

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## Overview of the Workshop

At the outset of the workshop, participants collaborated in working groups to identify the full spectrum of stakeholders for a given change initiative. Each working group mapped the stakeholders according to their influence over and interest in the initiative. Participants then identified the current level of support of each individual stakeholder or group of stakeholders. Armed with this awareness, the working group drafted a stakeholder engagement plan, which combined the information from the stakeholder map with key communication messages and vehicles designed to engage stakeholders in the change process. Following the workshop, during the development and implementation of the change initiative, each leader regularly worked with his or her team to update the stakeholder engagement and communication approach.

We find that this workshop is especially useful for organizations that are looking for a very tangible application of network mindsets and tools. The approach goes beyond developing an awareness of the current network of stakeholders to actively developing a specific network that can help a change effort succeed. Organizational or personal network surveys are not required, but if they are available, they can be used to ensure that key brokers are identified and engaged. The workshop is typically four-and-a-half hours, but it can be expanded or contracted, depending on the depth of the conversation and level of detail.

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## Workshop Preparation

Prior to the workshop, five workshop participants who were currently leading change initiatives were identified. They were invited to be “sponsors” of the change initiatives during the workshop. They were instructed that their role was to describe their change initiative and the desired result. A group of five or six fellow program participants would then work with the sponsor through the rest of the workshop activities.

To be chosen for the workshop, a change initiative had to be one that the sponsor believed would make a difference in the lives of a group of people. The group could be some or all of MedImmune’s employees, its direct clients, the ultimate beneficiaries of the products, or a combination of those groups. It also had to be a complex initiative with many potential stakeholders both inside and outside the company.

The initiatives tackled during this workshop reflected the variety of changes in the company. Some were technical in nature. For example, a leader from the Finance organization was accountable for implementing an enterprise finance IT system that would be used not just by Finance but also by other corporate functions. Human Resources, for instance, would use it to address regulatory needs, and many people would need to adopt it in their day-to-day work. Consequently, many groups contributed to the development and implementation of the system.

Other change initiatives were more behavioral, requiring a shift in assumptions and values. A leader from the Sales and Marketing organization, for instance, was charged with centralizing and managing the process for developing and distributing collateral materials. The business case for this change was clear: an improved process would help the leader better manage collateral inventory, leverage relationships with vendors, and control costs. But the changes would require the people who created the collateral and those who used them to increase their planning and coordination.

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## The Session

The materials required for the session are Post-It notes; red, yellow and green sticky dots, and five posters with the Stakeholder Mapping Four Box Model.

### Workshop Introduction and Selection of Working Groups

We began the Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement session by building participants' awareness of the importance of networks. We then focused on the importance of identifying and managing a very targeted network: the stakeholders for a specific change initiative.

This introduction was followed by an overview of the stakeholder mapping activity. First, we advised participants who were joining the working groups of their role: to support project sponsors in identifying stakeholders and creating a plan to engage the stakeholder network. Each sponsor then provided the full group with a few headlines about his or her change initiative. The headlines were intended to give participants enough information to help them select a project. Each of the sponsors was seated at a different table in the room.

After each of the sponsors had given the headlines for his or her initiative, it was time to create working groups. First, we gave sponsors an opportunity to invite specific people to join their group. The sponsors frequently asked participants who were part of stakeholder groups they sought to engage during the change initiative. We then invited the remaining participants to select an initiative that interested them and move to the sponsor's table. As facilitators, we ensured that the working groups were roughly the same size. This segment should take one hour.

### Stakeholder Mapping

The entire Stakeholder Mapping exercise should take two hours to complete.

***Directions for the Full Group (15 minutes)*** We introduced the full group to the Stakeholder Map (Figure 20.1), which we use to array all the stakeholders for a given change initiative.

We displayed the map and explained that the working groups would use it to sort stakeholders according to the influence they have over the sponsor's change initiative and the level of interest in it.

Stakeholders who have a high degree of influence can approve or block the initiative. Without most or all of these high influence stakeholders on board, it

FIGURE 20.1 THE STAKEHOLDER MAP

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High Influence	Short and Tailored	Stay Close
Low Influence	Be Aware	Share Updates
	Low Interest	High Interest

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would be difficult for the change initiative to succeed. Those with a low degree of influence cannot, on their own, approve or block the change initiative.

Those who display a high level of interest are willing to meet with the sponsor, respond to e-mail messages, and provide input. Those with a low level of interest prefer to remain uninvolved. The placement or mapping of a given stakeholder in the four-box model determines which of four engagement strategies are most effective:

**Low interest and low influence—Engagement strategy: Be aware.** This group requires minimal effort. Do not overinvest time in this group. Do be aware of those in this group in case they become more interested or gain influence.

**High interest and low influence—Engagement strategy: Share updates.** This group is interested, but the sponsor should not spend too much time soliciting input. The best strategy is to send informative e-mail messages or hold update meetings to communicate information about the change initiative. Consider who in this group can influence the more powerful stakeholders.

**Low interest and high influence—Engagement strategy: Make it short and tailored.** This group prefers to be passive but may emerge at the final hour and block or slow down the change. Keep communication short and to the point. Ask a few direct questions and make sure the information you share is bottom-line oriented and tailored so that you are communicating only what is important. Do not ignore these stakeholders, especially if they do not support the change initiative.

**High interest and high influence—Engagement strategy: Stay close.**

Engage this group frequently and work to align support. Make sure meetings and update sessions allow for plenty of interactive, two-way communication. Use questions to tune into what is important to this group and communicate frequently about areas of interest.

**Directions for Working Groups (1 hour, 45 minutes)** The working groups were now ready to delve into the details of their change initiatives and to map stakeholders. The groups proceeded as follows:

1. The sponsor provided an expanded description of the change initiative and the desired results to his or her working group. Group members asked questions to guide the sponsor in sharing key information. This was a very informal conversation. (15 minutes)
2. The working group then helped the sponsor list all of the individual people or groups who were affected by the project, had influence or power over it, or had a stake in its successful or unsuccessful conclusion. The table groups “consulted to” the sponsor by asking good questions and making suggestions that led to the identification of a comprehensive group of stakeholders.

The sponsors of change initiatives at MedImmune found that individuals in their groups consistently thought of stakeholders they had not considered. For example, one sponsor was launching an initiative to form a cross-functional team that spanned the entire manufacturing process. A member of his group identified stakeholders working at MedImmune’s manufacturing plants whose involvement could help ensure success. (30 minutes)

3. The working groups then wrote each stakeholder (group or individual) on a Post-it note and placed each note in the appropriate box on a preprinted poster of a blank stakeholder map. Group members were often able to reveal some of the informal networks within the organization and inform the sponsor about the influence level of different stakeholders.

When they were undecided on a stakeholder’s level of influence, the groups always returned to the essential question, “Is the stakeholder able to approve or block the change initiative?” This question helped ground the working groups and supported them in reaching agreement on how to best map the stakeholder. If the interest level was unknown, the working groups mapped the stakeholder along the midline and made a note to gauge the level of interest as part of the engagement and communication plan. (45 minutes)

4. The team then used sticky dots to identify each stakeholder's level of support: (15 minutes)
  - **Green:** Actively or passively supports the change initiative.
  - **Yellow:** Undecided or unknown.
  - **Red:** Actively or passively opposes the change initiative.

## Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Following the mapping activity, each working group created a Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Plan, which became a living document, guiding the sponsor in engaging the stakeholder network. The participants began by targeting the highest-priority stakeholders, those who have high influence but are either undecided or actively oppose the change initiative. They also sought to target those who currently support the idea and might be influential with this high-priority group by sharing their reasons for supporting the change initiative.

The Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Plan includes the following information:

- **Stakeholder.** List names of individual stakeholders and stakeholder groups.
- **Influence.** Based on assessments during the mapping exercise, indicate high or low. How much control do they have over the change initiative? Can they block successful implementation? Do they control decisions that will be made? Budgets? Do they influence others?
- **Interest.** Based on conversation during the mapping exercise, indicate the amount of interest as high or low. How much time can they devote to receiving updates or giving their thoughts about the change project? How interested are they in hearing from the sponsor?
- **Overall strategy.** Select the appropriate strategy from the influence/interest four box model (Be Aware, Share Updates, Short and Tailored, Stay Close).
- **Level of support.** Do they oppose the project or support it, or are they on the fence? In the case of the Sales and Marketing leader, her working group helped shift her perspective about the value of her change effort. While she was fully committed to realizing efficiency and cost gains, her colleagues challenged her to look for benefits for her stakeholder group. For example, once implemented, the new process would free up salespeople for more calls.
- **Topics of interest or concern.** What is relevant for them about the change initiative? How could their support enable or hinder the results the stakeholder is seeking to achieve? In the case of the Finance leader who was depending on IT to deliver his enterprise financial system, one working group member was an IT leader. She provided valuable information regarding the IT project

manager's other assignments, which helped the Finance leader understand that it would be helpful to ensure that he and the IT project manager were aligned on timing and resource requirements.

- **Communication vehicles.** Does the stakeholder prefer group meetings, one-on-one chats, e-mail, voice mail, or “drive by” meetings, in which quick updates are shared when passing by his or her office? How often does the stakeholder want or need to be updated? Does the sponsor need to determine which communication vehicles will be most effective? The higher the influence level, the more the sponsor should consider designing two-way forums in which the stakeholder will feel heard.
- **Who will lead?** Who will lead and be accountable for communication with the specific individual or group? Do members of the sponsor's team have relationships they can leverage to enroll stakeholders? Who has the knowledge, insights, and communication style to best face off with different stakeholders? Make sure that those who are working directly with key influential stakeholders have the credibility and skills to uncover their points of view and tailor convincing messages. The sponsor's implementation team will need to decide how to develop approaches to win over those stakeholders who are most critical to success.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan should take one hour to complete.

## Wrap-Up

During the final segment of the workshop, we brought the working groups back together so that the full group could discuss its reactions to the Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement process. We asked the participants what they had learned and what they found helpful. In general, most of the participants had not been through a disciplined approach to thinking through the stakeholder aspect of a change initiative. They commented that this process could have helped them avoid earlier headaches.

The sponsors found that their working groups were able to generate a number of valuable recommendations for the engagement and communication plan. For example, a participant from the Commercial Division was able to provide insights into particular individuals' communication preferences and concerns. This segment should take 30 minutes to complete.

## Results

At any growing, complex organization, it can be challenging for leaders to understand the entirety of the business. It's hard to see across functional lines, to drop

by the office of a colleague who works on the other side of the Atlantic, or speak directly with a customer who is multiple steps downstream in the process you manage. To be effective, leaders must step back and challenge themselves to understand the impact of their work across the business.

This workshop helped MedImmune's leaders broaden their perspective and understand the impact of their change efforts. The early days, when they could gather the group of cross-functional stakeholders by yelling down the hall, are gone. Mapping and planning a stakeholder engagement strategy gave participants the opportunity to tap their diverse network to look across the business, identify stakeholders who could make a difference, and develop a plan to drive collaboration, alignment, and successful change implementation.

The workshop helped the sponsors of change initiatives increase their odds of success, but it also had a secondary benefit: it gave all participants the experience of giving input to and receiving input from a large, diverse group. They gained an appreciation for the benefits of hearing from those outside of their existing network. Several sponsors at MedImmune were surprised that people who knew little about the details of their work could contribute to the creation of a robust stakeholder engagement and communication plan—a learning that influenced the degree to which they actively tapped and built their own personal networks in the future.

## THE MENTOR MARKETPLACE

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Christie Dowling and Victor Gulas

As professionals enter the workplace and look to rapidly increase their skills, understanding of the company, and professional network, many of them ask for help identifying a mentor. Although the mentor–protégé relationship is a very personal one, many companies try to create matches through formal mentoring programs. These can be great, especially for pairing new employees who have a particular technical focus with mentors who understand the area. However, formal mentoring programs, for which organizations often have very high expectations, do not necessarily create successful matches and can go too far in prescribing the terms of the relationship. In addition, formal programs, especially ones with a technical focus, often do not address employees' intangible needs to get to know the corporate culture and develop a network of colleagues.

Informal mentoring networks often develop to meet those needs. In such cases, eager protégés often seek out mentors on their own. We at MWH, a large, geographically dispersed engineering firm, developed the Mentor Marketplace to increase the number of potential connections between mentors and protégés, and to allow mentoring relationships to develop beyond the typical limitations of technical career mentoring. The Mentor Marketplace is not a formal organizational program; it is a web-enabled tool that exists simply to facilitate informal connections between those in MWH looking for a mentor and those who want to mentor. Mentoring relationships in MWH tend to result from chance encounters. The purpose of the Mentor Marketplace is to increase the frequency of those encounters.

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## The Basic Challenges

We developed the Mentor Marketplace after noting several challenges:

- **Retaining employees.** In December 2007, MWH recognized a need to reduce the number of employees voluntarily leaving the company. Many departing employees cited lack of career development and/or poor relationships with their supervisor as primary reasons for leaving.
- **Maintaining high levels of employee motivation.** Around the same time, MWH learned about some research presented by the Corporate Leadership Council (CLC) citing the importance of a sense of engagement in employees' desire to stay with the company and improve their performance. Entering into a mentoring relationship can foster that engagement, provide career satisfaction, and help employees reach their potential.
- **Lack of consistent practices around mentoring.** Throughout our large organization, there were already some mentoring activities in place. For example, our Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) region supports new graduates in seeking professional accreditation. When developing the Mentor Marketplace, we did not want to inhibit such activities, but we did note that existing processes were disparate and as a result were not widely used around the company. Providing tools, techniques, and an open culture, as the Marketplace does, can allow informal mentoring processes to flourish.
- **Working in a global organization.** In the past few years, MWH has become a more globally dispersed organization through both organic growth and mergers. Project teams increasingly comprise individuals who do not work in the same office, highlighting the need to create strong networks across locations. The Mentor Marketplace provides an opportunity for employees to identify and connect with others who could help them both professionally and technically.

The Mentor Marketplace was not a standalone undertaking. Rather, it was a technology-based intervention within a series of communication, training, and change management activities to help develop a mentoring culture throughout the organization.

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## What Is a Mentor?

Mentors are coaches, guides, teachers, counselors, facilitators, supporters, advisers, consultants, and encouragers. Whereas many think of mentors as older or

more experienced than their protégés, we have found at MWH that peer-to-peer mentoring relationships can be beneficial for both parties. Employees are encouraged to experience mentoring relationships first as a protégé, second as a mentor, and finally as a peer mentor. When introducing this concept to younger employees, we find that initial hesitation often gives way to enthusiasm and excitement—everyone has some life experience that can be shared with others.

Good mentors share various traits: a willingness to pass on expertise, good listening skills, a broad understanding of the company, accessibility and the willingness to give of their time, the ability to work out strategies for assisting their protégés, and the ability to encourage people to achieve their objectives. No one methodology or model for mentoring exists. We believe, however, that there are four basic roles for mentoring: coaching, facilitating, counseling, and networking.

Coaching mentors focus on taking protégés through a systematic effort to improve their capabilities. These mentors seek information about their protégés' knowledge and experience, asking questions, focusing on details, rather than telling them what to do. They help protégés apply specific skills and deal with problematic situations.

Facilitating mentors help identify opportunities for their protégés. They are willing to work hard to find developmental assignments for their protégés even if it means losing them from their team or office. These mentors are very engaged and proactive in helping to manage the careers of their protégés.

Counseling mentors are keenly interested in helping their protégés understand the consequences of past actions and options for future ones. They are excellent listeners and not quick to offer advice on how to fix situations. They go the extra mile in understanding the whole person—their protégés' lives at home and at work. They are also encouraging, constantly making their protégés aware of their value to the company and to the mentor personally.

Lastly, networking mentors help their protégés develop productive networks within the company. They typically have effective networks themselves, into which they introduce their protégés. And they encourage, if not outright push, their protégés into events that will expand and strengthen their networks.

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## How Does the Mentor Marketplace Work?

The Mentor Marketplace is a Web site that allows employees to look for mentors or protégés using a Match.com type of approach. It is housed on our internal SharePoint-enabled company intranet. When an employee goes to the Mentor Marketplace, he or she finds a home page with step-by-step directions on how to get started (see Figure 21.1).

FIGURE 21.1 THE MENTOR MARKETPLACE HOME PAGE

<b>Mentor Marketplace</b>	Home > Learning & Sharing Knowledge > Mentor Marketplace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mentors</li> <li>▪ Protégés</li> <li>▪ New Relationship</li> <li>▪ My MarketPlace</li> </ul>	<h2>Welcome to the MWH Mentor Marketplace</h2> <p>This is site where Mentors and Protégés can easily find and connect around topics for learning and career development. Here's a <i>step by step approach</i> below on how to make that happen!</p> <p><b>Step One:</b> Sign up as a Mentor or Protégé by clicking on these links. Fill out the profile information requested.</p> <p>Would you like to be a <b>Mentor</b>? <b>Sign up</b>          Would you like to be a <b>Protégé</b>? <b>Sign up</b></p> <p><b>Step Two:</b> For <b>Protégés</b>, use search on the right hand side of the website to search for Mentors whom you would benefit from their areas of expertise. Just type in that expertise (like Leadership) into the search menu and see who comes forward. <b>Mentors</b>, change the drop down menu to "Protégés" and search for those individuals who would benefit from your expertise. You should also scan the Mentor or Protégés lists by clicking the navigator on the left to find potential pairings.</p>
<b>Discussions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mentor/Protege Discussion Forum</li> </ul>	
<b>Administration</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Relationships</li> </ul>	
<b>How this site works</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ FAQs</li> <li>▪ Quick Ref Guide</li> <li>▪ Mentor Marketplace Process Flow</li> </ul>	
<b>Feedback on MarketPlace</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Feedback</li> </ul>	
<b>People and Groups</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪  Recycle Bin</li> </ul>	

## 1. Creating a Profile

First, the individual creates a user profile as a mentor, a protégé, or both. Many employees have reported that they have enjoyed playing both roles through interactions prompted by the Marketplace. For example, one senior leader signed up as the protégé of a young professional as a way to gain insight on the work strategies of the millennial generation. This same employee also plays the role of mentor in several other relationships.

A user profile consists of the following information:

- Office location.
- About Yourself is a field for employees to describe their role at MWH and include some personal information if desired.
- Knowledge and Specializations (for mentors) and Knowledge Areas of Interest (for protégés) are fields in which mentors and protégés input information related to the type of mentoring they are seeking or can provide.

- Preferred modes of communication allows both mentor and protégé to indicate their communication preferences, including phone, e-mail, computer chat, videoconference, discussion forum, or face to face.
- Status indicates if mentors are available to accept new protégés.
- Number of Active Protégés provides a count of the number of relationships mentors are currently participating in.
- Start date is the date mentors are available to start working with a protégé.

## 2. Searching for a Match

After a potential mentor or protégé has entered the preceding information, he or she can try to find a match in one of two ways: using the search engine feature of the tool and entering such criteria as area of interest and location, or browsing the complete list. The intent of this site is to enable mentor-protégé relationships to span the organization; as such, we encourage protégés and mentors to seek mentoring relationships outside of their home office. Figure 21.2 provides a view of the search engine. After entering a search term, potential mentoring matches are returned through a list of names and details from the profile.

Figure 21.3 shows a profile that someone might come across while browsing through the list of all active mentor profiles.

## 3. Contacting the Potential Mentor or Protégé

The Mentor Marketplace is not a formal program that automatically suggests matches for employees. The employee is responsible not only for reviewing the available individuals but also for reaching out to a potential mentor or protégé. This initial contact does not take place through the Marketplace, but through e-mail, over the phone, or face to face.

If a mentor or protégé is found through the Mentor Marketplace, there is no guarantee that the two individuals will then enter into a mentoring relationship. Mentors may realize, for instance, that they simply don't have the time or that they do not have sufficient expertise in areas where the protégé wants help. The mentor-protégé relationship must be entered into mutually. If one side declines, nothing should be read into the reasons or be held against that individual. For potential mentors and protégés, the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) posted on the site include these guidelines, as well as other tips for mentors and protégés.

## 4. Establishing the Relationship

If both the potential mentor and protégé believe that theirs would be a beneficial relationship, they then determine the framework for it. The Mentor Marketplace

FIGURE 21.2 SEARCH ENGINE AND RESULTS

Search the Mentor Marketplace

Mentors

Mentors  
Protégés

Search the Mentor Marketplace

Mentors

Results 1-10 of 17. Your search took 1.17 seconds.

Clear Results

Mentors  
Learning & Sharing **Knowledge** ... Client Relationship **Management** ... Project **Management**, Team **Management**  
<http://myknet.mwhglobal.com/learningsharingknowledge>  
- System Account - 4/2/2009

Mentor  
... Chief People and **Knowledge** Officer in the company. been focused on **knowledge management** and implementing changes in IT and HR across the company. **Knowledge management**, change **management**, networking within the company, career guidance, social n ...  
<http://myknet.mwhglobal.com/LearningSharingKnowledgeID=17> - Gulas, Victor G (Vic) - 10/16/2008

Mentor  
... I am a part of the **Management** Consulting business of BSG working on workforce development, kno ... **Management** consulting services: ... development, **knowledge management**, education/training/learning design and delivery, change enableme ...  
<http://myknet.mwhglobal.com/LearningSharingKnowledgeID=37> - Yoskowitz, Seth J - 6/23/2008

FIGURE 21.3 A MENTOR'S PROFILE

Mentors

New ▾ Actions ▾ Settings ▾					
Type	Mentor Name	Knowledge and Specialisations	About Yourself	No. of active Protégés	Status
<b>Count = 166</b>					
	 Dowling, Christie L	Decision analysis, risk management, network analysis, designing and delivering presentations, climate change, change management, career development	I am an environmental engineer with ~ 9 years with MWH. I am currently in an internal role that focuses on knowledge sharing within MWH - how can we make some of our global processes more efficient? I started out in the Industrial Group (NRII) in Walnut Creek, CA. While my heart may still be in CA, I am enjoying living in CO with my husband Chris.	1	Available to mentor

offers tips for exploring the compatibility of the mentor and protégé and for establishing a strong mentoring relationship (see Table 21.1).

The Marketplace also provides the following guidance on both exploring and defining the terms of mentoring relationships.

- **Clearly define the area for the mentoring exchange.** In the initial inquiry between a potential mentor and potential protégé, one of the first topics should be what knowledge or skill needs to be transferred and whether the mentor has a strong capability in that area. For example, if a mentor lists the broad topic “wastewater treatment” under “Knowledge and Specializations,” the potential mentor and protégé should discuss the needs of the protégé in that area. The potential mentor may not in fact have the specialized skills or experience that the protégé is seeking. For a technical mentoring relationship, establishing upfront exactly what skill needs to be transferred provides an

**TABLE 21.1 MARKETPLACE TIPS**

Mentors	Protégés
Choose a protégé you can identify with.	Examine the company to identify people you admire or would like to emulate.
Define the relationship and expectations upfront.	Personally approach your potential mentor to define what you hope to accomplish and set expectations upfront.
Act as a sponsor for your protégé.	Being pleasantly persistent is a good way to develop a good relationship. As you are the one looking for guidance, the onus is on you to be proactive.
Allow your protégé to diagnose and resolve issues on his or her own—don’t just tell the protégé what to do.	Be respectful of the mentor’s time and preferred mode of communication.
Help your protégé learn from the mistakes he or she makes.	Have good listening skills.
Find ways for your protégé to maximize his or her strengths and manage weaknesses; provide feedback in both areas.	If the mentor asks you to do some follow-up work to help you develop, do it and report back the results. There has to be accountability in the relationship for it to be effective.
Recognize the benefits that mentoring will offer you; that is, you enter the relationship with an attitude of “I’m going to learn something new here.”	

endpoint for the mentoring engagement. But mentoring relationships can have a purpose that is not technical. For example, several entries on the Mentor Marketplace indicate that “career guidance” is a primary purpose. In this instance as well, it is important to define expectations.

- **Don’t overpromise on results and time.** Mentors should be realistic about time expectations with their protégés—start small by offering a realistic amount of time per week or per month. Be sure to clarify how the interactions will occur (face to face, phone, e-mail, or some combination). Both the mentor and protégé need to demonstrate their commitment and energy toward the mentoring goal, understanding that it may take longer than anticipated. In addition, the time commitment should be worked out between the mentor and protégé. Much of the time necessary for the relationship will be dictated by the knowledge or skill being transferred. If time is scarce, set realistic expectations at the beginning and design interactions to maximize effectiveness.

- **Look at the relationship as a two-way street.** Learning will surely happen for the protégé, but, with the right perspective, the mentor will also learn, and in doing so will set up a more open and trusting partnership to foster knowledge exchange.

- **Determine how long you are committing to working together.** A mentor and protégé should establish a time frame for the relationship at the outset so that they will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the relationship at key milestones and determine if it is valuable or necessary to continue the interaction to achieve the original goals.

- **Determine what roles each person will play in the relationship.** For example, the mentor can be a “facilitator” or a “coach,” and the protégé can be responsible for arranging meetings.

- **Determine what modes of communication you will use.** This allows the mentor and protégé to discuss communication preferences. Particularly in the case of relationships that cross geographical boundaries, the mentor and protégé can discuss communication styles and determine which communication technologies will be used, including videoconference, teleconference, and written communication.

## 5. Documenting the Relationship

After a mentor and protégé have agreed to enter into a relationship and have established its terms, they can document it on the Mentor Marketplace. Figure 21.4 shows the data fields that can be entered to document the relationship. This is simply a chance for the mentor and protégé to record the expectations established using the preceding guidelines. After a relationship is documented, the details of the relationship can be viewed only by the mentor and protégé.

**FIGURE 21.4 DOCUMENTING A RELATIONSHIP**

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<b>Purpose *</b>	<input type="text"/> Describe the purpose of the mentoring relationship e.g. Technical, Personal, Career Goals
<b>Mentor</b>	<input type="text"/> & ✓
<b>Protégé</b>	<input type="text"/> & ✓
<b>Start Date</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>End Date</b>	<input type="text"/> 24 months maximum recommended
<b>Mentoring Relationship Status</b>	New
<b>Modes of Communication</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Sametime <input type="checkbox"/> Video Conference <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Forum <input type="checkbox"/> Face to face
<b>Knowledge areas of interest *</b>	<input type="text"/> What Knowledge or skills do you want to attain out of this relationship? (Please separate by commas)

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## Connections to Other Mentoring Initiatives

The Mentor Marketplace was part of a broader initiative within MWH to create a more supportive and active mentoring culture. The objectives of mentoring communications and initiatives at MWH included the following:

- Raising awareness of available tools and references
- Explaining how effective mentoring relationships can improve employee engagement
- Informing and involving stakeholders
- Managing expectations and clarifying expected improvements
- Creating a desire to change behavior
- Providing skills to mentor more effectively

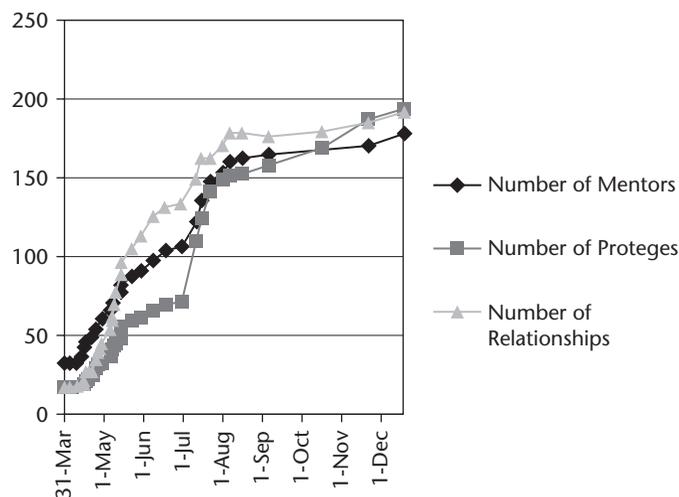
In conjunction with other communication and training programs, the Mentor Marketplace site was launched on our internal network. We used several existing networks to publicize the marketplace, including the leadership course graduates, MWH's Young Professionals Group, and participants in internal Communities of Practice (CoPs). In addition, we placed a news story about the Marketplace on our intranet home page.

We also worked with several groups at MWH to create mentoring resources outside of the Marketplace. For example, two human resources professionals developed reference and training materials for mentors. Also, as part of the company's high-potential leadership program, participants were given the task of mentoring one or two individuals who were solid to high performers but were considered at risk of leaving the company. In addition, graduates of an internal leadership course were tapped to become active mentors through the Marketplace. At the same time, the company's IT organization piloted a series of lunchtime mentoring seminars.

## Results

Participation in the Mentor Marketplace has increased steadily since its introduction in March 2008. A participation tracking graph, shown in Figure 21.5, is posted on the Marketplace.

**FIGURE 21.5 TRACKING MARKETPLACE PARTICIPATION**



However, the number of relationships is not the best metric to gauge the success of the Marketplace. Rather, we feel that the stories told by mentors and protégés speak for themselves.

One protégé in New Zealand searched the Mentor Marketplace and found a mentor in Colorado. The protégé says that the relationship has exposed him to a different perspective on the business, which has helped him in his work. The protégé also points to other, more personal benefits:

“By citing her own and her colleagues’ examples, she has given me a lot of encouragement and help. I feel really proud and happy to be a part of the MWH family. I am grateful to my mentor and can’t thank her enough for all her efforts and guidance. I look forward to this mentor–protégé relationship becoming even stronger and more productive.”

We have found that having a site that makes mentoring visible has increased the number of people reaching out for mentors in office locations other than their own. In that sense, the Mentor Marketplace has strengthened our internal network across geographies.

Several other stories also tell of relationships being formed over geographic boundaries. According to one mentor:

“I had a request from a young graduate from our Florida office to be her mentor. We have communicated by e-mail so far, and I’ve given her a few tasks to carry out before we organize a videoconference, hopefully before she starts completing her [performance review] for next year. I am based in our Singapore office now, and although there is the time difference we are hoping to continue with positive progress.”

The Marketplace has also prompted dialogue around the corporate culture and company news. In the words of one mentor:

“I thought it was great that she reached out to ask me [a question] rather than worrying or being confused. The connections we have made through the Marketplace allow us easy access to people who can help us better understand what is going on with the company and keep things in perspective. We continue to have formal dates, but I also value and appreciate the case-specific opportunities where I can be of help to another person.”

For many protégés, the marketplace provides an opportunity to find a mentor to help develop skills and strengths. According to one protégé:

Meeting biweekly with my mentor through the Marketplace for the past six months has helped me to develop my strengths, improve delegation skills, and gain insight into a part of the company that is geographically remote yet relevant to the work that I do on a day-to-day basis. My mentor has provided books, DVDs, and other course material to help me improve my leadership and delegation skills. Focusing on my efforts to play to my strengths at work, I shared one of the strengths-finder materials that my mentor provided with the young professionals in my office to encourage them to identify and capitalize on their strengths. Through biweekly videoconferences, I received constructive feedback from my mentor on various matters, including how to deal with difficult situations, better manage my workload, set more measurable annual performance objectives, as well as develop simple action steps to achieve these goals. Open dialogue with my mentor has helped me sift through details and focus on achieving goals and developing qualities that are integral for personal and career success.

Finally, the benefits of the Mentor Marketplace have gone beyond traditional career or technical mentoring. For one mentor and protégé, the marketplace has formed connections to help deal with a common life challenge:

I have certainly derived great benefit from the Mentor Marketplace as both a protégé and as a mentor. I was approached by a gentleman in New Zealand to act as a mentor and was wonderfully gratified to hear that some training I had recommended for him was not only well received but considered to be life changing. I have also provided some material and advice that has been well received and enjoy touching base every couple of weeks to check that focus and commitment levels are not slipping. I feel that my protégé has lifted himself to a higher level of awareness and possibly performance as a result of our relationship, and I'm proud to have contributed to that. Additionally, I have reached out as a protégé to mentors who have shared a common life challenge, and I've been deeply grateful to find two people in the U.S. who have provided me with guidance and support and continue to do so. In fact, I'm going to get to meet one of them in person today and am very much looking forward to the opportunity to thank them for support they have provided and the value I have received from our relationship. The Marketplace goes far beyond just technical mentorship, and I am very grateful for it.

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## Implementation Challenges

The most difficult aspect of introducing the Mentor Marketplace has been the challenges associated with raising awareness and communicating to employees about the existence of the site. The number of participants always spikes after a

communication or announcement about the site—through an e-mail or a posting on our company intranet—and then plateaus until the next announcement. As such, it is difficult to keep up momentum and increase participation.

While the employees who participate have cited positive outcomes from using the Marketplace, the number of employees participating is only a sliver of our population. Our challenge going forward will be to continue to raise awareness of the Marketplace to make it a true resource for all employees. We hope to do this by continuing to advertise the site, encouraging lunchtime seminars on mentoring-related topics, and continuing the mentoring activities associated with our internal leadership program.

It is important to keep in mind that the Mentor Marketplace is just a technical tool for facilitating connections. The true benefit of the mentoring relationship will be realized by the individuals involved.

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## Value for Other Organizations

At MWH, the Mentor Marketplace has helped employees make connections across a geographically dispersed network. The mentoring relationships have extended beyond the expertise transfer that typifies many formal mentoring programs. Other companies can implement a Marketplace concept in situations where employees express a desire for help in finding a mentor, particularly in a company with a geographically dispersed employee base. Overall, the feedback from participants has been very positive. To sum up using the observation of one employee who is both a mentor and protégé, “I think the marketplace is a wonderful opportunity for people to connect and learn from each other. I look forward to seeing how these mentor–protégé relationships progress!”

## MANAGING EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS AND STEMMING KNOWLEDGE LOSS

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Carlota Vollhardt and Brigitte Lippmann

For many organizations, managing relationships with key stakeholders is a critical business challenge. In industries from finance to consumer goods to pharmaceuticals, informed decisions and outcomes require input from various external groups. Managing a multiplicity of relationships can be a difficult and complicated task because many groups within an organization may have both unique and overlapping relationships with one stakeholder.

The challenge is even greater when individuals who have been the main channels of information flow between a company and a stakeholder organization change roles or retire. At the very least, the company must spend time and other resources rebuilding the channel while dealing with the temporary disruption in the relationship. At the very worst, the company's relationship with the stakeholder is permanently damaged, and information will not pass smoothly between them; the company will then find itself continually making decisions on the basis of incomplete information.

The departure of a person who serves as a bridge to external stakeholders represents a multifaceted loss: the organization not only loses valuable social capital but also tacit knowledge about the stakeholder, the relationship, and the history of shared decision making. The impact of such a departure often completely escapes the organization's attention until there's a major blunder, and people realize, "If Joe were still here, this would not have happened!" In recent years, many companies have established more rigorous succession and talent management

processes. However, these efforts often focus on business-critical positions, not on key experts, and the emphasis is on helping a new leader succeed, not necessarily on preventing disruption to the business or retaining valuable organizational knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, we describe what happened in a company when an employee who had invaluable knowledge of a critical stakeholder was about to retire. As you will see in this example, organizational network analysis (ONA) can be used to assess the relationships between a business and a key external stakeholder organization, revealing where the company may be over- or underinvesting in a relationship or might be at risk through the impending loss of an important player. ONA can thus help prevent the disruption of and loss of knowledge about critical, highly sensitive stakeholder networks and can guide a relationship management strategy for the future.

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## The Challenges at a Pharmaceutical Company

The organization, a U.S.-based global pharmaceutical company, faced numerous challenges, including a situation involving one of its most crucial external stakeholders: the World Health Organization (WHO). As European governments tried to contain health care costs by cutting reimbursement for medicines, some governments had started using a WHO metric as a benchmark to establish a pricing cap. The pharmaceutical industry objected to this use of the metric, which had been designed to serve a purely scientific purpose—the gathering of comparative data for epidemiological studies. When a new drug came on the market, a panel of WHO experts—mostly pharmacologists and physicians—would assign it a metric on the basis of specific technical criteria. The metric would then be revised for new approved indications. The drug maker had no direct input into this process but could request a hearing with the WHO technical panel in the case of an issue.

When controversy erupted over the use of the metric for pricing purposes, fierce debate ensued among policy experts on all three sides: policy makers (both in government and in the WHO), scientists, and the pharmaceutical industry. WHO policy makers took an ambiguous stance. It was difficult for the industry to influence the internal debate at the WHO: its policy side was understandably reluctant to talk with the pharmaceutical industry, and WHO technical experts who served as panelists were not allowed to have direct connections at all to the industry, outside of the rare official hearings.

The pharmaceutical company had a multiplicity of contacts with the WHO in a variety of policy areas as well as philanthropic engagements and scientific

boards, but they were scattered across divisions, countries, and functions, and were not managed strategically around particular issues or challenges. The company assembled a taskforce to devise a more integrated, strategic approach internally and a more influential approach externally with regard to the pricing issue, a big part of which was dealing with both the technical and policy sides of the WHO. The taskforce soon became a victim of the same phenomenon of scatteredness, and the leader felt that it had an unclear mandate and was operating in a fog.

As a further complication, Franco—the person in the company who had the most intimate knowledge of the WHO in regard to the metric controversy—announced his retirement. A competent, kind, and shy man originally from southern Europe, Franco had worked for a competitor that the pharmaceutical company had recently acquired. His departure would come in the wake of the merger integration. Franco had been loosely connected to the taskforce, but the relevance of his knowledge and experiences had not been fully recognized.

However, an attentive HR generalist, aware of the importance of knowledge retention and the benefits of ONA, discovered in the course of preparing Franco's exit process the risk and missed opportunity that his departure would present. She then brought our team, which specialized in knowledge transfer and executive transition, to the attention of the taskforce leader. The involvement of this HR professional was critical. As we have seen in other situations, HR is often in the position to “connect the dots” within an organization. In this case, she spotted the risk associated with Franco's retirement while there was still time to do something about it.

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## The Network Analysis Project

Our team discussed with the taskforce leader the challenges of the company's relationship with the WHO regarding the metric and pricing issue, the implications of Franco's departure, and the causes of the taskforce's frustrations. We decided on a course of action that would not only evaluate the degree to which the misuse of the WHO metric was an issue across Europe but also assess the company's relationship with the WHO in that arena and develop a plan for managing it strategically. The plan called for two steps in this regard:

- Identify the relationship risks. What were the connections between the company and the WHO regarding this issue, the possible existing gaps, and gaps that would open up as a result of Franco's departure?
- Develop recommendations on how to close the gaps and strategically manage the relationships between the WHO and the company regarding this issue in the future.

We started by forming a subteam to the taskforce that included the relevant functional experts, Franco, and Joe, a colleague from Corporate Affairs who was seen as having the most WHO contacts on the policy side.

## Identifying Relationship Risks

To identify the contacts between the company and the WHO relevant to the metric issue, we conducted a network analysis. Because we were not able to validate anything with WHO contacts, we collected and cross-referenced the data in several ways:

- An initial relationship-mapping exercise with Franco and Joe
- A quick e-mail survey with colleagues in the European country offices on the commercial side and with colleagues from R&D and New Product Development who were involved with the issue
- In-depth interviews with key people identified in the survey and mapping exercise

We mapped the results visually and identified several issues:

- Franco and Joe were indeed the main brokers between the company and the WHO regarding the metric—Franco for the technical experts, Joe for the policy side.
- Relationships were rated as mostly positive or good on the technical side, and mostly negative or neutral on the policy side.
- Franco and Joe shared only three contacts at the WHO.
- Other individuals at the company who were distributed across the globe had relationships to some of the contacts at the WHO but not as many.
- They were mostly not aware of Joe's or Franco's connections; therefore, they could not leverage or coordinate the relationships and approaches.
- The company had no connection to several WHO individuals in critical positions concerning the issue at hand, partly because of fluctuation in these roles at the WHO.

No wonder the taskforce had been feeling disoriented!

We discovered that Franco had an elaborate way of meeting technical experts, who could not be approached in their WHO panelist role. He got to know them outside the WHO at professional conferences. He established a good rapport through his technical expertise and his understated, straightforward, and ethically sound diplomacy. He also had a good handle on how different subcommittees at the WHO influenced one another.

In addition, Franco was familiar with the mindset, current thinking, and scientific language of the expert committee making the metric decisions. Because those committee members base their decisions to a large extent on the materials presented by pharmaceutical companies to the FDA in the drug approval process, he could explain how the company would need to articulate results of big clinical studies to be better understood and evaluated by the WHO panelists.

The conclusion was that Franco's knowledge had resulted in a competitive advantage for the acquired firm (for which Franco had worked) and that his departure would cause a major, irretrievable gap in social capital and intelligence built over years with the technical experts at the WHO, leaving the acquiring company exposed and unable to capitalize on this expertise in the future. This assessment represented a huge opportunity for us to build a business case for a coordinated, cross-divisional, and international approach around the metric issue that would pull together the company's distributed internal stakeholders and enable them to strategically manage the external relationships with the WHO on an ongoing basis.

## Recommendations

The visual map and the analysis made it obvious how fragmented the organization was in managing what used to be a strictly scientific element of the drug development and commercialization process. Clear ownership, roles, and responsibilities across divisions would be crucial for managing a highly regulated end-to-end new work stream, starting with the proper documentation and presentation of trial findings in the FDA submissions so that the WHO would interpret them correctly, and involving multiple handoffs internally until the metric was set and pricing negotiated with European governments.

This was critical for making a compelling business case for the subteam's recommendations. The recommendations fell into three categories: The first two were aimed largely at understanding and integrating the specific requirements regarding the WHO metric and its implications for documentation and handoffs during the drug development and commercialization process; the third was an approach to creating an internally integrated and aligned external stakeholder-management strategy with the WHO.

### **1. People and Organization**

- Establish a liaison role between the company and the WHO as a part of the function that links the development and commercialization process from preparing for the FDA approval to pricing and launch.
- Identify the individual for this liaison role, and transfer knowledge from Franco to that person.

- Include cross-functional coordination between the technical and policy side within the company into the job descriptions, goals, and performance evaluations for the two roles responsible for those areas—the to-be-created liaison and the existing policy role involved in the issue, currently filled by Joe.
- Create a cross-functional, cross-divisional WHO council, co-led by the liaison and Joe, to ensure ongoing communication, alignment, and support for an integrated stakeholder strategy.
- Building on the official metric training offered by the WHO for the industry, educate the management of New Product Development, Marketing and Development teams, and R&D professionals involved in the clinical stage of drug development on the implications of the metric for pricing decisions.

## **2. Process**

- Instead of preparing submissions only with the FDA's (and its international counterparts') requirements in mind and subsequently leaving it to the commercial division to deal with the implications for the WHO metric, incorporate the WHO's requirements into the overall development and submission process. That means collecting, documenting, and thinking through the relevant data points with regard to their impact on the assignment of the WHO metric during the clinical phase.
- Be specific in the use of language that could be misunderstood and misinterpreted by the WHO.
- Incorporate metric-related checkpoints into the existing milestones in the development process.

**3. Strategy** Develop a comprehensive, cross-functional stakeholder management strategy as part of the new liaison role.

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## **Implementation**

These recommendations required different implementation tactics and channels and—though the taskforce leader gained approval by the senior level steering committee—were highly dependent on organizational buy-in from multiple functions across countries and divisions.

### **1. A Well-Positioned Liaison**

Identifying, scoping, and getting support for the liaison role was the most critical and challenging issue. After extensive discussions with the internal stakeholders of this issue—the Policy Group, Pricing, and New Product Development, to name only a

few—the taskforce asked a highly regarded New Product Development VP to be responsible for filling the role. He had experience with and technical knowledge of the issue and the organizational clout to connect with the corporate groups about policy. He identified an individual on his global team who lived in Europe and already had relationships at the WHO and experience in dealing with the metric. The scope of this individual’s role was redefined to include the integrated stakeholder management strategy and the oversight of the implementation of process changes in R&D.

## 2. A Clear Policy Statement and Approach

Using the metric to set pricing represented an obvious misuse of a technical tool for policy-making purposes. A clear statement by the company was therefore needed to articulate the misleading and potentially negative impact on the pharmaceutical industry and, more important, on doctors and patients around the world. Corporate Affairs and Public Affairs worked with the liaison to draft a statement, to be approved by senior management, which would serve as a communication tool and as a guideline for internal decision making.

## 3. Teaching and Reference Materials

For the knowledge transfer workshop to have an impact, we knew we needed to prepare documents that would focus our work on key points in the drug development process and key influencers and decision makers in the network.

***Process Documentation for R&D*** The taskforce gathered various process maps and other materials to help the development teams understand at what points of the clinical phase the metric needed to be considered to ensure the WHO’s understanding on a strictly scientific level, thus minimizing the need to request hearings owing to misinterpretations. Currently there was no consideration until after FDA approval.

***Network Description and Intelligence for the Liaison Role*** In preparation for a workshop to transfer Franco’s knowledge before his retirement, the team mapped out his understanding of how the WHO technical panelists worked internally, and with the WHO policy side, how they interacted with the European governments and with other organizations such as professional associations. The intent was to capture the operations of the WHO technical network and the relationships between influencers and decision makers.

#### 4. Knowledge Transfer and Project Transition Workshop

A full-day workshop brought together the New Product Development VP, the liaison, Franco, Joe, and selected colleagues from the R&D and Commercial side. The agenda included the following items.

***The Business Case*** We began by reviewing the elements and data that formed the basis for our recommendations and action plan: the WHO metric and its current misapplication for pricing by governments in various EU countries, market implications of this misuse, potential levers to influence the new practice, the company's actions and internal stakeholders involved so far, and internal WHO processes, policy creation, and use of scientific data.

Our approach was to present two recent examples of the handling of the metric process—one that had a positive outcome and one negative—in a case study format. In a facilitated discussion, the group then compared the cost of investing in a more stringent internal process to track and document the data points for the metric earlier in the clinical development process and the cost of creating a new role and structures to spearhead a stakeholder management strategy with the WHO at the commercial end, with the potential benefit achieved by better outcomes. The magnitude of the benefit outweighed the cost many times.

***The Process Changes*** An overview of the modifications required to ensure the metric was well understood and integrated into the clinical development and submissions process as well as in the documentation processes for all submissions to authorities such as the FDA and its international counterparts.

Before the workshop, the group had put together an “As-Is” process and a “To-Be” process for documenting and evaluating data points during the clinical development process. The description included details such as: What are trigger events? What are individual steps, and which role takes them? Who makes which decisions, and which input is needed to make them? What are the interdependencies between steps in the process flow? Where do external requirements drive the process, and how does that affect planning and execution?

During the workshop, both the As-Is and the To-Be processes were mounted on the wall. Participants also had copies on their laptops so that they could make real-time changes. The discussion centered on modifications to roles and responsibilities, alterations in interactions with other parties, and potential tension points. Participants suggested refinements to the process and to the stakeholder communication and project implementation plan to ensure the effectiveness of the rollout to all product development teams.

**Change Management** The idea was to create recommendations on how to roll out the process to all development teams when approaching the stage critical for the metric.

After lunch, the group reviewed the poster it had created during the previous session to capture the stakeholder map and action plan. The stakeholders were listed on the y-axis, timing on the x-axis, and each cell contained the content and media or additional intervention. Participants decided that the most efficient approach would be to educate the drug development teams as they neared the phase in the development process when the information would make a difference. We then began to group and prioritize the actions from the poster to identify which pieces were “timeless” and which were “time bound” to the development process. After distinguishing these two using colored dots, we divided the activities among team members on the basis of their positions and their proximity to the process steps and to stakeholders.

**The External Network** Using the network analysis as a guide, participants reviewed—with Franco’s and Joe’s input—key stakeholders at the WHO on the policy and technical sides, and people at other organizations with whom they regularly interacted in regard to scientific metrics and pricing policy. During this session, Franco and Joe shared stories and experiences, “downloading” their tacit knowledge in detail: individuals’ roles, history, political leaning, and agendas, what decisions they had made in the past, whom they influenced, who influenced them, and how they could be approached.

The group captured the intelligence in a Word document: The top of the page contained a profile of the individual with contacts (if appropriate), role, history, known facts, and decisions made. The second part of the page included assumptions about the person’s philosophy and the network of people who influence his or her thinking as well as the people whom that person influences. The page ended with next steps that should be taken to build and maintain the relationship and who would be most suited to do so. This directory was put on a protected eRoom, accessible only to people involved in managing the issue.

**The Internal Network** The group reviewed individuals distributed throughout the company who had contacts at the WHO and would be critical, by virtue of their role or expertise, for the functioning of the new development process. The goal here was to collect as much information as possible to build a robust internal network for the new process and for handling the WHO situation. Whenever participants realized that they needed additional information on an individual, they identified who in the room would contact that individual.

## 5. Follow-up Meetings

After the workshop, a follow-on conversation was held between the liaison and taskforce members to answer questions, solidify important information (such as the process and action plan to form the internal network), and support the rollout.

## 6. Senior Management Buy-In

As part of the rollout of the newly designed approach for dealing with the WHO metric and the related cross-divisional work stream, the liaison needed to present the business case for the changes to senior management to ensure alignment, understanding, and funding. Because the liaison role was integrated into an existing role, funding was less of an issue than anticipated, and management gave a clear go-ahead to continue with the implementation.

## 7. Creation of a Stakeholder Management Strategy

The liaison and Joe (who remained in his role in the organization) were tasked with identifying the key products that would be submitted for regulatory approval and hence be touched by the WHO over the next 24 months. The goal here was to identify a medium-term approach to stakeholder management. This effort was supposed to serve as a testing ground for all three pieces: the liaison role (focusing on internal stakeholders and the WHO), the policy statement and approach (focusing on governmental and NGO parties involved in setting treatment and pricing standards), and the coordinated external stakeholder management (professional associations, NGOs, governments, and key opinion leaders). A first revision was planned to occur after 18 months.

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## Epilogue

The broader stakeholder management strategy was in the planning stage, and Franco had started to work with the individual in the liaison role on personal introductions to WHO contacts at commonly attended conferences, when we transitioned the project to New Product Development. Shortly afterward, we both left the company, and it is therefore unclear to what degree full implementation took place. In addition, the company has gone through several rounds of restructurings, acquisitions, and leadership changes. Similarly, European governments have changed, and pricing strategies have evolved. However, all the

right elements were in place to continue to manage the metric issue in a strategic and coordinated fashion.

Franco, whose time with the company had been extended to complete this project, has retired and now lives in the South of France. Joe is still with the company.

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## Key Insights

After going through this process, we were convinced that the more precise the questions you ask, the more powerful the results of an ONA will be. We went into the analysis with clear questions—and a hypothesis—about the state of our external network, and the results confirmed our expectations. We wish that at the outset we had formulated equally penetrating questions about our internal network—we would have saved time and gained additional value from the analysis.

Even with visible evidence of the impact of individual connections on business success, it took a lot of work and encouragement to make the necessary changes. Ideally, we would have assisted with the building of the external and internal networks and tracked progress, most likely with an additional ONA. Instead, we guided the project until it was transferred to the right people for implementation.

Although we do not know the final outcomes of our efforts, we can say that interventions such as this can have a significant impact on morale. The metric process, usually overlooked by those not directly touched by it, gained visibility, and all involved parties experienced a morale boost. In addition, the recognition of Franco as the holder of critical knowledge not only made him feel valued but sent a clear message to the organization about the importance of know-how. The group worked well together, had fun, and Franco and the other members felt that they made significant contributions to the organization.

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## Endnote

1. See Carlota Vollhardt, “Pfizer’s Prescription to the Risky Business of Executive Transitions,” *Journal for Organizational Excellence*, Wiley, 2005.

## SMART MENTORING TO INCREASE CONNECTIVITY

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Adrian (Zeke) Wolfberg

The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), a Department of Defense (DOD) combat support agency, is a critical member of the U.S. intelligence community. With more than 12,000 military and civilian employees worldwide, the DIA is a major producer and manager of foreign military intelligence, which is used by war fighters, defense policy makers, and force planners to support U.S. military planning, operations, and weapon systems acquisition. A typical DIA project usually involves some sort of collaboration, whether intra- or inter-agency, in an attempt to harness all relevant sources of knowledge in a problem-solving effort.

As in many organizations, however, collaboration, particularly across lines of formal structure, did not always come naturally. Whereas some people reached out to colleagues within the DIA or in other organizations inside and outside the DOD, many operated within the confines of their own units, isolated from the broader knowledge and experience that the full DOD has to offer. This was especially true for newer employees, who hadn't yet developed many ties and whose expertise was not yet widely recognized. In this chapter, we will describe how a program called Smart Mentoring improved the connectivity of isolated, or "peripheral" individuals and created a more cohesive cross-DOD network.

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## The Knowledge Lab Network

The idea for Smart Mentoring emerged from a change initiative we at the DIA undertook in 2004 to improve knowledge sharing and collaboration. As part of this initiative, we decided to form a cross-agency network called the Knowledge Lab, designed to break through traditional silos, bring together multiple perspectives, and provide a safe space for experimentation. It was hoped that the lab would become a model of collaboration organizationwide. The lab was also to act as a proving ground for network concepts, which could then be applied to DOD more broadly to make improvements in the areas of communication, creative learning, solving problems across organizational boundaries, cross-cultural awareness, and organizational self-awareness. Members included employee volunteers who remained in their full-time positions.

One of our first steps was an organizational network analysis with Knowledge Lab participants to inform our efforts and strengthen agencywide collaboration. In addition to basic questions about demographics and identification of who one knows and communicates with, we included questions about how employees felt about the culture of the organization and how they would like it to be in the future. This “culture index,” as we called it, showed that people felt the organization was too formal, task-oriented, hierarchical, and inflexible and that they wanted the organization to be agile and to empower individuals.

The ONA also revealed that while the overall information network was somewhat connected, certain members, generally those who had been around the longest, were overly central and many others, typically newcomers, were stuck on the periphery. The network was also fragmented by both line-organization affiliation (analysts talked with just analysts, HR staffers talked only with other HR staffers) and physical location in ways that undercut strategic directives for DIA. We followed up on the ONA results with a number of actions. The Smart Mentoring program, one of the most important, was aimed specifically at the challenge of linking some of the most central members of the network with those on the periphery.

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## Launching the Mentoring Program

The fundamental idea behind Smart Mentoring was to create mentoring relationships between central and peripheral players in the Knowledge Lab network. Central people would be able to offer connections and better integrate their peripheral mentees into the flow of organizational knowledge. The peripheral people would bring unnoticed or undervalued skills and perspectives more clearly

into the organization's problem-solving discussions. Everyone would benefit from a greater degree of knowledge-sharing overall.

## Enlisting Mentors and Mentees

We chose the people to participate in the Smart Mentoring program on the basis of the ONA findings. To form the mentoring pairs, we identified 22 very central individuals as potential mentors and 33 less connected individuals as potential mentees. The potential mentors were not only central to the network but also were brokers, people who have relationships across various subgroups. Because they serve as a bridge between individuals who do not otherwise know one another, brokers can be tremendously influential in a network, helping to disseminate new ideas and ways of working. Our goal in pairing brokers with peripheral people was to quickly boost the network's overall connectivity.

We then contacted the potential mentors individually, informing them that they had been identified as individuals in key positions in the network and asking them to become involved in a Knowledge Lab program to help others become more collaborative. These potential mentors, flattered to have been invited to play an important role in the organization's development, generally responded positively.

Inviting mentees—people who were on the periphery of the network—to participate was a more delicate task. These were largely new and young employees, who would not necessarily appreciate being told that others in the DIA thought they needed help. We decided that the best way to approach them was through a short narrative. So the Lab members created a marketing pitch that focused on the opportunity to meet experienced, seasoned employees who felt the same way as the newcomers did about the need for change. Potential mentees were asked, “How would you like to be better connected to people in DIA who themselves are well connected and share your belief that the DIA needs to become more agile and creative, and less risk averse?” Potential mentees responded positively to this approach, which came with an implicit promise of self-development in a safe environment.

## Gaining General Acceptance

Another challenge was to gain acceptance for the new program in an organization that already had a traditional mentoring program. Because our initiative was not part of the official DOD program, we had to frame it as an experiment that had objectives beyond individual development. We met with the members of the official mentoring program, explained the project, and reached an understanding on how to gain value from two programs with two different sets of objectives.

## Roles of Mentors and Mentees

To launch the Smart Mentoring program, each mentor crafted an autobiography and supplied a photograph. We emailed the autobiographies to the mentee candidates, who were asked to rank the top three mentors with whom they would like to be paired. An independent consultant supported a process to match the pairs, based on this initial show of interest and other network factors. To help the program succeed, we also made sure that all participants obtained permission from their supervisors and that they would actually take the time to participate fully in the program and were not about to take on a new work assignment or go on an extended business trip.

The final number of pairs participating in Smart Mentoring was 12. After the pairings were completed, we e-mailed the mentor and mentee about the pairing and goals of the program. The mentor and mentee then worked together to create specific objectives for their relationship.

**Mentors** The mentors were asked to help mentees increase their knowledge and experiences. Mentors would help mentees do the following:

- Achieve a diverse network.
- Add new people to their network.
- Develop strong relationships with a few well-connected colleagues.
- Gain access to a broad base of knowledge.
- Engage in activities that would keep them on the cutting edge.
- Be proactive and intentional in developing relationships.
- Spend time getting work done (instead of engaging in political or self-marketing activities) to achieve a good reputation and attract new opportunities.

**Mentees** Mentees were asked to help mentors understand a new generation of employees, in particular regarding matters of communication and technology. Mentees would do the following:

- Identify the most crucial bottlenecks and barriers that new employees face, including communication and process barriers.
- Help break down the communication barriers that sometimes exist between newer and more tenured employees.
- Help the organization understand what new employees want and need.
- Become a bridge between newer and more experienced employees.
- Incorporate new energy and skills sets, such as technology skills, into their work.

***Providing Examples*** To help mentors and mentees begin immediately to form useful and trusting relationships, we provided each pair with examples of what to look for during their initial conversations. For instance, mentors were urged to develop an understanding of the ways their mentees communicated orally and through technology. Mentees were urged to become more aware of their mentors' connections and the various ways they moved ideas and questions through the organization.

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## Results

We have been gathering both anecdotal and quantitative results about the impact of Smart Mentoring.

### Anecdotal Outcomes

As the individuals got to know one another, we began to see interactions that were substantially exceeding our expectations. For example, a mentee named Fred was paired with a mentor named Jack. Fred wanted help with his career decisions. Over a couple of years, Fred discussed the various options he felt were open to him.

Jack, who thought that Fred was highly motivated and creative, explained to Fred the need to become recognized as an expert at some core mission area. But Jack could see that other factors were influencing Fred's thinking in this matter; in particular, Fred believed that he would not necessarily thrive in all environments across the agency.

Fred always appreciated Jack's insights about the DIA organization and its values, as well as insights on the options he was considering. Over the course of the relationship, Jack developed a deeper understanding of the concerns that young, creative analysts were experiencing.

In another example, Sarah was paired as a mentee with Kim. Sarah had selected Kim in part because they were already acquainted; while working at separate organizations in the past, they had collaborated on various projects. This familiarity made it easier for the two to build a relationship. Sarah wanted help planning her career, so Kim asked Sarah to write down her goals so that together they could work on a road map for Sarah.

Kim learned that new employees are not all the same. Their needs and questions depend on their experiences, education, and personality. Kim learned that the onboarding process must be tailored to each employee.

Though seemingly simple, such interactions between mentors and mentees helped shaped the overall Knowledge Lab network.

### **Metrics of Success**

In 2006, after the Smart Mentoring program had been up and running, we conducted a follow-on ONA, which indicated a significant improvement in information flow, including a 14 percent increase in helpful relationships. Interestingly, we found that the peripheral people's networks grew, and the number of people leveraging these newcomers' expertise tripled. We knew from anecdotal evidence that this growth was due in no small part to the legitimization and introductions mentees received from their well-placed mentors.

Beyond information flow, our comparison of the first and second networks also revealed a significant improvement in employees' perceptions of the organization's culture: Knowledge Lab participants felt far more energized in collaborations with colleagues; 18 percent more people felt that the culture was becoming decentralized and flexible; and the gap between the perceived and desired work environment had shrunk substantially.

The network analysis also revealed a total of 388 new relationships in which people had collaborated and benefited as a result of the mentoring program and other Knowledge Lab initiatives.

These metrics have been inspiring, but perhaps even more telling were the recent remarks of the agency's director of human capital, who said that the informal mentoring that the Knowledge Lab has pursued is much better for producing results than the formal program within his organization. This may be the best indicator of the continued success of Smart Mentoring.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

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# NEWCOMERS' BOOT CAMP

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Betsy Hudson

The engineers and computer scientists who make up the government agency where I work have the challenging job of ensuring the security of our nation's defense communications systems. As the agency's internal human performance consultant, my job is to make sure that we organize ourselves in a way that allows us to make the most of our skills and abilities and to excel at our important mission. A large part of that, I have found, is helping new employees become comfortable and productive.

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### An Onboarding Challenge

Successful onboarding always requires careful planning, but some situations present even greater challenges for new hires than others. We found this two years ago, when we made the transition from a hierarchical organizational structure, in which engineers were assigned to programs for long periods, to a more agile matrixed structure, in which engineers provide guidance to multiple programs for limited periods. Our engineers essentially became consultants—a big change for them. Instead of working in a lab as hands-on problem solvers, designing and building equipment, they had to interact directly with clients (military and civilian program managers with diverse backgrounds and missions).

This put a new emphasis on social and interpersonal skills, and we started to see an increase in turnover: engineers who had previously designed and built security devices did not necessarily want to play this consultant role.

Before the restructuring, our 200-person organization was a patchwork of small teams working on discrete long-term programs. People had little visibility into the work that others were doing, and there was not a lot of information flow between teams. As a result of past reorganizations, there were groups of people who had known each other for years and developed close relationships (some even vacationed together), while newcomers often remained isolated or peripheral. But in the new matrix structure, the engineers needed to work together effectively on teams that formed quickly and changed frequently, which required them to have a good understanding of one another's skills and knowledge as well as the ability to communicate well and build good working relationships.

In addition to more rapid turnover, the new matrix structure also yielded increased demand for our services. Hiring became an organizational priority. Unfortunately, the government hiring process tends to be very slow and largely beyond our control. As pressure mounted to staff programs, we looked for ways to onboard new employees more quickly so that they were "plugged in" and ready to contribute in a short time.

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## Developing a Boot Camp

One way to address this challenge was to make sure newcomers had a chance to connect with colleagues soon after their arrival. We did this through our organizational onboarding event: Boot Camp.

### First Tries

Boot Camp started out as a five-day series of briefings, videos, and tours designed to familiarize newcomers with the organization's mission and structure. Participants were drawn from all four divisions, so the event was a rare chance for them to meet one another outside the bounds of their respective programs. Briefings were provided by technical experts from the four divisions, who used PowerPoint slides to give a "crash course" on their topics. Their slides were often full of acronyms and excessive organizational detail. Most of the briefers plowed through the slides, with little or no interaction with the people in the room. Few introductions were made during these sessions. We were perilously close to "death by PowerPoint."

The most popular part of Boot Camp was the lab tours, which gave the group the opportunity to visit facilities outside of our building. A big white government van and a box of doughnuts created a setting in which newcomers found common ground as they discussed military assignments, colleges, hobbies, and

friends. After the tours, the group had a new cohesion that translated into more engagement in the briefing room and more interaction during breaks.

One problem with this form of Boot Camp was that it was extremely time consuming for coordinators and for participants. And because scheduling briefings and tours took weeks, the camp was offered only once or twice a year, after some of the participants had already been at the agency for many months. Also, it was difficult for newcomers to take five days away from their jobs (on top of a four-day corporate orientation and a three-day directorate orientation).

## Redesigning Camp

I decided to shorten Boot Camp so that we could offer it more frequently and to restructure it to emphasize relationship building. My goal was to have a group of 12 to 15 new hires for each offering and to schedule three or four offerings per year.

First, I separated out some of the informational briefings that were not directly related to our organization, offering them at other times. Then I built in activities that allowed newcomers to connect with others in targeted ways: meeting other newcomers, managers from across the organization, and colleagues. I also sought opportunities for participants to deepen the connections they made during the onboarding process. For example, participants in the last Boot Camp worked together to create learning objectives for program management training.

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## The Current Camp

I have now run the new version of Boot Camp several times successfully, with the assistance of another staff member. What follows are the objectives for the event and a description of one of the sessions.

### Objectives

- Make newcomers feel welcome.
- Introduce newcomers to each other, managers, and organizational staff.
- Describe the basic work of each division without going into too much detail.
- Provide reference materials containing the fundamental knowledge of how we practice systems security engineering.
- Show participants our labs and other spaces.
- Help newcomers find, share, and leverage organizational networks.

## Agenda

### *Day 1*

1. **Icebreaker.** On poster-size paper, participants listed their names, organizations, past jobs, skills and knowledge, and hobbies and other personal information. People paired off to talk about their posters. After about 15 minutes, each person introduced his or her partner to the group. For a group of 15 people, this exercise took approximately 45 minutes. After the introductions were finished, we taped the posters to the wall of the conference room and left them there for the remainder of Boot Camp. The room happened to be the same room in which the weekly managers' staff meeting took place. We noticed with pleasure that the posters piqued the managers' curiosity and sparked some important conversations.
2. **Division briefings.** Each division was encouraged to send a team (as opposed to a single "representative") to brief the newcomers on its mission. By inviting more than one person, we gave the newcomers a chance to meet more people and hear different perspectives on the divisions. A 45-minute time slot was allotted to each division. In some cases, the team members introduced themselves and talked about their careers and experiences in our organization. Slides were kept to a minimum. At the end of these briefings, each participant was expected to be able to give a good, short "elevator speech" about our organization's mission.
3. **Communications/knowledge-sharing norms.** Organizational staff members spent an hour discussing the following:
  - Ways to communicate effectively through vertical levels of management and laterally with colleagues
  - Where official documents could be found
  - Organizational events: information-sharing sessions, brown bags, town meetings
  - Opportunities for education and development

### *Day 2*

1. **Mission "basics" briefing.** One of our most-respected technical directors addressed the following questions: What is the fundamental knowledge everyone in our organization should have? Where can it be found? Who are the subject matter experts?
2. **Tours of organizational facilities.** We took an informal walk through the various offices, including labs, front offices, and work spaces. We work in a cubicle environment, and it is important to encourage our largely introverted workforce to seek face-to-face contact.

3. **Meet and greet.** At the end, we hosted a mid-afternoon “Meet and Greet.” Everyone in the organization was invited to stop in the front office to meet the newcomers and partake of lemonade and cookies. It was a short but pleasant way to celebrate the arrival of new colleagues.

#### *After Boot Camp*

1. We distributed contact information for everyone who participated in Boot Camp and everyone in the organization.
2. Participants were asked for permission to post the introductory bios on our web page.
3. Participants received follow-up e-mails announcing events they might want to attend.

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## Results

Eight months after the first revised Boot Camp, we polled participants to see what impact it had on their subsequent experience in the organization. All were extremely pleased with the way the program helped them to integrate into the new environment. For example, one person echoed many similar comments in the following:

“I really enjoyed the Boot Camp. It is definitely a GREAT way to get familiar with the organization as a whole and understand the other divisions. It was also a great way to network and find answers to questions . . . I did communicate with people who were in the Boot Camp afterwards . . . For me, I thought all of the basics were covered . . . I would have felt overwhelmed if it had more . . . ”

In the future, we are considering bringing back one of the “road trips” that were so popular in the past, taking the group to the headquarters building for a briefing in the operations center and a meeting with one of the organization’s senior leaders. In the white government van. With doughnuts.

## A NETWORK APPROACH TO ONBOARDING

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Michel Buffet, Gregory A. Janicik, Maria Gallegos, Giulio Quaggiotto, and Lauren Ashwell

Many of us have experienced the roller coaster of joining a new organization—from the excitement of fresh opportunities to the frustration of not knowing how to accomplish simple tasks. These challenges affect not only individuals but also organizations. The U.S. Labor Department reports that more than 25 percent of all U.S. workers have been in their companies less than one year. Getting new hires up to speed quickly has obvious benefits for both employers and employees in terms of productivity and job satisfaction. Mellon Corporation research recently revealed that the time for new hires to reach full productivity ranges from 8 weeks for those in clerical roles to 26 weeks for executives. We believe that an essential component of ensuring that new hires quickly become productive and effective is helping them build a network of relationships.

The stakes are high for successful onboarding, in light of the large amounts that companies spend to recruit and train employees, especially at the executive level. Research has shown that a large proportion—as much as 40 percent—of new executive hires leave their organization within the first 18 months. This kind of turnover is a legitimate concern for organizations: some studies estimate that the cost for an organization to lose an executive is as high as 30 times his or her total compensation. Also, the loss of an executive can translate into a decrease in productivity among the remaining employees. A recent study by the Corporate Leadership Council shows that involuntary turnover among recently hired

executives affects morale and confidence throughout an organization, which in turn can lead to increased turnover and lower engagement.

One factor that weighs heavily in an executive's decision to leave is his or her early experiences on the job. An executive hired to be a change agent, for instance, will not be able to make a smooth and satisfying transition if early on it becomes clear that he or she won't be given the resources to push for change or that the organization is not open to it. This early period is a critical time for new hires at all levels. In 2008, a survey conducted by the Aberdeen Group shows that 86 percent of employees make their decision to stay or leave in the first 12 months (Martin & Saba). To increase the likelihood that newly hired talent will find their early weeks and months to meet their expectations, many organizations have designed onboarding processes to ease and accelerate the breaking-in period. In fact, 68 percent of corporate human resources executives recently surveyed indicated that their companies have a formal onboarding process. Most of them, however, focus on imparting information to new hires through orientation activities, documents, and Intranet sites. Few of them stress the importance of relationship building.

New managers are often hired to bring in fresh perspectives and expertise. However, to gain buy-in, commitment, and even openness to their ideas, they need first to establish trust and build formal and informal relationships. If these managers are not quickly accepted and listened to, their valuable insights can be watered down or lost. Rollag, Parise, and Cross (2005) write that augmenting the traditional informational approach to onboarding with a relational component can accelerate a new hire's integration and his or her ability to become a productive contributor.

An onboarding program that goes beyond delivering information to facilitate relationship building will accomplish the following:

- Provide opportunities for the transfer of knowledge between the new hire and the organization. Knowledge should flow both ways. Many orientation programs give new employees a very detailed view into the organization's ins and outs but fail to mine new employees' experience and business intelligence, even when they have been brought in as change agents.
- Clarify role expectations as early as possible—preferably in the selection stage but at least before the first day on the job—and provide occasions for new executives to clarify goals and expectations with their direct reports.
- Stimulate relationship building with people throughout the organization. The first two imperatives cannot be met effectively if relationship building is not at the center of an onboarding strategy. By establishing trusting and collaborative relationships with various organizational stakeholders early on, new employees are more likely to receive the unadulterated information they need to do their jobs and negotiate performance objectives for themselves and others.

In this chapter, we provide four examples of effective onboarding, each of which was informed by a belief in the importance of social networks and the crucial role they can play for new hires. The first two examples focus on executives. Michel Buffet follows the onboarding of a new leader at a biotech company, and Gregory Janicik presents a model to better understand a company's environment and readiness for change and describes its application at an architecture firm.

In both examples, the steps in the onboarding process follow a logical sequence:

1. Data are gathered about the environment the executive is joining, with particular attention paid to key stakeholders and the political lay of the land.
2. A coach or consultant works with the new leader to develop a network development and management plan, which includes input from key stakeholders.
3. The new hire takes action based on the plan.
4. The new leader, with help from others in the organization, tracks his or her evolving network, continually looking for opportunities to refine it.

The second two examples, each of which presents a discrete onboarding exercise rather than an entire process, pertain to new hires at all levels. Maria Gallegos and Giulio Quaggiotto describe a workshop that focuses on brokering introductions between new hires and key managers, and Lauren Ashwell presents an exercise designed to help new employees understand an organization's culture and tacit norms. Both of these practical approaches could be implemented as part of any onboarding program.

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## **Example 1: Onboarding a New Controller at a Biotech Company**

*Michel Buffet*

Polygon (names of companies and individuals have been disguised), a U.S.-based biotech company, contacted my consulting colleagues and me to help with the onboarding of its new controller. The company had recently been acquired by BioMed, a global diversified life-sciences holding company looking to expand its footprint in the biotech industry. Polygon had a history of rapid growth and breakthrough innovation, which BioMed was eager to leverage to counterbalance slowing growth in its other business units.

The new controller would face some challenges. For instance, Polygon was going through substantial business changes, in response to regulatory changes and

greater competition in the company's target therapeutic areas. Consequently, the finance function was under tremendous pressure to provide quick turnaround on financial data to help senior management make faster and better decisions regarding new investments and the allocation of resources.

Also, six months earlier, BioMed had launched a number of organizational transformations aimed at greater coordination with the corporate finance group and improved information systems. In the long term, this would translate into greater standardization of accounting practices, but in the short term, it meant a lot more work and disruption for the finance teams in each business unit, including Polygon.

Joe Walker, Polygon's previous controller, had left fairly abruptly to join a smaller biotech company. There was no succession plan, so Tim Pace, Polygon's CFO, stood in as controller for a couple of months until he suggested as a candidate Phil Brown. Phil, an acquaintance of Tim, was a mid-career, high-potential accounting executive from another business unit of BioMed. Phil's candidacy, along with that of a handful of others, was vetted by the executive team, which included the CEO, the COO, the CFO, the chief marketing officer (CMO), the chief of R&D (CR&D), and the chief of manufacturing (CM). The general counsel and head of compliance were also engaged in the selection process. The team agreed that Phil met the requirements and extended an offer that Phil promptly accepted.

## Initial Engagement and Diagnostic

The first step for us was to meet with the CEO and the chief human resource officer (CHRO) to start assessing the key issues concerning Phil's onboarding. We quickly proposed the following plan, as both an initial diagnostic process and a way to engage the right stakeholders early on:

- We worked with the CEO and the CHRO to define a protocol for one-hour interviews (in which Phil would not be present) with those likely to be Phil's key stakeholders: members of the executive team, the finance management team, and the controller's team. The interview protocol was designed to define Phil's role requirements and better understand the organizational context. It included the following questions:
  - What do you see as Phil's top priorities? What milestones does he need to achieve within the first 30 days? 90 days?
  - Who are Phil's key stakeholders, and what are their expectations?
  - What information is most critical for Phil?
  - What can help speed up and maximize Phil's onboarding?
  - What can hinder Phil's onboarding? What actions can help overcome these obstacles?

- What role do you see yourself having in the onboarding of Phil?
- Phil’s onboarding will be a success if...
- What other suggestions would you like to share to prepare Phil’s onboarding process?
- As part of the interviewing process, we asked members of the executive team to indicate how critical it would be for Phil to establish a relationship with each key stakeholder for him to be successful in his role.
- Finally, we reviewed Phil’s 360-degree results from his previous role and asked him to complete the Hogan Leadership Forecast, a personality assessment that focuses on an individual’s needs, motives, leadership potential, and “derailers.”

**Assessment Results** In preparing for the initial onboarding planning session with Phil and the CHRO, we examined all the information we had gathered, looking for themes and salient points. The interviews shed light on a number of issues that were directly relevant to Phil’s onboarding:

- Joe Walker, the departed controller, had been with Polygon since its inception and was very much liked and respected by his team, but he had a discordant relationship with the CFO, Tim Pace. Some felt the controller had been bypassed when the CEO hired Tim from another biotech firm. Although the CEO enjoyed a strong relationship with Tim—praising his competence and reliability—other members of the executive team felt the same way as Joe and demonstrated a lack of trust in Tim’s ability and commitment. As a result, the executive team had mixed expectations for Phil, given his relationship with Tim.
- Before we were brought in, there had been no systematic approach to onboarding, beyond a very short orientation program. The executive team, which had a “sink or swim” mentality, did not think that Polygon needed a formal onboarding process, while the finance team thought that Phil required more hand-holding, at least in the beginning.
- When asked how critical it would be for Phil to establish relationships with each key stakeholder to be effective in his role, survey respondents submitted very similar ratings for a few stakeholders but disagreed on others (see Table 25.1). The data were shared with the executive team at one of its weekly meetings, and we facilitated a discussion to bring the team to an agreement on their ratings for those relationships that had the highest levels of variance (as indicated by the standard deviations with a gray background). This process helped the team develop a shared understanding of each member’s role in the integration of the new controller.

**TABLE 25.1 ASSESSMENTS OF DESIRED NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIPS FOR THE NEW CONTROLLER**

Importance of Relationship with . . .	Individual Ratings*							Pre-Meeting	Post-Meeting	Final Ratings
	CEO	COO	CFO	CMO	CR&D	CM	CHRO	Mean	sd	
CEO	5	4	3	3	3	4	4	3.7	0.8	4
COO	4	6	6	3	3	4	3	4.1	1.3	5
CFO	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7.0	0.0	7
CMO	5	5	4	2	3	4	5	4.0	1.2	4
CR&D	5	5	3	2	3	4	5	3.9	1.2	3
CM	5	3	3	3	3	6	5	4.0	1.3	3
CHRO	4	5	3	2	3	3	3	3.3	1.0	3
Controller team	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7.0	0.0	7

\*Ratings are on a seven-point scale, from 1= not critical at all to 7= very critical.

- Finally, Phil’s assessment data revealed strengths and areas for development that should inform the onboarding strategy. Previous feedback from his superiors and peers indicated that Phil had very strong analytical skills and a drive to achieve results but was not as adept at engaging others, particularly across functional lines. He also appeared to “micromanage” the work of his direct reports. A review of his personality profile also yielded important insights: although Phil showed strong values for financial rewards and job security and a prudent and well-adjusted leadership style, he lacked “social skills” and could be overly skeptical and aloof—qualities that could work against him in Polygon’s culture of collaboration and “high touch” leadership styles. The founders of the biotech company had left a strong imprint of informality and designed the organization to be rather flat, giving employees easy access to leaders.

### Design of the Onboarding Road Map

Based on an analysis of these data, three main priorities clearly emerged for Phil. First, he would need to work quickly to understand Polygon’s structure, operations, and its key stakeholders, internal and external. Phil showed a strong

learning orientation in his personality profile that would help him process a lot of information before day one and in the early weeks on the job. But some of the information he needed was not formally documented and would require him to reach out to others, which was not his natural inclination.

Second, given Polygon's pressures, Phil would need quickly to set performance expectations for his team and his peers, and manage that performance effectively so that the executive team would have the financial information it needed. For that reason, Phil would have to assume his leadership role immediately and decide how he would engage his team and his stakeholders in the various functional areas of the organization.

Third (but by no means least important), it was clear in the minds of executive team members that Phil had to achieve the first and second priorities through effective relationship building with them and a number of other stakeholders. These priorities would require ongoing communications and frequent in-person meetings—at least in the early stages of his onboarding.

***Onboarding Design Session*** A week before he was set to start in his new role, we met with Phil, Tim, and the CHRO for a half-day session to draft Phil's onboarding process. On the agenda for the session were the following objectives:

- Identify key learning areas for Phil.
- List key stakeholders and define relationship-building objectives.
- Define a first draft of objectives for Phil.
- Set up a tentative calendar of learning sessions, meetings with stakeholders, and work milestones.

In the session, we started listing materials that would help Phil learn about Polygon and its members:

- Organization chart
- Bios of key people in the organization
- Recent press releases
- Employee survey results
- Copies of key addresses from senior leaders
- Corporate calendar, including upcoming meetings and governance processes

The discussion of how to establish the right kind of personal network dominated this design session. The final ratings listed in Table 25.1 were shared with Phil, and together we defined specific ways in which he could establish as quickly as possible the desired level of interaction and collaboration with each of the stakeholders identified by the executive team. The outcomes of this discussion are summarized in Table 25.2.

**TABLE 25.2 STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**

Stakeholder	Objectives	Relationship-Building Strategy
CFO	Remain aligned with the function's key objectives. Receive feedback on learning and performance.	Weekly one-on-one meetings Monthly check-in lunch
Controller Team	Give and receive feedback. Manage performance. Develop the team.	Weekly meetings Regular one-on-one lunch with team members
COO	Provide support to cross-functional efforts.	Monthly cross-functional team meeting Copied on key communications
CR&D	Provide input to resource-allocation decisions.	Extended Leadership Team Meeting (quarterly) Copied on key communications

### Implementation and Measures of Progress

The onboarding process was kicked off and implemented as planned. Participants in the process showed a high level of compliance and engagement. We held one-on-one meetings with Phil one month, three months, and six months after he started his new role. These sessions were designed to assess how well the relationship strategy was working for Phil and his key stakeholders. Nine months after taking on his new role at Polygon, another data-collection effort was launched to evaluate the effectiveness of Phil's onboarding process. The effort included the following:

- 30-minute follow-up interviews with members of the executive team, Phil, and Phil's direct reports, exploring the effectiveness of the onboarding process and various parties' satisfaction with it. Specifically, interviewees were asked to comment on their level of satisfaction with Phil's progress on his learning, networking, and performance goals. They also each provided a rating for how effective they thought their relationship with Phil was nine months after he had started as controller.
- A personal network analysis (PNA) completed by Phil, designed to assess the effectiveness of the onboarding process in fostering productive relationships with his key stakeholders. Phil's ratings were then combined with the ratings provided by the key stakeholders. The results are shown in Table 25.3.

**TABLE 25.3 RATINGS OF RELATIONSHIP EFFECTIVENESS BETWEEN PHIL AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

Stakeholders	Phil's Ratings	Target's Ratings	Gap
CEO	5	4	-1
COO	5	5	0
CFO	5	5	0
CMO	4	3	-1
CR&D	5	5	0
CM	5	4	-1
CHRO	5	5	0
Controller team	5	3.8	-1.2

This assessment showed overall positive results; Phil had achieved an effective integration with most of his key stakeholders at Polygon. However, a few issues emerged:

- One member of the controller team reported lower ratings for his relationship with Phil, which was consistent with some of the comments made by other team members. After some investigation, it became clear that members of the finance team were experiencing similar issues with this individual. We suggested that the CHRO look into proposing a team-building effort to try to integrate this person more successfully into the team and restore a positive work climate.
- The CEO reported slightly lower ratings than Phil's. His interview comments helped clarify the discrepancy, as he explained that Phil did not seem to understand Polygon's business priorities as well as he should. The CEO proposed that going forward, Phil attend certain segments of executive team meetings and review corporate communications about Polygon's recent business developments.
- The CMO and CM indicated that they had not had enough opportunities to interact with Phil. After checking with HR, it appeared that no one-on-one meetings had been scheduled between them and Phil. This oversight was addressed, and two informal lunch meetings were set up over the following weeks.

## Lessons Learned

At the end of the project, we conducted an informal debriefing session with Phil, the CFO, and the CHRO to go over what had worked well in Phil's onboarding and what we might have done differently.

On the positive side, the CFO expressed great satisfaction with the approach, the level of engagement of key stakeholders, and the use of data to build alignment early in the process and design a targeted onboarding experience. Phil was also pleased with the attention given to his onboarding process and felt that it had helped compensate for his reluctance to reach out to others for help.

Although the interviews were rich in content and helped elucidate the history of the previous controller's relationships with his team, the CFO, and the executive team, and the dynamics among members of the executive team, we concluded that conducting an ONA of the upper levels of Polygon would have allowed us to draw a more detailed map of the relationships among key stakeholders. Phil could have then used this map as a baseline against which to chart his own network-building progress. This network analysis might have revealed highly sensitive information, which we would have needed to handle with great care, but it would have been one more useful bit of information that could have helped us target Phil's onboarding process even more accurately.

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## Example 2: Understanding Senior Executive Dynamics at an Architecture Firm

*Gregory A. Janicik*

Building, leveraging, and navigating relationships are important for any new executive. This is especially true at senior levels, where history, coalitions, and alliances influence strategic decisions. Pushing for any kind of change at the top of an organization requires the finesse to win the support of key stakeholders and establish momentum. A senior manager's ability to leverage relationships in these situations depends on understanding the dynamics of the social network and choosing the right tactics for the change context.

Given that context plays such a pivotal role in a new executive's success, onboarding engagements should start with the premise that not all change situations are alike. Much depends on the organization's agility. In particular, the organization's desire for and openness to change (its degree of organizational inertia) influence the strategy—and relative success—of a new executive during a

**FIGURE 25.1 ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY MODEL**

Organizational Inertia	High	<b>Status Quo</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low risk situation—less emphasis on agility</li> <li>• Fit of executive to role more important than change management skills</li> </ul>	<b>Challenge Zone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resistance to change</li> <li>• Odds of failure increase</li> <li>• Executive will need excellent change management skills</li> </ul>	
	Low	<b>Adaptation over Time</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agility linked to organizational pace of change</li> <li>• Executive’s external monitoring skills important to adapt initiatives as needed</li> </ul>	<b>Opportunity Zone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thirst for change and organization’s agility potential will facilitate goal attainment</li> <li>• Fit of executive in terms of comfort with ambiguity and speed of decision making will be important</li> </ul>	
		Low	Change Desired (Expectations for New Executive)	High

transition. In my work as an organizational consultant, I developed the following model, shown in Figure 25.1, to use as the foundation of an onboarding effort:

By assessing an organization’s agility prior to the start of an onboarding engagement, as well as the leadership and problem-solving style of the new executive, one can improve transitional coaching and accelerate the contributions of and changes initiated by the new hire. Relationships are important, of course. But how a new executive leverages and navigates the relationships among key stakeholders on the senior team (and across the organization) must depend on which cell in the matrix best represents the organization. Perhaps the most common pitfall for executives going through an onboarding transition is thinking that they are in an Opportunity Zone when in fact they are in a Challenge Zone.

The example of a North American architecture firm illustrates how ONA can help a new executive get the lay of the land and improve the results that emerge from change management efforts. The firm, which I’ll call Tower99, had recently shifted strategy, looking to differentiate itself by enhancing its engineering capabilities and marketing them strategically. Tower99 had always had a strong engineering group, but it had served primarily as a support function for architecture design projects. To initiate the change, the president of Tower99 hired a

search consultant to recruit a top-notch engineering leader who could help establish and transform the firm's engineering capabilities. After a long search, Richard was hired. The president and the other senior executives eagerly awaited his start date. Knowing that the new role would be a challenge for even the most gifted leader, the firm hired me and my consulting colleagues to help with Richard's onboarding.

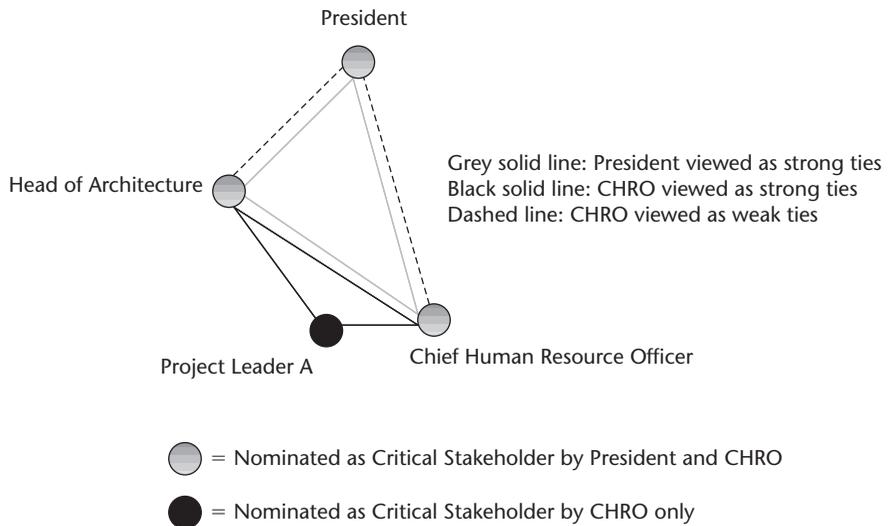
## Onboarding Process Initiated

To initiate the onboarding engagement, we conducted a situation analysis, in which we examined the following:

- The organization's strategy and how it affected priorities for this role
- Stakeholders critical to the new executive's transition and integration
- The organization's culture
- Leadership characteristics that were mission-critical for this organization
- Key success factors for the new executive

The first source of information for the analysis was the search consultant who had helped hire Richard. He had a long-term relationship with the firm and deep insights into its culture and key stakeholders. Because he was instrumental in the hiring of Richard, he also knew the leadership characteristics desired by the firm and Richard's strengths and weaknesses (based on interviews and assessment data). The search consultant's summary reflected that although there was a desire for change, the president still valued architecture over engineering. In sum, it was a Challenge Zone situation. Also, the consultant feared that Richard was walking into a minefield with respect to the alliances and difficult relationships at the top of the firm. His summary influenced our approach to acquiring additional data for the situation analysis; we decided to use ONA methods to better prepare Richard and coach him during the transition.

***The Use of Organizational Network Analysis*** As part of our situation analysis, we met with the hiring manager (in this case, the president of Tower99) to discuss the role as it related to the strategy and culture of the organization, and other relevant pieces of information we had gleaned from the search consultant. In this case, we decided to focus on the political landscape at the top of Tower99. We asked the president to complete an organizational network questionnaire, indicating from whom Richard would need to obtain buy-in or support to drive the changes coming out of his office. We asked the chief human resource officer

**FIGURE 25.2 TWO VIEWS OF A NETWORK**

to complete the same questionnaire. The resulting networks of the stakeholders were similar but not exact, as shown in Figure 25.2.

The interesting finding was that the president nominated three people (herself, the head of architecture, and the chief human resource officer) and perceived strong relationships among them. The CHRO perceived an extra key stakeholder (Project Leader A) and weaker relationships between the president and himself and the president and the head of architecture. What would this mean for Richard, and how would it affect his initial network-building tactics?

### Introductory Session with Richard

The second phase of our onboarding engagement involved setting up an initial meeting with Richard (before his start date) to accomplish the following:

- Understand his take on the firm and expectations for his role.
- Review his assessment results and link strengths and development opportunities to the new role.
- Obtain his perspective on the change context (desire for change and his perception of organizational inertia).

- Plan for his first days at the firm.
- Map out a transition and integration plan based on the situation analysis.

In this initial meeting with Richard, we discovered that he perceived Tower99 as a classic “need for change” situation that had the full support of the president. He was not thinking about the resistance that he could encounter as a result of the uncertainty of the relationships—and potential lack of alignment—among the firm’s senior leaders. For example, he knew that he would have to hire new engineering talent and that the president supported his hiring plans. He did not anticipate, or think about, the fact that the CHRO might have a different point of view on the extent and pace of his hiring efforts. Upon seeing the results of our network-mapping exercise, he commented, “When I mentioned my hiring plans to the CHRO in my interview with him, he was positive—but gave somewhat of a lukewarm response. In hindsight, I guess I should have asked more questions about his thoughts on expansion plans.” Richard also commented that he had met with Project Leader A during the interview process and knew that she would need to be managed, given her bias against putting engineering projects front and center within the firm. Her strong tie to the head of architecture could be problematic if Richard tried to push for big engineering projects that took resources away from her.

As part of our discussions with Richard about the network of key stakeholders at Tower99, we emphasized that certain networking tactics must be altered in a Challenge Zone situation. Richard could not assume that the head of architecture would support him just because the president did. This was counterintuitive to Richard: the president and the head of architecture had known each other for years; they had attended school together and often joked about thinking the same way on architectural projects. Instead of assuming that the two held the same opinions, Richard would have to take time to understand where they agreed and disagreed. Similarly, Richard would have to rethink (potentially) his aggressive approach to conflict management, especially when dealing with Project Leader A (given her potentially strong tie to the head of architecture, Richard’s new peer). He might even have to find someone else who would be able to influence her on key initiatives. Figure 25.3 highlights some of the differences in networking tactics between the Challenge and Opportunity Zones.

## Ongoing Transition Work

Much of our ongoing work with Richard focused on aligning expectations and priorities in his new role vis-à-vis the other key stakeholders. As part of this process, we measured Richard’s social network after three months and after six

**FIGURE 25.3 NETWORKING TACTICS FOR THE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY ZONES**

<p style="text-align: center;">Challenge Zone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resistance to change</li> <li>• Odds of failure increase</li> <li>• Executive will need excellent change management skills</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Networking Tactics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go slow, take time to understand nuances of key relationships at the top</li> <li>• Get a feel for the different alliances and where resistance is strongest</li> <li>• Identify central players who can help broker buy-in of difficult change initiatives</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunity Zone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thirst for change and organizational agility will facilitate goal attainment</li> <li>• Fit of executive in terms of comfort with ambiguity and speed of decision making will be important</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Networking Tactics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build relationships with change champions, reinforce their relationships to build strong coalition</li> <li>• Foster trust among key stakeholders and work to leverage their relationships in the broader organization</li> </ul>

months, and asked him to comment on some of the more difficult relationships to manage among key stakeholders. During our coaching conversations with him, we pushed him to think about the relationship-building tactics that could help him achieve his objectives among people who had very different views on how he should be building the engineering group.

**Three-Month Check-In** At three months into his new role, Richard reported in his network questionnaire that he had developed only a weak tie with the head of architecture and was having trouble managing some of the hidden conflicts that were emerging between him and the president. We discussed ways that he could foster trust and buy-in from the head of architecture while maintaining his strong relationship with the president. We saw that he was starting to build a solid relationship with an architect who had a strong tie to both stakeholders (the president and the head of architecture). We suggested that he continue to foster that relationship to learn how this architect managed the tension. In essence, he had to build a coalition so that he did not have to manage the tension by himself.

**Six-Month Check-In** At six months, Richard had overcome a lot of the problems he had faced at three months. He had a much better relationship with the head of architecture and had even served as a mediator, getting conflict out in the

open and discussing it as a leadership team. His new challenge was managing the influence of Project Leader A. She had a tendency to hinder some of Richard's efforts, and he knew he had to foster a better relationship with her to ease the tension. Given their personality differences, we were not sure there ever could be the requisite trust to manage their differences productively in a one-on-one fashion. We suggested that Richard begin to uncover the issues where he faced the most resistance from her and map out where he could find support in his network. We asked him to create "issue networks" and identify possible coalition partners to manage his relationship with Project Leader A.

## Results

Our work with Richard was a success. He built strong, trusting relationships with all key stakeholders before taking any bold action in his new role. As he learned which issues were divisive among the senior team and which were not, he was able to build coalitions and obtain easy wins, as well as learn when to back down. We had to convince Richard that making enemies in his first six months was not going to help him down the road as he worked to raise the talent level in the engineering group and increase the visibility and prominence of the projects that it won. Over the course of his first year, Richard expanded the engineering group by 50 percent and increased its contribution to the bottom line by 75 percent, owing to lucrative projects that the team won. The shift in strategy was eventually well accepted by his peers and direct reports, and Richard was perceived to be an effective leader who helped change the future for Tower99.

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## Example 3: Rethinking Onboarding at IFC

*Maria Gallegos and Giulio Quaggiotto*

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) fosters sustainable economic growth in developing countries by financing private-sector investment, mobilizing capital in the international financial markets, and providing advisory services to businesses and governments. Founded in 1956, the IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, has 182 member countries.

In recent years, two corporate initiatives have led to a need for a strong onboarding program: rapid growth in headcount and decentralization. For IFC, decentralization means reducing the number of staff at headquarters in Washington, D.C. and increasing our presence in regional offices in developing

countries to be closer to our clients. The emphasis on growth and decentralization is true for IFC as a whole and for the department in which we work—the Environment and Social Development Department, known as CES.

To complement the corporatewide onboarding program, CES developed a department-specific onboarding process in 2007 focusing primarily on introducing new staff to processes and organizational structure. In light of the organization's growth and decentralization plans, we realized the need to reevaluate our process.

First, a staff survey indicated that our colleagues were concerned about losing their informal networks should they be moved from our headquarters to a regional office. Second, a social network analysis conducted in 2007 to assess the connectivity of the department revealed that (1) it took approximately three years for a new hire to be integrated into the department's network, and (2) more than 40 percent of staff members were not aware of the expertise of new hires, and vice versa. The combination of this information underscored the need to incorporate a networking component into our onboarding approach.

To address these challenges, we expanded the onboarding program in July 2009 to include three “tracks”: professional competencies, knowledge of processes, and networking/relationship building. Explicitly including the third component in the program and clearly articulating its objectives allowed us to design a number of activities to promote the quick integration of new hires into the department's networks. The results have been quite significant—a 35 percent reduction in the number of new staff stuck on the periphery of the network,<sup>1</sup> a strong indication of the importance of incorporating social networking in an onboarding program.

Based on our understanding that there's no one “right” answer on how to foster or develop networks, we piloted various activities to bring people from different tenure bands together and highlight “hidden” expertise: from mentoring to informal gatherings over drinks, from “deep dive” immersions on specific topics to an onboarding graduation ceremony. One activity we found to be particularly successful was a quarterly lunch hosted by our management team for new hires who had worked at the IFC six months or less. The impact of the lunches was so positive that we decided to make it a permanent feature in our onboarding program.

We articulated three objectives for the lunches:

1. To help new staff network with people at different levels of the organization: (1) among themselves (a “cohort” of new hires), (2) with senior staff, and (3) with the wider organization, by allowing newcomers to tap into managers' extensive networks.

2. To give managers a broader understanding of the breadth and depth of expertise of new hires and a more personal flavor of the new hire's interests and expectations. This was done to avoid "pigeon-holing" new hires into a specific area of expertise.
3. To create a forum for new staff to provide feedback on their early experiences in the department.

Apart from the new hires and the management team, a few longtime employees committed to knowledge sharing and capacity building are invited to join.

A week before the lunch, new staff members are asked to design a personal collage to illustrate who they are, their backgrounds, and their interests. There are numerous benefits to this approach. Collages give new hires the "opportunity to shine" and let managers and their onboarding cohort know about their expertise and interests. The collage format is fun and ABP (anything but PowerPoint), allowing new staff to demonstrate their creativity. On many occasions we've seen elaborate drawings, creative assembly of pictures from magazines and posters, and self-portraits. Participants were instructed to cover the following in their collages:

- Companies they have worked for and countries where they have worked
- Areas in which they have worked
- Expertise they may have but are not currently using in their work
- Areas of professional interests
- Areas they'd like to move into but haven't had the chance to explore
- Any additional information that would best describe them to their managers

Each new staff member explains his or her collage in a two-minute presentation at the lunch. After five presentations, the management team provides feedback and gives each presenter names of three or four people who share the same interests and expertise or may help further the new hire's career at the organization. As an added incentive, the managers distribute free coffee coupons to help networking. Managers also vote on the best collage and award a gift certificate to a favorite restaurant, where they can do more networking!

We also experimented by allowing new hires from our regional offices to participate virtually. Despite not being able to enjoy the lunch, they were happy to be in on the discussion and get their own share of the limelight with managers.

For managers, the lunches have been an effective way to learn about "hidden expertise" and strategically mobilize their networks of contacts to open doors for new hires. For new hires, the lunches have given them an opportunity to network among themselves (a number of common patterns emerged in their backgrounds, such as having worked for the same company or in the same country), get access

to strategic contacts, and highlight areas of expertise and professional interest that go beyond their current job description.

The lunches have also led to some serendipitous outcomes. For instance, a new staff member found a more experienced employee with a similar background, interests, and goals, who agreed to serve as a mentor, and a departmental soccer team was born after the discovery that many people shared an interest in the sport.

In addition, the department's risk management group, which had been trying to hire a forestry expert, discovered through one of the lunches an individual in a different unit of the department who had the right background and expertise for the job. In this way, the lunches not only help new employees but also enrich the networks and experiences of longtime staff members.

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## Example 4: Uncovering Organizational Norms

*Lauren Ashwell*

A relatively small investment bank, which had long considered itself a “scrappy underdog” among competitors, established an ambitious growth strategy that called for new senior-level hires. After a couple of these new hires derailed within months, the COO realized that the firm needed to get better at bringing in new blood. An onboarding program was born.

One goal of the new program was to “grow the culture as we grow the firm.” In other words, we wanted to maintain the bank's core values while adapting to the changing internal and external landscapes. This was easier said than done. The bank was insular: the executive team's bonds had been forged by triumphing over adversity on several occasions. And the culture was defined by unwritten rules that were second nature to insiders, many of whom had never worked anywhere else. People hired into the bank, especially at senior levels, reported feeling “new” years into their tenure—that is, if they lasted more than a year.

To address this cultural challenge, we designed an exercise for our onboarding program that encourages dialogue about the bank's unwritten rules between members of the Executive Committee (EC) and recently hired senior vice presidents and managing directors. We have also incorporated this Organization Norms exercise into leadership development programs.

### The Exercise

The exercise takes 45 minutes to an hour. It works best with at least 30 participants from various regions and businesses, who have been with the bank for at

least three months and no more than nine. Larger groups—up to 60—are more challenging to facilitate, but the energy is great. People come away from the exercise reporting that they “get the firm” in a way that eluded them before. Hearing an EC member tell stories that had shaped the culture and seeing colleagues react to aspects of the culture is not only comforting but also clarifying, helping participants “see the forest for the trees.” Many participants are impressed by the level of candor the bank encourages in this exercise, which they have not necessarily experienced elsewhere.

To frame the exercise, the facilitator begins by noting that culture is not static; it can evolve through conversation and feedback. The facilitator explains that participants will be part of that conversation: the themes and topics that emerge during the exercise will be brought to the entire EC by the members present at the exercise.

Participants get into groups of six to nine members, representing certain regions or businesses, and stand at a flip chart. Each group is given 15 to 20 minutes to list two types of unwritten rules: things you must do to succeed at the bank and things that will derail you. The group must then choose its top two items from each category. Participants are instructed to leave political correctness at the door and not to try for consensus—some things might show up on both sides of the chart. Discussion is generally robust, to say the least.

Then, in a session that lasts about 30 minutes, a member of the EC stands by each flip chart, along with a spokesperson for each group. The facilitator moves from group to group, asking each spokesperson to comment on the group’s top two items from each category. The facilitator encourages people to be crisp (“use headlines”). The EC member—who has been coached beforehand—listens, asks questions, interjects stories, and adds his or her perspective. The facilitator’s role is to encourage and manage dialogue. It is a delicate role and especially important if the EC member uses firm-specific jargon, assumes knowledge that the group might not have, or, most important, becomes in any way defensive.

To close the exercise, the EC member and the facilitator summarize key takeaways that will be shared with the full committee, commenting on what was similar and different across groups. The EC member encourages participants to continue the conversation and to make unwritten rules transparent, especially when they get in the way of shared goals.

We have found that all participants in this exercise—both new hires and EC members—benefit. EC members gain an understanding of recent hires’ perspectives on the culture and can see how the culture is—or is not—helping new talent achieve the goals the bank sets for them. And recent hires get a better feel for the culture and its roots, as well as an understanding of the executive team’s aspirations for change.

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## Endnote

1. Based on the comparison of results between the 2007 and 2009 survey, of the 29 most peripheral people, 52 percent were new staff in 2007 while 17 percent were new staff in 2009.

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## INDEX

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### A

Aberdeen Group, 327  
Accelerated Research Collaboration (ARC)  
  model, 208  
Accountability, 207–208  
Allies and opponents exercise, 225–226  
Ancona, D., 107  
Anderson, C., 203  
Architecture firm. *See* Tower99  
Ashwell, L., 244, 326  
AstraZeneca, 283  
Authenticity leadership practice: introducing  
  authenticity for, 249–250; mindset shift  
  for, 252*fig*; overview of, 248–249; reflecting  
  on your own behavior to build, 250–251;  
  summary and action planning for, 251–252

### B

Baby Boomers, 59, 60  
Backler, W., 183, 184, 203

Bacon, K., 274–275, 275*fig*  
BioMed onboarding program: assessments  
  of desired network relationships for new  
  controller, 330–331*t*; challenges facing  
  new controller after merger, 328–329;  
  designing onboarding road map, 331–332;  
  implementing and measures of progress,  
  333–334; initial engagement and diagnostic  
  step of, 329–331; PNA (personal network  
  analysis) used during, 333–334*t*; ratings  
  relationship effectiveness following, 334*t*;  
  stakeholder relationship building during,  
  332–333*t*. *See also* Polygon  
BizTech: background information on, 149–  
  150; workshop for aligning networks with  
  strategy at, 151–156  
BizTech workshop: content and discussions  
  of, 152–156; next steps to take following,  
  156; ONA to help facilitate, 153–154;  
  overview of, 151; PNA (personal network  
  assessment) to facilitate, 150, 154;  
  preparation for, 151–152; purpose of, 150  
Blasnales, J., 57, 72

- “Blindfold Square” game, 98
- Blum, I. J., 58, 107
- Boot Camp: current version of, 323–325; early development of the, 322–323; onboarding challenges requiring, 321–322; results of the, 325
- Borgatti, S. P., 108
- Boston Consulting Group (BCG), 209
- Brainstorming: Metaphor technique for, 192, 200–201; *Stepping Stones*, 191
- Bresman, H., 107
- Bromley, R., 208
- Brown, P., 329–334*t*
- Bryant, G., 1, 3
- Buffet, M., 244, 326, 328
- Building blocks workshop, 187–189
- Business narrative: driving change with, 131–133; springboard stories as, 132–133; story-building guidelines for, 136*e*; tips on employing, 133; World Bank use of, 131–132
- Business value: ConocoPhillips’ NoEs (Networks of Excellence) creating, 22; of effective onboarding of new employees, 321–345; Halliburton’s ONA (organizational network analysis) for creating, 23–43
- ## C
- Cantrell, S., 199, 235
- Carboni, I., 58, 107
- Cedarwood Pharmaceuticals: decision making challenges facing, 171–172; decision-making interventions at, 178–181; decision-making roles at, 175*fig*; diagnosing the decision making problem, 172–174; examining organizational networks of, 174–176; mapping decision stages at, 173*fig*; quantifying the costs of inefficient decision making at, 176–178
- Change agents: culture carriers as, 127, 129; identifying, 126–130*t*; opinion leaders as, 126–127; relationship brokers as, 129–130*t*
- Chavez, M., 243, 245
- Cleveland Clinic: additional lessons learned from, 148; background information on, 140; change outcomes at, 148; message monitoring and making changes at, 140–142; message monitoring process at, 142–147
- Code Fest competition (VerSign), 6
- Colella, S., 124, 149, 184, 233, 243, 282
- Collaborative innovation network: discovery process of, 209–215; “long tail” of innovation and, 203, 213*fig*; Myelin Repair Foundation (MRF) approach to, 204–217; Procter & Gamble’s use of, 203–204; technology landscapes of, 212*fig*
- Collaborative innovation network process: 1: identify and catalyze the core, 205–206; 2: align on a common vision, 206; 3: build trust, 206–207; 4: share leadership and accountability, 207–208; 5: establish norms of interaction, 208
- Collective resume exercise, 194–195
- Communities of Practice (CoPs): ConocoPhillips’ NoEs (Networks of Excellence) as, 12–17, 19–21; creating business value through, 22; engineering small practice groups, 59–71; Halliburton’s ONA (organizational network analysis) as, 23–43; 3M’s ONA-Engineering Small Practice Groups, 59–71; variety of different, 11–12. *See also* Networks; Relationships
- Community Analytics, 45
- Completions CoP program (Halliburton), 23
- Connectivity: driving revenue growth through improved, 164–166; driving service innovation and cross-selling through, 166–168; improving overall collaboration through, 160–164; improving talent management using, 168–169; reaping the rewards of improved, 169–170; Smart Mentoring program to increase, 315–320. *See also* Networks
- ConocoPhillips: knowledge-sharing culture developed at, 17–19; NoEs (Networks of

Excellence) launched by, 12–17, 19–21;  
 recognition of employees by, 18–19; Upstream  
 Rotating Equipment Network of, 13  
 Coordinators, network success and role of, 16  
 Corporate Leadership Council, 326  
 Coyne, B., 60  
 Cross, R., 2, 22, 107, 108, 123, 124, 125, 157,  
 171, 199, 219, 235, 243, 264, 327  
 Culture carriers, 127, 129  
 Customer Relationship Management (CRM)  
 systems, 44

## D

Davenport, T. H., 199, 235  
 Dawson, R., 107  
 Dayton, B., 57, 59  
 Decision making: Cedarwood Pharmaceuticals  
 organizational networks and, 174–176;  
 diagnosing the problem with, 172–174;  
 inefficiencies impacting, 171–172;  
 interventions for improving, 178–181;  
 mapping stages of, 173*fig*; quantifying the  
 costs of inefficient, 176–178  
 Decision-making interventions: 1: codify  
 decision protocols and rights, 178; 2: assign  
 ownership for important decisions, 178–179;  
 3: decrease density of decision-making  
 network, 179–180; 4: improve meeting-  
 management practices, 180; 5: strengthen  
 conflict-resolution skills, 180; 6: reinforce  
 decision-making proficiency through  
 performance management, 181  
 Denning, S., 123, 125, 131, 138  
 DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency):  
 background information on, 315;  
 Knowledge Lab of, 316, 320; ONA  
 conducted by, 316; Smart Mentoring  
 program of, 315–319; Smart Mentoring  
 results for, 319–320  
 Diffusion of Innovation, 142, 193–194  
 Discovery process: collaborative innovation  
 network use of, 209; Discovery Workshop

on, 209–213; network hubs and leaders,  
 214*fig*; outcomes of, 215  
 DOD (Department of Defense): background  
 information on, 315; Smart Mentoring  
 program of, 315–319; Smart Mentoring  
 results for, 319–320  
 Dowling, C., 58, 89, 244, 291  
 Droppers, K., 183, 185  
 Drug Discovery, 208  
 Dutra, A., 124, 157

## E

Ehrlich, K., 58, 107  
 Elements of Innovation presentation, 189  
 Employees: CoP used to ensure engagement  
 by, 35–43; costs of involuntary turnover  
 among recently hired, 326–327; ITSec  
 projects for trust-building among, 78–87;  
 network approach to onboarding, 326–345;  
 Newcomer's Boot Camp for onboarding,  
 321–325; sales and marketing, 44–55,  
 107–121, 160–169. *See also* Mentoring;  
 Recognition; Sales and marketing  
 professionals  
 Engineering groups. *See* ONA-Engineering  
 Small Practice Groups  
 Estes, J., 171  
 Executive Committee (EC): organizational  
 norms exercise used by, 344–345; program  
 for uncovering organizational norms  
 of, 344  
 External connectivity workshop, 190–191  
 External stakeholder management: clear policy  
 statement and approach for, 310; creating  
 stakeholder management strategy for, 313;  
 follow-up meetings for, 313; identifying  
 relationship risks, 307–308; knowledge  
 transfer and project transition workshop for  
 improving, 311–312; recommendations for,  
 308–309; senior management buy-in for,  
 313; teaching and reference materials for,  
 310; well-positioned liaison for, 309–310

External stakeholders: critical importance  
of connection with, 304–305; network  
analysis project managing relationship with  
WHO, 306–314; WHO (World Health  
Organization) as, 305–306

## F

FDA (Food and Drug Administration), 308,  
309  
Feedback: influence networking and ongoing  
loop of, 54–55; VerSign Technical  
Community program use of, 7  
*The Fifth Discipline* (Senge), 247  
Finan, A., 1, 3  
Frischmuth, C., 184, 218

## G

Gallegos, M., 244, 326, 341  
Gap analysis, 47–48  
Gartner Group, 125  
Gordon Research Conference (2002), 205–206  
Gray, P., 1, 11  
Green, M., 243, 245  
Gulas, V., 58, 89, 244, 291

## H

Halliburton: Completions CoP program  
created by, 23; ONA (organizational network  
analysis) of, 23–43; post-change network  
analysis of, 27*fig*; pre-change network  
analysis of, 26*fig*  
Halliburton ONA (organizational network  
analysis): benefits of using, 23–25; business  
value of improvements through, 25;  
community portal statistics tracked on,  
30*e*–31*e*; developing a sense-and-respond  
capability using, 29–31*e*; driving planned

and emergent innovation using, 32–33;  
ensuring employee engagement through,  
35–43; five added-value propositions of  
network analysis using, 25–43; improving  
information flow and knowledge reuse  
using, 28–29; nurturing value-creating  
interactions using, 34–35; scorecard metrics  
example of, 34*fig*

Have you ever? exercise, 223–224

Health Check: getting feedback and  
recommendations from, 113–115, 117, 118*e*;  
team building using tool of, 109–110, 111*fig*,  
112–113

Helferich, J., 107

Hidden Assets activity: identifying strategic  
network opportunities, 236–241;  
introduction to, 233–234; overview of, 234;  
Request and Offer Cards for, 239*e*; review of  
PNA (personal network analysis), 235–236  
*The Hidden Power of Social Networks* (Cross), 268  
Hudson, B., 321

## I

“Ice cube” model of episodic change, 193

Icebreaking activities, 95–96, 324

Improvisation: building synergy using,  
227–230; debriefing participants in,  
220; moving toward and moving away  
from using, 225–227; relationships  
within hierarchy using, 230–232; rules  
for participants, 219; warming up and  
generating group energy using, 221–225; a  
word to facilitators about using, 220–221

Improvisation exercises: 1: learning names,  
221–222; 2: stage presence, 222–223;  
3: have you ever?, 223–224; 4: yes, let’s,  
224–225; 5: allies and opponents, 225–226;  
6: scene work, 226–227; 7: machine, 228;  
8: yes, and, 228–229; 9: 21s, 229–230;  
10: status scene, 230–231; 11: mirroring,  
231–232

- Independent Oracle Users Group (IOUG), 7
- Influence networks: description of, 44;  
Technfirm's approach to, 45–55
- Information: Halliburton's ONA for improving flow of, 28–29; hierarchy of network, 94*t*; message monitoring of, 139–148; 3M ONA-Engineered Small Practice Groups to improve flow of, 59–71; trust building through sharing of, 75*fig*–76*fig*. *See also* Knowledge; Message monitoring
- Innovation: building collaborative network for, 203–217; building idea-sharing networks for, 185–202; diffusion of, 142, 193–194; driving cross-selling and service, 166–168; Halliburton's CoP as driving, 32–33; “long tail” of, 203, 213*fig*
- Innovation exercises: collective resume, 194–195; lego modeling of innovation, 189, 195–196; mapping our external networks, 196–199; network development board game, 199–200; network metaphors, 192, 200–201; organic ideation and test drive of conversion process, 201–202
- Innovation workshops: building blocks, 187–189; converting ideas to products and practices, 193; diffusion of the innovation process, 193–194; external connectivity, 190–191; internal connectivity, 191–192
- Internal connectivity workshop, 191–192
- International Finance Corporation (IFC): background information on, 341–342; corporatewide onboarding program developed at, 342; onboarding lunches results at, 344; quarterly lunches as part of onboarding program, 342–344
- IT&S (Information Technology and Services): five innovation workshops at, 187–194; innovation challenge facing, 185–186; innovation exercises conducted by, 194–202; Innovation Lab created for, 186–187
- ITSec (Information Security department): background information on, 72–73; continuing ONA results in, 88; information sharing hubs in, 75*fig*–76*fig*; ONA (organizational network analysis) used to build ties in, 73–88; ONA workshop conducted by, 77–78; overall approach of ONA*fig* used by, 73–76; projects used for building ties in, 78–87; reviewing the ONA results with, 76–77
- ITSec trust-building projects: basic issues of, 79–80; general strategy of, 78–79; project waves and timing of, 83*fig*–87; roles in the, 81–83, 84*fig*; 3/3/2 formula for, 79; topics for the, 80–81
- ## J
- Janicik, G. A., 244, 326, 335
- Jarvenpaa, S. L., 107
- JavaOone, 7
- Johnson, S., 205–206, 209
- ## K
- Kaeufer, K., 107
- Kiho, 64
- KNMs (key network members): building partnerships among, 49–51; cross-functional team assignments of, 49, 52*t*; facilitating connections between, 51, 53; gap analysis on, 47–48; segmentation of, 48
- Knowledge: distribution of expertise, 167*fig*; identifying and documenting important, 169; managing external stakeholders and stemming loss of, 304–314; publicizing external sources of, 166; recombining skill sets to increase, 167–168. *See also* Information
- Knowledge brokers, 28, 29
- Knowledge Lab (DIA), 316, 320
- Knowledge Management (KM) Program Office [3M]: description of, 60; four-step process toward small practice groups at, 60–70

Knowledge-sharing culture: ConocoPhillips' development of, 17–19; Smart Mentoring program developed through DIA's, 316  
 Knox: background information on, 108; building healthy teams at, 108–121

## L

Leaders: as change agents, 126–130*t*; driving service innovation and cross-selling, 166–168; driving value growth through connectivity, 164–166; improving overall collaboration strategies, 160–164; improving talent management, 168–169; positioning through network fine-tuning, 157–170; uncovering hidden assets of, 233–241; virtually training, 99–103

*A Leader's Guide to Storytelling* (Denning), 138

Leadership: change agents, 126–130*t*; collaborative innovation network and shared, 207–208, 214*fig*; embedding network perspective into, 245–263; managing transition of, 162–163; network success and role of, 16, 19; networking challenges facing, 245–248; PNA for improving effectiveness of, 264–280; sharing Message Monitoring Dashboard with, 147; 3M's ONA-Engineering Small Practice Groups, 67; virtual training of, 99–103

Leadership development: formation of relationships during, 233; Hidden Assets activity for, 233–241; stakeholder mapping and engagement workshop for, 282–290; strengthening organization's networks through, 233

Leadership effectiveness: behaviors that energize networks and, 279–280; bridging relationships in networks for, 273–276; building bridging ties for, 277*e*; comparing formal/informal network structure for, 268–269*fig*, 270–271; leveraging networks to extend expertise/augment skill gaps, 278*e*;

promoted through organizational networks, 272; promoted through personal networks, 273–280; relationships that extend expertise and, 276–279; self-assessment of network use for, 271–273

Leadership network workshops: session 1: promoting leaders' effectiveness through networks, 265–273; session 2: promoting effectiveness through personal networks, 273–280; standard format of, 266*t*–267*t*

Leadership networking practices: 1: authenticity as lever for building networks, 248–252*fig*; 2: network mapping and stakeholder analysis, 253–259; 3: speed networking, 259–263

Leading Virtually (MWH corporate university), 99

Learning names exercise, 221–222

Lego Modeling of Innovations exercise, 189, 195–196

Leidner, D. E., 108

Lewin, K., 193

Lippmann, B., 244, 304

Local knowledge champion, 28–29. *See also* Subject matter experts (SMEs)

“Long tail” of innovation, 203, 213*fig*

## M

Machine exercise, 228

Mapping our external networks exercise, 196–199

Martin, K., 327

Matrix (VerSign Technical Community), 8–9, 10

MedImmune: background information on, 283; Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement workshop held for, 283–290

Mentor Marketplace: basic challenges leading to development of, 292; challenges related to implementing the, 302–303; connections to other mentoring initiatives through,

- 299–300; description of web site and home page, 293–294*fig*; increasing mentoring networks through, 291; results of participation in the, 300–302; search engine and results for, 296*fig*; steps for using the, 294–299*fig*; tips for using, 297*t*; tracking participation in, 300*fig*
- Mentor Marketplace steps: 1: creating a profile, 294–295, 296*fig*; 2: searching for a match, 295; 3: contacting potential mentor or protégé, 295; 4: reestablishing relationship, 295, 297–298; 5: documenting the relationship, 298–299*fig*
- Mentoring: informal processes of, 292; Mentor Marketplace to facilitate, 293–303; Smart Mentoring program approach to, 315–320. *See also* Employees; Onboarding employees
- Mentors: definitions of, 292–293; facilitating opportunities for protégés, 293; Mentor Marketplace facilitating networks of, 293–303; Smart Mentoring program roles of, 318
- Message monitoring: Cleveland Clinic/Resurrection Health Care application of, 140–148; description of, 139; value of combining ONA with, 139, 140–142. *See also* Information
- Message Monitoring Dashboard: description and metrics of, 145*fig*–146; sharing with leadership, 147
- Message monitoring process: 1: identify key connectors, 142; 2: monitor awareness and impact of message, 143–144; 3: analyze results, 144–145; 4: translate results into message monitoring dashboard, 145*fig*–146; 5: share dashboard with leaders, 147; 6: refine or alter message and mode of communication, 147
- Metaphor brainstorming technique, 192, 200–201
- Miller, B., 206
- Mirroring exercise, 231–232
- Model-building exercise, 102–103*fig*
- Molecular Biology of the Cell*, 206
- MWH: background information on, 89–90, 291; impact of hierarchy on information flow in network of, 94*t*; initial ONA of the iNet group, 93*fig*; IT reorganization challenge facing, 90–94; Leading Virtually corporate university of, 99; Mentor Marketplace development by, 291–303; new iNet organization implemented, 91*fig*; ONA cross-functional team design at, 103–104; ONA results at, 104–106; team building in, 94–99; TRUST Model developed at, 99–103; virtual leadership training at, 99–103
- Myelin Repair Foundation (MRF): Accelerated Research Collaboration (ARC) model used by, 208; background information on, 204–205; extending the network, 209–215; laying basis of collaborative innovation network by, 205–208; lessons learned from, 216–217; outcomes of collaborative network of, 215–216
- Myers-Briggs training, 96
- ## N
- National Academy of Science, 206
- Network analysis: ConocoPhillips' NoEs (Networks of Excellence), 12–21; influence networks, 44–55; MWH global connections, 89–106; ONA-Engineering Small Practice Groups, 59–71. *See also* ONA (organizational network analysis)
- Network analysis and business narrative change program: 1: identify network that most needs to change, 133; 2: apply network analysis to the group, 134; 3: use network analysis to identify key storytellers/recipients, 134–135; 4: interpret and summarize network results, 135; 5: conduct narrative workshop, 135–137; 6: program follow-up/coaching, 137; 7: assess program impact, 138

- Network analysis project: external stakeholder management through, 306–309; identifying relationship risks, 307–308; implementing stakeholder management recommendations of, 309–313; recommendations on stakeholder management by, 308–309
- Network development board game exercise, 199–200
- Network mapping practice: action planning for, 257–259; clarify stakeholder connections to team members for, 254–255; connections among stakeholders for, 257; connections to the team as whole for, 255–257; overview of, 253–254; preparation for, 254; rough-cut network map, 258*fig*
- Network metaphors exercise, 192, 200–201
- Networks: behaviors that energize, 279–280; BioMed onboarding program to develop stakeholder, 328–336; changing culture through, 125–128; CRM (Customer Relationship Management), 44; day-to-day operations of, 19–21; distribution of expertise in, 167*fig*; driving business results, 22–43; embedding leadership with perspective on, 245–263; formal and informal structure of, 268–269*fig*, 270–271; formation of, 14–15; four principles of effective, 13; improving decision making through reconstructing, 171–184; improving talent management in, 168–169; innovation using idea-sharing, 185–202; knowledge-sharing culture through, 17–19; leveraging to extend expertise and augment skill gaps, 278*e*; mapping and engaging influence, 44–55; measuring culture in, 128*e*; Mentor Marketplace to increase mentoring, 291–303; organizational strategy unit’s information, 160*fig*; roles and responsibilities, 15–17; “Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon” game on, 274–275, 275*fig*; smart mentoring to increase connectivity of, 315–320; stakeholder mapping/engagement workshop to develop leaders,’ 282–290; two views used during onboarding program, 338*fig*. *See also* Communities of Practice (CoPs); Connectivity; Relationships
- Networks of Excellence (NoEs)  
[ConocoPhillips]: background information on, 12; day-to-day operation of, 19–21; financial returns of, 12–13; formation of, 14–15; four principles of effective, 13; knowledge-sharing culture created by, 17–19; roles and responsibilities within, 15–17; Upstream Rotating Equipment Network, 13
- Newberry, C., 124, 157
- Newcomers’ Boot Camp: current version of, 323–325; early development of the, 322–323; onboarding challenge requiring, 321–322; results of the, 325
- NorthStar Management Consulting:  
background information on, 157–158; ONA (organizational network analysis) objectives for, 158–169; reaping the rewards of ONA at, 169–170
- NorthStar ONA objectives: 1: improve overall collaboration, 160–164; 2: drive revenue growth through improved connectivity, 164–166; 3: drive service innovation and cross-selling, 166–168; 4: improve talent management, 168–169
- Norton, M., 2, 44
- ## O
- ONA (organizational network analysis):  
building trusted ties using, 72–88; change by combining message monitoring with, 139–148; changing culture through, 125–138; DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) use of, 316; examining Cedarwood’s decision making through, 174–176; facilitating network alignment with strategy using, 153–154; Halliburton’s approach to, 23–43; MWH global connections using, 89–106; onboarding programs using, 337–338*fig*;

organizational change through, 133–138;  
 positioning new leader through fine-tuning,  
 158–170; 3M's ONA-Engineering Small  
 Practice Groups, 59–71. *See also* Network  
 analysis

ONA-Engineering Small Practice Groups:  
 description of, 59–60; four step process of  
 developing RBD, 60–70; 3M's RBD (Really  
 Big Division) results of, 70–71

Onboarding employees: benefits of  
 effective, 327; four examples of, 328–345;  
 Newcomer's Boot Camp approach to, 321–  
 325. *See also* Mentoring

Onboarding program examples: new  
 controller at biotech company, 328–335;  
 rethinking onboarding at IFC  
 (International Finance Corporation),  
 341–344; uncovering organizational  
 norms, 344–345; understanding senior  
 executive dynamics at architecture firm,  
 335–341

Opinion leaders, 126–127

*Oracle of Bacon* Web site, 274, 275*fig*

Organic ideation/test drive of conversion  
 process exercise, 201–202

Organizational agility model, 336*fig*

Organizational change: business narrative  
 for driving, 131–133; changing culture  
 through networks, 125–126; identifying  
 agents for changing, 126–130*t*; message  
 monitoring to accelerate, 139–148; network  
 analysis and business narrative change  
 program for, 133–138; where and how to  
 begin, 138

Organizational culture: Halliburton's CoP  
 development of sense-and-respond  
 capability, 29–31*e*; knowledge-sharing,  
 17–19, 316; measuring in networks, 128*e*;  
 networks used to change, 125–128

Organizational network analysis (ONA), 45

Organizational norms: benefits of uncovering,  
 345; exercise used to uncover, 344–345;  
 onboarding program to uncover, 344

## P

Pace, T., 329, 330

Parise, S., 327

Personal network assessment (PNA): aligning  
 networks with strategy workshop use of,  
 150, 154; BioMed onboarding program  
 application of, 333–334*t*; Hidden Assets  
 activity use of, 235–236; improving  
 leadership effectiveness through, 264–280

Pharmaceutical company: external stakeholder  
 challenges facing, 305–306; implementing  
 recommendations for managing WHO  
 relationship, 309–313; network analysis  
 project for managing WHO relationship,  
 306–309; results of broader stakeholder  
 management strategy by, 313–314

Polygon, 328–329, 332. *See also* BioMed  
 onboarding program

Procter & Gamble, 203–204

Promotion reformulation, 50–51

## Q

Quaggiotto, G., 244, 326, 341

## R

Raff, M., 206

Ranta, D., 1, 11

RBD (Really Big Division) [3M]: fourteen  
 members selected for small practice group,  
 66*fig*; map of global lab of, 62*fig*; map of  
 lab technical service engineers in Asia and  
 U.S., 65*fig*; ONA-Engineered Small Practice  
 Groups used at, 69–71; results at the, 70–71

Reciprocity (employee), 35

Recognition: ConocoPhillips' opportunities  
 for employee, 18–19; ITSec trust-building  
 projects approach to, 86–87. *See also*  
 Employees

Redfern, B. S., 58, 89

Relationship brokers, 129–130*t*

Relationships: BioMed onboarding program to develop stakeholder, 328–336; connecting through improvisation, 218–232; expertise extended by, 276–279; influence networking to build, 46–55; inside and outside forces of employee, 36–43; leadership development and formation of, 233; leadership effectiveness by bridging network, 273–276; Mentor Marketplace facilitating mentoring-protégé, 293–303; network analysis project to manage external stakeholder, 306–314; networking as art of building, 218; using ONA to build trusted ties and, 72–88; PNA (personal network analysis) analysis of, 235–236; reciprocity of employee, 35. *See also* Communities of Practice (CoPs); Networks; Teams

Resurrection Health Care: additional lessons learned from, 148; background information on, 140; change outcomes at, 148; message monitoring and making changes at, 140–142; message monitoring process at, 142–147

Revenue growth: channeling time savings into, 165–166; fostering cross-company sales efforts for, 164–165; making everyone responsible for, 165

Rogers, E., 142

Rollag, K., 327

## S

Saba, J., 327

Sales and marketing professionals: CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems for, 44; driving service innovation and cross-selling, 166–168; four-step influence network approach for, 46–55; high-performing teams of, 107–121; improved connectivity for driving revenue

growth, 164–166; improving overall collaboration of, 160–164; improving talent management, 168–169; ONA (organizational network analysis) techniques for, 45; TechFirm’s influence network for, 45–55. *See also* Employees

Sales targeting, 51

Sales teams: characteristics of high-performing, 107–108; example of building healthy, 108–121

Saving Nature: background information on, 234; Hidden Assets activity used by, 234–241

Scene work exercise, 226–227

*The Secret Language of Leadership* (Denning), 138

Senge, P., 247

Singer, J., 183, 185

“Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon” game, 274–275, 275*fig*

Smart Mentoring program: DIA and DOD results of the, 319–320; DIA and DOD’s launching of the, 316–319; DOD and DIA increased connectivity using the, 315

Speed networking practice: conducting the rounds for, 261–262; debriefing for, 262–263; Networking Card used for, 260*fig*; overview of, 259; preparation for, 260–261; setting up the exercise for, 261

Sponsors of networks, 15

Springboard story, 132–133

SS7 signaling services, 3

Stage presence exercise, 222–223

Stakeholder analysis practice: action planning for, 257–259; clarify stakeholder connections to team members for, 254–255; connections among stakeholders for, 257; connections to the team as whole for, 255–257; initial stakeholder analysis, 254*fig*; overview of, 253–254; preparation for, 254; rough-cut network map for, 258*fig*; view of critical stakeholders for, 256*fig*

Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement workshop: devising the, 282–283; overview

- of the, 283–284; preparation of the, 284; results of the, 289–290; stakeholder engagement plan activity during, 288–289; Stakeholder Map developed during, 286*fig*; stakeholder mapping activity during, 285–288; wrap-up of, 289
- Stakeholders: analysis of connections with, 253–259; BioMed onboarding program to develop networks of, 328–336; mapping and engaging, 282–289; stemming knowledge loss and managing external, 304–314
- Status scene exercise, 230–231
- Stepping Stones* brainstorming, 191
- Story-building guidelines, 136*e*
- Strei, K., 243, 282
- Subject matter experts (SMEs): building bridges between industry groups and, 164; cross-functional team design inclusion of, 104; Halliburton's CoP program use of, 28–29, 33; as network sponsor, 15. *See also* Local knowledge champion
- T**
- Talent management strategies, 168–169
- Team building: background research for, 108–109; clinic workshops on, 110–113*e*; *Code of Conduct* specifying behavior norms, 116, 117*e*; evaluation of, 120–121; first-tier meetings for, 94–95; Health Check tool used for, 109–110, 111*fig*, 112–113, 117, 118*e*; of healthy teams, 107–121; second-tier meetings for, 95–99; six exercises for, 113–120
- Team building exercises: 1: team Health Check feedback and recommendations, 113–115; 2: individual roles and metrics, 115; 3: team norms, backgrounds, and competencies, 115–116; 4: strategic action plan, 116–117; 5: client focus and execution plan, 117–119; 6: improvement road map, 119–120
- Teams: characteristics of high-performing sales, 107–108; *Code of Conduct* specifying behavior norms of, 116, 117*e*; creating healthy, 107–121; KNMs (key network members) cross-functional assignments on, 49, 52*t*; MWH's ONA cross-functional, 103–104; SMEs (subject matter experts) inclusion on, 104. *See also* Relationships
- Technfirm: background information on, 45; four-step influence network approach used by, 46–55; influence network payoffs for, 45–46
- Technfirm influence networking steps: 1: identify opportunities, 47–49; 2: build partnerships, 49–51, 52*t*; 3: facilitate connections, 51, 53; 4: sustain relationships, 53–55
- Technical community: VeriSign's expansion and enhancement of, 9–10; VeriSign's goals for the, 4
- Technology landscapes, 212*fig*
- Thomas, R. J., 124, 157, 171, 235
- 3M: challenges related to flow of information in, 59; map of RBD global lab at, 62*fig*; map of RBD lab technical service engineers in Asia and U.S., 65*fig*; ONA-Engineered Small Practice Groups used by KM Program Office of, 60–71; RBD (Really Big Division) results at, 70–71
- Tower99 onboarding program: challenges facing, 335–337; initiating the, 337–338; introductory session of, 338–339; networking tactics used during, 340*fig*; ongoing transition work during, 339–341; organizational agility model used in, 336*fig*; results of the, 341; two views of a network used in, 338*fig*
- Traffic* (film), 274
- Trust: collaborative innovation network and fostering, 210; distinction between professional and personal, 88n.1; ITSec organizational network analysis approach to, 73–88

Trust building: collaborative innovation network and, 206–207; information sharing process and, 75*fig*–76*fig*; ITSec example on, 72–88; ITSec projects for, 78–87; ITSec workshop on, 77–78; ONA (organizational network analysis) approach to, 73–88; reviewing the impact of ONA on, 76–77

TRUST Model: developed at MWH, 99–103; virtual, 100*fig*

Tung, J., 208

21s exercise, 229–230

## U

Upstream Rotating Equipment Network (ConocoPhillips), 13

U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA): background information on, 315; Knowledge Lab of, 316, 320; ONA conducted by, 316; Smart Mentoring program of, 315–319; Smart Mentoring results for, 319–320

U.S. Department of Defense (DOD): background information on, 315; Smart Mentoring program of, 315–319; Smart Mentoring results for, 319–320

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), 308, 309

U.S. Labor Department, onboarding challenges facing, 326–327

## V

Velasquez, G., 2, 22

VeriSign: mission of, 3–4; strategy and approach taken by, 5–9; technical community enhancement by, 9–10; technical community goals of, 4

VeriSign Technical Symposium (VTS), 5–7

VeriSign Technical Community program: building an online community through, 8–9; Code Fest competition of, 6; continuing to enhance the, 9–10; goals of, 4; the Matrix of, 8–9, 10; VTS (VeriSign Technical Symposium) element of the, 5–7

Virtual leadership training, 99–103

Virtual trust model, 100*fig*

Vision alignment, 206

Voice over IP (VOIP) services, 3

Vollhardt, C., 244, 304

## W

Walker, J., 329, 330

WIIFM (What's In It For Me?), 67, 69–70

Williams, T. G., 123, 139

Wolffberg, A. (Zeke), 244, 315

*The Woodsman* (film), 274

World Bank, 131–132, 341

World Health Organization (WHO): as external stakeholder to pharmaceutical industry, 305–306; network analysis project to manage relationship with, 306–314

## Y

“Yes, and” exercise, 228–229

“Yes, let’s” exercise, 224–225

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