

## KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS AND SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

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### ABSTRACT

Studying knowledge networks is related to knowledge management where the organization is viewed as a body of knowledge and employees are carriers of knowledge within their discipline. Implementation of knowledge builds organizational capabilities. Complex knowledge emerges not from work simplification but from the social exchange of those within and across organizations. This is especially the case when viewing organizations as part of the global community. In today's competitive environment, managers must rediscover and understand knowledge network in action. The focus is on knowledge sharing, collaboration, and actionable results. Knowledge network operates at all levels of the organization, even between organization worldwide. It is made up of individuals tied to specific relationships.

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## Introduction

A network is a system of nodes and links among nodes. It means creating links (relationships or ties) among nodes. In an organization, a node could be a person with a pre-defined role to play. The links among people form a network of relationships that drive the organization into action. **Knowledge Network** is a social structure made up of individuals (nodes), tied by one or more specific relationship like values, affiliation and speciality. It creates, transforms, and communicates knowledge embedded in a web of social, economic and administrative relationships. Knowledge networks operate at all levels of the organization, even among organizations worldwide.

## Network Characteristics

Knowledge networks can be identified by several characteristics

### ➤ Balance

This characteristic addresses the degree of structure within a knowledge network. Balance is explained by reciprocity and transitivity between and among individuals in the work environment. People arrange existing relationships to reduce the feeling of imbalance.

### ➤ Centralization

As a concept, centralization deals with the degree to which a network is centered on one or more people.

### ➤ Density

In networking, density measures the number of connections between and among individuals in the knowledge network-the larger the number, the higher the density. With density, there is a geometric increase in the total frequency of interaction and knowledge exchange.

### ➤ Reachability

This network characteristic deals with the ease of message reaching as many people in the network as possible. For example, if A in a department contacts B and his or her employees and through this two-step contact all employees in the department have been contacted, then one could say that A has higher reachability than another department where the same two-step process reaches half the people.

Thus the shape and size of a knowledge network helps to determine a network's usefulness and strength of interpersonal ties. Smaller, tighter networks can be less useful to their members than larger ones with loose connections to those outside the main network. Open networks with many social connections are also more likely to introduce new ideas than closed networks with redundant ties. The attributes of members counts heavily in the viability and knowledge-sharing of the network.

### Unique Features

At the organization level, studies have shown that corporate benefits accrue from well-connected relationships between and within organizations. As a concept, knowledge networks in business are dynamic, honed by continued attempts for excellence.

**Knowledge networks have several overall contributions to advance the cause of business:**

- Support partnership and alliances by reinforcing commonality of interests and goals
- Stabilize people at work through reciprocity and knowledge-sharing within a speciality
- Protect and expedite knowledge gained over time in a specialized domain
- Eliminate waste of time and resources
- Improve morale and trust within teams, groups and committee over time.
- Contribute to cohesion and a feeling of belonging through mutual interdependence
- Generate new ideas and promote innovation which contributes to advancement, recognition, and job enrichment
- Promote knowledge-sharing via group decision-making and group consensus

**The major limitations of knowledge networks include :**

- Feedback may be distorted, especially in a large group.
- Somewhat slow in an emergency because of the many inputs from participants.
- Network may not be ready when tapped due to congestion or emergency meetings.
- Possible dissension or desertion under stress which could contribute to turnover and layoffs.
- Possible rise of cliques and imbalanced relationships in a department or organization.

**Interest-Based knowledge networks**

Technology-based knowledge networks date back to 1995 with [www.classmates.com](http://www.classmates.com). Two years later, [www.sixdegrees.com](http://www.sixdegrees.com) appeared. More and more knowledge network websites flourished through 2000 when [www.MySpace](http://www.MySpace.com) was getting more page views than Google. Google has a knowledge network, called Arkut which launched in 2004. Later that year, Yahoo launched Yahoo! 360. In all such networks, the theme is the same: the founders send out messages inviting those of their own knowledge networks to join the site.

Most Internet-based knowledge networks are public, inviting anyone to participate. A new type of knowledge network is linked between web pages in knowledge networks. Individuals begin with an address book and expand their network by adding friends, acquaintances, neighbors, classmates, and others. This creates a network by being connected through friends of friends. The geometric increase in the number of participants eventually links them to other knowledge networks, and so on, so the total connectivity is a virtual knowledge network worldwide.

**Knowledge network divides itself into several types:**

- **Knowledge Network** - Persons with whom to check and find out what is going on. It connects the real, the willing, and the available.
- **Expert knowledge Network** - Persons to contact for advice.
- **Career Network** - Person to turn to for advice regarding the career.
- **Innovation Network** – Persons with whom brainstorm of new ideas can be made.

- **Learning Network** - Person to contact for improving current operations or processes.
- **Work Network** - Persons who are willing to share and exchange information with on a daily basis at work.
- **Yelp All You Want!!**

**Yelping** (a contraction of **Yellow Pages**) is fast becoming the Internet's gift to small business. It opens a new door into what the chattering public is saying. A major feature of yelping is crowd-sourcing where yelpers express feelings and make names for themselves. **www.yelp.com** has begun changing the way local business does marketing. It encourages people to write review about a business (restaurants, clubs) without asking questions.

Other more recent knowledge network sites that yelp and exchange information are:

- **Digg** - online-content-sharing site.
- **Friend Feed** - Customized content feed for one's knowledge network page, started by Google alumni.
- **iLike** - Music recommendations and playlists on social-networking sites.
- **Mint** - Free personal finance site.
- **My Year Book** - "Safe" knowledge networking site for high schoolers.
- **Ning** - Do-it-yourself knowledge network, like your own custom facebook.
- **Yelp** - User-generated reveiws and recommendations of other businesses.
- **Zynga** - Free games by **Facebook**, **MySpace**, and other social-networking sites

### **Bloggers and Kloggers**

An emerging trend in knowledge exchange and knowledge-sharing is blogging and klogging via the Internet. A blog (short for **Weblog**) is a web page that acts as a public access journal for anyone reflecting the personality of the "blogger". Bloggers are easy to spot. The contrast is a klog (short for **knowledge blog**) which is an internal blog not accessible to the general public which serves as a knowledge management system. The term is also used to describe a technical-oriented blog. Klogging is conversational and content-rich which helps to find the right people to chime in on a question. It illuminates context of time, topic and social

connection. Klogging is not about chunking knowledge. It helps to uncover the threads that tie it together. It has direct contribution to improvement in sales, employee and customer satisfaction, speed and quality of transacting business.

### Knowledge network Analysis

Once management commits to the hidden power of knowledge network, a qualified specialist analyzes the current knowledge network to uncover where true knowledge resides. It is looking into the "informal" or hidden face of business, in contrast with the formal face, which is "what you see and what you do".

### Benefits

- Diagnoses how well current hierarchy accommodates information flow
- Checks the pulse of the organization climate for readiness to share, to trust, to exchange, to think more positively and to serve long-term goals.
- Evaluates information quality, usability, and timeliness.
- Identifies blockers, disconnects, or people who make a project happen, delay it, or destroy it.
- Looks for values that individuals own or possess.
- Maps awareness of who knows what
- Learns about who is accessible to whom, to what degree, and at what cost.
- Specifies the complexity of knowledge networks.

### Social Intelligence

Social intelligence is embedded in knowledge networks, especially when the network is challenged by stresses and barriers. As a tool, it helps participants transfer knowledge more reliably and with motivation that encourages continued connectivity within and barriers. As a tool, it helps participants transfer knowledge more reliably and with motivation that encourages continued connectivity within and across the network. It is the "fuel" for knowledge-sharing and

knowledge transfer. It means reading people, smoothing out knowledge traffic and sustaining momentum in the process.

### **Group Intelligence**

The other face of social intelligence is when knowledge workers come together to collaborate on a planning session or to solve a complex problem. The effort gives a sense of a group IQ - the sum total of the abilities, skills and savvy of all those included in the group. A high group IQ and highly productive team is social harmony demonstrated when the team brings in a pool of talent and skills (verbal skills, creativity, empathy), has an effective leader, establishes order and discipline in the way the group approaches a problem and provides emotional support throughout the process.

### **Social Software Tools**

Work has always been social. Even before the dawn of civilization, hunters had to work collaboratively to find sustenance and shelter. Social software is a cluster of tools for networking and collaboration within and across the organization. Most of today's social software tends to assume participants are autonomous working alone in lonely offices. The fact is an increasing momentum from senior management to break down internal and external boundaries to promote virtual teams working on adhoc projects. Social software technology gives knowledge workers the tools they need to work together effectively in their domain.

### **Conclusion**

Knowledge networks view the organization as a body of knowledge, which is the core of a learning organization. It points out to the fabric of relationships that can make or break knowledge-sharing and knowledge transfer. A knowledge network approach also helps in explaining how organizational knowledge is accumulated and applied. Complex knowledge emerges not from work simplification but from the way individuals interact with one another within and across organizations. Studying knowledge networks also alerts us to the importance and hidden powers of personality, attitude, perceptions and the resulting behaviour and performance that determines the direction and potential of the business. Once learned, it makes it easier to decide who should share knowledge with whom, for what reasons, and for how long, before certain outcomes can be realized.

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