

Organisational Network Analysis

uncovering the way work really is done

ONA is a diagnostic tool that can assist in your understanding of the interactions between your people and the DNA of your organisation. It is a way of assessing and mapping the underlying structure of how work gets done. It provides visual and quantitative measures of relationships, knowledge and the structure of the organisation.

We are heading into a new era - the way organisations and people work is fundamentally changing. Investments in technology and large scale change programs are facing diminishing returns. Organisations that rely on top down command and control structures are losing their competitive edge. Today, informal networks and the exchange of social capital is becoming the new currency. Progressive organisations understand that the path to continued competitive advantage lies in mapping and fostering their social capital.

Can you map your organisation's DNA?

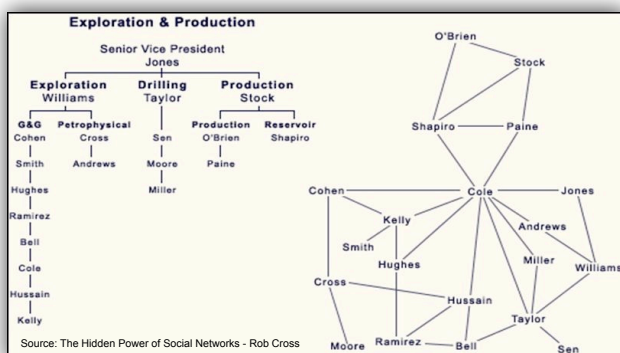
Intuitively we all know that an individual's success and the success of a team depends less on reporting structure and more on who you know. However, can you identify and understand the connections that exist between your people and the business? Can you identify patterns of interactions and business outcomes such as job satisfaction, job performance, adoption of new ideas / technologies, information sharing and creation of new ideas? The efficiency and effectiveness of your organisation can be impacted by an understanding of these interactions

What Is Social Capital and Why Is It So Important?

There has been much talk about the importance of human capital in the past couple of decades. In the decade to come, there will be even greater buzz about social capital. What is it? In sum, it is the value people produce when they work together to achieve mutual goals. It emerges when people build trust, a shared understanding, and a willingness to cooperate in ways that produce something greater than the sum of their parts.

In comparison, human capital is the value that people produce based on their unique education, knowledge, and skills. It is what employees bring to the table through their individual efforts. Both social and human capital are important. But emerging research suggests that social capital is at least as important as human capital when it comes to productivity. Research by Richard Hackman of Harvard University on airline crews offers a case in point. His research reveals that in the majority of cases, airline incidents and accidents occur because of breakdowns in communication between members of the cockpit crew – not because of their technical skills (or mechanical errors with the equipment).

So how can leaders build social capital? The first step is to decide what's at stake to the current and future growth of the organization. Which are the strategies that generate the greatest value – and who are the critical talent tasked with executing them? Are the group dynamics between players healthy and productive? Is conflict brought out into the open and handled in constructive ways? Do people readily share knowledge, trust, and help one another? Do they challenge the status quo by asking the right questions and debating them to find realistic solutions? Or does execution get bogged down by mistrust and misunderstanding, leading to broken morale and poor decisions?



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Business Benefits

As a diagnostic tool, the real benefits of the analysis are apparent in the actions or interventions taken as a result of the insights learnt. For example, a recent analysis of a consulting practice confirmed the hypothesis of large scale network fragmentation between practice areas and competency teams. The visual nature of the network maps and supporting quantitative analysis meant that leadership were able to easily assess where the issues lay, and take steps to facilitate a programme of network building activities to ensure greater collaboration and value add to solving client business issues. Some of the benefits of ONA include:

Identification of client networks	A better understanding of relationships and interactions with client can assist management in focussing their relationship development, leverage cross-selling opportunities and embrace knowledge sharing activities
Improving efficiency and effectiveness of individual business units or functions	Executives can utilise ONA to understand the extent to which business unit interactions are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - aligned with strategic direction - generating measurable value for the business - enabling better working relationships - facilitating information sharing and expertise
Support if strategy execution	Are cross-functional groups or departments working collaboratively in support of strategic objectives
Facilitating large scale change or merger integration	Successful change on a large scale fundamentally revolves around network integration. ONA can be used before a change initiative to identify key people and it can be implemented 6 – 9 months later to assess if there are significant issues leadership needs to address.
Driving Innovation	Successful innovation is the result of a collaborative effort. ONA can assist in understanding the degree to which a team is integrating expertise and utilising skills of others in the organisation
Strategic Partnerships	Alliances and strategic partnerships are becoming more common as a way to utilise cross-organisational initiatives. ONA can highlight effectiveness of these initiatives through information flows, knowledge transfer and decision making
Talent Management	The war for talent is now top of mind with executives. ONA can assist in understanding the loss of relationships / social capital when key people leave the organisation, as well as the value and effectiveness of talent in the organisation.

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