

Get more done with fewer resources by using internal networks to their highest potential
by Dr. Deborah Peck

In today's economic climate, many business leaders are thinking about how to do more with fewer resources. Cutting budgets, delaying projects and layoffs can only help so much. Old methods are not producing the desired results and it seems like there are no alternatives. Decision makers want real solutions to tough problems and need a different approach.

When the economy is down, it is a great time to embrace innovative methods for moving a business forward. How can productivity be improved? How can the best and most influential employees be retained to get the work done efficiently? Obvious options include restructuring or reevaluating current resources. Workers are asked to do more and more for their organizations to meet goals and remain competitive. But is this effective?

Let's consider a new way to view people as resources in an organization.

A typical view of an organization relies on an organization chart (see Figure 1). We often relate to the functions of an organization based on this view of people as resources; they support the organization and produce business results. But is this how work *really* gets done: by following the organization chart flow? Don't answer too fast.

We all have work relationships. It is part of human nature to develop relationships - even at work. These informal relationships develop organically based on trust and according to work circumstances. Exploring these relationships explains how the work actually gets done in any organization.

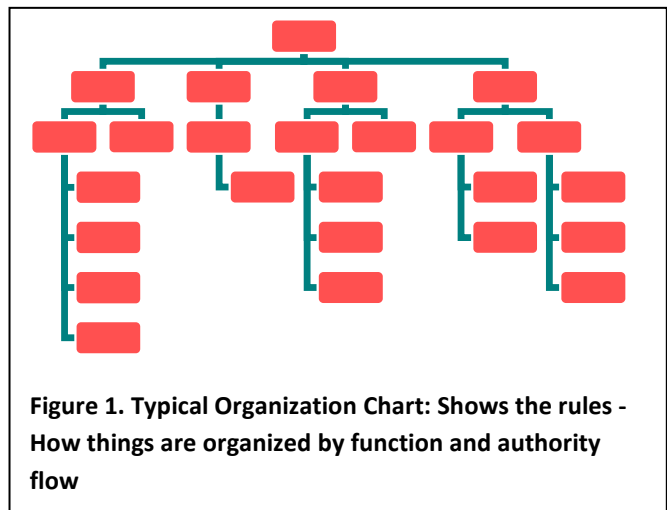


Figure 1. Typical Organization Chart: Shows the rules - How things are organized by function and authority flow

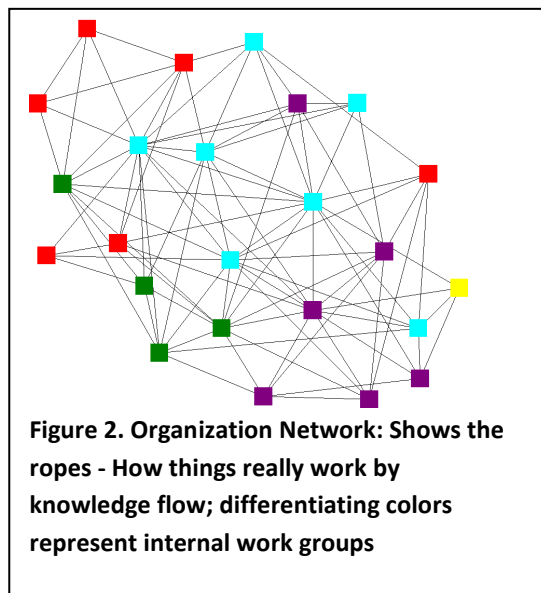


Figure 2. Organization Network: Shows the ropes - How things really work by knowledge flow; differentiating colors represent internal work groups

How do you stay on top of an ever-changing business environment, business demands, and increased competition? The best answer is to make informed decisions based on objective information about how the work really gets done in your organization. A network analysis uncovers information that is often hidden about an organization's current and most valuable resources – its people (see figure 2).

Once a company's network is accurately analyzed, it's possible to prepare and position the business now to respond when the economy improves.

The who, what, when, where and why of understanding the power of informal relationships in the workplace are:

Who: All people in an organization no matter level or title

What: A network analysis of how the work really gets done in an organization

When: Now - for those looking to beat the competition, increase business results, do more with less, and manage based on information unavailable through any other method.

Where: Within any company/organization

Why: To address the causes, rather than the symptoms of organizational problems

As an example, a business owner is making budget cuts but still wants to move forward with some plans put in place for employee development needs that cannot wait. Some communication issues (a symptom) among departmental groups are apparent. A teambuilding session would offer a resolution to this issue while providing some teamwork training at the same time. To most, this may sound like a good plan and good use of the company's precious dollars. Never before has it been so critical that the money spent produces the desired results.

Therefore, it's important to consider: Is communication really the problem (the cause)? Could it be something else? Is there a way to be sure? There are some options.

1. Do nothing
2. Go ahead with the teambuilding session and hope for the best
3. Address the cause, not the symptoms of the communication issue

Addressing the causes, not the symptoms of issues in any organization is best done using the Knowledge, Experience, Skills (KĒS) Network Analysis™ system. The networks become visible through maps (figure 2). Patterns emerge and the maps are combined with metrics that offer a valid interpretation of what is really occurring in the organization. The analysis identifies key players and other information for leaders to make informed decisions that reduce the risk of wasting budget dollars.

KĒS Network Analysis is useful for several applications in the workplace including such things as organization restructuring, succession planning, change management, and mergers and acquisitions to name a few. The analysis provides rich information and recommendations about what is working in an organization and what is not working. Networks are dynamic and provide a snapshot of what is occurring real-time for objective information to make informed decisions.

As a business leader, you can continue to base your decisions on the organization chart (do the same thing and expect different results - the definition of insanity). Or, you can use the network and make informed decisions that will exact change and results that are swift and essential. Which will you choose?

Dr. Deborah Peck is the president and principal consultant at Seity, Inc. (www.seity.com). She is the developer of the Knowledge, Experience, Skills (KES) Network Analysis™ system, which physically maps work relationships and productivity paths within organizations. Dr. Peck will introduce how KES unlocks information and knowledge leaders need in order to understand how their organization is connected at the Unlock It! Forum, taking place September 17, 2009 at the Desert Willow Conference Center in Phoenix. For more details or to register, please visit <http://www.seity.com/eventregistration>. Dr. Deborah Peck may be reached directly at 480.922.7102 or dpeck@seity.com.