

With the right research approach and analytical techniques, social networks can be leveraged in many facets of the business world. Internally, companies can increase operational efficiency by analyzing how work really gets done within different departments. At a broader level, social networks can add a new lens through which to view the company as a whole, evaluating how key stakeholder groups interact with each other and with clients. Looking externally, influence networks within target markets emphasize a community-based approach to sales and marketing initiatives. Organizational Networks, Client Connectivity Networks, and External Networks, then, each require a distinct set of research and analytical techniques.

## ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

An Organizational Network Analysis (ONA) reveals the relationships which employees rely on to be successful in their jobs. The goal of an ONA is to increase efficiency by ensuring that everyone in the group is leveraging the resources they need to excel. These studies examine the personal network connections that may exist both within the organization and outside the organization. There is a particular focus on each person's connections within their working group. Deeper information about these connections is garnered, such as why each person is important to the employee, how each person helps the employee accomplish her career goals, and how each person helps the employee solve problems. Compiling and analyzing these networks, we gain several insights about the dynamics of the organization at both a macro and micro level. Some of the different types of individuals found in organizational networks are given below.

- **Trusted Advisors** within the organization score highly on innovation and achievement indices; that is, they are most frequently sought out by coworkers for their ability to brainstorm new ideas and/or solve problems effectively (Figure 1).
- **Connectors** create the shortest path for many individuals to reach one another.
- **Cross-Connectors** create the shortest path for many individuals from different stakeholder groups (e.g. departments or working teams) to reach one another.
- **Bottlenecks** are sources of information who many people seek out for advice. These individuals may be pulled in too many directions to focus on their own tasks, thus losing efficiency. If another individual within the network were to take on some of the bottleneck's connections, this would enable everyone to get access to the information they need in a more timely and efficient manner.



Looking at the network as a whole, we uncover insights about the broader dynamics of the group. For example, information about a company's networking energy levels can be garnered by analyzing data relative to the group's willingness to solve challenging problems, help one another improve, and to drive innovation. The diversity of each individual's personal network is also an important factor. If all of Tom's connections are also connected to one another, then Tom is at risk of succumbing to "groupthink" due to a lack of diverse points of view. Once these kinds of results are uncovered, managers can meet with their team members to discuss the implications of their networks and adjust their behavior in order to promote a better working environment.

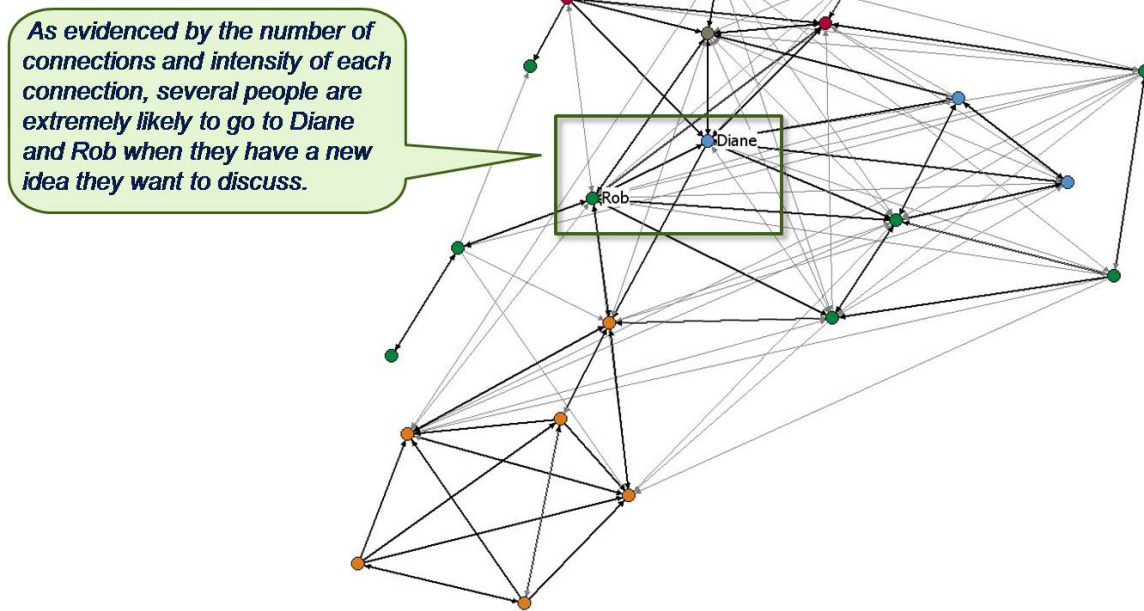


Figure 1: Organizational Network of Innovative Thinkers

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