

talent management

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Special Report:
HR Technology

Deploying Network
Talent to Drive
Innovation

Bring Your Own ...
Now What? Cloud
Models Explained

HR Challenged in
the Era of Big Data

The Value of
Engagement

Adobe Checks In

The software company turned to more frequent performance conversations to better manage its workforce and remove the dread of the annual review.



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CORRECTION:

In the August feature "Rescuing Your Reputation," the location of Bridge Partners LLC should have been listed as New York.

ON THE WEB AT TALENTMGT.COM

Dumbing Down Performance Reviews

In an ideal world, managers would manage performance throughout the year, offer timely and consistent feedback. talentmgt.com/performancereviews

Reader Feedback



"I have run across companies who mandate to their managers that metrics such as the following are expected: 10 percent will exceed, 70 percent will meet and 20 percent will be placed on plans. This destroys the cohesiveness of the team and has a negative effect on production, morale and engagement."

— Brassblower, via comment on site



"Great article. Performance management is about the same everywhere, the difference is in execution."

— Peter Gresens, via comment on site.

Do you have an opinion? Send comments to editor@talentmgt.com and post your thoughts on our Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and blog pages.

ON THE COVER: INSET PHOTOS BY MIKE LLOYD, SHUTTERSTOP PHOTOGRAPHY



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ON THE WEB

What technologies can organizations use to foster global innovation and communication between global leaders to create top-notch ideas? Join the *Talent Management* LinkedIn group to discuss: tinyurl.com/tmtechnology.



Deploying Network Talent to

DRIVE INNOVATION

Essay by Rob Cross and Chris Ernst

For companies to continuously innovate, they must first redesign how jobs are structured to discover and communicate new ideas.

The shift to collaborative, interdependent work is well underway. The traditional organizational paradigm of the corporate bureaucracy is slowly coming unhinged; replacing it is a new paradigm of the network.

In large organizations, performance and innovation are heavily influenced by the ability to connect people across boundaries and silos. While many leaders recognize the importance of these cross-boundary connections, most do not know how to cultivate them or produce the kind of collaboration needed to obtain desired business outcomes.

In 2009 research by the Center for Creative Leadership, 86 percent of senior executives said that working across boundaries is “very important” for business performance — yet just 7 percent said they were “very effective” at doing so.

Leaders, understandably, are looking for solutions. And talent professionals are wondering what role they can play to ensure employees are able to collaborate and innovate in fast-paced, networked environments.

Investing in network talent is one approach. Network talent is an organizational capability beyond developing individual competency to collaborate across boundaries to unleash knowledge, expertise and ideas.

But deploying network talent to drive innovation requires an understanding of an organization's networks and how to create new, more effective boundary-spanning networks.

A Network Talent Test Case

Two years ago, Juniper Networks Inc., a Sunnyvale, California-based manufacturer of networking equipment, was experiencing growing pains as its operating model became increasingly complex. The biggest concern: Innovation processes that worked before were hitting unexpected roadblocks. (Editor's Note: One of the authors works for the company).

"Our formal organizational structure wasn't conducive to the types of cross-boundary engagement and conversations required for innovation to thrive," said Vince Molinaro, the company's executive vice president and

chief customer officer. "We weren't integrating diverse expertise and experience across engineering, infrastructure and sales teams."

To try and solve this problem, Juniper tapped two emerging collaboration-building disciplines — Organizational Network Analysis and Boundary Spanning Leadership.

Juniper launched the Innovation Challenge, a test-case for using network talent to devise new business ideas.

The first step was to build a boundary-spanning innovation network. This consisted of 85 employees spanning six vertical layers — from executive vice presidents to first-line managers — 13 horizontal functions across the engineering, sales and infrastructure groups and participants from 18 locations.

Juniper then conducted an organizational network analysis, or ONA, to understand the connections — or lack thereof — among the members of the group. The results showed minimal or no connectivity across groups.

The ONA affirmed that traditional approaches to fostering collaboration and team building were not going to work. The divides between engineering, sales, executives and line leaders would not be bridged without creating new patterns of interaction.

The company created an event to jump-start the network. The 85 leaders identified to take part in the network were invited to a three-day Innovation Challenge in San Francisco. There, they would be tasked to work with people they didn't know on an assignment that had open-ended parameters.

Four elements turned the traditional corporate event on its head:

The environment. In creating innovation, location matters. Rather than meet in a conference room, the participants gathered in a garage. Everything about the physical environment suggested this was a place to think different.

The action. Instead of Molinaro, the most senior leader, opening with a formal presentation, participants were organized into six teams and sent out on the streets of San Francisco. Their task was to explore and capture new ideas and perspectives on future network technology.

Everywhere they went, the teams considered: Where might this industry be in five years? Is technology transforming this industry? What networking breakthrough might be useful? Back at the garage, participants worked late to begin translating their observations into product ideas.

The experts. The second day, a group of senior Juniper technical experts joined the network. To avoid the talking-head phenomenon and promote rapid knowledge-sharing, the experts aimed to create a human library. Teams could "check out" and "swap" experts. This created a different type of interaction, focused on coaching rather than evaluating, and allowed for ideas to be explored in a more informal and natural environment.

The wrap up. On the third day, the network went to Juniper headquarters to present the most promising ideas to top executives. A "no slide" rule — in reference to traditional PowerPoint presentations — was put into

Network Talent Bridges Five Boundaries

Advances in network and collaboration technologies are dismantling many of the boundaries that once prevented people from working together. Yet as physical boundaries are removed, the boundaries that still exist in human relationships remain.

In a decade-long program of research, a team of researchers associated with the Center for Creative Leadership sought to understand these boundaries and how leaders and organizations can span them.

The boundaries that matter most today are psychological and emotional, rather than organizational and structural. These divides are largely about human identity: core values, how we define ourselves and how we fit within our larger social world.

The following five types of boundaries challenge leaders and organizations to work in new ways:

- **Vertical:** Rank, class, seniority, authority, power.
- **Horizontal:** Expertise, function, peers.
- **Stakeholder:** Partners, constituencies, value chain, communities.
- **Demographic:** Gender, generation, nationality, culture, personality, ideology.
- **Geographic:** Location, region, markets, distance.

While these boundaries create constraints, they can also be frontiers. Wherever boundaries collide and diverse expertise and experience intersect, there is potential for solving pressing problems, driving innovation and leading breakthrough change.

— Chris Ernst and Donna Chrobot-Mason, director of the Center for Organizational Leadership at the University of Cincinnati.

effect, with members of the network and executives standing side-by-side leaning over rolls of butcher paper with marker-drawn images and words. The long rolls of paper enabled everyone to see the bigger picture.

The outcome of the initiative was a hybrid of two product ideas. Equally important, the event created the right types of conversations and opened the door to more effective collaboration in the future.

Nurture the network. Through the event, Juniper executives went to great lengths to avoid the typical one-way, top-down communication patterns. But it wasn't long before organizational inertia kicked in. As it became clear that the product idea was a winner, the established, formal structures and ways of working were pulling on the network. So the company made the decision to bring the product to market by using the informal network already in place.

But the network still needed development and support. A three-day event wasn't the same as building organizational network talent. Turning back to the original ONA, Juniper executives gave coaching and support to people who play three critical network roles:

1. **Connectors** create alignment within a team or department through their informal leadership and trusted opinions. By virtue of their position in the network,

connectors are often conduits of information that people turn to for problem-solving and advice.

2. **Cross-boundary brokers** have the ability to drive change or innovate across structured groups. Given their knowledge of what will work in different parts of an organization, as well as their credibility, brokers are often critical enablers of innovation efforts.

3. **Energizers** get more out of those around them. Energizers unleash passion, rather than grudging compliance, in the workplace.

In less than six months, the network built a product prototype and began to get customer feedback. Following initial reluctance to install an untested product, a large telecommunications company agreed to pilot it. The product is now being tested in production environments in more than a half-dozen large companies.

Based on the success and lessons learned from this network, Juniper is now deploying up to 5 percent of employees in boundary-spanning networks. The goal is that in the near future everyone in the company will be engaged in more networked work styles.

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Putting Network to Action

Talent leaders can choose to deploy network talent like Juniper. And a big initiative isn't necessarily needed to get started. A few simple changes can get the wheels turning.

Talent leaders can begin to develop network talent with these tactics:

Look for informal networks. How are people connected across level, function, demographic, geographic or stakeholder boundaries? Who are the natural connectors, brokers and energizers on your team and across the organization?

Encourage communities of practice. Provide a home for people with shared expertise or technical domains. Provide time, space and support for affinity groups based on shared interests or demographics. These groups of "same" give people the chance to meet and work outside of their daily routine, while removing some of the barriers that they normally experience.

Create a network of allies. Ask other groups or leaders to join team meetings to share knowledge. Set up a temporary network to generate ideas or work on a problem.

Play other roles. Think and learn about other perspectives. Get work teams in the habit of asking, "How would other departments or divisions think about this?"

Connect on neutral ground. Hold meetings in cafes and shared spaces rather than conference rooms.

Find a cross-boundary buddy. Build relationships across organizational lines. Find a buddy to help mentor, partner and meet people in other groups.

Harness the power of symbols. When bringing together cross-boundary teams, find a unifying image or narrative. Agree on a symbol or icon to represent the network. Come up with a storyline that solidifies a shared identity or purpose.

Mix it up. Use flexible membership teams and fresh combinations of task and team to get the job done. Job rotations and other tactics for individual development can double as network development.

Practice low-risk collaboration. Implement simple, small-scale projects for divergent groups to gain experience working across boundaries and without the usual structures and constraints.

Get out of your world. Send a mixed group of leaders or new team members on an exploration of a field completely outside their usual work. Have them attend workshops or conferences outside their domain. Challenge them to expand their perspective and re-imagine new offerings and ways of working. **TM**

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the infrastructure will almost certainly be a service developed by the organization. As such, the organization can ensure that it has a process in place for retrieving and deleting the information from the cloud provider's systems.

As you move into the PaaS and SaaS models, however, the answer becomes a little less simple. If the PaaS offering is an industry standard package that has been set up in the cloud for use as a subscription-based service, then it should be relatively easy to get the information out. But if it is a highly customized service using a third party's proprietary platform and tools, then extracting the data becomes less likely.

In the SaaS model, the organization accesses the provider's software on a subscription or per-use basis. Therefore, it's likely this service will be very specific and proprietary, making it difficult to move either out of the cloud or to a competing SaaS service.

Another aspect to consider is cost. While cloud services usually have a lower entry point, some organizations are finding that the ongoing running costs are more than anticipated. In a scenario where the entire IT infrastructure is deployed to the cloud, different cloud models might be needed for different workloads.

An IaaS offering might host an organization's proprietary software. A PaaS model might be used for development or database workloads. And SaaS could be used for business applications. In a scenario like this, an organization might pay by usage hour (typical for IaaS services) or per-user/per-month (typical for PaaS and SaaS).

With the per-user/per-month pricing scheme, it is pretty easy to anticipate what the running cost will be. But the IaaS model is less easy to calculate. Will it be used 24/7 or only during certain times per month? Unanticipated variables or unexpected uses could break the bank.

However, according to the Gartner study, by 2016 the majority of SaaS contracts will include price escalation limitations and the ability to terminate contracts. The cost and reliability of these offers could become less of a concern than they are today.

There is no doubt that the cloud is here to stay. With this development come several services and opportunities for organizations — especially talent management, a function increasingly intertwined with IT. These services can usher in terrific gains and should not be shunned. Instead, they should be examined carefully with a thought process bent on maximizing these tools' benefits. **TM**

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