

## Organisational Network Analysis

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How work gets done inside an organization can be a mystery even in the best of times. Add in the rapid move to remote work and virtual collaboration spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic and it becomes even more so. Visualising and analysing formal and informal relationships in your organization can help you shape the business strategy that maximizes the organic exchange of information. The exchange of information helps the business become more sustainable and effective. All this is achieved through Organisational Network Analysis (ONA).

According to Rob Cross, a professor at Babson College in Wellesley, Organizational Network Analysis, or ONA, is a process to gather data on how groups collaborate and how information is shared across an organization. That can lead to a better understanding of performance, learning, and innovation and help "de-layer overloaded roles or people. The current emphasis on managing remote teams makes this an ideal time to conduct an ONA.

Being able to see the patterns of connectivity within groups helps a leader make more targeted decisions to improve group effectiveness than simply holding more Zoom calls or virtual happy hours. Leaders can see how and where to pull people into work and connections as well as where people are getting overwhelmed or where silos might exist.”

### **Why it's important**

The way organisations work continues to shift from the traditional hierarchies and bureaucracies prevalent in the 20th Century to more agile enterprises founded upon teams and networks of teams. ONA can provide a fresh lens into how these teams and networks collaborate and behave, and how work gets done.

ONA provides insights that can unlock innovation, drive productivity, and improve performance whilst at the same time enhancing employee experience and wellness. These are all areas that are front-of-mind for CEOs and business leaders as they seek to create the climate and culture that drives competitive advantage and business success.

Traditionally HR analytics teams had relied on static “Human Capital” data. ONA adds the dynamic of ‘Social Capital’. Social capital includes networks and relationships that employees build to help them get work done. These cover a diverse range of areas such as networks for expertise, innovation, social, learning, strategy, and day to day work. Social capital has a big bearing on the individual, team and organisational performance, which is a significant reason why interest in ONA has surged and why this is the technique that people analytics leaders most want to learn more about.

Your organisation may well be structured using a traditional hierarchy chart or organisational chart.

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Who is who's boss? But this doesn't give you the real picture of how the organisation works.

Employee value that enables organisational success is a result of a combination of human capital which comprises of the traits & skill sets that enable employees to perform and social capital which is the relationships & networks employees build to enable them to get work done. Employees with rich Social Capital can contribute more meaningfully to business value-creation. Although Human Capital is visible, easily quantifiable, and usually quite static, Social Capital is dynamic but intangible and difficult to quantify.

Analysing networks allows the organisation to understand who is influential both positively and negatively. When an organisation wants to drive change within the organisation they have to use people who are influential to make sure everyone accepts that change. After analysing networks of communication either via emails, calls, or face to face, the organisation will understand who is at the center of every communication and is highly likely to influence others in both negative and positive ways. General Motors use ONA to disrupt itself from the inside. An article by MIT Sloan Management Review outlines how the different role brokers, connectors, and energisers play in a network in discovering, developing, and diffusing innovation within an organisation and essentially how to disrupt from the inside. Microsoft also combined data from Workplace analytics (email and calendar Metadata, not content) with engagement and business data to better understand manager effectiveness.

Understanding who is turning to who for information within the organisation help to enhance learning and development for both new hires and people within the organisation. Instead of using old methods of learning, an organisation can identify hidden experts in different areas and allow them to train and mentor all the other team members that need capacitation. This is more effective not only because the experts will be able to explain and mentor effectively, but because the other employees or team members will be able to listen and absorb the knowledge since they trust and are used to getting all information from them. Motivating these employees at the center who may be high performers will likely push engagement for the whole team upward. A European Retail Bank applied ONA and discovered that, despite employees in each branch having the same training and similar demographics, the performance was very different. They used digital badges to assess whether there was a correlation between network strength and branch performance. The results indicated that the highest performing branches had the most cohesive, interconnected social networks.

In terms of preparing people for succession, analysing networks will enable an organization to identify which of the employees' potential new leaders are basing on influence and knowledge. These people will then be coached, trained, and rewarded to allow them to pull more team members with them hence building a strong team.

Organisations can use past employee networks or communication data to predict who is likely to leave the organisation in the future. Who will leave the organisation has an impact on the organisation in terms of information flow, driving change, knowledge transfer, and organisational revenue. Ways of retaining these employees if they are good performers may then be implemented.

### **Tools that can be used for ONA**

## **Humanyze**

With individual trackers, Humanyze can gather data about individuals and teams.

## **KeyNetiQ**

“An innovative platform for Organisational Network Analysis. It’s designed to map, visualise and analyse networks of people and relations between them, revealing how organisations operate in day-to-day business.”

## **OrgMapper**

Is an online organisational diagnostic tool that analyses and visualises the human networks your employees use to collaborate, communicate, and exchange information over to do their daily work. It produces informative network maps and lists of key influencers who have a substantial impact on performance, communication, learning, and innovation.

## **Volometrix**

Works with the data from the corporate communication systems. One of the outputs is an organisational network analysis (Volometrix is part of Microsoft).

Using ONA can uncover several issues that are hidden within the organisation. These data-driven insights will help organisations build strong teams that can allow them to survive this era of disruption. There are many ways to build a strong organization but using data-driven insights from your employees and building a strong team gives a competitive advantage to the organisation.

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