

Speaking Notes  
PADM 5501  
Weeks 6 and 7 - knowledge management and learning organizations  
Dr. Neubauer

## WHERE WE ARE

- I do not think we will meet next Thursday because I will be working under a short deadline to grade things and complete midterm grade reports next week.
- You have your midterms and your discussion forum 2A. Both are due in GeorgiaVIEW by October 5.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT includes related concepts like collaboration and virtual collaboration.

“WISDOM MANAGEMENT”
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
DATA MANAGEMENT

In public administration (PA) and other fields there has “always” been a lot of emphasis given to HIERARCHICAL RELATIONSHIPS. Increasingly, PA scholars and others are realizing the importance of NETWORKS both within organizations and among organizations.

A hierarchy reflects a system based on AUTHORITY and limited span of control.

Informal networks within organizations and networks among organizations usually reflect patterns of COMMUNICATIONS.

Most of the real work gets done through networks and through BUSINESS PROCESSES that cross functional (and organizational) boundaries.

(That is a large part of the importance of civil organizations and membership on boards of other organizations.)

KNOWLEDGE is information (usually in a human mind) that is ACTIONABLE.

People (with formal authority) in organizations make many decisions without the benefit of RELEVANT INFORMATION that exists in the organization but that is NOT KNOWLEDGE IN THE MIND of the decision maker(s).

Yes, computer information systems can sometimes support decision making, especially if they have been designed to support particular kinds of decisions. But the need to make certain kinds of decisions cannot always be anticipated. Not all decisions are routine.

Modern organizations need to be smart, which requires not only smart people but the "infrastructure" (both computer and social networks) that permit INFORMED AGILITY.

The environment of a modern organization can change rapidly and in unpredictable ways. ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING and ADAPTATION are needed to keep in sync with the environment. An organization usually cannot control its environment (economic, social, political, competitive), but if it is agile and practices KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT it may be able to adapt quickly.

Knowledge management (KM) is getting the "right" information to the right person(s) at the right time.

(If it helps, think of improvising in the game of basketball and the need to get the ball to the "right" person at the right time although the planned play has broken.)

This is not something that can precisely scripted or FORCED DOWN upon the people in the organization.

KM usually EMERGES from within the organization. The degree to which it is likely to emerge is a function of the CULTURE of the organization.

In the absence of TRUST people are not likely to willing share what they know with others.

Knowledge flows through organizations (and among organizations) via SOCIAL NETWORKS. These are likely to be informal, but it is possible to strategically enhance existing networks.

Many social networks are shaped by the architecture of buildings. The move to the Fine Arts Building reshaped the working locations of many academic departments. Cubicles and offices make differences also.

Information technology (IT) can also be designed and used to support constructive social networks. Think about the significance of email and listservs.

In organizations full of KNOWLEDGE WORKERS, think of the significance of acoustics, and mail that rings in the speaker on every desktop at 11:00 a.m.

Think of the potential of informal networks including people in different organizations to support important collaborations among bureaucratic organizations, like the skybridges of downtown Sioux City, Iowa.

<https://www.sioux-city.org/government/departments-g-p/parking/skywalks>

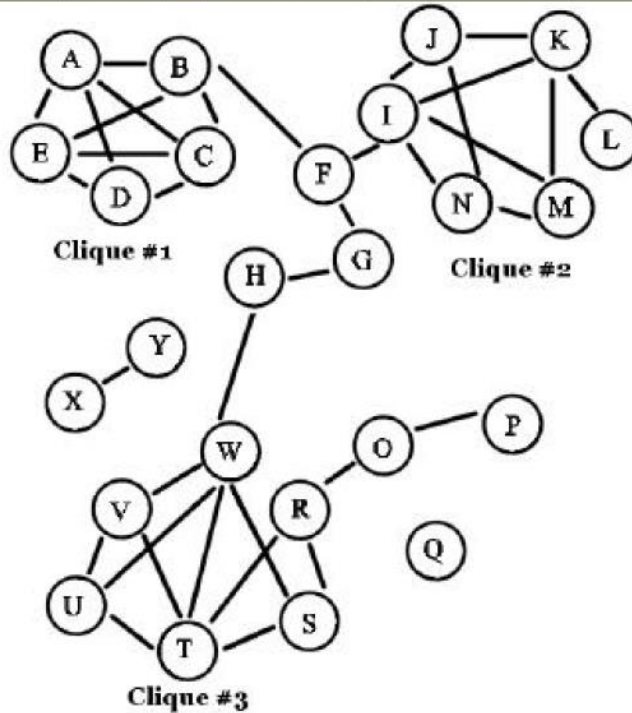
<https://downtownsiouxcity.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Downtown-Sioux-City-Skywalk-Map.png>



Source: URL shown above

You can think of these "connections" as creating virtual organizations AMONG AND ACROSS government agencies and other organizations. Such connections are essential in systems of governments as complicated and "diced up" as in our federalism.

The nodes in social network models are usually people. Different people in a network may or may not be employed in the same organization. A clique in a social network may or may not be people working in the same organization or in physical proximity.



**Clique Members:** A-E, I-N, R-W  
**Liaisons:** F, G, H  
**Isolates:** O, P, Q, X, Y

Assume that the social network model represents a pattern of communications (information flow) in an organization and that all members of the organization at least occasionally make relatively important decisions.

How significant would be the departure of "O" from the organization? Why?

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How significant would be the departure of "C" from the organization? Why?

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How significant would be the departure of "W" from the organization? Why?

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How significant would be the departure of "F" from the organization? Why?

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As a general manager, if someone proposes that the purchase of an upgraded computer system be made possible by "getting rid of" members F, G, and H, by "rightsizing the organization," how would you respond? In other words, is the substitution of human relationships by the addition of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES an adequate substitution? Why or why not?

What introductions might help members X, Y and Q get "onboard?"

Does the model above tell us who the supervisors are? Could they be X and Y.

Is organizational culture related to patterns of social networking and informal working relationships in organizations? YES!

IMAGINE that all the nodes in the model above are CASEWORKERS in one large social services organization. The case workers have to make decisions about clients by applying a large, complex set of policies/rules. In fact, they must each exercise substantial PROFESSIONAL DISCRETION and subjective judgement when making decisions about their clients and their applications. In the model above, which case workers are likely to relatively uninformed about how other case workers are making decisions? Clients of which case workers are likely to be treated "most fairly?"

(There is a whole literature on LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS.)

IMAGINE that you are an administrator in a large organization in which knowledge does not flow freely. How would you try to create an organizational more conducive to KNOWLEDGE SHARING and social learning. How would you help assure that when

people in the organization make important decisions, they have the information/knowledge they need to make informed decisions?

Think about the relationship between ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE and knowledge sharing.

Think about the role of computer technologies in knowledge management in and among organizations.

Can you make people want to share what they know?

Can/should the facilitation of knowledge management in an organization be a centralized endeavor. Should there be a vice-president or knowledge, for example?