

Mastering the pivot
Using network analysis
to intentionally architect
collaboration

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“Adaptability—the ability to be nimble, be flexible, and pivot as conditions change—is critical for organizations and individuals.” Individuals come together and form networks to get work done. It may be easy for one person to pivot, but how about an organization of 200,000 people, each with their own networks and goals? These intricate networks make up an organization’s energy, and using network analysis, we can see and understand how work gets done and how to unleash the full potential of an organization and its individuals. To truly be adaptable, organizations should embrace intentional collaboration. Intentional collaboration is purposeful and transformative for organizations of all shapes and sizes. And in today’s remote-first work environment, there are a myriad of tools that can support an organization’s move to embrace intentional collaboration.

Act I: Organizational adaptability is more important than ever

The future of work is now. The world is fundamentally different. Stability has given way to unpredictability. Organizations are living, breathing systems organized around networks of how people actually work and behave that embraces change as the new normal. COVID-19 has shined a spotlight on the importance of collaboration to build resiliency against the negative implications of pandemic. The ability of an organization to adapt to new ways of working will be fundamental to bringing organizations back to the same level of productivity that they had before the pandemic (or even altogether new levels of productivity). So far, there has been a multiple-week decline in informal collaboration, leading to decreased engagement and performance. People already on the periphery of an organization are becoming more isolated. Work hours are up on average, and, given the increased work hours, many people report they are just as productive, but business results have not shown a commensurate increase in productivity. However, some organizations that have been able to harness networks and intentional collaboration have reported significant increases in interpersonal connectivity.

These organizations are examples of how changing how work gets done can offset current and future shifts in the world. Organizations should be able to flex and change around new organizational goals and aspirations. This means the workforce, from those with long tenures to new students joining the workforce (**Read about how ASU powers the modern learning experience with Slack here**) should come together in new and dynamic ways. Network analysis can provide an organization with the insights to architect intentional collaboration, and collaboration platforms can bring this intentional collaboration to life. The ability of collaboration tools to democratize access to information and decision-making enables connectivity across the organization. We collaborated with Slack to understand what this looks like in practice—how organizations can leverage network analysis insights to understand the way they work today and how they can architect intentional collaboration in the future.



Act II: Understanding and harnessing the power of collaboration networks

Organizational charts and graphs are not a proxy for how humans interact and collaborate. Networks hold the key to understanding how work gets done. Using network analysis, organizations can unlock previously hidden insights around collaboration, productivity, and wellness. These insights can help organizations assess the value of changes they have already made, proactively plan for changes or pulse before, during, and after to fully visualize a transformation.

Using network analysis after you have undertaken a transformation effort to change the way your organization works can help understand how a collaboration platform and program changes how work gets done.

Case study 1: A global media and entertainment organization implemented a collaboration platform and allowed its teams to form new, organic collaboration patterns. After implementation, it measured its collaboration networks and found the number of silos decreased by 6:1 over the course of one year. After seeing its networks, the organization took steps to introduce a more intentional collaboration strategy, bringing together business units and studios into a series of intentional channels. Networks helped it measure the effectiveness and value of its recent collaboration platform and identify what next steps it could take toward an intentional collaboration strategy.



Using network analysis proactively before a big shift can help organizations improve productivity and connectivity during remote work times. And specifically, for some organizations, how can connectivity between HQ and the field be improved?

Case study 2: An analytics company had recently introduced a collaboration strategy and platform. It compared its collaboration networks pre- and post-COVID-19. It saw that the number of connections between colleagues went up 200%. It also saw its organizational silos decrease from 9:1. The remote work environment brought on by COVID-19 had actually boosted its collaboration. However, within the networks, it pinpointed a critical disconnect in communications between HQ and the field, which allowed it to make targeted changes to further improve its communication and connectivity to be less HQ-centric.

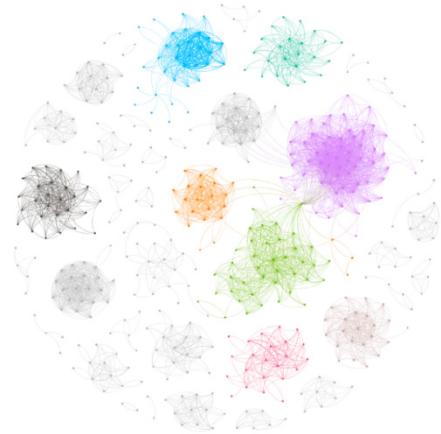
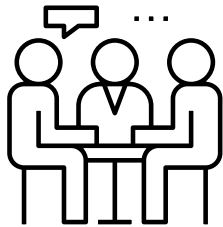


Finally, using network analysis before, during, and after transformation can identify silos and how to create meaningful connections, even in a mega-sized organization.

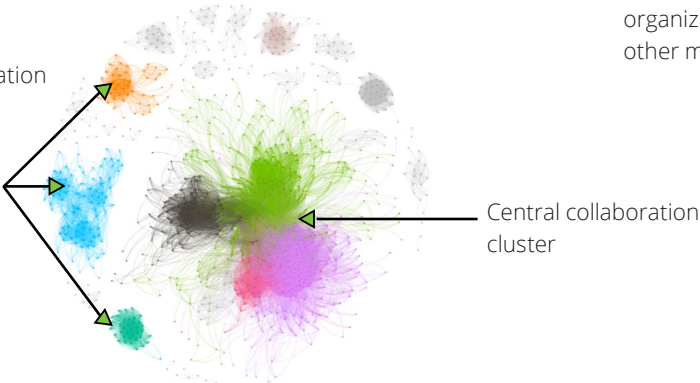
Case study 3: This mega-financial company worked in several disparate and disconnected islands. It took weeks for responses and collaboration to happen between different parts of the organization. Using network data to identify islands and where connections would bring the most value, within one year, its active collaboration strategy shortened the response time to less than one week, and the number of connections between colleagues went up more than 500%. After identifying further opportunities to collaborate, it saw connections increase an additional 200% the next year. Within two short years, intentional collaboration improved 10X.



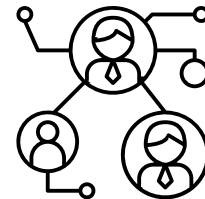
2018: Starting collaboration patterns show multiple disconnected islands and a largely siloed organization with limited collaboration across groups.



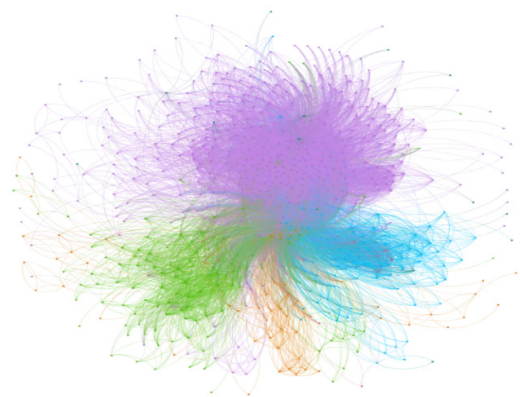
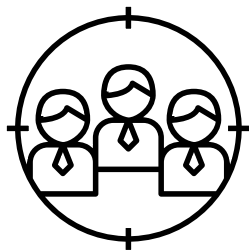
Auxiliary collaboration clusters



2019: A large collaboration cluster has emerged centrally in the organization. Employee connections are up 500% over 2018. Three other major collaboration clusters are formed.



2020: The majority of groups have been absorbed into a central collaboration hub, making the organization 10X more collaborative than in 2018.



If you understand your organization's informal networks and use that knowledge while you implement a purposeful collaboration strategy, you should be able to quickly move toward intentional connectivity and enhanced productivity.

Act III: Creating intentional connectivity

There is a suite of collaboration tools available, from synchronous to asynchronous and everything in between, but the real game-changer is architecting an intentional collaboration strategy to support your business. Slack is one of the channel-based messaging platforms that democratize information and enable intentional connectivity and collaboration across networks. Many companies never progress past organic usage because they provide a platform for their teams to work differently, but they don't actually drive the shift to changing how work is done. Mature usage of a collaboration platform and, ultimately, transformational change requires understanding how work is done today and intentionally rearchitecting workflows within the platform. Rearchitecting workflows and collaboration allows people to form and re-form networks as organizational goals or needs change. This helps organizations to be intentionally collaborative in times of change. Entire organizations can pivot and direct their energy toward new or refined goals seamlessly.

This purpose-driven collaboration, fueled by collaboration tools, will help push organizations to new levels of adaptability that were previously thought to be unattainable. Understanding your organization's networks and utilizing those networks should allow you to move from simple communication to transformational collaboration. Ready to bring your organization to a new bold place? Check out the next chapter in our series on how networks have helped organizations see and take meaningful action toward inclusivity.

Let's talk

Have an interest in networks? We do, too.

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