

Knowing and Leveraging your Knowledge Networks

Transportation Librarian's Roundtable

July 30, 2020

Ground Rules and Protocols

- This is a learning exercise – we each know something about the topic but we all have much to learn
- Expectation is for a good discussion that will begin but not end today
- The event will be a success if when you walk away you are more confident about your networks and if you have ideas for how to build and strengthen them
- We have a lot to cover so I would like to ask you to use the Chat function to share your comments and questions up until Step 1. From Step 1 on, we'll build in time for discussions.
- I've added times to the agenda, so we can be sure to cover each of the topics.

Agenda for the Discussion

1. Why Care about Networks (10 mins.)
2. What is a Knowledge Network? (15 mins.)
3. All Your Networks (10 mins.)
4. Making Networks Visible (10 mins.)
5. Assessing Network Health (15 mins.)
6. Growing and Nourishing Transportation Networks (10 mins.)
7. Managing Your Transportation Networks (10 mins.)

WHY WE CARE ABOUT NETWORKS

First, let's talk about you

- Everyone involved in this conversation today is a successful professional - let's think about why that is and how you got to this point
- You have achieved this role and responsibility because you have valuable:
 - *Human Capital* – Tacit Knowledge, Skills & Competencies, and productive Attitudes and Behaviors
 - *Structural Capital* – you have produced or can work with Explicit Knowledge/Information, have and work with others to create Procedural Knowledge, and bring important Cultures to your role (learning, business, public service, information professional, etc.)
 - *Relational Capital* – your Networks, and your Reputation

Human Knowledge Capital

- Tacit Knowledge
- Skills and Competencies
- Attitudes & Personality

Structural Knowledge Capital

- Explicit Knowledge
- Procedural knowledge
- Cultural Knowledge

Relational Knowledge Capital

- Network Capital
- Reputational Capital

Networks and Knowledge Capital

- What we just referred to is what economists call Intellectual Capital – what knowledge management professionals call Knowledge Capital
- In the Knowledge Economy knowledge is the primary factor of production – knowledge is now as or more valuable than an organization's physical and financial capital
- Bottom line – you and the people you work with are the most valuable assets of your organization
- Challenge – knowledge behaves different than other kinds of capital – stockpiling it and storing it diminish its value – USE and BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION creates value

We Care About Networks Because.....

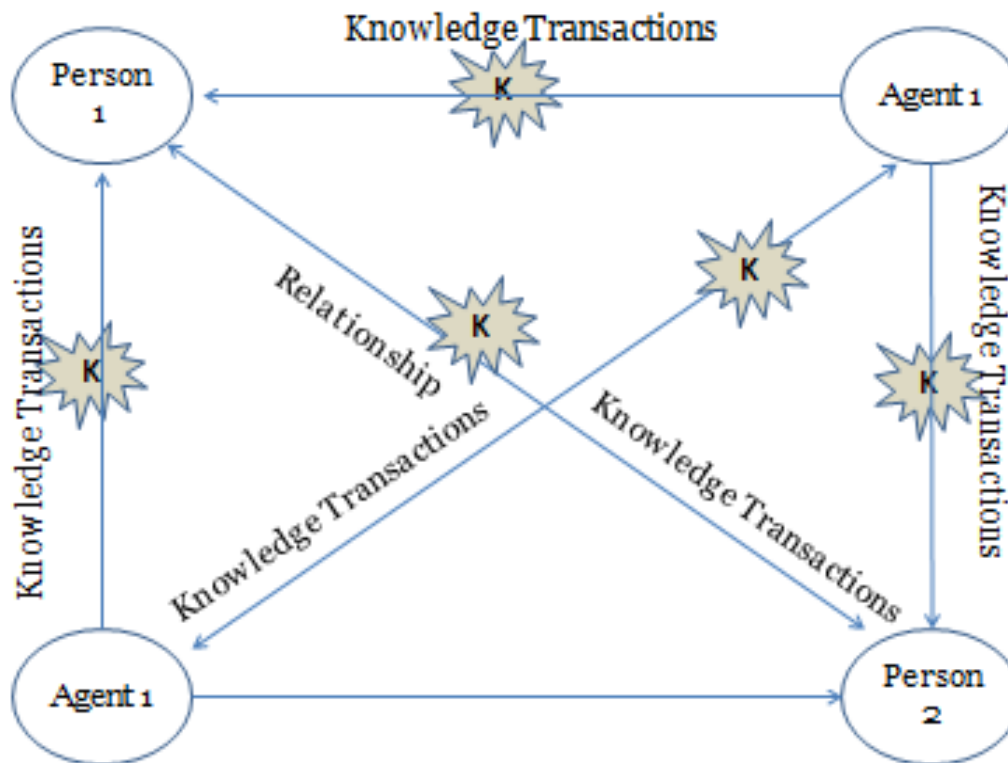
- Networks.....
 - Create the roads and paths along which knowledge flows and achieves value
 - Connect the sources of knowledge – people, teams, groups, communities,
 - Create contexts for each of us to grow our human capital
 - Create contexts for each of us and our agencies to grow structural capital
 - Create contexts for the field of transportation to create, leverage and nourish a wide range of networks and relationships

WHAT IS A KNOWLEDGE NETWORK?

What is a knowledge network?

- Collections of individuals and teams who come together across organizational, spatial and disciplinary boundaries to invent and share a body of knowledge.
- They are designed to develop, distribute, leverage and use knowledge.
- Networks exist in every business context, in every professional context, in every social context, and geographical context.
- Come in every size and take many shapes – five people or five hundred people, virtual or physical
- Knowledge networks can be spontaneous or persistent – short-lived or long-term
- Ancient and modern – medieval guilds and apprentices, artists and invisible college, trade unions, business groups, social clubs

Visual Representation of a Network



Knowledge Network Nodes & Transactions



- Network Nodes can take any form – a person, a team, a neighborhood, a computer, a paper, or a concept or idea
- We care about People as Nodes – people as sources and targets of knowledge flows in the network
- We care about transactions because they represent our knowledge flows – any kind of knowledge capital you give or get through your network
- People cannot exist without knowledge networks – they are essential to survival – they are so integral to how we work that it is challenging to see them

Network Transactions and Activities

- Network transactions can be knowledge flows or they can be activities
- Think about all the kinds of things you do to grow your knowledge capital – discuss ideas, teach others, work on a project, exchange information, join a new unit and learn that unit culture, build new friendships and relationships, and grow your reputation
- Think of how you are using your networks every day to build your knowledge capital

Investing in and Deriving Value from Networks

- Each of has a set of goals and values – we invest in our networks and derive value based on those goals and values
- Investing in and deriving value from a network is not too different from an economic transaction – whether you realize it or not you make an implicit decision about every action you take in a network
- Every investment takes time – every transaction has a value – is your investment going to pay off? Is the value going to be worth the time?

Envisioning and Sharing Exercise

- Select one of your knowledge networks – preferably a work related network
- Please close your eyes and see yourself as a node in that network – think about your role in the network
- Who else is in the network? What are their roles?
- Why you participate in this network? Is it voluntary or required? What is your role in this network? What value do you get from this network? What do you give to this network?
- In whatever network you used for your envisioning exercise, I want you to share with us what kinds of knowledge transactions you give to or get from others

Or, fish can't see water.....

ALL YOUR NETWORKS

Your Transportation Networks

- You don't have just one transportation network – there are many networks -- you have networks of
- transportation information professionals at the agency level, another one at the state DOT level, and yet another one at the national DOT level
- transportation practitioners – those people who you engage with to provide services, to ask for expertise
- agency level administrators
- general information professionals (not transportation specific)
- suppliers and vendors
- sources in the private sector, the academic sector
- community members

More Sharing and Brainstorming

- You already know a lot about and have a lot of experience with networks..... the question is:
- Do you have the network you need to do your work?
- Are the networks you have healthy? Do they achieve their purpose?
- What changes will make them worth your investment?

Beginning of a Discussion

- Could today be the start of a discussion among TKN members of – a test run for a Step 2? Let's try this:
- What networks you have in place?
- What new networks you need to create?
- Whether your networks are healthy – do they need to be expanded? Formalized?
- How you could nourish and strengthen those networks?

STEP 1. MAKING NETWORKS VISIBLE

Step 1. Inventory Your Networks

- First challenge is to make your existing networks visible
- Consider creating a personal inventory – you could simply create a log of your interactions for a week and I guarantee they will all be quite visible
- The personal inventory will help you to better assess how much knowledge capital and time you're investing in your networks and whether there is value
- It will also let you share your networks with TKN – the easiest way to grow networks is to expand and connect them

Step 1. Inventory Your Networks

- After you create your inventory, sketch out the elements of each network
- Who is in the network? What kinds of roles does it support?
- What kinds of messages, activities and transactions does it support?
- Is it physical or virtual? What channels does it use – phone, email, text, social media, citation lists, etc.
- How extensive do you think it is?
- Your thoughts and comments?.....

STEP 2. ASSESSING NETWORK HEALTH

A Healthy Network....

- Gives as much value as it takes
- Continuously regenerates itself
- Does not live beyond its useful business life
- Generates all types of knowledge capital investment and growth – not just Explicit Knowledge
- Has many different entry points – meaning you can discover it and engage through more than one channel
- Has a core membership – what network analysts call density
- Enables each member to chose their role and to vary that role over time – central role, peripheral role, “lurker”
- Is non-threatening and has a set of ‘guiding principles’ that govern the behavior of nodes

Are Your Networks Healthy?

- If you can set up and work through Step 1, you have positioned yourself to then assess the networks in place
- If you share your insights around the existing networks, what might emerge is a set of community goals for those common networks
- Not all networks will be important to everyone, but for those that are – this might help you to determine what you expect from them
- Don't worry about other people's goals – think about what you want the networks to do for you and your community – only you can decide this

Most Important Rule of Thumb

- For any network, the most important thing to remember is that you have to invest to derive value
- I think of my networks as my “relational capital bank accounts” – when someone asks me to contribute, I always try to make an investment
- If I see over time that the investment did not return at least equal value – the other members didn’t reciprocate – then I either exit or reduce my participation in that network
- Worst case scenario – some networks are BAD investments – people might steal or appropriate your knowledge, misuse it, or leverage your reputation without giving back any value – stay away from unhealthy networks.....

Step 2. Mechanics

- Start with some open discussions but make sure that you don't limit the input to only those who can join in the discussion on a particular day
- Think about ways to bring those who contribute to the networks into the discussion – the broader view you have the healthier you can grow your network
- At a minimum, this gives you a common set of goals for your networks
- At the most, you come out of the discussions with some thoughts on assessments and metrics

Step 2. Trial Run

- How would you define a healthy knowledge network? What criteria are important to you?
- Based on these criteria, which of your networks are healthy?
- Based on these criteria, which of your networks would you continue to invest in?
- Based on these criteria, which of your networks need to be strengthened?
- Based on these criteria, which of your networks should you relinquish – they cost you more than they give value?
- Your thoughts and comments?.....

STEP 3. GROWING AND NOURISHING TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS

Step 3. Gap Filling and Nourishing

- Willing to bet that if you can work through Steps 1 and 2, you will already have a lot of ideas for what networks you might want to create, and what networks need some further support
- You already have a start at creating new networks – just based on what people have shared and what they need
- You also have a good understanding of where you have gaps and deficiencies in your existing networks
- **NEVER EVER ASSUME YOU ARE STARTING FROM SCRATCH!!!**
- **NEVER ASSUME YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO NETWORK!!!**

Step 3. Trial Run

- Let's start with those that you think are healthy. Do you think others would benefit from joining them? How might you engage them?
- Of those that have potential value – how would you strengthen them? Do they need new or more members? Do they need new or expanded kinds of transactions? Do you need a new environment? Do you need institutional support or recognition?
- Of those that have little value – how might you transition them? Archive the value? Save the relationships – carry them over to another network?
- Your thoughts and comments?.....

MANAGING OUR COMMON NETWORKS

Topology of Networks

- Focus on those networks that have value to TKN, consider what it will mean to keep those networks healthy, engaged and relevant
- There doesn't have to be a single, all encompassing network - there can (and should) be many focused networks
- Just make sure that the boundaries of these networks are connected – the best way to do this is by identifying people who are members of more than one network and encourage them to share
- Ensure that knowledge flows not only within but across networks

Living Networks

- Networks need to be monitored and continually assessed
- Don't feel that you have to create a new network – be on the lookout for existing networks and link them to other networks
- Look for affinities across all of the different perspectives of your work – remember that transportation is a complex environment of business, industry, public sector, theoretical and applied research, teaching.....

Comments, Questions, Disagreements, Next Steps.....?

THANK YOU!