Un-managing knowledge workers

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide a conceptual and flexible framework for the management of knowledge workers in the current information economy.

Design/methodology/approach – Research from such diverse fields as anthropology, evolutionary biology/psychology, paleontology, molecular biology, neurophysiology, and social network analysis are used in an attempt to find commonalities in these disciplines that will help determine the effects of various organizational contexts on human nature and the innovative capabilities of knowledge workers.

Findings – Provides definitive explanations/reasons why knowledge workers should not be managed using Industrial Age management concepts and organizational structures. Also includes four clearly defined descriptive principles for the development of Knowledge Age organizations and social networks.

Practical implications – An especially useful multidisciplinary source for the development of innovative enterprises capable of motivating and expanding the creative potential of knowledge workers.

Originality/value – The paper identifies critical needs and methodologies for managing knowledge workers in addition to providing fundamental principles for the advancement of flexible and innovation rich organizations.

Keywords Motivation (psychology), Information personnel, Knowledge organizations

Paper type Viewpoint

The burden of the industrial age mindset

The author suggests that management models developed since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, many of which still are in use today, have not been very effective from the get-go. The “old” theories were originally conceived primarily by engineers and economists who placed little emphasis on the people side of the equation because they believed companies should be run like well-oiled machines. People, of course, are not machines by any stretch of the imagination.

Past management models were at least “sufficient” in supporting ventures and activities of the Industrial Age. During this period, the environment was relatively stable, most work was repetitive and physical, and the generation of new concepts was almost exclusively the purview of top management. Since we have entered the Knowledge Age, the world economy is increasingly dependent on knowledge workers and the continuous pursuit of intellectual capital. As the value of knowledge rises daily, we are discovering that knowledge workers cannot be managed in the traditional sense.

The generation of new knowledge or intellectual capital is particularly dependent on voluntary collaboration and self-determination, concepts which are foreign to the Industrial Age management mind-set that still plagues us today. Discovering and supporting the application of self-organizing principles is the key to success in maximizing the productivity of knowledge workers.

Essentially, what the author has done is identify the dynamic relationships of three primary factors that he believes are the foundation of informal social networks present...
Knowledge Age dynamics
The author argues that organizations need to pay close attention to the following eight interdependent dynamics if they aspire to prosper in the Knowledge Age:

1. Knowledge and knowledge workers cannot be managed in the traditional sense.
2. All life forms are self-organizing systems by design, down to their individual cells and molecules.
3. All biological systems have genetically transmitted behavioral tendencies modified by life experiences.
4. Social capital is as important as financial capital for knowledge-based organizations.
5. Knowledge is classified into two categories – explicit and tacit. Each category needs to be managed differently.
6. The size of an organizational unit affects the establishment and maintenance of “voluntary” interdependent relationships among its members.
7. The formation of hierarchical social systems is not a natural phenomenon among humans.
8. The more an institution supports the principles of self-organization openly, the more social capital and tacit knowledge it will generate which, in turn, will lead to increased levels of innovation, commitment and entrepreneurship.

Managing knowledge workers
Understanding self-organizing principles is especially important when dealing with knowledge professionals. The reason for this is quite simple. The generation of knowledge is an indiscernible voluntary cooperative process, as opposed to a practice where the movement of hands and feet can be observed, as was/is the case with the industrial workforce. New ideas cannot be forced out of people who often do not know exactly what tacit knowledge they possess.

Recent research (Morris, 2001) also shows that by creating negative emotions, a threatening environment narrows thought patterns by necessity. Conversely, positive emotions enhance more expansive and resourceful thinking that is essential for creativity. In addition, knowledge workers are especially dependent on free-wheeling informal networks within and external to the organizations with which they are affiliated (Parkhe et al., 2006). Hence, the sharing of tacit knowledge and the generation of social capital is critical to their success.

Self-organization
All biological organisms, including humans, function in a self-organizing mode internally and externally. That is, our bodies – down to individual cells and DNA molecules – work together in order to sustain us. However, there is no central “boss” to
control this dynamic activity. Our relationships with other individuals also progress through the same circular free flowing process as we search for outcomes that are best for our well-being. Under the right conditions, these social exchanges can be extraordinarily altruistic. Conversely, they can also be quite self-centered and even violent. It all depends on the context of the immediate environment and the people involved. Even people in prisons, gulags, concentration camps and very tightly run top-down organizations continuously self-organize in response to the demands of their immediate surroundings and conditions.

**Innate behavioral tendencies**

We are not born with a blank slate for a mind. Instead, we arrive with all the basic rudiments of our mental circuitry in place ready to act in response to our immediate environment. At the same time, we are able to learn from our experiences (Restak, 1984). Thus, we are equipped not only with instincts, but also with much broader innate drives or predisposed genetic tendencies such as concern for status and for affiliation. This means that our behavior is “influenced” by our genes rather than genetically determined and that we do have free will (Barash and Barash, 2000). As Steven Pinker suggests, “human nature is the problem, and human nature is the solution.”

Starting with the work of Baken (1966), researchers have concluded that humans come equipped with innate drives which are considerably less reactive than pure instincts. These drives fall into two fundamental categories: a set of self-centered drives (e.g. concern for control, rank, status, territory and possessions) and a set of other-centered drives (e.g. concern for attachments, affiliation, altruism, care giving and care receiving). We seem to function best in an environment where both categories of drives can be expressed in a balanced manner.

Unconsciously, most of today’s organizations, with their prevailing top-down management and reward systems, are typically impacting their people’s self-centered drives as they pursue their most viable career options. Concurrently, countless leaders in these enterprises are also asking members to be first-rate team players and devoted to the goals of their respective businesses. Clearly, that is not a very effective way to run an organization, especially one that is reliant on intellectual capital generation.

**Social capital**

Without high levels of social capital, not much in the way of productive work, and especially new knowledge creation, can take place in an organization. Adler and Seok-Woo (2002), have defined social capital most precisely. They suggest that social capital is the goodwill available to individuals or groups. “Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor’s social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor.”

We should bear in mind that few things in organizations are accomplished by strictly following formal directives. Hence, without sufficient social capital, an enterprise is, for all intents and purposes, merely a collection of employees or hired hands waiting for instructions from the bosses. In essence, social capital is based on altruistic and interdependent relationships formed by people over time. It is also something that cannot be managed or controlled. Social capital is the very foundation of voluntary interdependent associations. It develops through self-organization, as opposed to top down directives and position power.
Explicit and tacit knowledge

Knowledge is fundamentally classified into two categories: explicit and tacit (Polanyi, 1958). Explicit knowledge is any information that has been formally defined and codified. Thus, it is usually gained through sources such as formal education, training, books, and the internet. Explicit knowledge is a static resource. That is to say, it does not contain the capacity to renew itself. An outside entity needs to keep it current.

Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, encompasses ideas and abstractions at the individual level. It is acquired by life experiences and by interacting or working with more experienced people. There is also a physiological reason why tacit knowledge differs from explicit knowledge. Very simply, “... different brain systems are involved in implicit forms of memory, on the one hand, and conscious/explicit/declarative memory, on the other” (LeDoux, 2002).

Unrelated or unexpressed knowledge comes to the fore serendipitously as individuals or small groups confront new or unanticipated situations. Consequently, tacit knowledge is a dynamic resource. Hence, although relatively stable, implicit knowledge continues to be shaped by our continuous interactions with our immediate surroundings and other people. Most importantly, tacit knowledge is the wellspring for all new knowledge.

People are seldom aware of exactly what unrelated knowledge they possess until confronted with a problem or an opportunity. Therefore, in order for tacit knowledge to properly emerge, people must first be surrounded by a supportive environment. Threats, for example, create negative emotions that, by necessity, narrow thought patterns (Morris, 2001). People threatened by the loss of their jobs, a bullying boss, not knowing what their status is from day to day and so on, innately narrow their thought patterns to avoid or eliminate these negative emotions. As a result, such individuals unconsciously devote little or no time to engage their minds more expansively and resourcefully in search of new ideas.

Organizational size

A critical factor in developing knowledge-intensive enterprises is size. There is considerable evidence (Dunbar, 1996) that human beings are physiologically limited in developing and maintaining mutually beneficial voluntary collaborative relationships in groups of more than 150 people. In larger collectives, relationships become fragmented, ties of common interest cannot be properly sustained, and hierarchical structures begin to take shape. Humans are not fundamentally “noble savages” nor are they uncompromisingly self-indulgent. We are capable of both extremes, given the appropriate surroundings. Thus, from a human nature perspective, small size is vital for the development of supportive environmental contexts where informal groups and networks can flourish most effectively.

 Hierarchical social systems

Hierarchies are necessary in managing certain rapid response organizations such as military units and large police departments but they are not appropriate for all social endeavors. The problem with a hierarchy is that it is founded on two false assertions that also serve as the foundation for its advocacy. The first premise suggests that hierarchies are an unavoidable phenomenon among humans. This argument is true only if we prefer to rely primarily on the most primitive drives of the lowest level of our
three-tiered brain – the reptilian complex that evolved about 400 million years ago (Sagan, 1977). If we believe that humans are more intelligent than reptiles, it would make more sense (at least occasionally) to rely on our characteristically human social side, especially with respect to creativity and innovation.

The second contention supporting the hierarchical model is grounded in the belief that social organizations should be structured in accordance with a mechanistic or machine metaphor. That is, organizations should be developed and run like machines. The problem with this premise is that it confuses control with order. People are not machines by any stretch of the imagination. Machines need to have external control mechanisms. People naturally self-organize around any situation or opportunity, thus establishing situation-specific order. Accordingly, whether we like to admit it or not, hierarchical systems are artificial frameworks whose actions and activities are much less integrated than those of natural biological entities (Schoderbek and Schoderbek, 1990).

Supporting self-organizing principles openly
It seems paradoxical but the author submits that the more an institution embraces self-organization rather than a hierarchical system, the more social capital it will generate. The rationale for this form of “unmanagement” is straightforward. Social capital is generated and maintained by voluntary interdependent personal connections that are mutually supportive. That, of course, is the foundation for self-organization. Such an environment also facilitates the emergence and sharing of tacit knowledge – the wellspring of all new knowledge. Accordingly, the hidden riches of any social system consists of a powerful triad of interdependent but invisible dynamics: self-organization, social capital, and tacit knowledge.

The eight fundamental considerations delineated above make it clear that in the current Knowledge Age, much closer attention should be paid to certain fundamental factors that allow knowledge workers to become fully engaged. In essence, we need to learn not to waste time and money trying to circumvent human nature but rather we should become skilled at “un-managing” knowledge workers.

By understanding our inherent evolved predispositions and how the environment affects them, we can begin to leverage the intangible power that resides in the informal social networks of every organization. Without recognizing the vitality of these hidden social dynamics, we will continue to curb the intellectual capital generation capabilities of knowledge workers.

In the remainder of this paper, the author will incorporate the eight elementary factors previously discussed into four key principles which, from his perspective, are the underpinnings for supporting overt self-organization in all social endeavors. He concludes by showing how these principles lead to the development of “shared-access systems” (defined shortly) which are specifically designed to enhance the performance and self-motivation of knowledge workers.

Basic elements of behavior
Before examining the principles of overt self-organization necessary for supporting a shared-access system, a quick look at the basics of human behavior is in order. Figure 1 shows the continuously evolving dynamic process of individual behavior. Fundamentally, our actions and reactions around a particular circumstance consist
of the fluid interface of four factors: genetic predispositions, life experiences, social capital, and self-organization. Essentially, the behavioral elements revolve around a problem or opportunity that an individual encounters. Thus, how we behave depends on our perceptions of the people and circumstances we come upon, modified by our innate drives which, in turn, are molded by the events we have encountered throughout our lives and the support networks we have developed over time.

Starting with our genetic makeup, we need to remember that for “normal behavior” (conduct that is not overly altruistic or self-centered) to take place, both sets of our innate drives need to be expressed in a balanced manner. We should also be cognizant of the fact that these drives cannot be consciously controlled. Our genetic predispositions are expressed mainly in response to specific environmental conditions. This is a major reason why our personalities remain relatively stable over a lifetime. As Howard (2000) stipulates:

[...] to the degree that all traits are hereditary, they are adaptive; they are helpful to survival. Every trait then, whether it is anger or reliability, solitude or defiance, has its survival value.

As far as life experiences are concerned, we have absolutely no control over two things. We cannot select our parents, nor do we have a say where in the world we will be born. Subsequently, we also develop our repertoire of life experiences rather serendipitously. For example, there is little certainty as to the schools we will attend, the people we will encounter, the friendships we will develop, or the careers we will pursue over the course of our lives. What is certain is that during the course of our journeys through life we access and file away extensive amounts of explicit and tacit knowledge that forms our mind-set or worldview. Also, what we learn may or may not be terribly useful.

When it comes to social capital, we do have significant choice as to what support networks we join and help to build. It is also important to keep in mind, however, that most of what we pursue in private or public life impacts other individuals and we, in turn, are affected by the activities of the people around us. Hence, it makes considerable practical sense to develop informal support systems that are interdependent and mutually beneficial. Social capital is not something a person can buy or sell. It is person and organization-specific. It is, therefore, earned and not acquired.
 Finally, the current situation dictates how an individual perceives and responds to what he or she is encountering. If, for instance, the circumstances seem to be non-threatening and beneficial to the well being of all the people involved, they will most likely share as much of their explicit and tacit knowledge as possible in solving the problem or taking advantage of the opportunity encountered. Conversely, if the state of affairs appears to have negative personal implications (such as someone else getting credit for a job), the people involved will place more effort towards averting personal loss than on solving the overall problem. No matter what the situation, people will respond (or self-organize) in accordance with their perceptions and what they believe is the most beneficial course of action.

Shared-access systems
As the author taught graduate management courses, over time he became more and more dissatisfied defining organizational structures as tall or flat, vertical or horizontal, hierarchical or non-hierarchical and so forth. These descriptions seemed too simplistic and relatively meaningless. They also appeared to imply that tall or flat, one was still predominantly dealing with a top-down organizational configuration, the only difference being that one type was less hierarchical than the other.

Eventually, the author decided to be more definitive by placing organizational structures into just two general categories: controlled- and shared-access systems (Ehin, 2000). In this classification scheme, a controlled-access system, whether tall or flat, is an organizational framework wherein one individual or a very limited number of people exclusively control access to all major resources. All other members of the organization must first get approval from these executives before any of the assets can be used or invested. Essentially, in controlled-access systems position power is king, informal networks are not valued and compliance, instead of commitment, is prized.

Conversely, in a shared-access system, situational leadership emerges based on expert knowledge. All organizational members have considerable autonomy in decision making and in resource allocations including hiring and firing of people. In a shared-access system expert power, instead of position power, dominates. Thus, major emphasis is placed on situational leadership (where leadership is defined by followership), open book management and commitment, rather than compliance. Such an arrangement clearly benefits from expanding social capital and the continuous sharing of tacit and explicit knowledge.

In a controlled-access system the upshot from a human nature perspective, is that people are more concerned with their own welfare instead of their co-workers or the organization as a whole. In such an environment more of the self-centered innate drives are continuously expressed rather than the other-centered drives. In a shared-access system the opposite is true. Concern for self and others as well as the organization as a whole is well balanced. In addition, there is great stress placed on interdependence rather than competition.

Principles supporting shared-access systems
The four overt self-organizing principles, the author will describe next are the very foundation for the development and maintenance of shared-access systems. These theoretical constructs were created with the aid of four primary sources:
From the analysis of anthropological data, the author identified five fundamental organizational success factors that our “immediate-consumption” hunter-gatherer ancestors relied on for roughly 200,000 years (Ehin, 2005). (Owing to high mobility and limited storage capabilities, they consumed what was amassed within 48 hours.) The success factors were as follows:

1. they lived in relatively small very interdependent groups composed of kin and close friends;
2. they maintained high-sustained levels of reciprocity, egalitarianism, and practiced consensus decision making;
3. members owned their own means of production;
4. they respected individual autonomy and self-reliance tempered with high levels of social responsibility and accountability; and
5. they practiced situational or shared leadership based on expertise (social attention holding power) rather than rank or position power (resource holding power) with no status differences based on gender.

What stands out in the scrutiny of these five factors is that for hundreds of millennia, our kind maintained fluid social structures where the self-organizing process was as overt as possible. As a result, the levels of social capital and sharing of tacit knowledge were also quite high among these people.

Smith and Comer (1994) found that four key elements are necessary for self-organization to take place in small groups. First, there needs to be sufficient periphery openness or interaction with the immediate environment. Second, an investigational aptitude or willingness to learn should prevail. Third, attentiveness to a deep common vision and values (or individual and group self-reference) is required. Lastly, a capacity to move as a whole (or shared identity), adjusting to changing conditions as necessary, is also required. These elements add to the credence of the hunter-gatherer success factors.

Chaos theory stipulates that a system (a person or group) is unpredictable and bounded at the same time. Hence, such a configuration never attains true equilibrium, since it is very sensitive to small disturbances all the time or is never precisely in the same place twice. Concurrently, the system never goes beyond certain margins. It has a self-reference to which it ceaselessly returns (Gleick, 1988). For example, every person’s behavior is never exactly the same but, simultaneously, it is bounded by his or her unique skills, personality and physical traits. Also, in a self-organizing group, individual autonomy is tempered by social responsibility and accountability.

Complexity theory holds that non-linear and unpredictable systems (people and groups) are more complex than linear, cyclical, and predictable structures like machines.
Furthermore, disequilibria are a necessary condition for growth. Therefore, as a system becomes unstable amid turbulence, it is able to restructure into a configuration that exhibits more viable properties than it previously possessed (Waldrop, 1992).

Thus, efforts to use linear and predictable mechanisms to control non-linear frameworks make little sense. The message for today’s organizations (and this was also applicable to the hunter-gatherers) is that since they must interact with a constantly changing, information-rich and complex environment, they must be equally multifaceted and flexible in order to survive. It is quite apparent why structures founded on a machine metaphor have an adverse affect on complex organic beings, such as humans.

These theories have been incorporated into an integrated practical framework shown by Figure 2. The model can be used by any organization to increase the levels of social capital and the sharing of tacit and explicit knowledge. The structure, however, is descriptive not prescriptive since every organization is unique and functions in a different environmental context. Hence, each company needs to determine how to develop and apply the four self-organizing principles in their own distinctive way.

The most important aspect regarding the model is that it is very dynamic and interdependent. In effect, it is a parallel operating system in which all of its components function together simultaneously. Thus, an overt self-organizing system works best when the requirements of each principle have been fully developed and placed into motion within an organization.

**Individual autonomy**

First, it is necessary to be particularly selective in determining who should be asked to join an organization. Being very selective has nothing to do with being arrogant or “snobbish.”

**Figure 2.**
Principles supporting over self-organization

Source: Ehin (2005)
Every organization needs to screen people one way or another to at least assure it hires people who have the skills to fill an institutional void.

The bottom line is that it is not particularly easy to work in a shared-access system. Individuals who have become accustomed to functioning in “9 to 5” or controlled-access settings have great difficulty in accepting the high levels of personal responsibility and accountability that an open self-organizing framework demands. There is no place for “hired hands” in a shared-access system because there are no bosses to issue directives or “employees” to carry them out. Rather, the system is comprised of partners or associates whose activities and interactions are founded on personal commitments and not on compliance with orders.

Therefore, for positive self-organization (as opposed to the underground type which can be positive, neutral or negative) to occur, a company needs to be composed of self-reliant people who are able and willing to take responsibility for their actions. These people also need to function both independently and in multiple teams, depending on the circumstances. A partnership also requires that each affiliate contribute something valuable to a venture. In effect, the system is extremely dependent on two interrelated qualities – interdependence and reciprocity.

**Shared identity**

Every close-knit social entity has a very unique shared identity or special chemistry that, like glue, holds it together through good times and bad. An established organization is a distinctive living and breathing biological system with its own needs and goals as it tries to survive as best as possible in its particular environment.

This shared identity is unique for two reasons. First, as far as we know, no two people born on our planet have ever been entirely identical. Thus, each group is made up of distinctive members. This alone makes each social body different from another. Second, after a group is formed, it begins to develop unique voluntary connections between its constituents as the members seek to pursue their perceived survival options (self-organize) within the assemblage. Clearly, the more open this process is and remains, the more constructive and organization-specific these networks become throughout the enterprise. According to Watts (2003):

> All the things we do, all the features that define us, and all the activities we pursue that lead us to meet and interact with each other are contexts. So the set of contexts in which each of us participates is an extremely important determinant of the network structure that we subsequently create.

Also, bear in mind that humans are physiologically incapable of establishing relatively close ties with more than roughly 150 people. Therefore, overt self-organizing systems can only be realistically nurtured within groups of about 150 members. Thus, a strong sense of interdependence can only be developed in an environment that is small enough where everyone can maintain face-to-face or line-of-sight relationships with all group members. The best indicator that people are maintaining excellent face-to-face interactions is when everybody in an organization is able to greet each person by their first names.

Small size alone, however, will fall short of facilitating the emergence of a truly evocative shared identity essential for sustaining significant levels of social capital. One of the most effective ways of developing unrestrained trust, a sense of
interdependence among people, and increase the robustness of the shared identity within an organization is through “real” teams. Real teams are composed of volunteers, since in an open self-organizing system no one makes assignments for someone else. People make their own commitments and their reputations depend on how well they keep those obligations. Team membership should be quite diverse including a suitable mix of abilities, skills, and experiences. Each individual needs to be well versed regarding group dynamics, and each team should fully manage its own activities. People should also be free to join several teams, as long as they are able to fulfill their commitments to each team. Finally, every team needs to keep abreast of what other teams throughout the enterprise are doing to assure that all team activities are fully coordinated for the benefit of the organization as a whole.

**Challenging aspirations**

An open, self-organizing system is fully dependent on mutually supportive processes that allow it to function with voluntary cooperation without the need of a formalized structure and management controls. For that reason, the third integrated principle provides the framework – an internal compass – that helps to keep all its members and teams advancing towards common objectives without the necessity for conventional policies and directives.

Goals must give organizational affiliates much more than direction. They not only have to be challenging but also inspiring. Most institutions have difficult targets but seldom do they motivate people to reach for greater heights. Challenging aspirations is a non-controlling means to help self-organization to be practiced openly instead of covertly. Therefore, in a shared-access system, defining challenging and aspiring goals is a never-ending dynamic process involving all associates, where the focus is on both self-interest and mutual benefits. The outcome of this continuous interdependent process is a living document called the common vision.

Consequently, since a common vision is such a vital document, considerable time and effort needs to be devoted to its development and maintenance. In fact, the process of putting the common vision together and getting total buy-in from all company members is at least as essential as the final product which, in reality, never is final. The principle of challenging aspirations is about developing goals that can satisfy both individual self- and mutual-interests without one impeding the attainment of the other. It is a delicate balancing act but well worth the effort.

**Dynamic alignment**

Like sailing ships at sea, people and organizations occasionally get off course or even begin to drift aimlessly. When that occurs, the person or persons who first become aware of the anomaly need to immediately sound the alarm and alert the rest of the crew of the situation so that appropriate action can be taken without delay. In a shared-access environment, there is no captain nor are there mates to make major decisions and to issue orders. Rather, every crew member must be ready and willing to take the helm when the need arises.

Every constituent of a self-organizing system should be prepared and willing to assume a leadership role, depending on the problems or opportunities that surface. Shared leadership is based on talent, skills, and experience and not on the specific
position one holds in an organization. Therefore, it takes considerable energy, self-initiative, mental toughness and never ending persistence (besides one’s abilities) to work in an overt self-organizing environment. There is no place to hide. You are either in or out of the game.

Consensus decision making, like shared leadership, is a fluid process that helps to provide an organization with dynamic alignment. Organizational alignment has nothing in common with maintaining control. It is all about sustaining dynamic order. In a shared-access system everybody takes full responsibility and accountability for the success or failure of the entire operation. Thus, in order to maintain or regain positive dynamic order, consensus decision making and open dialogue are the most viable options in conjunction with shared or situational leadership.

It is also critical that all members of a shared-access structure be familiar and at ease with co-evolving systems thinking. Perceiving wholes instead of individual parts or components is not something most of us have learned to do in school or at work. Overt self-organization, however, demands that all elements of a system be capable of functioning both autonomously and interdependently. Without interdependent systems thinking, this is an impossible task.

**Un-management in action**

As shown by Figure 3, a shared-access system robustly improves an organization’s ability to generate high, sustained levels of intellectual capital. Its rigor is attributed to the tightly coupled interplay at three network levels: organizational, individual and external.

At the company level, the principles supporting overt self-organization provide an organizational context to the knowledge worker that is non-threatening and optimally supportive. It also gives members more than just monetary incentives. The shared-access structure encourages the necessary autonomy and responsibility to be integral factors in running the firm. At the individual level, organizational affiliates can

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**Figure 3.** Reciprocal benefits of shared-access systems

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![Diagram](image-url)
freely set and satisfy their personal goals and practice situational leadership as well as select the informal networks in which they wish to participate. Members are also continuously able to expand their tacit and explicit knowledge. Leading edge organizations are also increasingly interactive with external value networks. Such collaborative efforts lead to increased innovative capacity and requisite variety. Clearly, it is a win-win situation at all three levels. In the final analysis, shared-access systems vigorously support the dynamic interplay of the triad of organizational success factors – self-organization, social capital, and tacit knowledge – leading to the generation of high-sustained levels of intellectual capital.

Conclusion
Whether we like to admit it or not, all activities and interactions between people are governed by the principles of self-organization. Therefore, it behooves us to discover some of the essential principles of self-organization in order to unleash the tremendous power of the intangible and illusive organizational success factors. Fundamentally, we need to discover that in the Knowledge Age, it is much more advantageous to give up hierarchical control in order to gain much greater self-regulating order and participation throughout an organization.

References

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