Chapter 6.5
Networks of People as an Emerging Business Model

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INTRODUCTION

Networking as a skill is becoming more and more important as traditional ways of doing business continue to change. Many organisations are moving from the industrial model of culture to a more “knowledge”-based culture, changing from having structured hierarchies to flatter structures with distributed responsibility. This has vast implications for how things get done. Instead of receiving instructions or being expected to work to a strict process, the knowledge-based organisations are giving people looser frameworks, and expect them to take responsibility for contributing ideas and sharing their knowledge.

EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH NETWORKING

The most effective way to work in these organisations is to build a network of contacts, colleagues, and teams. This networking approach is different from communities of practice where a group of people come together, formally or informally, to solve particular problems or discuss specific issues. Building a network is wider than just one specific focus; it is a new way of working and indeed a new way of thinking. This will give rise to many questions for organisations including structure, leadership, decision making, and much more. Many are not familiar in working in such an unstructured way.

Traditional communication techniques such as e-mail are also failing to deliver, as they dramatically overload people who have fallen into bad usage habits, thus restricting the techniques’ effective use. The preferred way to communicate in the new ‘networked organisations’ is by using instant messaging and blogs, providing immediate business interactivity and truly engaging people.

Along with these developments, many organisations are downsizing and encouraging