



## Rob Cross

*Expert on Human Networks Within Organizations*

### TOPICS:

Business Strategy; Organization and People; Innovation; Leadership and Management

### BIG IDEAS:

#### Leading in a Connected World

In today's flatter organizations work of significance demands effective collaboration within and across organizational, functional, physical and hierarchical boundaries. In this context, a network perspective yields multiple performance improvement opportunities that traditional managerial tools such as process mapping, culture surveys and activity analyses all miss. In this overview presentation, Rob demonstrates why and how executives must pay attention to collaboration and networks within their organizations based on in-depth experience with over 120 organizations in the last ten years.

During this presentation, Rob will:

- Demonstrate the way a network lens provides unique insights for leaders to improve value-added collaboration and concurrently performance (organizational and individual), innovation and quality of work life.
- Dynamically review several case examples of strategic problems leaders were able to solve with a network perspective and then reviews custom examples selected to help the audience translate application of the ideas to their own immediate projects and concerns.
- Discuss individual networks and ways that leaders can improve their own effectiveness as well as realize substantial performance benefits from replicating networks of high performers throughout their employee base.

#### Innovation and Organic Growth through Networks

Innovation remains central to an organization's ability to adapt to changing markets and technologies. However, increased complexity of most new products and services, reduced development cycles, and

leaner budgets have meant that innovation efforts must bring together a depth and breadth of expertise—from both inside and outside the firm—faster and more effectively than ever before. A network perspective uniquely enables leaders to promote collaborations that generate better innovations with greater likelihood of effective implementation.

Specifically, this presentation: (1) Demonstrates how innovations of substance occur in collaboration (de-bunking the "lone, genius inventor" myth) and ways that current talent management approaches undermine innovation by not facilitating the right collaborations; (2) Reviews obstacles to innovation that arise when leaders do not take a network perspective, including fragmentation, domination and insularity; and (3) Identifies and advocates proven practices to drive innovation through networks.

#### Speeding Large-Scale Change

Executives must implement large-scale organizational change initiatives in ever-tighter time frames with fewer resources. Yet anticipated performance outcomes often do not materialize as internal resistance slows or derails change efforts.

Rob presents a series of cases to show how thoughtfully working through an organization's informal structure executives can:

Facilitate large scale change by working through those in influential network positions (Central Connectors, Brokers and Peripheral Members); design and model interventions with a targeted network effect and track the impact of a transformation over time; and drive cultural change by combining assessments of cultural values and networks.

## BIOGRAPHY

Rob Cross is a professor of management at the University of Virginia and Research Director of The Network Roundtable, a consortium of 75 organizations sponsoring research on network applications to critical management issues. His research focuses on how relationships and informal networks in organizations can be analyzed and improved to promote competitive advantage, innovation, customer retention and profitability, leadership effectiveness, talent management and quality of work life.

Rob has worked directly with more than 200 strategically important networks across over 120 well-known organizations in consulting, pharmaceuticals, software, electronics and computer manufacturers, consumer products, financial services, petroleum, heavy equipment manufacturing, chemicals, and

government. Ideas emerging from his research have resulted in two books, four book chapters and 23 articles, several of which have won awards. In addition to top scholarly outlets, his work has been repeatedly published in *Harvard Business Review*, *Sloan Management Review*, *California Management Review*, *Academy of Management Executive* and *Organizational Dynamics*. His most recent book, *The Hidden Power of Social Networks: Understanding How Work Really Gets Done in Organizations* (Harvard Business School Press), has been featured in venues such as *Business Week*, *Fortune*, *The Financial Times*, *Time Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *CIO*, *Inc* and *Fast Company*.