



Frequently Asked Questions

In a typical KNETMAP™ implementation, who gets involved?

The HR staff person would be involved to the extent that they supply attribute data. You need a project sponsor such as a lead executive. You need a point person to ensure that surveys are worded properly and completed. If INFLOW™ analysis is included, then an IT person would be involved in exporting the data. (For large organizations such as IBM, we have trained people in INFLOW™ analysis. INFLOW™ is the standalone Windows-based analysis software. KNETMAP™ is the Web-based data-gathering and mapping software.)

The project leader would introduce the topic, for example, "We've just merged and we want to optimize our new working relationships. This survey will take an x-ray of our organization. We'll be inviting you to participate... etc."

As outside consultants, we will help lead the effort. We have different communication plans for the launch depending on what you are attempting to map and study in your organization. For example, participants may be advised not to exaggerate what they do and who they work with when they respond to the surveys.

How many questions are typically asked?

Four to eight questions will generally address a particular dynamic. If you ask the question at the beginning of the day, by the end of the day the responses should be in. A KNETMAP™ pilot includes 52

questions, and they can be run at any time. The results are archived.

We have standard questions for a "health checkup" in an organization.

When is an organization most likely to consider social network analysis?

We are usually invited when a situation has not been resolved after normal interventions, or when the complexity of an issue, such as replacement planning, requires additional tools for decision-making. Our approach is human-oriented, and not structural. It does not require any major changes to the work environment. It is ideally suited for providing management with a more informed perspective of workplace dynamics or to address a known problem in a specific area.

What percentage of the population must participate in a survey for validity? What are the risks if only 50% of the population responds to the survey?

We will survey a department, or a project team, or those involved in a cross-company alliance. We survey anywhere from 20 to 800 employees in a typical situation. We try to get everyone to participate because getting a good cross-section in your distribution list is important. If you're only getting 50% of the population participating, and particularly if the key players are missing then we keep pressing for more data. We prefer to have

participation of 85% or higher of the group we have decided to survey. Again, it depends on what you're surveying. If you are mapping a subject matter expert network, full participation is not so critical. If you are doing a survey where you are looking for confirmed ties [A says he/she works with B, and B says he/she works with A] then participation will have to be high or you will see many unconfirmed ties.

Is it advisable to poll everyone or just "ask the experts" when running a survey?

A good cross-section is important for peer-evaluated expert surveying. Management does not frequently know who the experts are. You want to discover who goes to which experts, so you survey all those who may be involved in the survey topic.

What are some of the outcomes of organizational network analysis?

Again, it depends on what you are addressing in your organization. Internal expertise? Retirement planning? Career planning? The biggest payoff, of course, is not the maps and metrics, but the conversations that start to happen between managers when they see a map of their department reflecting a particular dynamic. They will frequently start to say, "That explains why a particular project did not take off..."

How are attributes assigned to the nodes?

Attributes are part of the data set that would be provided by the HR department. We typically ask for first name, last name, email address and one to three attributes, depending on the type of survey you

plan to administer. If you are doing retirement planning, then "years from retirement" is an important attribute. If you are studying turnover, then gender or length of service might be an appropriate attribute. Attribute data can be provided in comma separated text files. The attribute groups you provide us with will determine how we "slice and dice" the results.

What are some of the typical interpretations of a social network map?

We look at path lengths of task networks, particularly of those employees that will be retiring soon. For replacement planning, we look at who has similar connections i.e. who might be 'structurally equivalent' (to use network analysis terminology). Looking at these maps helps to plan the trip if you know where your key staff are going. Of course, we can easily see who the information 'gatekeepers' are in an organization, and sometimes a key information broker can become a 'bottleneck'.

Just as any other map, it will depend on what you are trying to accomplish. Also, like other maps, these are good talking documents for managers to diagnose what is happening and what they will do next.

What are some of the sensitivities that surface when network maps are created?

Sometimes if a manager is new, they won't show up at the top of the list of people when "reach" is being measured. Occasionally people are much less connected than either they or their colleagues expect. Such situations should be recognized and planned for before any public feedback of the maps or measures is released.

Do organizations find network analysis of their people threatening?

Out of the hundreds of organizations, and thousands of employees we have worked with, only about twenty individuals have refused to take the survey. Such organizations are usually in a stressed situation or work in a tension-filled environment. We usually recommend delaying any social network analysis for inappropriate environments, such as those where imminent downsizing is about to occur.

Once a map is generated, for how long is the data valid?

Data longevity depends on the changes that are occurring in the organization. Six months would be a reasonable lapse of time before generating the KNETMAP™ again. In six months (a) new employees join the firm, existing employees will transfer, retire, move on etc. and therefore the population will change. (b) Even if the population remains the same, the KNETMAP™ query may trigger or catalyze new behaviours. If, for example, you query the population on a particular skill X, those who have no knowledge of that skill will (i) learn who the experts are (ii) be more attentive to new learning in that discipline or skill that has been identified as a strategic capability (iii) initiate more "water cooler conversations".

So, just doing the maps and sharing the results will probably change the networks.

N.B. When comparing two different measures over a period of time, it's the comparison (in % change) that is important. It is this comparison which allows you to monitor [the situation, or the dynamic, or whatever you are measuring.]

Would you say KNETMAP™ can measure knowledge?

No tool can do that. We can map and measure the pathways of information, but not knowledge itself. If we query the organization to identify subject matter experts, KNETMAP™ can generate a visualization of peer-evaluated expertise. Note that authorities/experts are quite easy to identify with KNETMAP™ as the data-gathering system via email. Once the KNETMAP™ is generated, the "reach" of an individual is a metric that shows his/her 'network horizon' -- how far this individual's influence *reaches* into the organization.

Would you say this tool can measure level of collaboration?

Yes, we can measure the collaboration of both individuals and groups. Note that 'hoarders' of information, and less approachable individuals do not show up well in a KNETMAP™ query, which identifies 'go to' people.

Can we use this tool 'to know a specific thing' such as who knows something about Mergers and Acquisitions?

KNETMAP™ is ideal for that. Not only will it reveal 'who knows what' but you can also learn '*who knows who knows what*' and that can help you access the 'what'.

Can this tool be used to build long-term indices?

With enough data over time, we can start doing averages and scores for high performers and best practices. While KNETMAP™ is a very versatile,

non-intrusive tool that gathers data to support an investigation into just about any kind of dynamic, networks are very unique to each situation and therefore not transferrable. The most important outcome is the conversations between managers that arise out of maps of information exchanges.

What is the difference between KNETMAP™ and INFLOW™?

KNETMAP™ is the Web-based data-gathering tool that builds network maps (KNETMAPs) in real time based on data submitted from the organization in response from a query or question (Question of the Week) sent via email. INFLOW™ is a Windows-based stand-alone analysis software for further analyzing the exported KNETMAP™ data. INFLOW™ is particularly useful for interpreting large maps of over 20 nodes of varying attributes.

What is the definition of a node and an attribute?

Node Definition

People who are elements in social network maps are referred to as nodes. In some types of maps, a node may also be a resource, such as a research institution or Web site where information is accessed.

Attribute Definition

An attribute is a category assigned to nodes to make the visualized map easier to interpret. These attributes may be assigned to a node as colour or shape, or both. Examples of attributes are department (marketing, sales, policy etc.), gender, years from retirement, years in service. The attributes you choose depend on the type of map you wish to study.

What is the Role of INFLOW™?

Small networks are relatively easy to interpret, but as networks get larger, it's not so easy to do. Larger maps, and combined maps in particular, benefit from the table-like results that INFLOW™ provides. INFLOW™ does, however, require some training. Alternatively, we provide INFLOW™ analysis as a service to our KNETMAP™ licensees. If you have a couple hundred people in your distribution list, your network maps will be complex and INFLOW™ results would be recommended.

How can we use KNETMAP™ for Replacement Planning?

For example, you might say "Show me the replacement networks of directors slated for retirement in the next year across these two divisions." The maps will show the incumbent (in one colour) and replacements (in another colour.) (Note that there will be two different links in this combined map.)

Dependencies are important. Who goes to this person all the time? Who is the second or third best if this person is not available? The date of retirement is important if risk is to be assessed.

- Where are we the most vulnerable?
- Who has links to the lower ranks?
- Who are natural "knowledge stewards"?
- Who do we invite back as consultants? (continuity planning)

There are valuable spinoffs to organizational network analysis, in addition to succession planning, replacement planning and continuity planning, such as:

- More effective support of knowledge strategy initiatives
- Communities of practice (monitoring the formal CoPs and identifying emergent, informal CoPs)

- Recruitment planning (e.g. KNETMAP™ shows we have 17 Oracle programmers but only one of them also knows C++)
- Organizational effectiveness
- Workforce diversity issues >>
- Hiring and Retaining>>
- Better long-term capabilities development