ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORK MANAGEMENT — NEW QUALITY IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF RESEARCH-DEVELOPMENT UNITS

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Summary

Market organizations apply multi-channel communication with clients, analyse and use signals from their clients to support development of products and services. Leading companies manage relations with employees in a similar way. This is particularly beneficial in organizations employing knowledge-workers. Employees, carrying out their tasks, as a result of interaction with clients and internal limitations, along with formal organizational structure spontaneously create a "fast reaction" network. Thanks to the analysis of the network of internal relations and visualization of data in online platforms organizations can investigate the methods of work and cooperation of teams and employees' behaviours. Organizational Network Analysis (ONA) is a new field, which provides strategic knowledge — about cooperation in an organization, the role of its units and particular employees, allocation of resources, relational potential and barriers for development. Online visualization of the network of relations accesssible for employees allows them to learn about the organization and better carry out their tasks, providing them with information about people with similar knowledge, or knowledge necessary for the employees, about cooperation of people and teams, flow of information and decisions. The analysis of organizational networks serves the purpose of diagnosing an organization and conducting continuous HR processes, e.g. codification of knowledge, identification of talents, organization of trainings and development, it delivers data for the decision-making process and communication and knowledge management. Using the example of the Polish participatory platform "Mapa organizacji" (Organization map) the author shows how to collect and use analytical data for the purpose of managing talents of an organization in an optimum way. Thanks to the visualization of this data, in a network you can highlight employees with various profiles e.g. sources of field knowledge, organizational and project talents, brokers of information, opinion leaders, or e.g. various styles of functioning of managers. Observing and measuring cooperation within teams and between them it is possible to plan and monitor the effects of activities facilitating communication and to efficiently manage knowledge and change e.g. by locating and breaking down silos. The application allows business owners and HR teams to manage talent the processes of "soft HR" with the use of analytical data, among others: induction of new employees, internal mobility and succession, identifying employees who could potentially drop out, internal trainers and mentors, developing cooperation where it's missing and reducing its excess, building communities of practice and project teams.

Introduction

This article presents a new approach to strategic management of an organization and people in an organization with the application of organizational network analysis. In the first part it compares new approach of human capital management departments to talent management with already established in practice relational and analytical approach of marketing departments to relations with clients.

Further, the article presents a general outline of basic issues from the field of organizational network analysis and correlation of the results of organizational network analysis of a company with its business results. On the example of a chosen application the article shows how an organization, collecting data about internal cooperation can build up and update knowledge about its own potential and barriers for development, getting all employees involved in the process and at the same time making them co-responsible. The experience from implementations shows that providing employees with a participatory online platform opens up internal communication and allows sharing information about the organization, which earlier remained hidden, as well as using this knowledge in daily work. The application of organizational network analysis makes it possible to obtain data about the structure of internal cooperation giving an unprecedented scope of insight into the functioning of an organization and people and thanks to this makes it possible to make the right decisions.

Summing up conclusions from practical experience and literature, the author shows which organizations can potentially derive the greatest benefits from the application of organizational network analysis; including organizations employing knowledge-workers.

Employees as a new marketing community and a source of data for an organization

For about a dozen years companies have been working hard on the development of analytics and client-focused approach in marketing. Marketing campaigns use modern online tools provided to new communities, above all, potential and current company clients, who in exchange for

providing their data don't have to visit a shop, or service point in person. Human resources management departments are following in the footsteps of marketing departments taking up actions which are new for them, aimed at learning about and developing the internal ecosystem of relations in an organization in order to more efficiently carry out strategic tasks. The employees are treated as the clients of an organization and partners in the process of carrying out tasks. There are three important reasons for this. First of all, employees are brand ambassadors and provide clients (sometimes unwittingly) with values they experience in company management practice. They are not always identical with the values officially promoted by the company in communication with clients. In order to change this companies run projects shaping employee experience in the cycle of employment, following the model of customer experience. Second thing is that regardless of how good the strategy and processes in a company are, employees implement them. They can improve them, or hamper their implementation. Finally, it is employees, just as clients, who form good opinion of their company on the market. Unfavourable opinions about the employer on Internet portals, high rotation, employees leaving the company to join competition, or even the departure of one well-known manager usually lead to bad reputation, or even the reduction of the price of shares in the company. Thus, the goal is to engage employees, stimulate team work and at the same time provide the organization with a tool it can use to collect data about itself.

What becomes the main subject of activities within an organization is the so-called tacit knowledge, which in many cases determined the market position and competitive advantage of a company. Until recently organizations didn't have at their disposal almost any tools facilitating this task. Digitalization, new data visualization techniques and the development of online social networks, as well as the development of online marketing tools and new methods of communication with clients have paved the way for similar activities in relations with employees. Extracting and using tacit knowledge, both field knowledge and knowledge about your own organization is not that hard anymore and we have the appropriate tools for that. Among these tools there are so-called networks platforms which organizations can use to collect and analyse data about employees and their relations giving them in exchange personalized feedback, similarly as they do on advertising-shopping platforms and in CRM systems in relations with clients.

Picture 1. **Comparison of the functioning of client-company ecosystem with analogous actions within an organization**

Ecosystem participants Network platform	Data Opinions 👍 ★★★★★	HR analytics Personalized feedback	Communication channels Constant availability	Inside the organization
User identification	**Utilization of data**	**Personalized advertising**	**Advertising space**	External ecosystem

Professional profile: Management

Interests: Cars   **Interests:** Fashion

Shopping plans: Products for school   **Shopping plans:** Professional sports

native ads
display desktop
display mobile
e-mail
social media

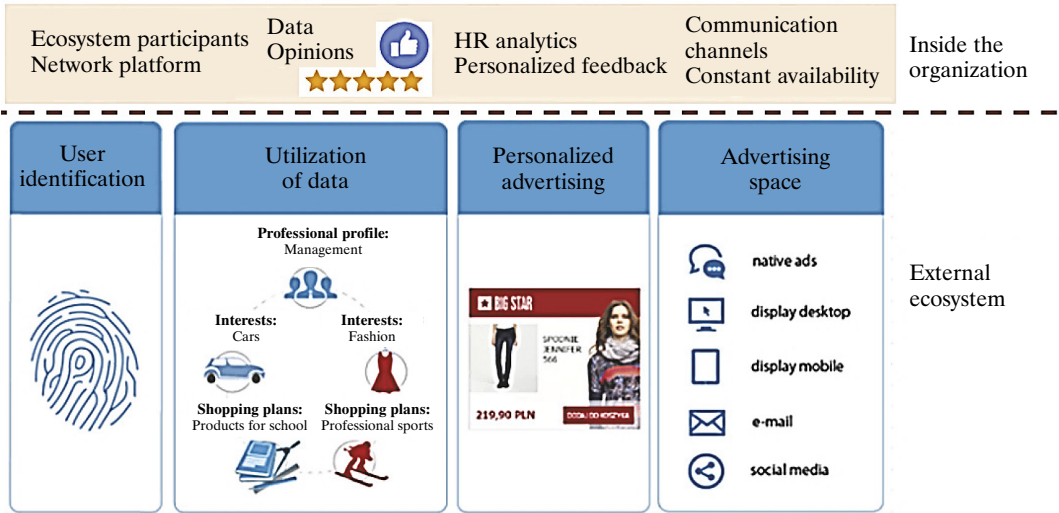BIG STAR — SPODNIE JENNIFER 566 — 219,90 PLN

Diagram of the functioning of Netsprint advertising ecosystem

Source: Own materials prepared on the basis of materials from Netsprint S.A.
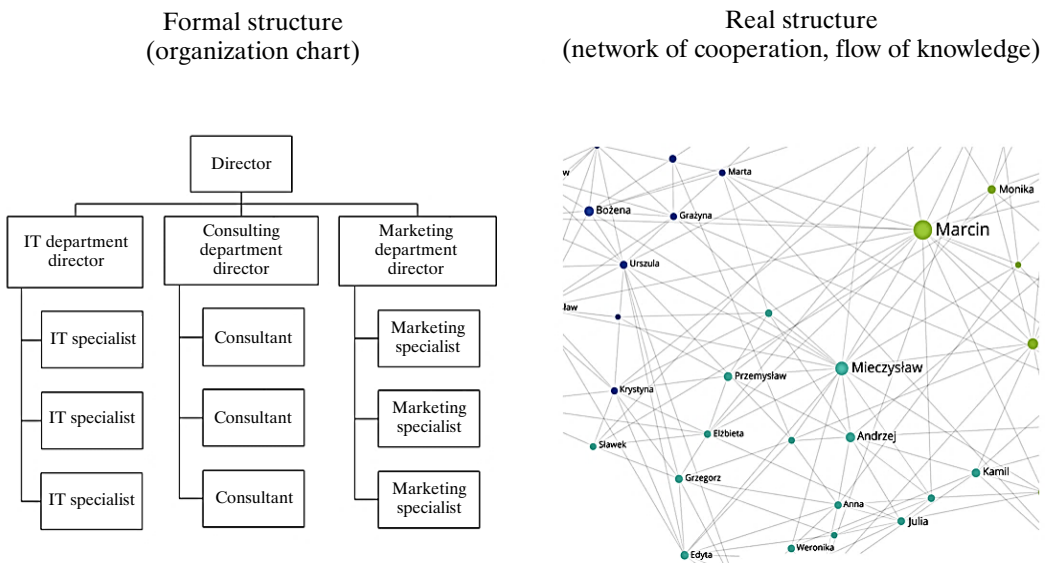
Currently, around the world you can buy about a dozen different applications analysing relations in organizations. These applications differ to a large extent in terms of scope and sources of collected data and in terms of the scope and form of feedback for employees.

Organizational network and its significance in management

Managers and HR managers, especially in big, hierarchical organizations with a complicated organizational structure have a substantially limited insight into the operation of their company at its lower levels, or in distant locations. Visualized network of internal relations, called in short organizational network makes it possible to find your way around the functioning of a company, teams and people much better than before. This also means you can influence them more efficiently.

Formal structure, usually presented in form of block organizational model is an instrument for planning, implementation and control of activities within an organization. It allows employees to understand how their company is organized; how goals, resources and duties are allocated to particular departments, who is responsible for which areas of activity and who reports to whom. It is planned and implemented from the top down. Unfortunately, it doesn't show how work is carried out. The lines connecting the rectangles show only the formal relations between the subordinate and the superior. Sometimes matrix subordination is shown additionally (usually with a dotted line).

Picture 2. **Formal structure and the structure of cooperation**

Formal structure
(organization chart)

Real structure
(network of cooperation, flow of knowledge)

Source: https://www.mapaorganizacji.pl/#/zarzadzanie-wiedza (20.09.2017).

The structure of cooperation, which is the essence of every organization is created from the bottom up as a result of real practices of employees striving to achieve business goals. It can be likened to a company's nervous system. It is formed by practices of activity and the business environment, including the demands of clients. It receives and conducts stimuli from the surroundings and the inside of an organization. Relations of cooperation allow the development of new skills and accumulation of knowledge. Visualization of the system of internal relations, that is, organizational network gives insight into processes, talents and organizational culture and if it can be used also by

managers and employees, for an organization it can serve as an instrument for building self-awareness, agility and learning about itself. Its advantage is the ability to reflect relations of cooperation in real time.
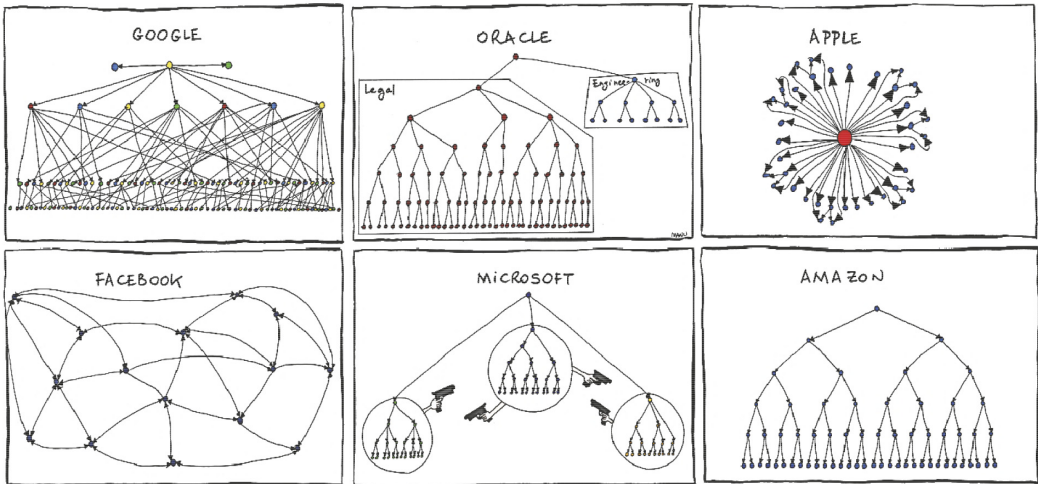
On the organizational network lines representing relations link not just subordinates with the superiors, but also people who cooperate in other circumstances — carrying out tasks together, carrying out projects, serving the same client. Nodes of the network (circles) represent people, or in views on other levels, teams, or departments. People located centrally in the network cooperate with others intensively. People and teams located in the peripheries cooperate with others much less, but they can be valuable for an organization for other reasons, e.g. they can have specialist knowledge. The size of the circle symbolizes the number of relations of an employee, or team.

Organizational network provides precious information and data for the decision-making process, which can't be obtained from other sources, thanks to this it is an important contribution to the organizational system. Thanks to it we can see who works within the formal processes, who is overburdened and who is "taking shortcuts" and finds desirable paths of activity facilitating work. It is possible to find any person, see the person's position, department, rank in hierarchy, duties, competences, contact data, the person's network of partners. The shape of the network makes it possible to make conclusions about talents and organizational culture.

Organizational Network Analysis (ONA), which belongs to a broader field of People Analytics (PA) comes from the analysis of social networks, which has been developing intensively for about a dozen years. It is the basis for the operation of applications providing the insight into the real structure of relations. The organizational networks of various companies differ from each other a lot. Good visualization makes it possible to give in a simple way answers to questions, which without access to data remain the subject of informal discussions e.g.: is there too much, or too little cooperation within an organization, do we have silos and where they can be found, who is important for cooperation and the flow of information within a company, who really works for the team and who is a star to a degree not necessarily matching the held competences etc.
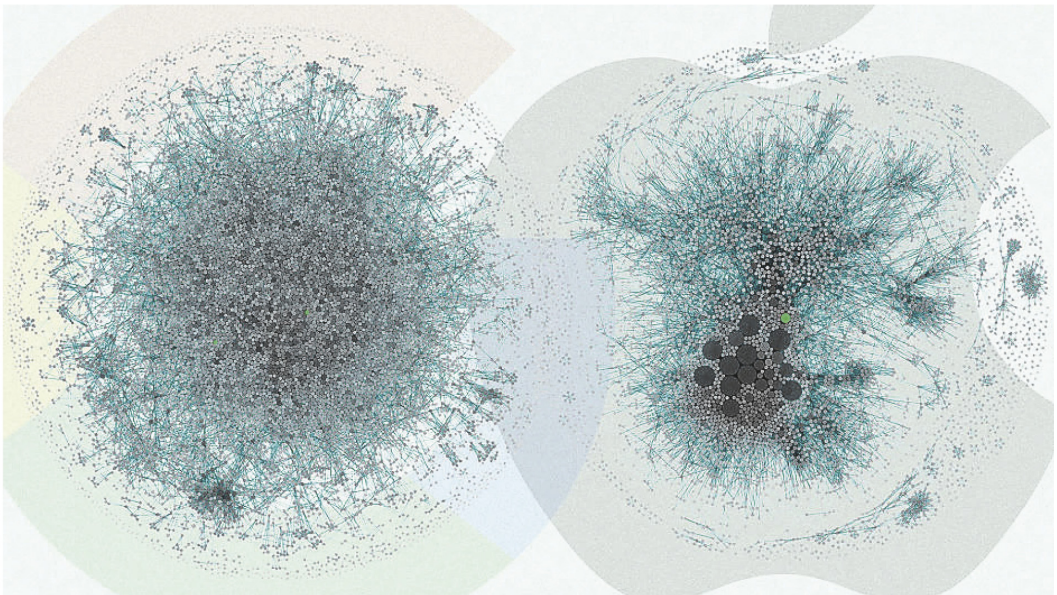
It turns out that the shape of the organizational network of a company has an impact on the results it achieves. On picture 4 the networks of relations in two well-known corporations — Google (on the left) and Apple

Picture 3. Organizational diagrams in the general perception of employees shown satirically

Source: Cornet, M., Organizational diagrams. *Bonkers World*.
http://bonkersworld.net/organizational-charts (15.09.2017).

Picture 4. Wilson, M., Real difference between Google and Apple. Fastcodesign

Source: https://www.fastcodesign.com/3068474/the-real-difference-between-google-and-apple (15.09.2017).

(on the right) are shown in green colour In the background of the network of relations the number and financial value of patents obtained by the

company are marked with grey colour. Thanks to this visualization the correlation between the shape of an organizational network and the distribution of patents in an organization can be seen with the naked eye.

J.Bersin (Bersin, 2016) shows that on a global scale 92% of organizations deal with improving its organizational structure and 75% regard such activities as important. However, with the same formal structure organizations with a different culture and organizational atmosphere will achieve different results. Additionally, most of them don't have an instrument to measure changes in organization and many other factors have an impact on the financial results. The application of organizational network analysis thanks to provision of new data improves the efficiency of management. It enables both a diagnosis of relations in organizations (e.g. cooperation, flow of knowledge, decisions, tasks) as well as planning, implementing and monitoring changes in an organization in real time.

At Network Perspective we apply two kinds of approach to the organization network; one of them is based on scanning the whole organization, the second one is based on the application of the so-called snowball method in which the investigation starts with a chosen group (e.g. in the context of innovativeness) and continues covering a greater population step by step. Thanks to this the obtained results keep getting more accurate. The snowball approach makes it possible to investigate a chosen aspect of the functioning of an organization in a population it concerns the most.

Scanning the whole organization is useful when we want to plan and implement processes which naturally concern the whole company, such as talent management. According to the WorldatWork report (Scot, McMullen i Royal, 2012) 46 % of the surveyed organization assessed that they identify talents well and 42% admitted that they have a clearly specified definition of talent and 56% admitted that they are looking for talents also below the executive level. The application of the organizational network analysis makes it possible to reveal specific, comparable types of talents and to quickly and easily survey the whole organization.

Collection and visualization of data
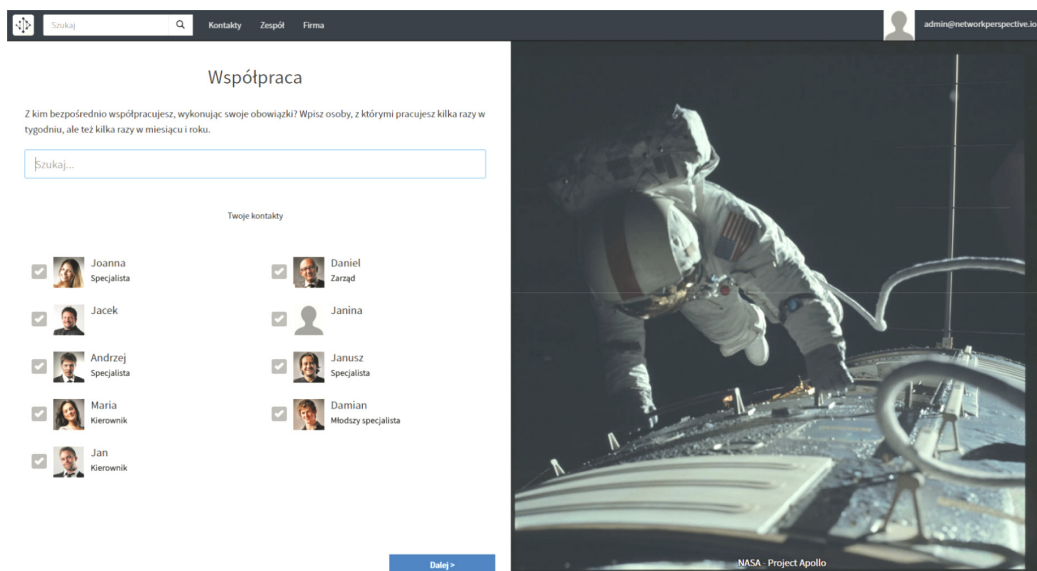## for the management of cooperation, talents and knowledge

As has been mentioned earlier, applications for the analysis of organizational network can to a large extent differ in scope and sources of data, as well as in terms of scope and form of feedback.

On the example of an application of Network Perspective it is possible to see how the image of network is built in a participatory way. Thanks to such approach companies stimulate open communication, engagement and empowerment (according to Wikipedia: Empowerment — the process of engaging employees in making decisions concerning the organization and enabling them to take responsibility for their actions, which raises awareness of costs, community spirit, efficiency and improves relations within the team thanks to the feeling that employees have real decision-making power. This leads to a situation in which team members approach tasks as company owners, that is, with greater responsibility and engagement). Not all organizations are ready for that, but those in which minimum openness, trust and tolerance for experiments and mistakes already functions, derive measurable benefits from including employees in the creation of the image of organizational network. It is employees themselves who have the best insight into their own work. They can provide data (and knowledge), which will be used by everybody in an organization. "Mapa organizacji" is distinguished by its participatory character both in terms of collecting data and the use of data by managers and employees, even though as practice shows, it is different in various organizations. Participatory method of creating and using an organizational network encounters obstacles not only in the sphere of management, but also organizational and technological obstacles. The application is offered in form of a SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) subscription. For this reason every participant of the network, to participate actively, has to have an individual address of company e-mail, which may be a problem, especially in manufacturing companies.

There are multiple benefits from the participatory approach; already at the stage of creation of a map (as we call the image of an organization network in the "Mapa organizacji" application), employees start getting more interested in the work of others and paying attention to their own contacts. Providing a map built together causes the "wow" effect. In our own eyes we are like this as an organization and thus, as we know it already, we are co-responsible for what we will do with this. The process of map building also teaches team work and the availability of information contained in it, concerning the work of every person teaches responsibility. The next stage is learning to use customized, interactive reports available online all the

time and drawing from them practical conclusions on the individual, team and company levels. The fact that it is easy to reach information about cooperation and people with the right knowledge means better, faster and easier organization of daily work on every level of an organization.

Picture 5. Interface for data collection in the "Mapa organizacji" application (www.mapaorganizacji.pl)
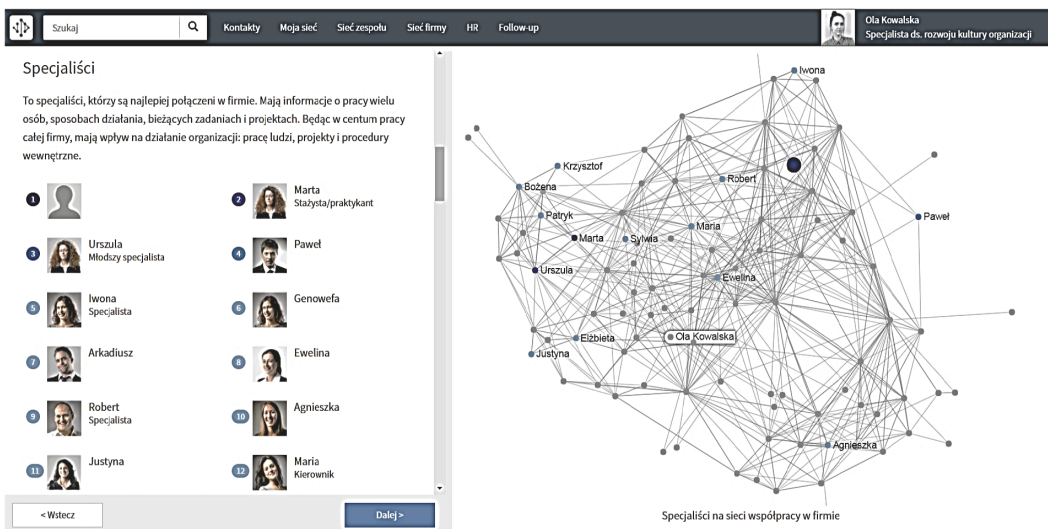

Source: unpublished materials of Network Perspective Sp. z o.o. company.

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Building a map starts with uploading data about the formal structure such as: name and surname, organizational unit affiliation, position, level of position in the hierarchy, formal subordination, or the location of workplace to the application in form of an Excel file, usually exported from a HR-payroll programme. After receiving an invitation in an e-mail, employees log into the application and can add their photograph, enter, or update their company contact data. Every participant is asked about his relations of cooperation. The question is crucial for building the image of the network and goes as follows: *Who do you directly cooperate with when carrying out your duties?*

Picture 6. **Image of cooperation among specialists in "Mapa organizacji" application (www.mapaorganizacji.pl)**

Source: Unpublished material from Network Perspective Sp. z o.o. company.

Employees in response to the question name their direct partners in the application. It is assumed that to have a reliable analysis we need a response rate of about 70%. The application aggregating answers, relying on the theory of organizational networks, which is the basis for the functioning of its analytical module, creates graphs illustrating the web of relations — interactive organization "maps". Additionally, we can analyse the flow of knowledge, or decisions.

The application also generates rankings reflecting the role of particular persons, teams, or departments in relations. Moreover, it is possible to upload to the application additional information about the employees complementing their profiles and cards, similarly as in social media portals. The characteristics of persons contained in their profiles (e.g. experience, knowledge, character of work, group affiliation etc.) can also be a source of data for analyses. On views of the network they are usually marked with different colours, which allows immediate identification of their bearers against the background of the company and provides an additional context for the interpretation of the network. Interactive application enables choosing various reports and highlighting the chosen network elements on the graph.

An advantage of network application is the possibility of conducting a big number of analyses on the basis of comparably simple sets of data. The obtained network image is analysed in the context of data about the formal organizational structure. The kind of analysed relations is responsible for the view of the network in its different layers. The network can be analysed on various organizational levels: whole company, the level of a department, team, location, or group identified on the basis of a different criterion e.g. the position in the hierarchy of a company, or experience, as well as in the context of the network of relations of individual persons.
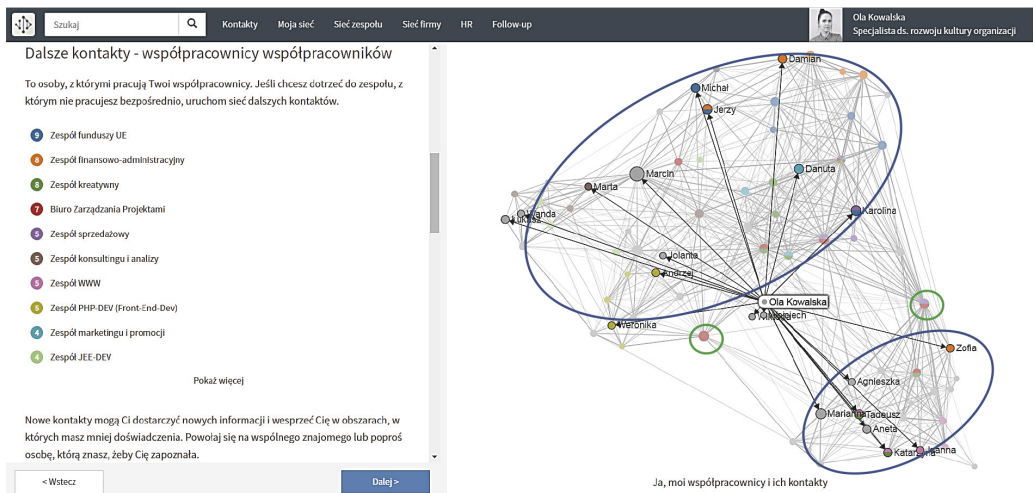
People and teams in a network

Every participant of a network uses above all reports concerning himself. The basic report is the view of your own cooperation network in a company. For example, Ola Kowalska logged into the network can see (Picture 7.) that her network of cooperation in a company consisting of direct contacts (the arrows are pointing to these people) and further partners (contacts of contacts — remaining persons marked with dots) has a shape of two groups (marked with navy blue ovals) which are connected through a few people, including Ola herself and two other people (marked with green circles).

Such an image gives plenty of possibilities of interpretation e.g.: What is the reason why Ola's partners are divided into two groups? Is her place

favourable taking into consideration her tasks? What is the significance of the fact that she doesn't cooperate directly with other persons linking two groups (marked with green circles)? Does she have the right number of direct partners in particular teams and are her contacts located in the optimum teams (ranking on the left side of the screen) in relation to the tasks she has been given? Does cooperation follow the planned processes, or is it the result of search for an efficient way to cope with difficulties? Does it arise more from the personal preference for work with people (too many contacts, in relation to the role) or documents (too few contacts, in relation to the role)? Perhaps this is an effect of the fact that she likes some people and doesn't like others, or of the fact that employees are located in different buildings, at different floors, etc.? Perhaps Ola and two linking persons should be located in one room, as their tighter cooperation would be beneficial for the company?

Picture 7. A chosen employee's network of partners in "Mapa organizacji" application (www.mapaorganizacji.pl) Teams that employees belong to are marked with colours.

Source: unpublished materials of the Network Perspective Sp. z o.o. company.

Thanks to the available data which can be read easily and intuitively from graphs, an employee gets an opportunity to understand his role in
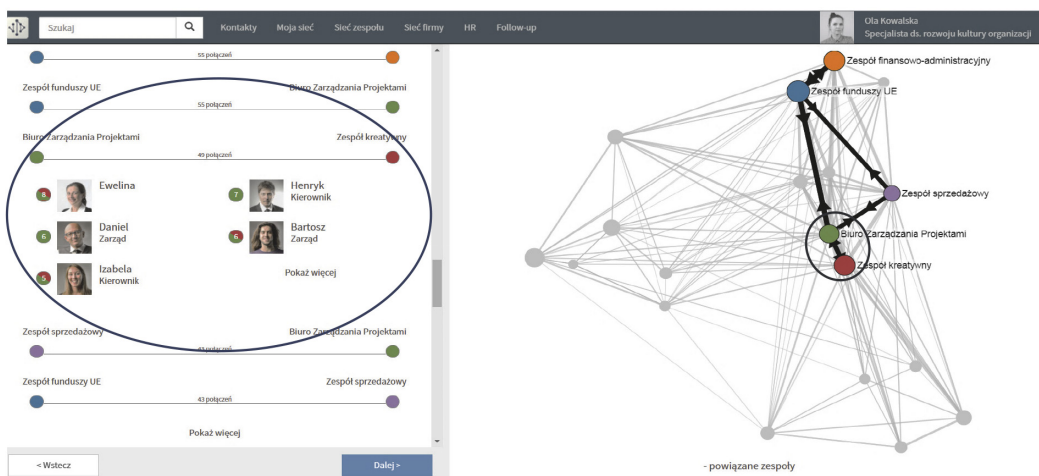
processes and to discuss it with his superior, or partners. Views of the network reveal certain characteristic employee profiles reflecting their role in the team (this can be also e.g. project team, company department, chosen level in company hierarchy, division, etc.) and organization.

Central persons on the web of cooperation — have the organizational potential, cooperate very well with many people at the same time, they often coordinate and unite the team and efficiently implement changes. Central people on the scale of the whole organization have the biggest access to information and resources. However, too much cooperation may lead to a situation in which an employee becomes a bottleneck.

Sources of knowledge in the network of the flow of knowledge don't just hold knowledge, but also eagerly share it; they are excellent mentors, internal trainers, competent consultants and opinion leaders who should be asked about their opinion at the preliminary stage of all important projects.

Picture 8. Links between two teams in the „Mapa organizacji" application (www.mapaorganizacji.pl) Teams are marked with colours on the web.

Source: unpublished materials of Network Perspective Sp. z o.o. company.
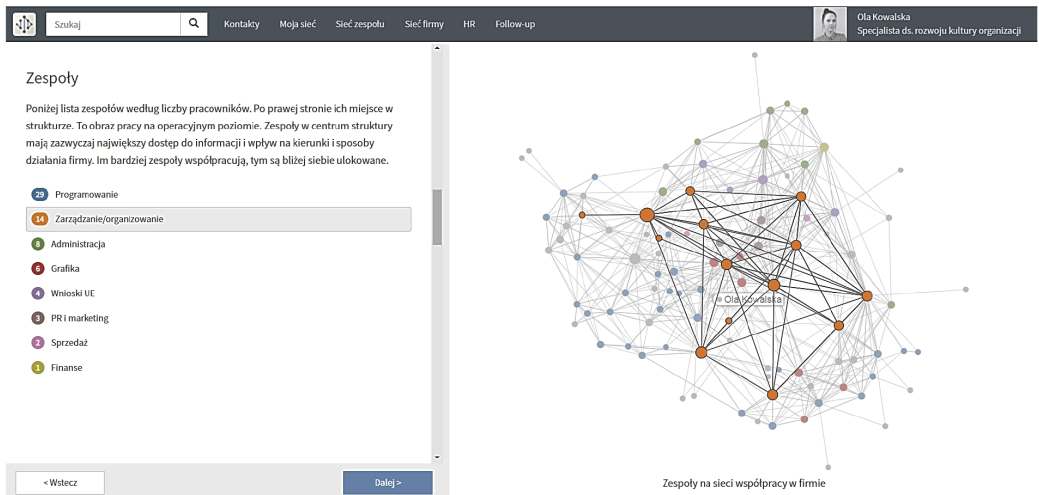
Links between teams in the network of cooperation connect two teams and hold interdisciplinary knowledge, as well as knowledge about people and the work of both teams. They usually cooperate well in project teams. Links on the level of organization facilitate quick passing of information

and coordination. They are usually precious talents who should be monitored, engaged and kept in an organization. They are good mediators. In unfavourable circumstances they can become communication nodes.

Decision-making persons visible as central persons on the web of decision flow are the sources of decisions for other employees regardless of the formal powers given to them and their position. They enjoy their trust and respect. They are natural leaders and agents of change. Excessive number of decision-making processes focused in few nodes can block a company's activity.

Reports concerning teams are a useful tool for employees, managers and HR Business Partners, as well as coaches and business analysts. They give knowledge about the structure, place and location of teams in an organization. Teams located close to each other on the web cooperate closely, concentrated ones cooperate more within themselves and dispersed ones cooperate more with other teams.

Picture 9. View of a chosen team in the network of cooperation of the whole company in "Mapa organizacji" application (www.mapaorganizacji.pl)
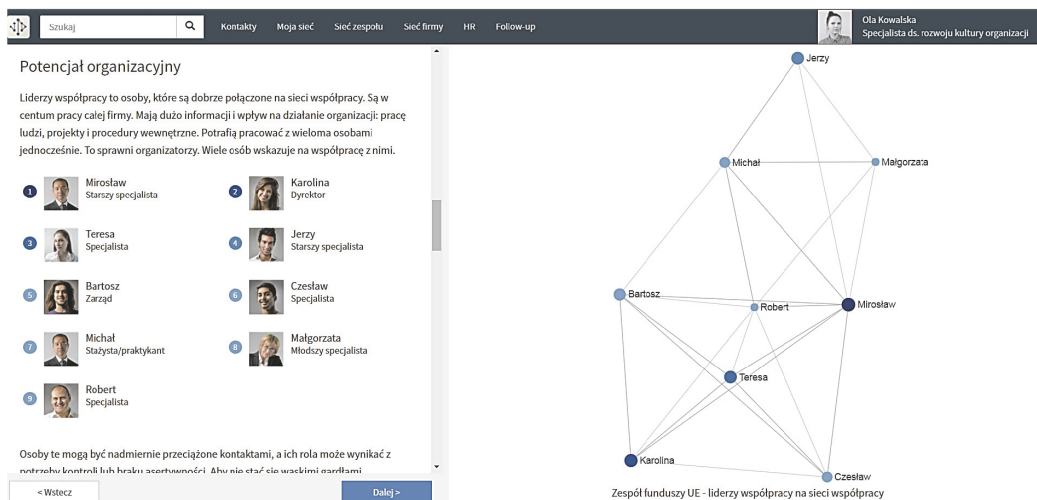

Source: unpublished materials of Network Perspective Sp. z o.o. company.

Organizational network of a company in the layer of cooperation viewed from the level of teams, departments, or locations delivers knowledge about how the main processes in an organization are carried out. Similarly to analysing the individual role of an employee we can analyse the role of

particular organizational units in an organization and on the basis of data, shape it so that it supports the implementation of not just a team's goals, but above all the goals of the whole organization. The network makes it easier to understand and manage cooperation in functional teams and between them, in project teams, processes and streams of value and reveals the roles particular employees play in them.

The latest literature concerning human capital management and building agile and efficient organizations points to cooperation of self-managing teams forming a network as a source of competitive advantage (Bersin, 2016). Bersin emphasizes that the basis for creating such structure are competences (e.g. knowledge, ability to work with a chosen group of clients, or products, etc.) and not formal positions held by particular persons, as well as the fact that employees can migrate from one team to another, depending on the current needs. The places uniting teams are not particular organizational silos, but information, or operational nodes, which in a natural way gather around them particular persons.
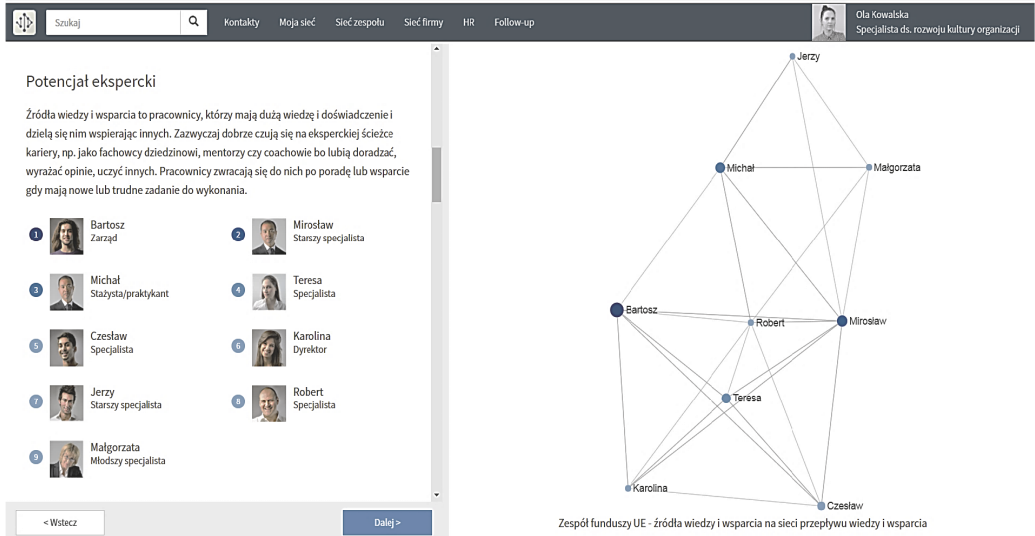
Picture 10. **View of the network of cooperation within a chosen team in the „Mapa organizacji" application (www.mapaorganizacji.pl) The size of the circle and colour depict an employee's role in cooperation**

Source: unpublished materials of Network Perspective Sp. z o.o. company.

Picture 11. **View of the network of knowledge flow in the same team in the**
„Mapa organizacji" application (www.mapaorganizacji.pl)
Circle size and colour mark the role of an employee in the flow of knowledge and sharing knowledge

Source: unpublished materials of Network Perspective Sp. z o.o. company.

Using organizational network in processes
of human development and knowledge management

Three main areas of the application of knowledge about people in the internal network of relations are:

- accurate allocation of employees, that is, allocation which boosts their success in an organization and takes into consideration the personal preferences and style of cooperation,
- planning and implementation of individual development, including the development of leaders,
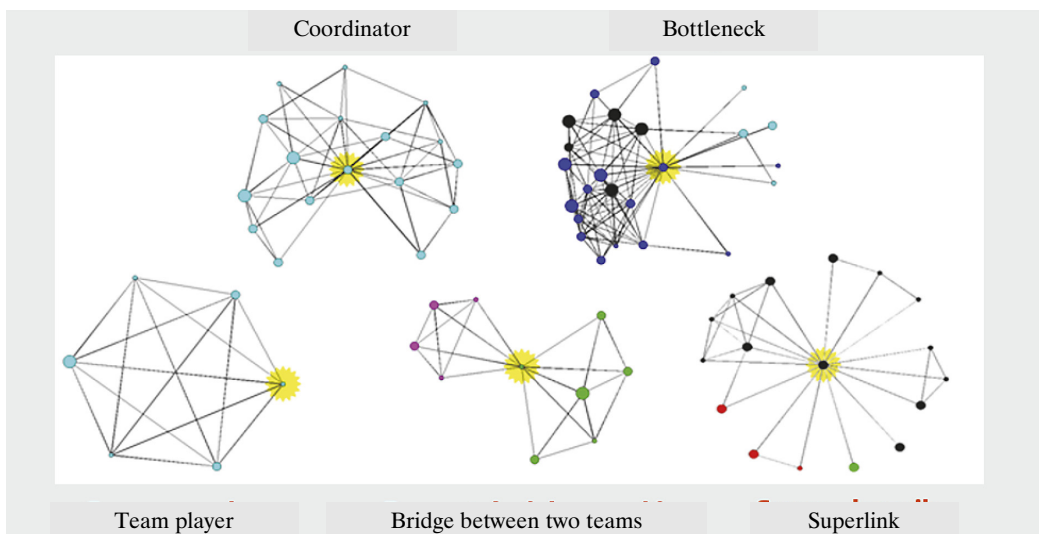- planning and implementation of team development.

Based on an organizational network we can select employees, that is, conduct internal recruitment, plan succession, build more efficient project teams, training groups etc., taking into consideration three sets of criteria:

- field competences and formal characteristics (location in the formal structure, specialist knowledge and practical skills confirmed by certificates, experience, positioning,…)
- network of contacts (work on the border between departments, access to information from many areas, contacts from previous workplaces in an organization, contacts at various levels of organization, balanced relations to and from,…)
- informal roles played in the network of the whole organization and team (allocation of roles in a team, according to natural social skills: sources of knowledge — expert character of work, mentors; leaders of cooperation — organizational tasks; links — project-focused character of work; decision-making persons — agents of change).

Even a rough, intuitive analysis of graphs showing the flow of knowledge allows giving general answers to the basic questions concerning knowledge management in an organization:
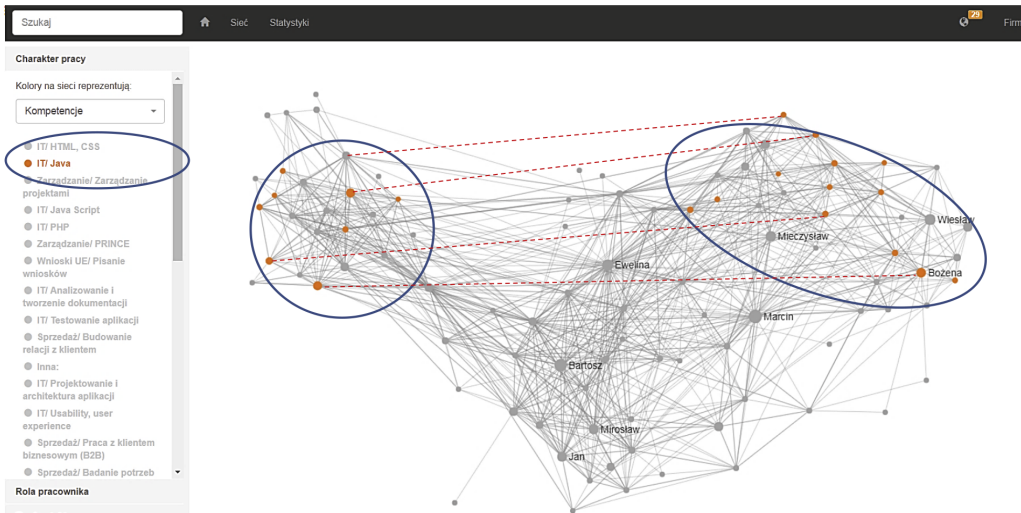
- Does the allocation of resources of knowledge in an organization, departments, processes, projects, positions etc. satisfy the needs?

Picture 12. **Network profiles show differences in individual styles of cooperation**

Source: (Clinton, C., 2014). http://exec.tuck.dartmouth.edu/news-knowledge/
blog/leveraging-social-networks-to-drive-collaboration-break-down-silos-and-impr (15.09.2017).

Picture 13. Possibilities of developing cooperation between two teams with the same competences.
View in the "Mapa organizacji application" (www.mapaorganizacji.pl). Dotted lines mean beneficial new relations

Source: unpublished materials of Network Perspective Sp. z o.o. company.

- Do specialists from a particular field know about each other and cooperate?
- Where are the blocks and bottlenecks in the flow of knowledge?
- How can we create communities of practice and implement improvements on a large scale?
- What innovative potential do we have?
- Which people in the organization eagerly support others in development and carrying out non-standard tasks?
- How can you organize effective internal trainings?
- Where can you improve and use your strong points (bridging) and who can you learn missing competences from (bonding)?

Chosen benefits for research-development units

Globally surveyed level of engagement of employees has been dropping dramatically for about a dozen years and currently amounts to an average of 15% in Europe, according to Gallup Institute and in the USA it has

recently grown to 33%. Polish surveys (Juchnowicz, 2012) reveal higher levels of engagement, but the research method is different. Unemployment in Poland is dropping and on the market a shortage of engineers, especially those with specialist knowledge and the knowledge of foreign languages, is emerging. Still, even though it is changing, the salaries in Poland are lower than in Western Europe. On average 42% of knowledge remains hidden in the minds of employees and almost a half of talents can't be discovered by employees using traditional methods. We should presume that in organizations employing knowledge workers these problems create bigger-than-average challenges. The change of approach from internal competition to cooperation necessary for the development of innovativeness, is also a major challenge, especially in some Polish organizational cultures called by business psychologist Jacek Santorski feudal organizations. The necessary condition for pushing an organization in the direction of internal cooperation is setting an important, common goal. Another one is breaking the opposition to open commnication and shifting the subject of discussion from people to challenges and looking for solutions, which requires appropriate formation of leaders and organizational culture. It is much easier when all participants of these processes hold the same data. A participatory application facilitates this task perfectly.

The following organizations can get the greatest benefits from organizational network management:

- employing more than 150 people
- employing knowledge workers; R&D, IT, hi-tech production, etc.
- managing knowledge, building their intellectual capital, aiming at innovations
- looking for ways to boost the engagement of experts
- organizations which have virtual teams, are dispersed geographically, have a departmental structure, capital groups
- rapidly growing, planning organizations, undergoing changes and mergers
- looking for greater flexibility and efficiency of processes
- willing to limit rotation and prevent the departure of crucial talents
- implementing development planning and succession management.

Summary

We can assume that the application of the client-focused and participatory approach to personnel and organization management with the use of an organizational network will be most beneficial for companies and units, which appreciate the effects of team work more than the formal structure, which want to adapt fast to the changing environment and care for long-term results and development. These organizations benefit the most from investing in the change of perception of cooperation and managing the development of teams, which managers undoubtedly need to efficiently work with an organizational network.

Implementation of the platform and providing it to the employees leads to interest in the real image of the organization, facilitates access to the right people and their knowledge, as well as stimulates cooperation and coordination. However, it doesn't directly bring a new quality of an organization's results. For this purpose you need skilful planning and efficient implementation of actions from the area of people and organization development. With the knowledge provided by the network you can shape such activities in a conscious way, taking into consideration the data about the role of teams and people. Work with the network gives a chance to take, implement, monitor and thus also continuously correct accurate initiatives based on data, which are aimed at building an organization knowing how to identify and appropriately engage talents, an organization which is learning itself and is flexible.

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