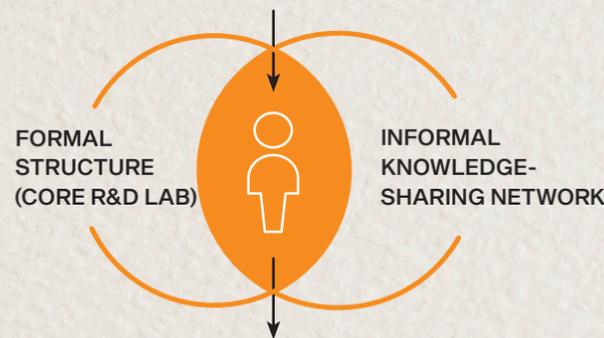


Network connectedness

Research-based tips for reaping the rewards of working together.

Which positions in an organization have the greatest impact on incremental innovation productivity?

These individuals act as innovation “engines”



Individuals who work in a core R&D lab **AND** who are also at the core of the informal knowledge-sharing network (aka core/core) have the **highest innovation productivity** (measured as the number of product developments and incremental innovation improvements).

DOUBLE BENEFITS

Access and control over resources from belonging to a core unit

Mutually reinforcing

Legitimacy and social support from being core in the informal network



BUT core/core individuals whose knowledge-sharing ties are disproportionately toward colleagues located in the network periphery reap fewer benefits.

- **Keep them focused** on other core colleagues, without neglecting less-central individuals.
- **Move core individuals** in peripheral units to the core.
- As network ties reconfigure, **protect and nurture new cores.**

How to amplify and extend cooperative behavior and collaborative performance when working together on a shared project...

1 Encourage proximity*

Physically

Reducing physical distance improves the collaboration effectiveness between employees.

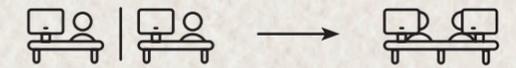
Relationally

Sitting closer stimulates communication, reciprocity and cooperation.

Affectively

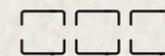
Strong affective closeness, developed from investing time and energy in the working relationship, mediates the above and strengthens the positive effects.

*Based on a study of two regional offices that relocated to a single site.



2 Normalize helpful behavior*

When triads (three individuals) behave in a helpful manner toward each other – providing intellectual or material support without expecting anything in return – the collaborations last longer, possibly through a micro-environment of shared identities, understandings and norms that mediates conflicts, creates a sense of belonging, and shifts interests and incentives away from individuals and toward the common interests of the group.



When 3rd party ties are weak

i.e., parties monitor each other but no real helpfulness or cooperative norms exist – the connection won't last when the 3rd party leaves.



However, when 3rd party ties are strong

i.e., where cooperative norms also shape behavior – collaborations tend to persist. Helpful 3rd parties make their collaborators more helpful and better able to withstand conflict, even if the 3rd party is absent.

*Based on a study of researchers who worked together on journal articles and then one of the members left.

SOURCE: “Big fish, big pond?” by Massimo Maoret et al. (<https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2020.1365>) and “Helpful behavior and the durability of collaborative ties” by Sampsa Samila et al. (<https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2021.1511>) are both published in *Organization Science*. Also co-authored by Maoret: “Close to me: studying the interplay between physical and social space on dyadic collaboration,” *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings*.