

Creating a Collaborative Enterprise



A Guide to Accelerating Business Value with
a Collaboration Framework

Foreword



Businesses are increasingly under pressure to find new ways to increase productivity and stay ahead of the competition. At Cisco, we have identified collaboration - and social networking in the enterprise - as the next phase of the Internet that will increase productivity, innovation, and growth. To date, we have seen a 900 percent return on our investment in collaboration solutions, but we believe that there is much more to come.

During the past 8 years, Cisco has been incorporating collaboration into the way we do business. First at the executive level and now, as the network has enabled even greater collaboration regardless of hierarchy or geography, we are extending collaboration to every employee across the globe. What we have discovered is that using a framework that couples people, process, and technology together allows us to reap greater business benefits in a shorter amount of time than if we had approached this process without a vision and a plan to guide us.

We hope that the Cisco® Collaboration Framework, contained herein, will provide you with guidance about how to approach collaboration in your own organization and that it will help you accelerate and attain greater business value and results.

In an affirmation of collaboration at work, the development of this framework included contributions from many thought leaders, including members of the Collaboration Consortium, an international group of private- and public-sector organizations that

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have prioritized efforts focused on collaboration. This consortium is now using the Cisco Collaboration Framework as the foundation for its industrywide collaboration reference model. In addition, Francois Joannette, managing partner of SBT Advisors and an expert on using collaboration to increase business value, provided content and clarity to this work. Special thanks also go to the cross-functional review team—which included members from Cisco Corporate Communications, Corporate Positioning, Customer Advocacy, Engineering,



Gary Bridge, Senior Vice President,
Internet Business Solutions Group



Blair Christie, Senior Vice President,
Corporate Communications

Global Supply Chain Management, Human Resources, Internet Business Solutions Group, IT, Marketing, Operations, Processes and Systems, and Sales—for their keen insights and contributions.

Our hope is that our collective work in this guide will help you create your own collaboration framework and inspire you to new ways of thinking about collaboration in your own business.



Randy Pond, Executive Vice President,
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Ron Ricci, Vice President,
Corporate Positioning

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Executive Overview

*“A great wind is blowing and that gives you either
imagination or a headache.”*

Catherine the Great



New networking technologies are offering organizations far greater freedom as to when, where, and how they collaborate. Is your company ready to take advantage of these major communications innovations?

Investments in information technology help organizations change the way they can do business. But technology cannot change old habits. Time and time again, Cisco has found that leadership coupled with strategic

management is the most effective way to create the organizational changes necessary to take best advantage of advances in technology.

With this philosophy in mind, Cisco has developed the Cisco® Collaboration Framework. Guided by the best practices of this framework, Cisco saved US\$691 million and increased productivity 4.9 percent in fiscal year 2008.

The Cisco Collaboration Framework provides a clear evolutionary path and a portfolio of structured methodologies that organizations can use to improve the way that information and expertise is shared among employees, partners, and their communities. By following the collaboration framework, enterprises can strategically harness a rapidly expanding array of Web 2.0 and social networking technologies, in the process dramatically improving their operations and potentially transforming their business.

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Great changes are now occurring throughout organizations worldwide. New and rapidly evolving Web 2.0 networking technologies promise the next great advances in information technology and business capabilities. An increasing array of multimedia communications technologies such as virtual workspaces, social networking tools, web conferencing applications, text messaging, Internet phone services, and as-if-you-are-there video meetings are creating new possibilities for organizations to more quickly and effectively connect people, information, and knowledge communities.

As with other pivotal developments in the evolution of information technology, such as database software, email, and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, organizations that are first to figure out the best ways to use these new technologies can gain a competitive

edge by making profound improvements in their operations.

Cisco, for example, saved US\$691 million and increased productivity 4.9 percent in fiscal year 2008 by using collaboration and Web 2.0

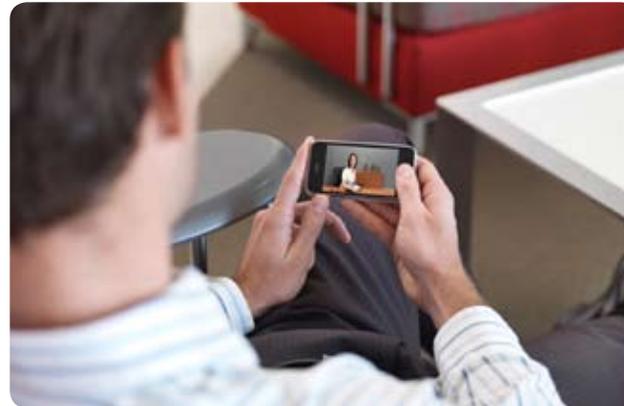
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technologies. The technology investments, which cost US\$81 million to deploy, provided a 900 percent return on investment (ROI).



To be sure, new Web 2.0 collaborative technologies will be difficult to ignore. Younger employees—especially Generation Y, employees now in their twenties—and other early adopters are now bringing these networking tools into the workplace—whether the IT manager or the CEO wants them there or not. In any case, businesses will need to develop a concerted strategy to proactively manage these technologies and, ideally, develop organizational capabilities to take best advantage of them. A noninterventionist management approach will fail to gain

the benefits of the full potential of these technologies while leaving companies dangerously exposed to damage from uncontrolled content and haphazard processes.

More importantly, organizations need to make use of new collaboration possibilities or face a significant competitive disadvantage. Companies that successfully adopt new collaborative processes will be able to move faster, make better decisions, draw from a deeper base of information, and more effectively operate across time and distance barriers. As is always the case in business, either you pull ahead or the competition will.

Why Is Collaboration So Important?

Collaboration is the act of people working together to reach a common goal. It involves getting the right information to the right people at the right time to make the right decision. Such well-informed and speedy decisions in turn help organizations get work done.

But collaboration is much more than communication. It is the way that all the people in an enterprise function together. Better collaboration means better business operations.

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By improving these capabilities with improved collaboration, organizations can increase the scale and capacity of their processes and develop new ways of doing business. Good collaborative information sharing and decision making lead to better business results by reducing manufacturing costs, stimulating innovation, speeding time-to-market, improving product and service quality, and opening new business opportunities.

Certainly, collaboration has always been fundamental to business. After all, humans are highly social animals, and by interacting with each other, we gain important information. But new pressures on businesses are making collaboration more important than ever.

In addition to economic conditions that are requiring even more cost-efficient operations, several long-term trends, including information overload (from email and its ilk), globalization, and partnering (through increased outsourcing and virtual companies), have put collaboration in the spotlight. In all these cases, various barriers (organizational, physical, and psychological) inhibit the optimum exchange of information to make decisions and get work done.

Now, however, new collaboration technologies can help organizations share information and expertise in ways that simply have not been possible. Much the way that databases revolutionized sales and marketing efforts, email transformed communications, or ERP systems



remade corporate operations, new networked collaboration technologies promise to radically improve the way that people interact and share information.

Unlike past IT advances, however, collaboration technologies provide a way for organizations to increase their access to the latent knowledge “stored” within employees, partners, customers, and even the broader public (which might harbor unknown experts with special insight).

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It is this human element that makes Web 2.0 and social networking tools different from information technology improvements of the past. The tacit knowledge in a person's mind is much harder to capture and codify. It is complex, rapidly changing, and often a bit messy. New collaborative communications tools, including blogs, virtual workspaces, wikis, desktop video, telepresence conferences, web conferencing, presence communications, and instant messaging, offer new ways to tap such crucial information.

But using these new tools to create a more collaborative enterprise is not an easy task. Deploying the technology is only one part of the process. Moving from experimental, impromptu use of social networking capabilities to strategic, companywide implementation requires close attention to cultural and procedural changes throughout an organization.

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How can an organization best harness the disparate concepts and technologies of new collaborative Web 2.0 advances? Certainly, new technologies can hurt as well as help an organization. ERP systems, while now a foundational element for most large companies, proved daunting and disruptive as organizations struggled to adapt to the new business processes these technologies required. Indeed, new technologies on their own can do little to improve a company. Significant new technologies require commensurate organizational changes.

As Cisco has seen time after time, an organization needs to focus as much on change management efforts for its people and its processes as it does on technology. The more all three work in concert, the more an organization will reap rewards from its investments in new technologies.

To help businesses and other enterprises in this effort, Cisco has developed the Cisco Collaboration Framework. The framework details a clear evolutionary path and a portfolio of structured methodologies that organizations

can use to improve the way that information and expertise is shared among employees, customers and partners.

By following the framework's business management guidance, enterprises can strategically harness the expanding array of Web 2.0 and social networking technologies—and in the process dramatically improve their operations and transform the way they do business.

The collaboration framework provides a guide to establishing collaboration in your organization based on your enterprise's unique business and operational models. The framework focuses on how organizations should manage their people, processes, and technology to advance their collaborative capabilities through three phases of development: investigative, performance, and transformation. As an organization moves through these phases, it gains increasingly greater value from collaboration.

To gain the most benefit from investments in collaborative tools, organizational leaders must make cultural, management, and process changes a priority. Without such behavioral and procedural initiatives, new collaborative

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technologies will offer only limited benefits, but if carried out well, implementation of these new technologies has the potential to transform an organization and bring exceptional new operational efficiencies and business opportunities.



The Cisco Collaboration Framework's build-as-you-go model provides guidance for organizations at any point of development. The focus is on taking advantage of the uses that are most likely springing up in your organization (likely perpetrated by your younger, Generation Y employees). Such unprompted use is a great thing. Enthusiastic, motivated interest in new collaboration tools is perhaps the most crucial element to the success of collaborative efforts.

If employees do not actively use the tools, then these technologies will fail to gain the critical mass so important to making the best possible connections with people and information.

But such impromptu use only goes so far. Critically, the collaboration framework provides guidance to help organizations get beyond a tactical, fragmented approach to a truly strategic approach to collaboration that can be implemented throughout the entire organization. While the trigger for all this collaborative change is clearly networking technology, comprehensive enterprise collaboration will struggle if it remains an IT-only initiative.

In its own experience, Cisco has seen repeatedly how important it is for IT advancements to progress in concert with changes in real-world processes and behaviors. This view requires radically different thinking and behavior from an organization's strategic leadership and operational management. New habits need to be formed, new technologies scaled, and new processes invented. The Cisco Collaboration Framework provides the guidance to make these necessary changes.

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To develop effective methods and best practices for addressing the complex challenges of building new collaborative capabilities within organizations, Cisco Systems and SBT Advisors, a New York–based consulting group specializing in collaboration, established the Collaboration Consortium in July 2008. This forum is composed of an international group of private and public organizations that are focusing on collaboration as a way to improve and transform their businesses.

The member organizations have been regularly discussing their ongoing insights into collaboration, with the goal of developing a business management model applicable to any type of organization. Consortium members have adopted the Cisco Collaboration Framework as the foundation for this model. Consortium members are now testing the framework's methodology in their own organizations as they develop additional insights into collaboration.

The collaboration framework is also based on Cisco's own lessons learned and best practices for establishing a collaborative environment.

Cisco is now using the principles of the framework to transform its own operations. As one of the most successful corporations of its generation, the networking equipment maker has grown rapidly in the past decade while expanding across an ever-greater breadth



and variety of geographical and technological markets. The new scale and complexities of Cisco's business, however, have posed increasing challenges to the company.

Cisco has a long history of using Internet technologies to improve business performance. Beginning in 1995, the company implemented a series of Web 1.0 solutions that led first to automated, paperless transactions and then

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to information exchanges through electronic interactions. Cisco's investments in a broad range of these Web 1.0 technologies now account for US\$3.7 billion in cumulative savings.

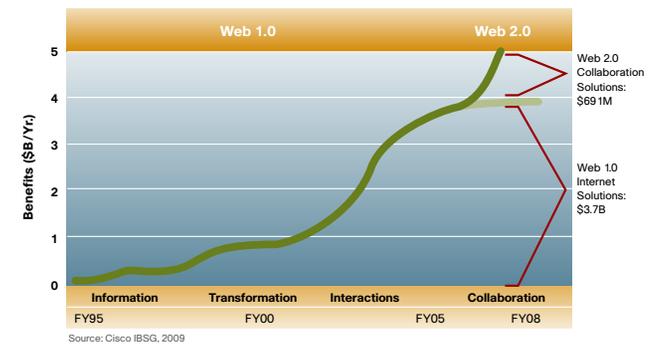
Cisco is now focused on the next era of the Internet, in which Web 2.0 and social networking technologies are making it possible to link employees, customers, and partners in entirely new ways. Just as when organizations evolved from paper-based transactions to electronic-based transactions more than a decade ago, Cisco sees a major transformation ahead. Cisco believes that collaboration is the "next big thing" that will transform commerce, enabling increased business agility and exceptional levels of productivity.

Cisco is already benefiting from this second wave of technological innovation. In fiscal year 2008, the company's Web 2.0-based benefits accrued in three areas: cost reduction, increased margin through revenue acceleration, and time savings.

Specifically, research from the Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG) shows that in fiscal year 2008 Cisco used collaboration technologies to reduce costs by \$251 million,

to increase profit margin by \$142 million, and to generate time savings for employees worth US\$380 million. The total cost to achieve these benefits was just \$82 million, resulting in overall net savings of \$691 million.

Figure 1. Cisco's Productivity Journey



+ Enlarge - Reduce

As one of the world's largest functional organizations, improving collaboration across Cisco's now \$40 billion business is vital to the company's continued success. Unlike some corporations, Cisco has one primary operations organization for the vast majority of the company, with few divisions or large subsidiaries. Everything must work together as one. The more transparently that happens, the more productively Cisco's 60,000 employees

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will be. For the company, that means greater speed, agility, and quality when anticipating and responding to an ever-shifting competitive and technological landscape.

Though these are still early days for Web 2.0 and social networking, Cisco and other companies are finding the collaboration framework an effective roadmap for guiding organizations toward better and more effective collaboration.



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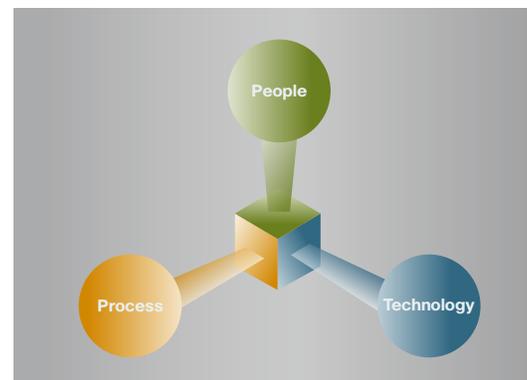
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To efficiently and effectively move through the investigative, performance, and transformation phases of collaboration, organizations must carefully cultivate the three components of collaboration: people, processes, and technology.

Figure 2. Components of Collaboration



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People

Also described as the cultural aspect of collaboration, the people component of the Cisco Collaboration Framework focuses on ways to influence people's attitudes and collaborative behaviors: what people believe, how they feel about something, and what they think is proper behavior. Main areas of focus include leadership expectations, management practices, performance measurements, incentives and rewards, role models, and hiring policies.

New behavioral expectations need to be clearly defined, developed, and incorporated into an organization's culture. Leadership and management systems need to align with new

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collaboration efforts for the proper behavior expectations to be set, operationalized, and measured (that is, made accountable). Companies can influence the cultural aspects of collaboration through such management tools as:

- Company, management and individual performance metrics
- Leadership values and competencies
- Management and execution principles
- Employee and workspace policies
- Collaboration readiness benchmarking and progress tracking
- Role models, especially ones from the executive level

Cisco on Cisco Watch Your Language: Do Not Overlook the Basics



If you want to collaborate effectively, everyone has to be speaking the same language. New Web 2.0 collaboration tools enable better communications options for widely dispersed teams—and these capabilities make the basics of communications even more important. C-Change, Cisco's executive collaboration process, addresses these challenges by prescribing steps to establish group "norms," which offer a common social foundation for virtual, global teams.

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Processes

Process changes are changes in the way you get your work done. Processes include governance, decision making, skills cultivation, funding, and operational logistics, with a strong emphasis on review-and-improve cycles. Collaborative processes are the institutional support structures necessary for helping people implement collaboration.

The unit of performance shifts from individual to group or team in a collaborative setting. An organization that uses collaboration well needs to understand that the traditional systems of performance will not work effectively (that is, individual systems produce competition, whereas team systems produce collaboration). Management models (or human resources [HR] systems) need to change to reward and recognize the right behaviors.

To adjust processes to best support collaboration, organizations need to develop business and management models encompassing:

- Staffing
- Priority setting and funding

- Support services
- Leadership and management development processes
- Data sharing policies and practices
- Internal change management consulting (collaboration experts)
- Systems of accountability and management for group performance



Technology

There are many types of collaborative applications—and there will be many more. Wikis, blogs, virtual workspaces, video

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presentations, instant messaging, social networking sites, web conferencing, and Twitter are just a start. With this in mind, chief information officers (CIOs) need to build a foundation to support those applications.

The range of collaborative possibilities will be limited by the network's infrastructure. A collaborative network infrastructure should be able to carry a host of multimedia services with quality-of-service (QoS) capabilities, especially for video and audio traffic.

Networks ideally should support:

- Voice over IP (VoIP) to provide fully integrated teleconferencing capabilities with multimedia web applications
- Video capabilities, especially to facilitate collaboration among remote employees
- High-fidelity communications, which enhance the effectiveness of many collaboration tools
- Easy-to-use, dependable tools readily available through the corporate network
- Integration with internal systems for supporting existing business processes, such as inventory management, sales, and manufacturing

Organizations can build efficiency into collaborative tool development by finding replicable models, such as "virtual expert" or "virtual teaming" modules that can be repurposed for a wide range of business scenarios. These kinds of models focus on the type of interaction rather than the business model or operational function. Cisco estimates that up to 80 percent of all collaboration processes can be addressed by replicable tools.

Also, organizations need to look at ways to integrate packages of tools into a single collaborative environment, such as pulling desktop sharing, video sharing, wikis, blogs, and forums onto a single intranet portal. Importantly, these tools, while standardized, should also provide individuals with personalization options to best support their unique needs.

For managing information, organizations will benefit from intranet search, tagging, and aggregation capabilities that can be continuously refined and adapted to deliver the most relevant information to a given population of users.

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Note: It is no accident that people and processes are listed before technology as framework components. People and process concepts blend fluidly. They both combine to create behavioral changes that lead to operational improvements in an organization. While technology is the crucial catalyst for enabling improved collaborative activities, the success of such efforts hinges on the behavioral changes that must take place through leadership, people, and processes.

Developing the Components of Collaboration

The components of collaboration take time to mature in an organization. They require a sustained effort, and patience is the proverbial

virtue. As Cisco has seen, just when you think a change management initiative will never take hold, momentum passes the tipping point, and widespread adoption occurs.

To keep an organization on course as it strives to improve its collaborative capabilities, the organization needs to develop a collaboration vision and strategy. Only by carefully developing a vision and strategy will an organization know when and how to best develop these crucial components. By making a careful assessment, an enterprise also will know much more about the kind of work it needs to do.

Cisco on Cisco Cisco Creates an Executive Collaboration Process



Cisco has spent the past 8 years moving from a command-and-control operation dominated by competing departments to a widely cross-functional company that uses collaborative councils, boards and working groups. These senior leadership teams facilitate executive decision-making, create cross-functional alignment, and guide business initiatives. Cisco documented what works in these councils and boards and, through its C-Change guide, offers insights on how new teams can collaborate more effectively.

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Creating Your Collaboration Vision and Strategy

To successfully develop the people, processes, and technology capabilities necessary for new forms of collaboration, an organization must carefully align its new collaboration efforts with its business goals. By establishing a clear 3- to 5-year vision for its collaboration efforts and explicit 1- to 2-year plans for its strategy, an organization will be able to successfully identify, prioritize, and sequence the initiatives necessary for establishing new business and management processes.

Some of the questions to ask include:

- How do you want the organization to change in the next 3 to 5 years?
- What does the organization need to do to get there?
- What role can collaboration play in achieving additional levels of process performance?
- What sequence of activities is needed to build the necessary collaborative capabilities?

To answer these questions, organizations need to identify their collaboration impact zones.

Finding Your Collaboration Impact Zones

Collaboration “impact zones” are the building blocks of the Cisco Collaboration Framework. Collaboration zones are the highest-intensity intersections of interactions, information, and expertise in your organizational ecosystem (employees, partners, customers, etc.). These are the high-value areas that, if improved through better collaboration, can most improve your organization’s business and management processes.

Figure 3. Collaboration Impact Zone



[+ Enlarge](#) [- Reduce](#)

An organization’s deployment strategy for collaboration is based on prioritizing and sequencing the rollout of the people, processes, and technologies necessary for improving

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the exchange of information and expertise in these communications crossroads. It is at these intersections that Web 2.0 and social networking collaboration tools can help most.

Organizations need to consider four dimensions of interaction when assessing impact zones: reach, richness, openness, and speed. These dimensions define the scope of collaboration for a given activity and places where an organization may need to make improvement.

- **Reach:** Reach is the capability to identify, access, and employ internal and external resources at the right time to influence better business results. How extensive and exhaustive are your knowledge networks in the impact zone? Are you reaching the best experts (even those you do not know about) from inside and outside the organization? Are you reaching the knowledge of outsiders, such as various employee groups, suppliers, customers, and public communities?
- **Richness:** Richness refers to the capability to effectively and efficiently foster the development and communication of new ideas, concepts, and strategies to make decisions and take actions. What is the

quality of the information people can access? Is it difficult to discern or highly usable? Is it inspiring or dull? Timely, high-quality information can help employees interpret, understand, learn, and contribute to better ways of doing business. Is this information being provided in the best virtual environment? What is most effective: text, graphics, or video in synchronous or asynchronous communications?

- **Openness:** An open environment enables individuals, teams, and organizations to have visibility into and the capability to easily contribute to the results of a work effort. How easily can others join your collaborative groups? Would a group benefit from more outsiders? Are employees, suppliers, customers, academics, interests groups, and the general public even aware of what groups they can join? Can they easily contribute to these groups? Are you accessing the “wisdom of the crowd?” Can your collaborative environments operate across the corporate firewall so outsiders can join easily? How do you manage boundaries of confidentiality?

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- **Speed:** The speed dimension looks at how new collaboration processes can increase the speed at which organizations can get things done and respond to changes. Where can time be saved? Do people know where information is and who the experts are? If so, is the speed at which people can access that information causing problems? Is information not being used because it takes too long to find? Does it take a long time for customers, suppliers, vendors, and customers to reach necessary information? Does it take a long time for your organization to access information and collaborate with customers, supplies, and vendors?

Much of the work in collaboration zones focuses on improving these four dimensions to make tacit knowledge more accessible. According to Wikipedia, “tacit knowledge is not easily shared. With tacit knowledge, people are not often aware of the knowledge they possess or how it can be valuable to others. Tacit knowledge is considered more valuable because it provides context for people, places, ideas, and experiences. Effective transfer of tacit knowledge generally requires extensive personal contact and trust.”

But to prioritize further, organizations must determine how improved tacit information exchange in these impact zones can change their business operations. Perhaps a company can gain the greatest return on efforts by addressing just a few of the impact zones. Perhaps efforts need to be cross-functional or focused on various bottlenecks.



To assess the most important collaboration impact zones:

- Identify the primary and secondary processes that directly bear on the success of your strategic initiatives
- Identify and survey or interview the individuals who are part of those processes to understand what is being produced and how

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it relates to the final deliverable of the process (be sure to include not just those individuals who are part of the formal process, but also the people with knowledge and influence to help ensure that you identify as many connections and interactions as possible)

- Identify the challenges and problem areas in the existing processes
- Identify where and how your organization can promote additional levels of performance by adding people, process, and technology components to enable more reach, richness, and openness
- Identify any elements of reach, richness, and openness that may need to be fine-tuned to gain additional collaboration and business performance

When assessing and prioritizing collaboration impact zones, the questions you should ask include:

- What interactions are your target constituents (employees, partners, customers, etc.) undertaking and what form do these interactions take (email, phone, instant

messaging, scheduled meetings, impromptu meetings, etc.)?

- With whom do your constituents interact? When do they interact? Why do they interact? What role does that interaction plays in achieving strategic goals?
- What information or content is used during these interactions and what form does that information or content take (slides, videos, documents, email, etc.)?
- What subject-matter experts are involved in the process? Who are they, and when are they used in the process?
- What are you trying to accomplish?

Assessing Your Collaboration Readiness

After an organization has established its vision and strategy for using collaboration to help address its business goals, it needs to focus on building collaborative capabilities. Vision, strategy, and the particular characteristics of an organization's collaboration impact zones will determine when, where, and how it will prioritize and sequence the development efforts of its people, processes, and technology.

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However, an organization first needs to find out where it is relative to collaboration adoption before it can start developing its collaborative framework. Organizations vary widely in their collaborative cultures and technology environments, and attitudes toward collaboration can vary widely within individual departments of a larger organization: The human resources department may prefer to be left alone, while the marketing folks love to chat. Or compensation structures may discourage sales representatives from sharing their customer and market data with some colleagues. People can be covetous of their knowledge. Knowledge is power, and it can be a difficult for people to share such power.

Some employees only need to be pointed in the right direction, and they will start proactively figuring out the best ways to make the most of new Web 2.0 capabilities. Other employees may be resistant or, at least, less than enthusiastic, about adopting new collaborative processes and tools.

For example, at Cisco, managers can see distinct differences between how its younger workers—the Generation Y workforce—

adopts new Web 2.0 communications tools, and how other age groups respond to these technologies. While books are being filled on what Generation Y means to corporations, this is a crucial constituency for any organization to carefully consider when building their collaboration capabilities. For this group, Web 2.0 and social networking tools appear to be what a personal computer was to workers in the late 1980s. Though organizations must consider their entire employee population while keeping their strategic collaborative goals in mind, they should pay close attention to their youngest members—they may have some very good ideas.

To help in assessing collaboration readiness, organization can tap a range of new social mapping techniques and tools to identify where they have strong collaboration hubs and where they have voids. With this information in hand, organizations can then systematically operationalize collaboration.

Also, organizations need to take an inventory of their physical collaboration environments. What technologies are already in place? What

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is the network's bandwidth and what tools are available to employees, partners, and others in the enterprise ecosystem? How do these physical environments differ depending on location? Do telecommuting employees have the same capabilities as employees working

from headquarters? Do partners have the necessary IT environments to participate in new collaboration initiatives? Answers to these and other environmental questions will help organizations assess the practical limits on the new collaborative tools that they adopt.

Overview: The Three Phases of Collaboration

To capture the full value of collaboration, every organization (or group within an organization) will go through each evolutionary phase of collaboration, though the pace will depend on business priorities and collaboration readiness.

- **Investigative phase:** The investigative phase involves learning and preparing. This phase is marked by spontaneous use of various Web 2.0 tools to help individual's increase productivity with discrete tasks. While the investigative phase provides limited benefits for improving broader business operations, it forms the crucial groundwork for more extensive collaboration efforts.
- **Performance phase:** To achieve organizationwide benefits from new Web 2.0 collaboration tools, organizations must make a big shift to the performance phase. In this pivotal phase, organizations move from segmented collaboration efforts to carefully organized, supported, and broader adoption of collaboration that improves major business processes. In the performance phase, organizations must turn from strictly organic and opportunistic efforts to a more structured and prescriptive approach to development of collaboration capabilities. Focus must shift from the technology aspects of collaboration to the people and process components of change management. Awareness and educational campaigns, for example, play important roles.
- **Transformation phase:** The ultimate goal of Web 2.0 collaboration is the transformation phase. In this phase, building on the capabilities developed in the previous two phases, organizations can do things that were previously impossible. Such changes can include reaching new markets, accessing new types of information, and implementing new business processes that were previously too costly or onerous. Such transformational changes are becoming increasingly important as commerce becomes more global and boundaries between organizations become more fluid as enterprises more closely coordinate activities with external supplies, partners, and customers.

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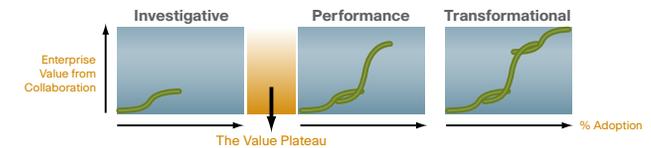
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The three components of collaboration (people, processes, and technology) must work in concert for organizations to gain the greatest advantages from investments in new collaboration capabilities. All three must be purposefully developed over time as organizations move through the three phases of collaboration: the investigative phase, the performance phase, and the transformation phase. Subsequent efforts build on the progress made in previous phases. As organizations proceed through this evolutionary process, benefits from collaboration grow.

Every company and every organization within a company will go through each evolutionary phase, though the pace will depend on business priorities and collaboration readiness. To achieve major performance and capabilities improvements (ones that increase an organization's profitability), however, organizations must make concerted efforts to evolve their culture and processes. The key is developing the right components at the right

time to maintain momentum and increase the ROI from your collaboration efforts.

Figure 4. Three Phases of Collaboration



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The Investigative Phase

The investigative phase involves learning and preparing. Many organizations are likely already in the investigative phase. This phase is marked by spontaneous use of various Web 2.0 tools to help increase individual productivity. The use of these tools spreads “virally,” or person to person through word-of-mouth recommendations.

You will know you are in the investigative phase when you start hearing statements like these: “I need a wiki (or blog),” “I want to be able to host a video conference (or web meeting).” Cisco calls this the “single tool, single task” mindset, in which collaboration is viewed as an event or activity that benefits a few individuals or a small group.

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Investigative Phase in Action: Cisco's C-Vision

Cisco's C-Vision is an example of an investigative-phase effort. C-Vision is a video forum like YouTube, but inside the corporate firewall. On C-Vision, employees can easily make and post desktop-quality videos for viewing at websites or on blogs. Cisco does not yet have a specific strategy for C-Vision. For now, it just provides another way to communicate besides emails and written blogs. This is okay, though. By making it easy for employees to try video, Cisco is helping employees become more adept at using the technology. [> Read More](#)

Figure. 5. Cisco CEO, John Chambers, using C-Vision



Tools used in the investigative phase typically run autonomously, with little, if any, integration into an organization's information technology systems. As companies become more deliberate in the way that employees adopt Web 2.0, such tools and associated activities should be isolated to protect the network and test their effectiveness in controlled use scenarios.

While an organization can glean some nice benefits from these separated instances of collaboration, many collaborative tools, such as wikis, discussion forums, and blogs, increase in value with the increase in use. Social networks for information exchange also follow Metcalfe's Law for computer networks, which states the value of a network increases proportionately to the square of the number of its connected users.

The investigative phase provides crucial groundwork for wider deployment efforts. It generates best practices and examples of success that the company can use to teach and inspire. In the investigative phase, coaches and mentors grow from the community of experts.

Organizations must be sure to cultivate the enthusiasm, creativity, and inclusion that

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naturally germinate in this phase, to provide a crucial foundation for future collaborative efforts.

However, in the investigative phase, adoption of collaborative tools and techniques plateaus as the clusters of early adopters and enthusiasts become saturated, and efforts stop when individual employees gain the personal productivity improvements they were seeking. Also, wider use of new collaboration tools may be beyond the ambition or power of these early adopters. To create substantial improvements in collaboration, the organization, and especially

its leaders, need to enact the necessary change management efforts, with their people, processes, and technologies.

Figure 6. Focus Areas for the Investigative Phase



Cisco on Cisco Creating Collaborative Behavioral Changes



Reaching critical mass with collaboration efforts requires leadership. At Cisco, leadership starts with CEO John Chambers. Chambers overcame his initial resistance and is now a self-proclaimed convert to Web 2.0 technology. Now, using the new technology, he regularly speaks directly with Cisco employees while getting unfiltered feedback from them. More important, Chambers is now a role model for Cisco's leadership team and employees, demonstrating how they can put Web 2.0 tools to work in their jobs. [> Read More](#)

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This phase is important if your organization is looking for collaboration to increase levels of business performance. It also needs to be fostered and supported at the corporate level. Like a foundation for a structure, this phase will establish the core capabilities on which an organization can build its collaborative business and management models.

When developing the three components of collaboration in the investigative phase, you can take some of the possible steps described here.



People

- **Define collaboration:** An organization needs to clearly define what it means by collaboration and what activities collaboration entails. Do not assume that a common

definition exists in your organization. Be explicit in communicating what collaboration means in your organization. An organization needs a clear behavioral roadmap to follow on its path to new collaborative behaviors.

- **Help ensure that executives lead the way:** Moving from an organization that operates through command-and-control to one that operates through collaboration means that the leaders need to lead, take risks, and move beyond behaviors that may be comfortable to them to demonstrate the importance of collaboration. Executives are the all-important role models.
- **Establish a code of business conduct:** A code of business conduct should reflect the way that you want your employees to interact among themselves and also with your customers, partners, and the general public. In this new world of collaboration and social networking, the line between work time and personal time is blurring.
- **Create intellectual property and nondisclosure policies:** Collaboration is fundamentally about the benefits from collective thinking and knowledge. In environments in which intellectual property

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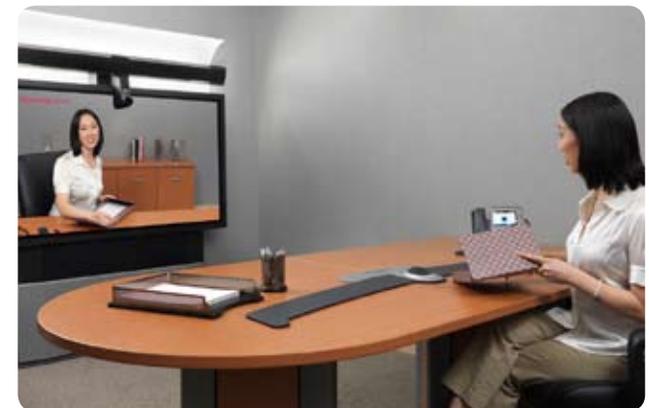
is crucial to the core business, the way that information is recognized and protected is more critical than ever. Promote innovation through collective knowledge, but have a way to identify who is bringing what to the discussion.

- **Develop collaborative decision-making processes:** While difficult to execute, the single decision to create and deploy a cross-functional collaborative decision-making process sets the pace for moving through the three phases of collaboration. Start at the executive level with the vision, strategy, and execution planning for the company's 3- to 5-year plan and migrate down through the organization when you have success at the previous level. Organizations can use their executive development programs to build out and develop decision-making models and the collaborative decision-making process.

Processes

- **Develop a community of experts:** At Cisco, we realized that early adopters were a valuable resource, providing support that we did not have built into our systems and

processes. To maintain our collaborative momentum, we created a website focused on those early adopters called the Cisco Communications Center of Excellence (CCoE). This tool gave the company a gathering spot for anyone who wanted to know about collaboration and Web 2.0 technologies, projects, and resources. We included discussion forums that were moderated by the early adopters.



Technology

- **Create a technology “sandbox,” for experimentation:** Do not discourage experimentation—instead, encourage it—but carefully observe it in action and be part of

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the learning experience. Encourage your employees to participate in the selection and adoption process. The more open and inclusive your selection process is, the faster you will discover the best approaches to collaboration for your business.

- **Consider virtual teaming and collaborative processes:** Keep global teaming and 24-hours-a-day workflow in mind as you move through the investigative phase. As your employees start playing in the technology sandboxes, look for ways to use these tools to unite larger teams that face your greatest time or geographic barriers.

The Performance Phase

While the investigative phase is a natural and necessary introduction to Web 2.0 tools and enterprise collaboration as a means to improved operations, organizations must move into the performance phase to reap organizationwide benefits. In this crucial stage, organizations move from one-off collaboration efforts that help personal productivity to carefully organized, supported, and broader adoption aimed at improving the way that a business works.

Cisco on Cisco Implementing Collaboration in Cisco's Global Supply Chain



With Cisco rapidly increasing its global operations and moving to a lean manufacturing business model, the company's supply chain group turned to new collaboration technologies to help meet its massive coordination challenges. The group's experience during the past 18 months demonstrates how organizations can evolve from the investigative to the performance phase of collaboration by taking a step back and looking strategically at collaboration impact zones.

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In the performance phase, organizations turn their focus toward improving company and process performance. In this phase, efforts shift from a strictly organic and opportunistic approach to a more structured and prescriptive approach to development of collaboration. In this phase, the company looks to its internal business models, organizational models, and support systems to provide the foundation points that it can build on to improve organizational performance.



Now the organization begins to move from the technological aspects of collaboration to the people and process aspects of collaboration. Collaboration becomes a foundational element for business performance. Crucial

to this phase is a shift in goal setting and performance management from individual units of performance to group units of performance.

In the performance phase, organizations start the strategic implementation of a matrix of collaboration tools by systematically applying these tools to critical business processes to boost operational capabilities across the organization. The focus should be on development of a collaborative work environment that encourages and rewards collaborative participation. At the same time, organizations need to develop collaborative business processes and create the tools and support services that facilitate collaboration improvements.

The performance phase takes the lessons learned by individuals and small groups during the investigative phase and applies them to broader business processes and operational goals. Unlike in the investigative phase, organizations need to apply all the framework components of people, processes, and technology to help ensure proper and thorough adoption of new collaboration capabilities within the targeted constituencies.

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Organizations must recognize that adoption of collaborative tools and techniques will reach a plateau and cease without broader support and well-defined benefits. Only a certain segment of your workforce will proactively learn and use new Web 2.0 tools. The rest of the employee population will ask, “What’s in it for me?” These proportions will vary widely among organizations, and your answer to this question will vary, depending on the culture of your organization.

Much of the work in the performance phase is in developing the most fruitful ways to cultivate adoption. Certainly, a mix of incentives will likely be necessary to overcome traditional barriers to collaboration among various groups within an organization.

While strong incentives (bonuses based on collaborative efforts) are important, Cisco has seen that adoption hinges most on leadership and on whether collaboration is made relevant to employees lives. Executive examples of collaborative behavior provide role models and clearly assert collaboration as an organizational priority. If executive leaders do not adopt the

new collaborative methods, then rank-and-file employees will not see these changes as important. With good examples to follow, employees will understand what behaviors they need to emulate for their professional success.

In particular, an enterprise must formalize its strategy for using collaboration technologies to change its business. The investigative phase should offer plenty of ideas about what an appropriate strategy might be. What is crucial is that any collaboration efforts must be prioritized based on the organization’s long-term vision for itself and its strategy for achieving this vision.

To build adoption, companies must create awareness and educational campaigns. They also need to help Web 2.0 tools evolve by integrating them into the company’s business processes and existing IT architecture. Luckily, these new Web 2.0 tools are proving much easier to integrate into a corporation than ERP systems and some other major IT initiatives of the past. Organizations also need to take steps to make the tools replicable and scalable.

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Figure 7. Focus Areas for the Performance Phase



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When developing the three components of collaboration in the performance phase, you can take some of the possible steps described here.

People

- Focus on collaboration readiness: Your organization's ability to collaborate effectively and efficiently is critical to increasing business performance through collaboration. Divide collaboration readiness into two areas: environment and ability. Each of these areas has specific subcomponents that, when combined, enable an organization to use collaboration as a performance platform. You

can assess these components by creating collaboration profiles of individuals, teams, and organizations. Managers can then use this inventory to identify any collaboration-readiness gaps.

- Reward cross-functional teaming: In environments in which intellectual property is crucial to the core business, the way that information is recognized and protected is critical. Promote innovation through collective knowledge, but have a way to identify who is bringing what to the discussion.
- Reward information sharing and discourage information hoarding: Cross-functional collaboration hinges on active sharing. Employees need incentives to share, especially with other groups outside their current reward system. Busy employees will typically give far less priority to people who do not directly influence their jobs or compensation. Organizational reward systems need to make cross-functional or other new collaborative interactions primary to professional success.

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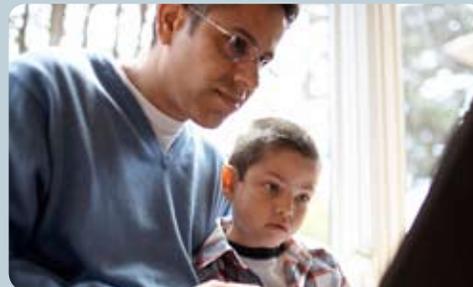
Processes

- Focus on your collaboration impact zones: Much of the performance phase focuses on improving collaboration impact zones: the hubs of interactions that can influence the quality of major business processes. The investigative phase exists to prepare an organization to enact major changes to these crucial activities. If your organization is not making changes to these interactions, you are still in the investigative phase.

Technology

- Build team workspaces and process applications: In the investigative phase, efforts focus on the use of one tool for a specific task to enhance personal productivity. In the performance phase, organizations need to build collaborative systems that harness multiple tools to facilitate multistep workflows and multiple types of collaborative information, expertise, and interaction. In this phase, organizations also need to more tightly

Cisco on Cisco Initiating Transformational Changes Through Web 2.0



By harnessing the power of wikis, Cisco launched the I-Prize, a global competition to develop a concept for Cisco's next \$1 billion business. More than 2,000 people from 104 countries participated. The I-Prize was inspired by the I-Zone, Cisco's internal business idea wiki. Any one of Cisco's 60,000 employees can post business ideas to the I-Zone. Both the I-Prize and I-Zone are showing Cisco that organizations can use social networking tools to find new, promising ideas, no matter where they might be.

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integrate collaboration technologies with their existing IT systems, to prevent fractured systems and orphaned information.

- Create an open technology architecture: The performance phase depends on aligning collaboration technologies with business processes. Any substantial business process will likely have multiple collaboration points requiring different types of collaboration tools. To best support the business process, an organization needs a holistic collaboration architecture. The IT architecture must be able to orchestrate the mix-and-match integration of various tools into collaboration hubs or process centers while also supporting these tools across multiple devices, operating systems, and networks (wired, Wi-Fi, cellular, etc.). Such capabilities will facilitate easier inclusion of partners, customers, and suppliers into the organization's new collaboration processes.

The Transformation Phase

In the transformation phase, you use collaboration to reinvent your organization.

The new collaborative capabilities of your organization have become so profound that you are now able to do things that were previously impossible.

New collaboration tools are already helping Cisco transform its business. One of Cisco's major challenges is globalizing its operations. The company has grown rapidly during its more than 20-year history, and now it is one of the world's biggest information technology companies.

Going global is not easy, but Cisco is finding that Web 2.0 and social networking technologies are making its globalization efforts far more effective than was previously possible.

The asynchronous (communicating at different times, as with email) capabilities of new networking tools are helping employees in scattered global teams stay in touch even across many time zones. Cisco's supply chain team, for example, runs virtual meetings with Cisco WebEx™ web conferencing services, which support document sharing, demonstrations, presentation, video chats, instant messaging, group votes, and integrated

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teleconferencing. All of these exchanges are recorded so that employees who were unable to attend the meeting can play back and review everything. These follow-on attendees of the meeting can then provide additional commentary in the workspace.

To gain the most value from the transformation phase, you need to focus on removal of any functional, political, and process barriers that may remain. Management's ability to identify and prioritize any collaboration problems is clearly crucial.

In the transformation phase, organizations put in place the core operational components of their collaboration framework. In this phase, the organization is ready to employ concepts such as global, 24-hour workflows and virtual teams. By being able to easily include employees, partners, and customers in collaborative systems, organizations can successfully implement the ideal of the boundaryless enterprise.

Figure 8. Focus Areas for the Transformation Phase



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How to Begin

Perhaps the most important advice in developing a collaborative workplace is this: just get started. The Cisco Collaboration Framework provides the guidelines for designing your development roadmap, and that process starts with a few simple steps.



- 1. [Investigate collaboration tools.](#)
- 2. [Draft a collaboration vision statement.](#)
- 3. [Run a series of workshops.](#)
- 4. [Benchmark important collaboration metrics.](#)
- 5. [Start building collaboration capabilities.](#)
- 6. [Establish test-and-learn processes.](#)

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Step 1. Investigate collaboration tools

Organizations should begin by investigating the various collaboration tools available. The market is highly fragmented, with dozens of

different vendors in many categories. Tools can be combined or integrated in a variety of ways. Start trying a few to get a sense of how they might help your organization.

As an organization moves through the investigative phase, it should consider all these IT components:

- Web 2.0 and collaboration tools
- Productivity and business applications
- Infrastructure: servers, desktops, and other user devices
- Network and bandwidth
- Existing internal IT systems

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Step 2. Draft a collaboration vision statement.

As you become familiar with new collaborative technologies and their capabilities, begin drafting a collaboration vision statement. Start simply by reflecting on how improved collaboration could help your organization. Ask these questions:

- What are the company's vision and strategic priorities?
- What are the main trends in the industry and how do they affect your business?
- Which parts of the business are information, expertise, and interaction intensive?
- Which of those collaboration factors need improvement given the company's vision and strategic priorities?

- What would be the benefit of greater collaboration for the company?
- What are the business trends that might make collaboration even more important?
- Where are information and expertise most needed to improve your operations?

Your business posture will influence your collaboration vision, strategy, and implementation:

- Survival business posture: "We need to shrink to grow, and collaboration will allow us to reduce costs throughout the enterprise."
- Transition business posture: "We will selectively use collaboration to extract greater performance from our current business processes, especially for R&D and sales."
- Attacking business posture: "Now is the time to differentiate ourselves and get ahead of the pack. We will use collaboration to create new ways to interact with our customers, partners, and each other that will set us far ahead of our competitors."

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Step 3. Run a series of workshops.

Next, organizations should run a series of workshops to identify the ways in which collaboration can help them reach their business vision. Workshops can focus on initiatives in specific product groups, process chains, or cross-functional interactions. From

these workshops, organizations should identify their most important collaboration impact zones, which will then guide their strategy and tactics for rolling out new collaboration capabilities.

Prepare for the workshops by assessing business priorities, primary business processes that relate to those priorities, and examples of ways in which employees, experts, and information interact to facilitate these processes. At the workshops, primary participants in these processes discuss problem areas and ways collaboration might improve their processes. Workshop participants should look at collaboration in terms of the extent to which reach, richness, openness, and speed can be influenced. These workshop assessments should lead to a prioritized list of collaboration impact zones.

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Step 4. Benchmark important collaboration metrics.

After you have outlined several strategic collaboration efforts, benchmark the main metrics. These metrics are the starting points that will provide the necessary references for assessing progress. They will tell managers whether and how much new collaboration capabilities are improving product development times, increasing customer satisfaction, or reducing manufacturing errors. Organizations also should establish a matrix of metrics

following adoption and use of collaboration tools. Are people actually reading the blogs or listening to podcasts? Are the expert videos being downloaded? Are people getting access to better information? If not, why not?

Organizations should benchmark current perceptions about the value of collaboration as well as readiness. Formal and informal surveys of both business leaders and rank-and-file employees will help set baselines. Such established benchmarks are invaluable, given the multiphase, long-term development required for meaningful collaboration improvements. Without such references, a company will have difficulty assessing long-term progress.

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Step 5. Start building collaboration capabilities.

After benchmarks are established, the organization needs to start building collaboration capabilities in each dimension of people, processes, and technology. The goal here is to gain some early successes to demonstrate how improved collaboration can help your business. These successes will help build adoption momentum and provide how-to examples to guide subsequent efforts.

The main focus will be on improving the reach, richness, openness, and speed of the critical collaboration impact zones identified through workshops. Here are some specific steps you can take to improve each of these aspects of collaborative interactions:

- Steps to improve reach:
 - Identify and make visible internal and external expertise across your organization.
 - Recognize and reward expertise and the proactive sharing of knowledge.
 - Cultivate visible communities of knowledge focused on sharing best practices.
 - Remove organizational barriers preventing alignment of expertise with business priorities.
 - Develop management skills for managing a matrix of collaborative resources.
 - Design workflows to use “click-to-link” virtual expertise at critical points in processes.

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- Steps to improve richness:
 - Promote a culture of trust and proactive, open, and respectful sharing of ideas.
 - Implement collaborative decision-making processes that require and reward participation.
 - Design and cultivate communities of and a process for innovation and idea sharing.
 - Design processes that promote the use of visualization (video, pictures, physical representations, etc.) to achieve business goals.
 - Develop and promote content templates that logically support the phases of your processes and the desired outcomes of your phases.
- Steps to improve openness:
 - Help ensure that content is stored in and made available through a central workspace that supports the logical workflow of your processes.
- Steps to improve speed:
 - Provide visible schedules for workflow.
 - Create visible and logical content areas.
 - Create group editing and document management mechanisms.
 - Establish centralized forums for discussions and comments.
 - Help ensure that the interactions needed to support your processes are as engaging, interactive, and effective (visual and content rich) as they need to be to promote and reward inclusion and knowledge sharing.
 - Help ensure team alignment through management and stakeholder video messaging and blogging.
- Steps to improve richness:
 - Create visible and logical content areas.
 - Create group editing and document management mechanisms.
 - Establish centralized forums for discussions and comments.
 - Help ensure that the interactions needed to support your processes are as engaging, interactive, and effective (visual and content rich) as they need to be to promote and reward inclusion and knowledge sharing.
 - Help ensure team alignment through management and stakeholder video messaging and blogging.
- Steps to improve speed:
 - Build cross-functional teams that represent every facet of the collaborative business process you want to improve.
 - Make improvements in business process speed a corporate priority.

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- Identify critical inputs, decision points, and outputs where partners, suppliers, and customers can influence the speed of collaboration for a given process.
- Choose a speed dimension that is a stretch but attainable for your enterprise.
- Communicate from senior leadership the sense of urgency in building new collaborative capabilities for improving the speed of operations.
- Create plans to help partners and suppliers build their communication and collaboration capabilities.



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Step 6. Establish test-and-learn processes.



Finally, organizations should establish test-and-learn processes. These are still early days for Web 2.0, social networking and other new collaboration capabilities. We are only at the beginning of the evolution of collaboration. Everyone is still figuring out what to do, and the technologies promise to evolve rapidly during the next few years. Who knows what the next great thing will be next year? Whatever their goals, organizations must keep in mind that the new era of collaboration is still a work in progress.

Organizations should aim to obtain, memorialize, and publicize early successes using new collaboration methods. An early success is:

- Visible: A large number of people can participate in the new collaborative process or can see its results.
- Unambiguous: There is no argument about the success of the new collaborative process.
- Transformational: The new collaborative process should directly support the vision for the company.

Early successes offer several benefits:

- They provide evidence of the benefits of collaborative change.
- They help an organization fine-tune its collaborative vision.
- They build collaboration knowledge and skills.
- They build the momentum of interest and support for new collaboration efforts.

Ultimately, organizations need to constantly assess how new Web 2.0 tools are helping or could possibly help them achieve their goals. The ones that figure this out fastest will have a lot to gain.

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Cisco on Cisco: Implementing Collaboration in Cisco's Global Supply Chain

Until recently, most collaboration in Cisco's supply chain happened through phone, email, and in-person meetings, says Christine Fisher, the head of the company's supply chain collaboration center. Since 95 percent of Cisco's manufacturing is outsourced, the 9000 Cisco employees in the supply chain organization must work with 30,000 employees who are not employees of Cisco. With the company rapidly increasing its global operations and moving to a lean manufacturing business model, the group turned to new collaboration technologies to help with its massive coordination challenges.

The group's experience over the past 18 months demonstrates how organizations can evolve from the investigative to the performance phase of collaboration by strategically improving critical collaboration impact zones.

Early in the investigative phase, supply chain teams started using individual collaboration tools to address discrete tasks. For example, employees used the collaborative workspace and document sharing capabilities of Cisco WebEx Connect to create a 100-page blueprint for lean manufacturing. The document required the input of many people to make it as comprehensive and effective as possible. Employees also started

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using Cisco TelePresence™ video conferencing technology to replace in-person meetings.

In both cases, the adoption of these new kinds of collaboration tools lowered costs by eliminating travel. They also increased productivity by enabling people to connect and share information much more easily. Most importantly, Fisher says, these tools helped boost the quality of their efforts. With Cisco TelePresence video conferencing, global team members can now meet more often “face-to-face.” With Cisco WebEx web conferencing, Fisher found that employees provided richer contributions that were easier for all participants to see and comment on.



These early successes then made Fisher's team begin thinking about how to strategically and systematically take advantage of new collaboration tools to increase capacity and help ensure quality as Cisco's operations become increasingly global.

But her group found that simply providing collaborative tools to employees was not enough to reach these broader goals. Though employees clamored for corporate variants of wikis, Facebook, or My Yahoo sites, these tools often quickly became graveyards of information. “We've seen this not just in the supply chain team, but throughout Cisco,” Fisher says. “People were so focused on the tools they didn't really think about how they would use them.”

So to help the supply chain move from the investigative to the performance phase of collaboration, Fisher took a step back. The group held twenty-five 90-minute introductory workshops, where participants got a basic education about Web 2.0 tools and then were asked to identify high-touch areas and problem areas where people and information intersect

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(collaboration impact zones). The workshop participants then detailed various what-if scenarios to see how Web 2.0 tools might be able to address various operational challenges.



With the information gathered in these workshops, Fisher's team then held a 2-day workshop to plan the best strategy for using new collaborative technologies to meet their needs. What they came up with was the "Connected Supply Chain Workspace," a place where all the people involved in Cisco's supply chain (partners and Cisco employees) could more effectively share pertinent information for coordinating their activities.

In pilot runs of the workspace, the supply chain team has discovered that new collaboration tools need comprehensive support services, from basic how-to technical information to consultation on how best to apply and use the tools, to coaching and best practices mentoring. But as people become more familiar with the system, distinct changes in operations are starting to happen, Fisher says.

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Cisco on Cisco: Cisco Creates an Executive Collaboration Process

Organizational structures need to reflect collaborative activities. Command-and-control management does not work well with collaboration. Cisco has spent the past 8 years moving from a command-and-control operation dominated by competing departments to a widely cross-functional company that uses collaborative councils, boards, and working groups. These senior leadership teams facilitate executive decision making, create cross-functional alignment, and guide business initiatives.

In 2006 Ron Ricci, vice president of corporate positioning, formed a team to observe what works in councils and boards. The team documented what it saw and called it C-Change. C-Change teaches “the people aspect: culture and process, and helps apply the technology aspect. The principals of C-Change can lead to effective collaboration for any type of group,” Ricci says.

C-Change guides Cisco employees through five steps:

- Establish a common vocabulary.
- Develop collaborative processes.

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- Cultivate a belief system.
- Scale through participation.
- Measure and improve.

C-Change also defines collaborative groups as cycling through a series of discrete stages: startup, agreement, alignment, accountability, and review. By providing a more effective approach for making decisions, coordinating resources, and tracking accountability, Cisco has greatly expanded its operational capacity and flexibility.



The company credits C-Change and its collaborative decision-making process with helping the company take on 28 business

priorities in fiscal year 2009, compared to only 2 priorities in fiscal year 2007. Certainly, C-Change has delivered significantly better decisions and results. For example, in 2008 Cisco was able to reform and refocus its small-business efforts in just 6 months, quickly marshalling US\$100 million in resources to go after this latent market opportunity.

Cisco now has more than 750 company leaders involved in councils, boards, and related working groups. But Cisco's goal is to broaden participation to 2500 or more employees. To scale, Ricci's team developed online tutorial kits to teach employees about the best practices Cisco discovered during the past 8 years.

Cisco expects C-Change to greatly increase the speed at which collaborative groups form, accomplish their goals, and disband. Teams scattered around the world, with different cultures and languages, are expected to produce results quickly, leaving little time for communication logistics. Collaborative skills, including technical, managerial, and social, are all basics for the job at Cisco. C-Change is a crucial aid in this effort.

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Cisco on Cisco: Watch Your Language—Do Not Overlook the Basics

If you are going to collaborate effectively, everyone has to be speaking the same language. That's something Ron Ricci, head of Cisco's C-Change program, found out early in Cisco's collaboration efforts. At an executive meeting a few years ago, attendees were asked to define "strategy." One by one, MBA after MBA, each person at the table gave a different answer.

New Web 2.0 collaboration tools offer better communications options for disparate teams, and these capabilities make the basics of communication more important than ever. Individuals and groups working independently from other groups within an organization do not

necessarily share the same vernacular, and they likely do not share all the same social norms.

C-Change, Cisco's executive collaboration process, addresses these challenges by prescribing steps to establish group norms. These norms provide a common social foundation for a collaborative group that might span the globe. Individuals in such a group do not have the usual cues for socializing their interactions. To overcome this challenge, organizations must fill the void by providing a common set of collaborative group norms for such things as vocabulary and behaviors. Also, seemingly simple activities, such as running virtual meetings, need new guidance to compensate for the loss of face-to-face social cues.

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Cisco on Cisco: Creating Collaborative Behavioral Changes

Most experts agree that change management begins with leadership, and the move to a collaborative enterprise is no exception. The development of that all-important critical mass and full buy-in throughout the organization hinges on leadership. If one branch office is collaborating a theoretical 100 percent while another branch office is collaborating 10 percent, then the collaboration level between the two will be no greater than 10 percent. With collaboration, the lowest common denominator of participation determines (or limits) the overall level of cross-functional activity.

To avoid areas within an organization where collaboration levels are low, the foundation of a collaboration framework must begin with corporate executives. If leaders offer only words, with no real action, in support of the idea, the rank-and-file employees will sense this lack of priority and respond accordingly.

Although a variety of communications and messaging tactics are appropriate, perhaps the best way for leaders to demonstrate the importance of new collaboration techniques is through example.

Setting an example can be challenging. Like most employees, executives are comfortable with their old ways and have little time to invest in a theoretically better tool. But also like other employees, executives need to try and test new collaborative tools and start using the ones that show the most promise for their jobs.



This was the approach taken by Cisco CEO John Chambers. In the beginning, Chambers resisted suggestions to write blogs to communicate with the company's workforce. He recognized that even for fast typists, written blogs can take a lot of time, so the benefits-to-costs of such a collaboration tool were low, since Chambers's time is a very valuable resource.

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But then video came along. Anyone who has seen Chambers in action knows that public speaking is his strength. The genial Southern salesman can easily capture an audience and keep them listening. So video blogging became Chambers's collaborative tool of choice.

Now Cisco employees regularly receive video messages from this self-proclaimed convert. Rather than receiving formal messages or third-hand information from other employees about what Chambers thinks or says, employees get to hear it directly from him. More importantly, through the video blogs discussion forum, Chambers can gain direct and immediate feedback from his employees, allowing him to gauge the mood of the company and to identify possible management challenges and opportunities.

Such collaboration is now building an even tighter bond between Cisco employees and their leader, helping the global company stay in tune with their CEO's vision and strategy. Most importantly, thanks to Chambers's video blogs, employees understand first-hand that Chambers has personally embraced these

new communication tools, and that blogging is an effective way to get your message out to a broad and dispersed audience.

But promoting collaboration should not be left just to executives. Blair Christie, Cisco's senior vice president for corporate communications, says that getting employees—or anyone—to change their habits is extremely difficult.

"Cisco loves technology, but 'deploying' technology is much easier than 'employing' it," she says. "We have 60,000 people. That's a lot of different behaviors to manage."



Christie says her group started a collaboration website in 2006 to help educate employees about the new collaboration technologies that

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were then just becoming popular. The site also allows employees to share ideas about using the tools with other employees. “The site helped the best practices bubble to the top,” Christie says.



She said her group has worked in close partnership with Cisco's IT group to “be the megaphone” for the changes that new collaboration tools are introducing to the company. “The act of communicating these changes is half the battle,” she says.

Incentive programs are also a crucial step in cultivating the kinds of collaborative behaviors that will make best use of new communications technologies.

Incentive programs are a manifestation of a belief system. If it is a good behavior, then it should be rewarded—this approach is not hard to understand. But the dilemma is how to reward collaborative behavior. Money is not necessarily the best incentive. Often, simply gaining recognition in a user's own community can be enough. If an engineer becomes the expert on a certain topic, that gives him or her meaningful public recognition.

But whatever the incentives, collaborative progress needs to be measured. In fact, another Cisco motto, “If it moves, measure it,” also applies to the Cisco Collaboration Framework. Besides assessing the quality of the interactions, organizations should know some basic metrics, such as how frequently tools are being used and in what way. Analytics can help an organization identify healthy and anemic social networks. Basic statistics can show blog visitors, the number of wiki entries, and who is watching the most video blogs. Any and all of these types of statistics will give organizations important insights for taking the next step forward.

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Cisco on Cisco: Transformational Changes Through Web 2.0

Cisco has seen first-hand the transformative capabilities of Web 2.0 technologies. By harnessing the power of wikis, Cisco launched the I-Prize, a global competition to come up with a concept for the networking giant's next US\$1 billion business. (A wiki is a collection of webpages designed to enable anyone with access to easily contribute or modify content, such as on Wikipedia).

More than 2000 people from 104 countries contributed ideas to the Cisco I-Prize. As was the intention, the contest attracted interest from

all parts of the world, especially from people outside the traditional technology and venture-capital communities.

The contest prize was US\$250,000 and a chance to join Cisco as a leader of the new business venture. In the end, a team of three people from Russia and Germany won the contest for an idea about improving electrical systems with networking technology. Cisco says it will commit as much as US\$10 million over the next 3 years to fund the effort.

While innovation contests are not new and some companies have offered more prize money,

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industry observers say no corporation has ever run a contest to start a major new business operation.

Most previous corporate innovation competitions have focused on products for solving a specific problem. Cisco's I-Prize was wide open: Would this idea make a good business for Cisco? Does it allow Cisco to use its expertise in networking technology to full advantage?

The I-Prize was inspired in part by Cisco's internal innovation wiki, the I-Zone. Any of Cisco's 60,000 employees can post business ideas, work collaboratively with other Cisco employees to develop an idea, and, if lucky, be a part of launching a new business. I-Zone was working so well that Cisco wanted to open the concept to the public.

The I-Zone is one of the new tools in Cisco's Emerging Technologies group. Cisco formed the group in 2006 as an internal venturing operation dedicated to hatching all-new billion-dollar businesses from within the company. The group has already made its mark as the birthplace of the company's extremely successful Cisco TelePresence video meeting system.

BrightIdea, an innovation management company, hosted the I-Prize site and used its WebStorm online brainstorming and collaboration software for organizing idea submissions and collaboration among participants.

Matthew Greeley, chief executive of the company, says the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies have revolutionized the ability of companies to collect ideas, helping boost what he calls the "signal-to-noise" ratio for large-scale brainstorming. "With these new networking tools, you can get more ideas faster from more areas with far less work and resources," he says. "And the more ideas you have, the more good ideas you have."

His company, now 8 years old, started helping companies generate ideas long before the days of Web 2.0. He laughs when recalling the overwhelming amount of labor involved in manually sorting through proposals by using sticky notes and highlighters.

But now the Internet and social networking have eliminated those kinds of barriers. These new tools dramatically improve or even replace intensive person-to-person meetings with

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university researchers, venture capitalists, individual inventors, and startups, Greeley says.

He says most of BrightIdea's Fortune 1000 customers use his company's software for managing internal innovation processes, and about 35 percent of his customers tie incentives to their idea collection programs.

But the simple lesson for Cisco is that Web 2.0 tools can indeed help the company do things it never did before. Now, more than ever, companies do not know where the next idea will come from. Certainly, Cisco realizes that Silicon Valley can no longer claim to have a monopoly on technology innovation. But the I-Prize is giving Cisco the ability to find those new ideas, no matter where they might be

