

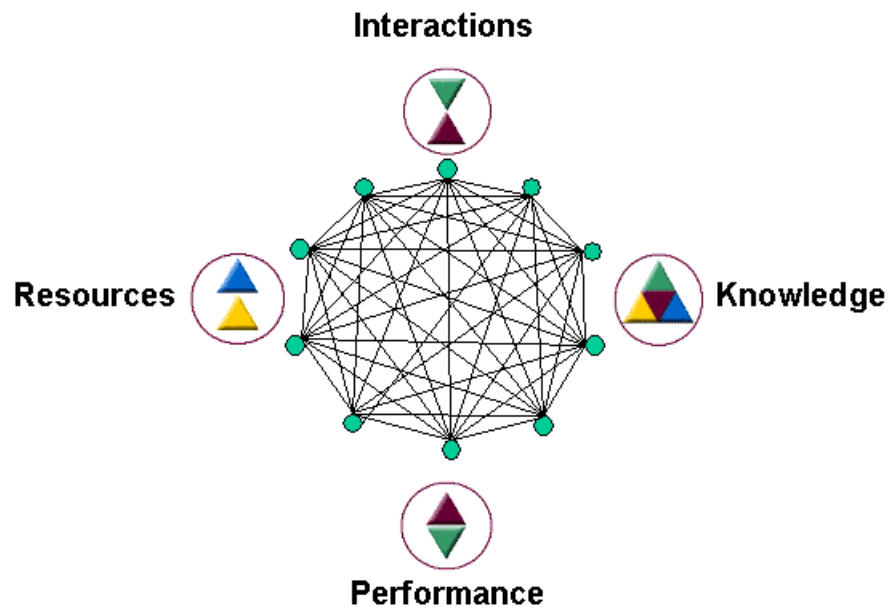


CONSORTIUM FOR  
SERVICE INNOVATION™

# ***The Adaptive Organization*** (aka Betty) ***Operational Model***

Version 1.4

## *The Practices*



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# Introduction

The Adaptive Organization model (also known as Betty) is a business strategy developed by the members of the Consortium for Service Innovation. It is based on research, conversation and reflection on shared experiences. The “Betty team” has taken the initial concepts and theories and organized them into an operational model. At the time of publishing version 4.0 of this document, the model represents a work in progress.

Why an Adaptive Organization? In December of 2000 in New Orleans, 22 Consortium members engaged in an unstructured conversation about the business challenges we face. The conversation centered on the issues of knowledge management and building effective, sustainable relationships; and began to explore the interaction between the two. Since then the Betty team has been exploring and developing the concepts of the Adaptive Organization (AO) model. Through the work, three key issues have emerged as to why a new approach is necessary:

1. **A shift in the source of value** – for most companies the source of value has shifted from tangible assets (physical goods, products) to intangible assets - services, information, relationships and influence.
2. **Our business structures and practices are obsolete** - our traditional hierarchical structures and command and control practices have evolved over the past hundred years with the objective of efficiently producing tangible assets (products). While the source of value has shifted to intangible assets, we have not changed the business model. We continue to use a linear, manufacturing process model for the business of creating value based on intangible assets (knowledge, trust and relationship) and the manufacturing model is proving to be woefully ineffective.
3. **Shift in values** - the industrial age was driven by materialistic values; we all wanted a lot of stuff. Our sense of self and self worth came from having nice cars and big houses. There are some strong indications that our values as individuals and therefore as a society are shifting to a more holistic or ecological model; our sense of self and self worth now includes our knowledge and our relationships; it is our reputation as knowledgeable (particularly in areas that we care about) and our contribution to and influence with others that is valued. We are seeking to be known and valued as individuals.

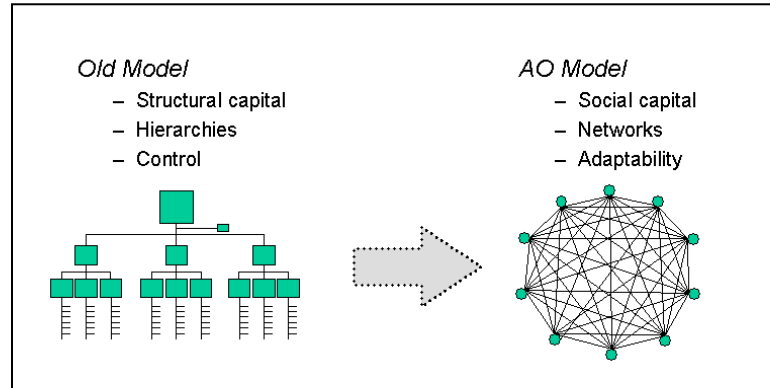
The initial discussions and concepts are documented in the Consortium publication “[Betty – Version 1.0](#)”. We will not re-iterate the concepts and insights discussed in that work other than to note that we explored what makes relationships work (or not) at the individual level and what has to happen for relationships to be meaningful at the organizational level. The original work is discussed in terms of the Id (identity, a sense of self), interactions, relationships and communities. It explores the factors that differentiate transactions from interactions and the key elements of relationship.

This paper outlines the emerging operational elements of the Adaptive Organization.

## A knowledge-enabled network

The AO environment is a knowledge-enabled network. It is optimized for the creation and evolution of knowledge and to recognize the individuals and teams who create value. It acknowledges how things get done in an organization and across organizations. It nurtures productive relationships and enables optimal productivity, inspiration and continuous innovation.

AO environments are less like hierarchies and more like networks. They are based on a new set of organizational principles and practices.



# The Principles

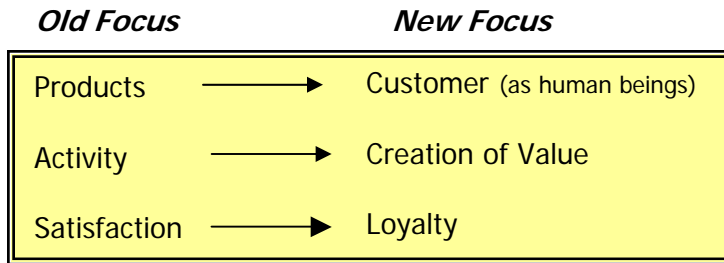
Sustained success in a dynamic environment requires persistent learning and innovation – a continuous process of regeneration. The complexity and pace of the world today mandates that regeneration be autonomic; a sense and respond system based on experience and reflection. Most organizations become so entrenched in past successes that they lack the ability to see beyond the events in which they are engaged. They do not recognize the patterns and insights that enable learning and innovation. The AO model is intended to be a sustainable business strategy focused on building new levels of value that is enabled by past success rather than inhibited by it.

The principles and practices are the organizing framework for the model. The principles define the foundation of the culture or values of the environment. The practices define the processes and activities which in turn imply functionality for the infrastructure needed to support an Adaptive Organization. First we will review the principles of alignment, transparency and identity.

## Alignment – to values and purpose

Sustained success is driven by persistent alignment to evolving values. It is the values of people; our customers' and our employees' that is important. Alignment is most powerful when people feel an emotional connection. This is the difference between loyalty and satisfaction.

The AO model represents a shift in focus.



The new focus enables long-term, sustained value creation. The AO model diminishes the distinction between employees and customers. Its focus is to improve the relevance of interactions between people regardless of role. It acknowledges people as whole beings (not resources or targets) and seeks to recognize, support and nurture the human spirit.

Interactions between people are based on need, context and legitimacy. People help each other achieve their goals. Integrating the "customer" into the process, as opposed to being the target of the process, enables the organization to continuously align its strategies and products to the customers needs. In fact, the customer becomes integral to the organization to the point that the distinction between customers and employees becomes blurred. The network or community ignores the traditional organizational boundaries.

### *Health of the Network*

Most organizations measure their business with event level, activity-based metrics. It is a transaction or manufacturing based view of the world. In an AO environment we engage in interactions not transactions. The distinction between transactions and interactions is that learning takes place as a result of interaction.

Interactions over time create a relationship. Each interaction is an opportunity to learn about each other which becomes the basis to improve the value of future interactions. Persistent learning is a fundamental characteristic of the AO model.

The "health and value" of relationships is determined from the patterns that emerge from interactions over time and the learning that occurs. From the patterns of behavior and leaning we can identify the drivers of results or value. It is from an appreciation of

these patterns that we determine who is creating value in the network and how to improve the relevance of the interactions.

The qualitative aspect of a “service” business introduces performance dimensions that can only be understood by studying the interactions over time – not through isolated events or explicit feedback. While measures about interactions in the environment are being monitored, they are used for studying the dynamics and identifying patterns - not for creating goals and incentives at the activity level. The health of the network is a function of the relevance, richness and diversity of the interactions taking place over time and the value being created as a result of the interactions.

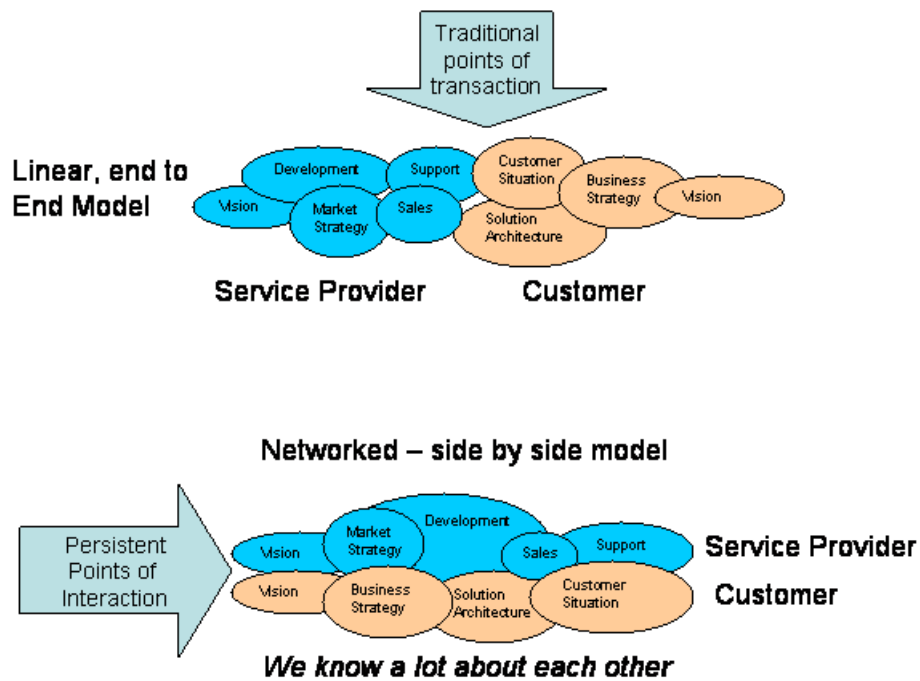
### ***The Strategy – modeled through a framework***

Businesses struggle to link high-level strategic goals to the operational levels of the organization. It is critical to build and communicate a strategic framework that aligns the vision and strategy with the infrastructure and processes needed to achieve the goals. The strategic framework drills down to define key initiatives and related results. This approach influences performance through understanding and employee engagement; allowing the people doing the work to figure out how best to achieve the results. The integration of the executive view of the “what” with the workers view of the “how” is critical and is one key difference between leadership and management. The AO environment requires leadership not management. (see [Jim Collins](#) - *Good to Great* and [Frederick Reicheld](#) - *Loyalty Rules* for more on leadership and alignment of metrics to strategies)

### **Transparency – removing boundaries**

A network approach establishes point-to-point connections between key players. The overall effectiveness of the relationship between the vendor and the customer depends on the ability to map offerings into the understanding of the customer. So, the customer engagement and experience starts before the point of sale and before the support interaction. The interactions that connect expectations with results need to happen at strategic levels. Strategies start to converge into common actions when executives participate in the discussions (not presentations but conversations). They influence customer expectations and more importantly they are influenced by customer expectations. And, those conversations ripple through other parts of the network. (see [Shoshana Zuboff](#) - *The Support Economy*)

## Adaptive Organization – Operational Model



This network-based interaction model aligns those with common purposes (e.g. market and business strategy, development with the customer's solution architecture, support with the customer situation, etc.) so they can interact and develop common perspectives and understanding. The customer becomes integral to the business.

The traditional hierarchical and linear model creates silos of interactions and organizational layers that buffer the customer from decision makers (i.e. the people at the vision layers would be at opposite ends of the chain). The linear approach to the market does not facilitate interactions at common points of interest and even worse each transaction is like the first transaction over and over again since there is no organizational learning taking place.

In the traditional/old model, the support organization comes to understand the customers' perspective, but that perspective has minimal influence with the development groups because their direction comes primarily from product management and marketing. Thus, support experiences "enlightened frustration" in dealing with development. The development groups, while well intentioned, are very product and technology focused. They have limited visibility to the customers' experiences or the customers' internal strategies. Development and product management are often focused on competitive products and this causes "competitive sub-optimization" (i.e. they seek to create features that map to a market trend defined by others who are not aligned to the needs of current customers). Development and sales often experience frustration with the customer time to adoption. The product may be functionally competitive relative to other offerings but from the customers' view it is often too feature rich and the "value to disruption" ratio of adoption is not compelling.

The network model engages vendor Vice Presidents with customer Vice Presidents and developers with developers. These interactions are not managed or directed. They are invited, stimulated and nurtured. As a result, perceptions, decisions and directions are influenced by a company's most valuable asset - its customers. The relevance of products and services is greatly enhanced because suppliers and customers know a lot about each other.

The principle of transparency is critical to optimizing the relevance of the connections it is also fundamental to the integrity or trust worthiness of the network. If the players have visibility to the nature of the interactions and the value created between others in the network it provides them with some level of confidence about who to engage with. The integrity factor in a self-managing network is the combination of identity and transparency.

### Identity - profiles and reputation

In the Adaptive Organization, people engage with content and with other people according to their interests and needs. Identity and reputation become the critical enablers. Both people and content in the network have an identity. Reputation as part of identity is developed over time and based on the patterns of behavior in the network. It is through reputation that content and players in the network gain legitimacy (or not).

The Identity in the network is enabled through rich profiles that include static and dynamic information about content and people. The goal of the profile is to be rich enough to enable relevant connections and a sense of trust. Particularly with respect to people these profiles will never fully represent the individual. The static elements of the profile are things like name, contact information, dates and language. The dynamic elements fit into two high level categories, topics and style. We believe that topic and style elements are very rich and must be managed programmatically. The technology for the infrastructure of the network must manage the topic and style elements based on the behaviors of others as they interact with the entity.

Security and privacy are challenging issues that must be considered in the requirements for the profiles. Just as we do in our social interactions we will want to manage the level of detail we want to share with others based on how well we know them.

Enabling the right interactions through visibility and awareness creates the value of the network. Through it, people will:

- *Engage resources* (e.g. people or content) based on what is relevant to them
- *Contribute value* because it aligns with their values and interests
- *Perceive others* based on their identity and reputation because it reflects realized value
- *Establish legitimacy* in the community through their own identity and reputation which is based on their pattern of participation and the emergent behavior patterns of others that interact with them

## **The Approach – a matter of finesse**

The AO environment requires nurturing, not directing. Connections are made and knowledge and value is created and shared because the players feel a sense of connectedness or belonging. A sense of choice and a sense of purpose are also critical ingredients.

Intangible assets are not stored in a warehouse, they exist first in the minds of the players in the network. Those who are interacting are gaining knowledge and perspectives. They may or may not choose to offer their experiences or understanding in a form that can be accessed by others.

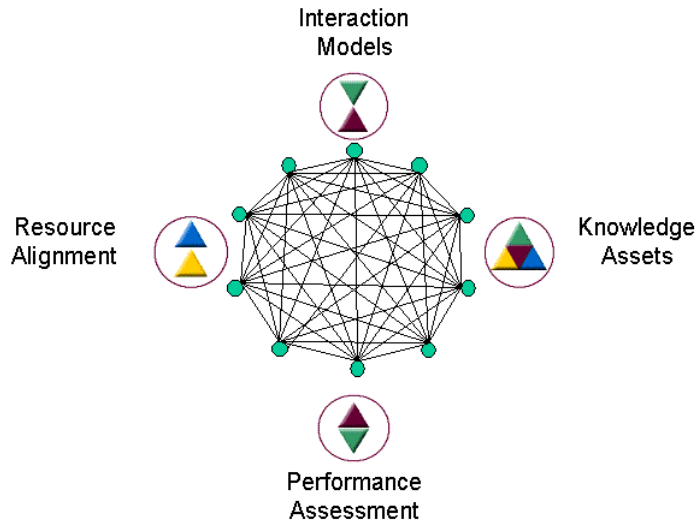
Knowledge is personal and while the unenlightened business may feel they own their employees knowledge, the employees know otherwise. Our knowledge is a huge part of who we are as individuals; our identity, our value. There has to be an emotional connection and a positive consequence for us to offer it up to others. That connection is about alignment to a common purpose and trust that others' commitment to that purpose is sincere. Neither of these, an emotional connection to a purpose or trust are attributes commonly found in today's corporations.

This means that "the company" is not well positioned to play the role of owner or manager of their business network. Corporations must learn to strike a balance between leadership through the development and articulation of a purpose that people can relate to and a willingness to acknowledge and appropriately compensate people for the creation of value in achieving that purpose.

# The AO Operational Elements

The Adaptive Organization operational model defines the practice dimensions that are required to create and sustain value. We have organized what we have learned about interactions, relationships, knowledge, and business performance into an operational framework (pictured below).

## *The Practices*



While it is helpful to explore them as distinct elements, it is important to note that the elements of this framework are highly interdependent.

We will start with the Knowledge Assets element, as it is a critical building block for the other three elements. It strongly influences the capabilities of the other three practice dimensions.



## Knowledge Assets

The AO Knowledge Assets concepts are much broader than just content management. The scope of knowledge in the AO model includes context for content as well as people. Also critical are the patterns that emerge from collections of content and collections of interactions between people. These are powerful notions in the AO model that enable persistent learning and perpetual relevance. The AO system enables the players in the system to know a lot about each other based on the collective past experience. Profiles and reputation for content and people are included in the concept of knowledge assets.

### *The AO Practices for Knowledge Assets*

- Connect people to content and people to people based on need, context and legitimacy
- Create multiple layers of context (profiles) to enable flexibility - this enables personalization, levels of privacy and improves relevance of future interactions
- Capture and integrate content and context through interactions – to drive organizational learning

The AO environment enables those who need to know to interact with those who know. The effectiveness of the network is improved by orders of magnitude when the interactions between the players are captured in such a way as to be findable and usable by others. While capturing the interactions produces interesting content, we are learning that the driver for relevance and value is context. The ability of the infrastructure to enable relevant connections is a function of the ability to develop and evolve context. Context is the “magic sauce” in a knowledge management practice; it establishes relevance for the content as well as for the people involved.

Knowledge is created through experience and interaction, whether it is a conversation or reading a book or visiting a web site, we learn as a by-product of interaction. And, what we learn from an interaction, what we take away from it, is a concept or new understanding - not the verbatim words and sentences of the interaction.

A process that creates context layers is needed. Based on past experience with categorization, this can not be done through a conscious categorization effort. We need a programmatic way to create dynamic association of related concepts. Just as biological systems organize cells within tissues, within organs, within organisms, the community can organize entities into increasing complex and relevant levels of relationships such that those relationships create value. This contextual organization is critical to drive efficiencies of access and more importantly to drive organizational learning and the creation of value.

Through effective association of context, the organization can correlate topics, with issues, with problems, with causes and new solutions or opportunities. A context thread can associate contributors with value across topics and relationships.

As the organization adopts new processes to manage context, we must consider how the context can be used to assess the value of the contribution of the players, as that is important input to a reputation model that is part of the Performance Assessment system.



## Performance Assessment

Assessing contribution in a knowledge-centered network is different from our traditional approach to performance evaluation. Contribution is not defined by activities, events, or the time spent but by the pattern that is created by interactions over time. This is an assessment of value creation not of activity.

### *AO Practices for Performance Assessment*

- Performance is linked to the creation of value and results
- How an individual impacts others in the network is more important than their activities
- Measures integrate objective and subjective feedback
- Individuals have visibility to the impact they create – as they create it
- A reputation is created over time

As expertise becomes part of the system through captured content, people's reputation can be determined by their interactions and the content with which their expertise is associated. Realms of expertise and the results produced (either through use of content or direct interaction) can produce quantified measures of business value that become part of people's reputation and eventually their compensation.

While it is important to monitor activity, it is not the indicator of value. The performance pattern that emerges over time is made up of both objective (patterns of behavior) and subjective (how people feel) feedback. The objective feedback is captured by the system and can be reported and monitored. The subjective feedback is a little more complex and must include both explicit and implicit indicators. Explicit feedback is the response to survey questions – “was this helpful?” The implicit feedback is the interpretation or implication of the patterns of behavior – things like frequency of reference. The mix of implicit and explicit feedback is uncertain at this time. Each have shortcomings; the implicit feedback takes time and volume to be meaningful and the explicit feedback is negotiable and often transaction based. (see [Marc Smith](#) – Microsoft Research, for more on reputation and implicit indicators)

The feedback system must be designed to promote an expanding level of engagement and optimization. This happens when feedback is systemic and aligned with the dynamics of collaborative and competitive forces that already exist. This is an important consideration for the evolution of the system.

The health and growth of the community over time is dependent on all the players having access to feedback about their participation. Feedback at the individual level is the continuous performance improvement loop in the system. The culture of the organization must encourage responsibility on the part of the players to provide meaningful feedback. The players' participation in the feedback system becomes part of their profile. This, along with the implicit measures is the basis for the reputation system.

Performance assessment is inherent in the system. Those who realize value from others' contribution of content or interaction are implicitly and explicitly providing feedback which is captured and reflected in the reputation part of the profile. These profiles are the basis for aligning resources to work.



## Resource Alignment

The goal of Resource Alignment is to engage resources in an optimal way. By "optimal", we mean in ways that produce the best possible results and develop or preserve capacity for future requirements. This requires a system that supports the motivation factors of accomplishment and recognition. These same factors enable connections to be made according to the best fit between the need and the resource.

### ***AO Practices for Resource Alignment:***

- ➔ Reputation – the most significant motivator is made part of the system as an indicator of meaningful contribution over time and creates increasing level of attention for those who are consistently creating value.
- ➔ Visibility – The system provides visibility to appropriate and relevant resources based on evolving roles, and the players have visibility to work opportunities based on their reputation. A rich and positive reputation will produce increasing levels of peripheral visibility. Visibility is not limited by organizational boundaries.
- ➔ Engagement – people and work are aligned to their preferred areas of skill, knowledge and ability – they choose the work they can best do.

Because people are motivated by doing things that are perceived as meaningful, how they are represented in the system becomes a primary motivator for contribution. The Performance Assessment system will feed and incorporate personal and team reputations that influence future interactions. People's reputations determine their value within the system and influence how others within the system will engage them.

What kind of structure enables effective Resource Alignment? The Adaptive Organization model defines practices that allow for a very fluid use of resources where the enterprise becomes a network that includes partners and customers. The increase in outsourcing and other creative employment practices over the past five years is evidence that businesses are moving toward variable workforce models.

The AO model eliminates the walls between employees, departments, divisions, partners and most importantly customers. It enables greater understanding through highly relevant interactions – that is the goal. As this emerges, it will mean that there is persistent shared understanding as well as an even larger opportunity to create a variable workforce through a network of players that is larger, more diverse and more talented than any one company can employ. This workforce can engage in graduated levels of work focus and commitment (i.e. jobs don't have to be one-size fits all). Involved and committed customers are then a part of the enterprise – the network is not outside or separate from the enterprise, it is the enterprise! It is the relevance of interaction that drives new levels of learning, productivity, creativity and value.



### Interaction Models

Meaningful interactions are relevant and productive. The system for Interaction Models seeks to drive these factors by integrating past patterns with strategic purpose. It recognizes that the most effective forms of interaction are not usually regimented and that the same things can appear very differently when viewed from different perspectives. Therefore, those who interact to create value must be engaged according to what they know, how they most effectively can accomplish their tasks, and how well their perspectives are known and positioned within the system.

#### ***AO Practices for Interaction Models***

- Relevance of interactions are driven by multi-dimensional context profiles
- The workflow media supports a continuum of collaborative interaction types – as appropriate
- Systemic maintenance and improvement is enabled through a double loop process

Generally the level of profile personalization in place today is simplistic and one-dimensional in that the profiling relates to broad topics areas or skills. The AO model requires the profiles to be expanded to include more aspects to enable more serendipity of connections and closer levels of relatedness between people. In order for someone to serve us well they have to know us well.

Patterns of interactions sometimes produce good results and sometimes they don't. People can repeat unproductive patterns as well as productive ones. Each meaningful interaction should show the type of result produced so that good patterns can be encouraged by the system – and so that new patterns can be identified when they emerge.

## Benefits

Imagine if every interaction in the course of your day was highly relevant to something you cared about and you trusted that you would be appropriately recognized for the value you create. What would happen to your productivity, your sense of value, your level of job satisfaction? Would the source of exhaustion shift from a basis of frustration to a basis of excitement and overwhelming opportunity?

The AO model enables:

- o Increased productivity and capacity, expanded capabilities
- o Persistent learning, increased agility
- o Inspired innovation and creativity
- o Increased relevance, customer, employee and partner loyalty
- o The creation of economic value and the evolution of capitalism (see [Shoshana Zuboff](#) - *The Support Economy*)

## Evolving operational efficiency

The AO environment enables many-to-many interactions and engages resources outside of its internal cost structure to contribute value. This nature of collaborative interaction produces a dramatic increase in capacity and capability when compared to the traditional models.

Resolutions of problems in most medium to high-complexity support organizations average less than 2 incidents a day per employee. In the AO models (communities) that we have studied at Novell and Microsoft, people are responding to hundreds of issues every month. There is over a 10-fold greater capability to perform.

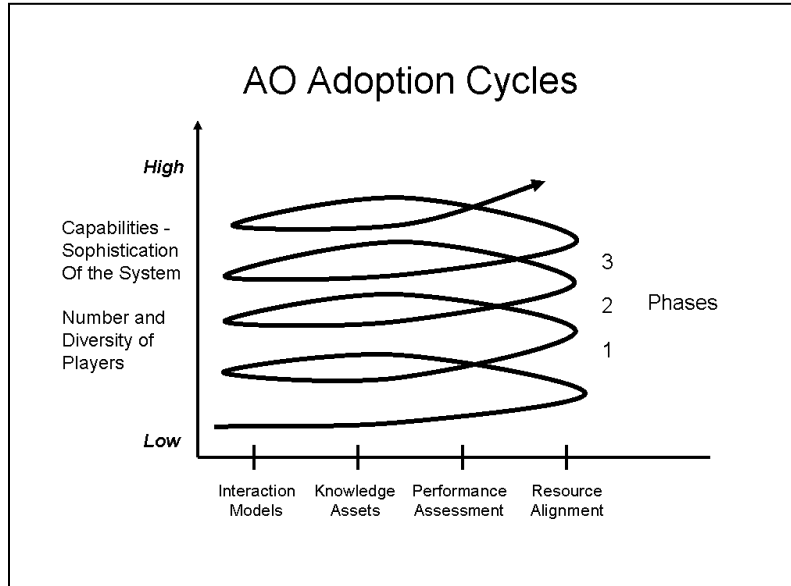
The results of the AO environment can be mapped against the traditional model of engaging customers to assess the difference in operating costs and value.

## Expanding market relevance

Regardless of the current success and depth of relationships across the community, the organization must be able to change and innovate. Patricia Seybold says in her book, *The Customer Revolution*, the enterprise must be “built to morph”. Through the context layers in which knowledge is captured and the distillation process, the enterprise will be able to identify root causes of issues and make correlations between customer needs and the drivers of those needs – these fuel relevant, breakthrough technologies.

## Closing thoughts

The Adaptive Organization spirals through stages of evolution. While Knowledge Assets forms a basis for the other three elements, they are all intertwined, one element can not stand alone. The players involved and the environment's capabilities increase with each iteration. The trick to implementing the AO model lies in finding place to start and having sufficient and complementary capabilities in each of the four dimensions and then cycling through a continuous improvement process to enrich the capabilities in each element.



***An Adaptive Organization  
never stops organizing...***

***therefore, it never stops  
to re-organize.***

### **A word of caution:**

We know that some of what we have proposed here is wrong; we don't yet have enough operational experience to know which parts will need to be tuned or re-defined. The power of the Consortium's collective experience is in benefiting from each other's learning, this accelerates the evolution of the model and helps avoid wasted time pursuing dead ends that others have explored.

### **A word of optimism:**

From our experience in developing the Knowledge-Centered Support (KCS<sup>sm</sup>) model we also know that some of what we have outlined here is more right than we realize, for reasons we don't yet understand.

### **Getting things done:**

We also know that the benefits gained from the community approaches that are in place today are dramatic (see [case studies](#)). However, most have been implemented as separate entities, not integrated with the key business processes. They have been detached from the existing structures and are looked at in the context of traditional hierarchical, command and control management practices. An AO environment is based on a new set of values, principles and practices; it is focused on the creation of intangible assets. It recognizes and embraces the power of the human spirit. It views people not as "human resources" but as human beings; people (not products) are the source of value in the new economy. The Adaptive Organization optimizes how value is produced; it is the way things get done today, only better.

### **The journey continues:**

The Adaptive Organization is a frontier; the Consortium is the base camp from which the members are exploring the frontier. If you would like to be part of the exploration, we are always looking for a few good thinkers; a few brave scouts willing to explore uncharted areas. Membership information is available at [www.serviceinnovation.org](http://www.serviceinnovation.org). Join us.

## **Acknowledgements**

While it is impossible to identify all the contributors to the perspectives represented in the AO Operational model, following are some who stand out in their contribution.

Livia Wilson – Livia is the visionary and architect behind the initial Betty concepts. Livia nurtured and facilitated the Betty team in its early years. She is the founder and principal of OutSights Inc., a business integration consulting firm.

Novell, Microsoft and HP have been unfaltering in their support of the work by consistently supporting the participation of their best and brightest people in the development of the model as members of the Betty team. Additionally they have opened their doors to the Consortium staff and enable us to study and be part of their respective programs. This has provided us with the opportunity to validate elements of the framework and refine the model based on an operational experience.

### **The Betty team – the founding group**

Following is a list of those who contributed to the birth of the Betty concepts. The dedication of these individuals to this work has been awesome and an inspiration to us on the Consortium staff. In some cases members of the team have taken vacation time and personally covered their travel expenses in order to stay involved. Fortunately this was the exception not the rule. The individuals are listed with the companies that supported their work on the team at the time.

Peter Beatley – BancTec  
Greg Liverman – Compaq  
Tom Elwood - EMC  
Sarah Nunke – ePeople  
Elizabeth Goumas – eTranslate  
John Chmaj – Kanisa  
Russ Resslerhuber – Kanisa  
Tom McMail – Microsoft

Tom Ford – Microsoft  
Corey Heerrman – Microsoft  
Gig Griffith – Novell  
Lisa Manchester - Oracle  
Shelley Benton – Primus  
Bob DeBold – Primus  
Kartik Ramakrishnan – QUIQ  
Angus Klein - VeriSign

## **References:**

### ***Key people who have shaped our thinking:***

[Verna Allee](#) - *The Future of Knowledge*

[Jim Collins](#) - *Good to Great*

[John HageI](#) – *The only Sustainable Edge*

[Frederick Herzberg](#) - *One More Time - How Do You Motivate Employees?*

[Robert Kaplan and David Norton](#) - *The Balance Score Card*

[Frederick Reicheld](#) - *Loyalty Rules*

[Peter Senge](#) - *The Dance of Change*

[Marc Smith](#) – Microsoft Research

[Margaret Wheatley](#) – *Leadership and the New Science*

[Livia Wilson](#) – OutSights Inc

[Shoshana Zuboff](#) - *The Support Economy*

*Consortium members should visit the member [collaboration space](#) for the latest updates and status on work in progress (password required members should contact [info@serviceinnovation.org](mailto:info@serviceinnovation.org) ).*

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