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## Internal communicators assist collaboration

*By providing information-rich communication systems and supporting networking.*

The Work Foundation has published a report outlining its current research into the knowledge economy.

*The Knowledge Economy: How Knowledge is Reshaping the Economic Life of Nations* says the demand for higher value-added goods and services is driving the knowledge economy.

### New pressures affecting change

As more sophisticated, more discerning and better-educated consumers and businesses are creating today's demand for goods and services "these pressures have interacted with both technology and globalization, accelerating the process of change and enabling new and disruptive patterns of supplying consumers," the report says.

It continues, "Innovation in the knowledge economy comes from both the successful exploitation of research and development (R&D) undertaken in the UK and overseas and from wider forms of innovation – design and development, marketing and organizational change."

### Implications for internal communication

The report's findings on innovation have particular relevance for internal communicators.

While innovation can come from single individuals, in most organizational settings it's down to the interactions and collaboration across groups of people – often disparate, virtual and even globally spread.

Collaborative research and development across software teams is just one example, but all organizations need to innovate.

### Give networking support

Internal communicators are well placed to help people in their organizations collaborate more effectively – by providing information-rich communication systems and supporting people's networking capabilities.

But collaboration should not be restricted to one organization – it often needs to work well between organizations and include suppliers and joint venture partners, for example.

### The principles of mass collaboration

William Buist, in an [article published on the Hub](#) in February, noted in a case study example how 4 principles are key to building a team that uses communication as the glue to enable mass collaboration:

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Connecting Communicators

1. Openness.
2. Peering.
3. Sharing.
4. Acting Globally.

### Search for competitive advantage

Ian Brinkley, director of The Work Foundation's [knowledge economy research program](#) and the report's author, says, "You can see the knowledge economy in the industries that flourish most today and in the kinds of jobs that more people do, but perhaps most of all in the ways that organizations today search for competitive advantage.

"Value is extracted from intangible things such as ideas, R&D, software, design and marketing, human and organizational capital, in a way that was not the case in previous eras. No one can point to it, but it's becoming more real in advanced nations as the 21st century unfolds."

The Work Foundation is 18 months into a 3-year, £1.5 million research program which will conclude in April 2009. "In the time that remains in the program, we shall be teasing out what the knowledge economy means practically for organizations and for the kinds of work that individuals do," Brinkley says.

### Have your say

A collaborative culture is the lifeblood of innovation. It depends on how people communicate across their organization – and sometimes with people in other organizations. Essentially there are 2 strands that help or hinder great collaboration:

1. the processes of communication; and
2. everyday communication behaviors.

How well do your communication systems and processes support easy collaboration? What collaborative behaviors do people exhibit on a day-to-day basis?

On a personal level, how much collaboration do you undertake to create innovation in internal communication for your organization? Discuss these issues with your communications peers by joining the [Internal Comms Hub members' group](#) on the Communicators' Network.

Other recommendations:

• [Using wikis as collaboration tools](#)

• [How to communicate and manage change across a virtual team](#)

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