

Collaborative Wellness through Dynamic Role
Alignment.

By

John Frederick Rose

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School of Systems, Management and Leadership.
Faculty of Engineering and IT.

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Motivation and Vision

The motivation for my research arose from my experiences in addressing complex social problems associated with group knowledge creation collaborations involving IT process and product innovation (Rose 2009, 2010). In the years between 2002 and 2008, I was involved in helping to improve outcomes of IT knowledge creation collaborations. Later, my focus moved to the issues encountered with the introduction of carbon abatement strategies into large organisations and Commonwealth Government agencies.

When addressing problems associated with introducing carbon abatement strategies, I found problem-solving using sequential or waterfall approaches to be unsuitable. Such approaches could not address the situation where implementing solutions adversely affected other areas related to the problem and often changed the very nature of the problem, thereby forcing a re-start to the sequential problem solving approach. To counter this situation, I formed a group of knowledge creators who could adapt to changing circumstances by using iterative, learning-by-doing techniques to devise and apply solution strategies. Outcomes were functionally acceptable, but the adaptations associated with learning-by-doing consumed valuable project time and required additional resources. Over time, I developed a series of perspectives that brought a focus to the learning-by-doing investigations by putting situations in a new light to reveal previously hidden aspects of the problem. These experiences motivated my desire to not only improve collaborative outcomes but also do it in such a way as to consume fewer resources.

My vision was to create a theory-informed system for studying knowledge creation collaboration for use in improving collaborative outcomes in product and process innovation. The system would inform improving the process of dynamic alignment of roles to the collaboration's purpose. Business designers and knowledge researchers could deploy the system in the form of adaptable customised architectures to track, assess and adjust improvement strategies. Experience teaches the importance of socialising improvements, incorporating feedback from stakeholders to ensure value is realised through use, and that improvement outcomes receive business endorsement. In this light, the system should inform the socialisation of collaborative outcomes with stakeholders. My conviction is that enhancing innovation collaboration leads to improved outcomes and the strengthening of the competitive position of organisations.

Abstract

The pressures to solve the complex social problems of our modern interconnected society have placed an emphasis on the use of knowledge creation collaborations to devise process and design innovations for tackling complex social problems. Despite extensive discussion in the literature, a theory for collaboration in meta-organisations that would inform improving product and process innovation has yet to emerge. To address this situation I treated a knowledge creation collaboration as a human centric, complex, adaptable social system that organisations use to solve problems in product or process innovation. Progress is monitored by assessing the gap between the current state and the state if the purpose of the collaboration was fulfilled. I call this gap "Collaborative wellness (CW)".

Collaborative processes are characterised by communications in social networks created by the interactions of knowledge creators. A knowledge creator will only participate in such a collaboration if they have the confidence to meet their assigned responsibilities. In deciding to participate, a knowledge creator interprets their responsibilities to create and perform a role-in-use which they dynamically adapt and align to the collaboration's purpose as circumstances change. In collaboration, knowledge creators negotiate compatibility between their roles-in-use and thereby form a shared sense of purpose to fulfil the collaboration's responsibilities. The concept of role-in-use alignment is central to my research.

I devised the "Collaborative Wellness System (CWS)" as a theory informed system of collaborative relationships in a framework with measures to support the evaluation and application of improvement strategies to existing collaborations. CWS may also inform the design of new collaborations. CWS is deployed as a customised architecture to suit a particular collaboration using perspectives developed from my practical experience. Improvement has the goal of enhancing both sustainability (doing more with less) and the value derived from using the created knowledge in process and product innovation. The measures of CWS form a tree structure that provides a detailed assessment across selected perspectives of a collaboration at a particular point in time. CWS relates measures to structures, processes and relationships. Four case studies validated CWS and provided a basis for a collaborative wellness scale to compare collaborations and their processes. The research has application in business process restructuring, logistics and disaster relief.

Keywords: Collaborative Wellness System, Role-in-use, Role-in-use Alignment, Knowledge Creation, Organisational Knowledge Creation Theory;

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