

The Double-Edged Sword of Collaboration Technologies

INNOVATORS' ROUNDTABLE, FALL 2012. CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA.

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“ [Even] inside the same company we're dispersed all over the world ... We need different kinds of glue to hold these networked organizations together ... The glue that we're putting in place now ... is the informal, spontaneous, collaborative, knowledge-based glue that comes with 2.0 tools and social business.”¹

Andrew McAfee, author of “Enterprise 2.0: The Dawn of Emergent Collaboration”

In the ongoing pursuit of innovation, many large companies use a variety of network-based collaboration technologies to unearth new ideas, connect employees and create seamless flows of information. And yet, therein lie some troubling ironies: technologies that are supposed to increase productivity and innovation can be a burden for the busy professionals who must learn how to use them. In an era of chronic collaboration, it's actually harder to have a conversation. Open innovation tools often generate an overwhelming torrent of ideas and input.

In short, the new collaboration technologies that promise tremendous benefits also present complex management challenges. To overcome them, companies need specific capabilities.

The third gathering of the Innovators' Roundtable, hosted by the Batten Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation on 4 October 2012, brought together innovation executives and Darden faculty members for a candid discussion of the use of technology to further corporate innovation.