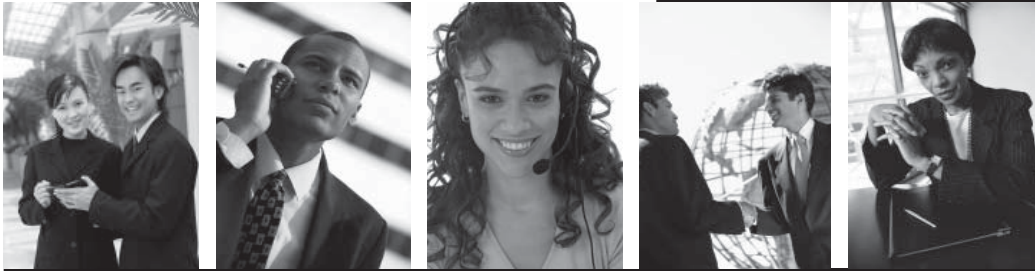


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***Small Acts of Inclusion—Creating Cultural Transformation***

Innovations  
International, Inc.

*Small Acts of Inclusion*®—Creating Cultural Transformation  
by William A. Guillory, Ph.D.

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## **Small Acts of Inclusion®—Creating Cultural Transformation**

*“Workplace relationships are a constellation of connecting and overlapping networks.”*

—William A. Guillory, Ph.D.  
President, Innovations International, Inc.

### **Defining Cultural Inclusion**

Innovations has developed a new breakthrough method for achieving cultural inclusion. We define cultural inclusion as an environment where *equity of opportunity* exists for all employees to achieve personal success and contribute to the organization’s success. Most efforts at achieving inclusion have fallen short of intended goals because of a number of reasons: 1) no inclusion measurement instrument, 2) focus solely on a leadership support system with accompanying management metrics, and 3) lack of specific objectives of inclusion that are measurable and definable.

Specific objectives include projected representation of the employee base at all levels of leadership and management; designated diverse representation in formal or “informal” high-potential programs; specifically projected diverse work force composition over a given period; a formal diverse mentorship program with a projected success rate; a leadership 360 survey based on diversity, inclusion, and high-performance; a comprehensive cultural survey based upon the achievement of an inclusive, high-performance organization; and most of all, a measurement of the transformation of the culture. In spite of these efforts, there has been less impact on a real change (transformation) of the

culture to an end-state of inclusion. We propose a holistic approach to inclusion which requires both *organizational* and *individual* transformation (see Figure 2, page 6).

### **Social Networking and Viral Dissemination through *Small Acts of Inclusion***

This program is based upon *social network theory* combined with the *viral spread* of cultural transformation. The key element is the naturally existing social networks within an organization. A social network is a group of individuals with common responsibilities or overlapping interests, e.g., project teams, leadership teams, sales and marketing teams, business units, affinity groups, etc. Transformation, from an individual perspective, occurs through the interpersonal interactions between employees within a network, as well as across networks. Contact patterns between individuals and networks are important in terms of accelerating the systematic transformation of the culture.

Transformation comes about through *small acts of inclusion*. These acts have been called “moments of truth” by Jan Carlzon, former CEO of Scandinavian Airlines Systems—opportunities in disguise to make a small difference in someone’s life. We have developed a list of behaviors corresponding to these human and information technology (IT) interactions (see page 9). The interactions are designed to positively influence change when practiced by a critical mass of the work force. Critical mass is defined as the number of employees (within a network unit) necessary to influence a transformation in the thinking and behaviors of the group.

We refer these employees as change agents (or more precisely, *agents of transformation*). Employees are classified as proactive change agents (diversity team, leadership team, affinity groups, etc.), natural change agents (influential individuals with many social contacts), and participants

(those receptive to change). Every human interaction is an opportunity for what we define as a *small act of inclusion*—and a corresponding gradual transformation of the culture.

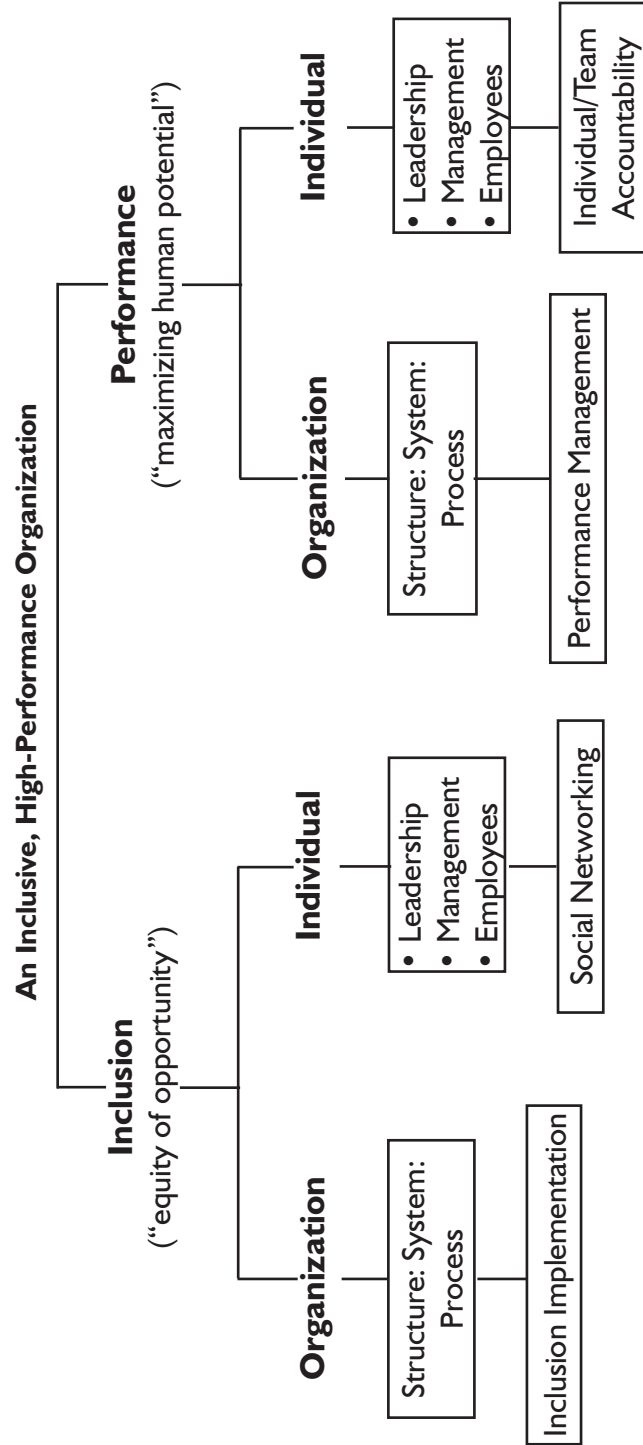
### **Creating an Inclusive, High-Performance Organization**

Figure 1 on page 4 illustrates the process of achieving an inclusive, high-performance organization. First and foremost, inclusion and performance are inseparable. It is not possible to maximize human potential and achieve high performance without an inclusive culture—both from an organizational and an individual perspective. Most organizations have made significant progress in terms of performance, but have not maximized their full potential. Less progress has been made in terms of inclusion. Therefore, the focus is on creating an inclusive culture, although opportunities for increased performance should not be ignored.

Both inclusion and performance require individual competence and an organizational support system with individual/team accountability. In the case of performance, most organizations employ an empowering support system. An empowering support system encourages maximum employee (and team) self-management in proportion to individual (and team) competency. Individual (and team) competencies—for leadership, management, and employees—include: technical, interpersonal, cross-cultural, collaboration, self-management, management, and leadership skills.

The degree of competency necessary depends on an individual's level or sphere of responsibility. All three roles—leadership, management, employee—have unique social networks in common (see page 16). The combination of an organizational commitment to high performance and the acceptance of that commitment by management and employees lead to high performance. Formal initiatives in behalf of quality, safety, productivity, performance management, and customer service often lead to a profitable

**Figure 1: A Holistic Approach to Inclusion and High Performance**

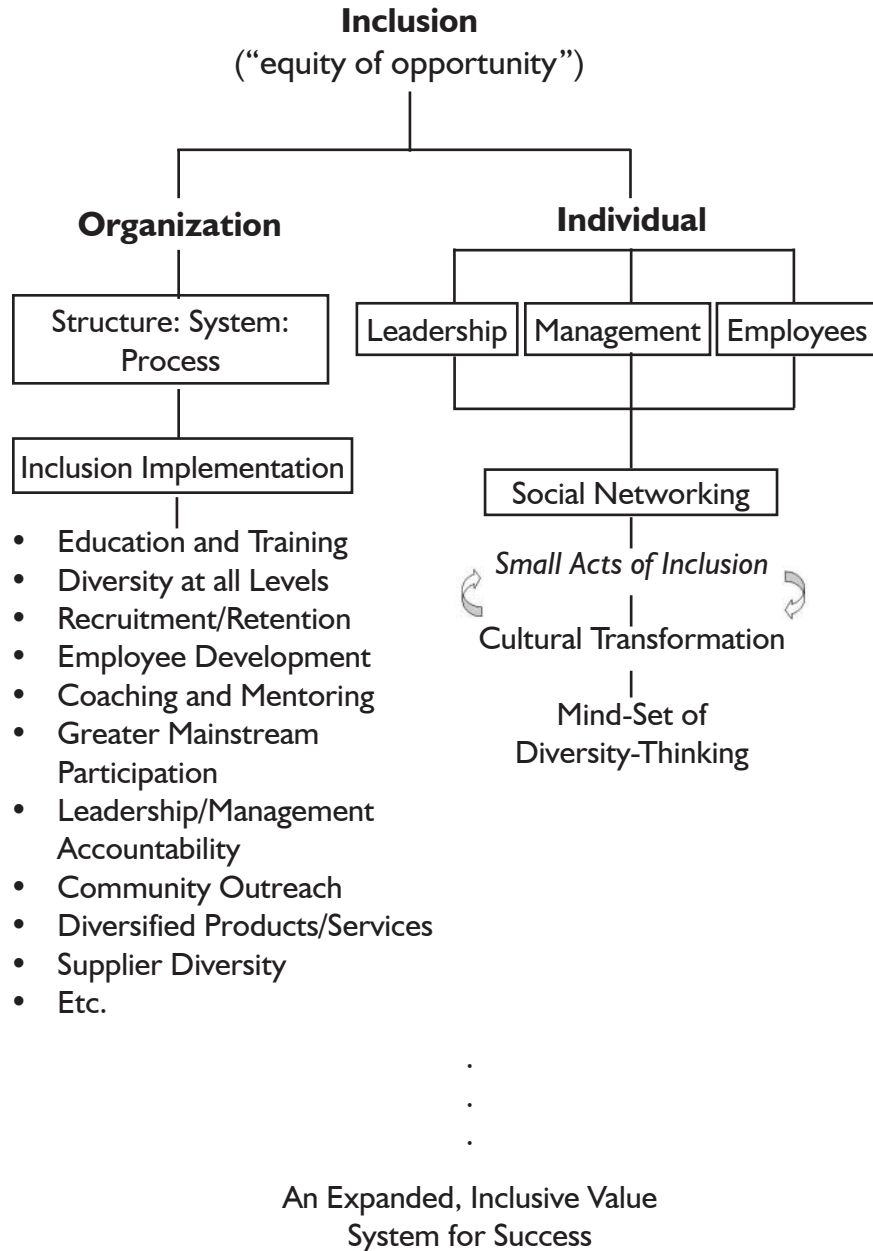


operation—but not necessarily exceptional performance. Inclusion is the vital element that maximizes performance and profitability.

### **Creating Cultural Inclusion**

Figure 2 on page 6 illustrates the components for achieving an inclusive culture. Most organizations have made considerable progress in organizational support—structure, system, and processes. For example, structure refers to diversity teams, system refers to roles and responsibilities of team members, and processes refer to the team activities. Exceptional inclusion initiatives are led by a Vice President or Director of Diversity—someone who has sufficient influence to lead the transformation effort, similar to Six Sigma. The assigned team members complete the structure, which may also include several geographical sites. Each team member is assigned to a major activity, such as supplier diversity, community outreach, education and training, global expansion, diversified products and services, diversity at all levels, or recruitment, retention, and development. They have defined metrics to measure the success of each of their organizational activities.

**Figure 2: A Holistic Approach to Inclusion**



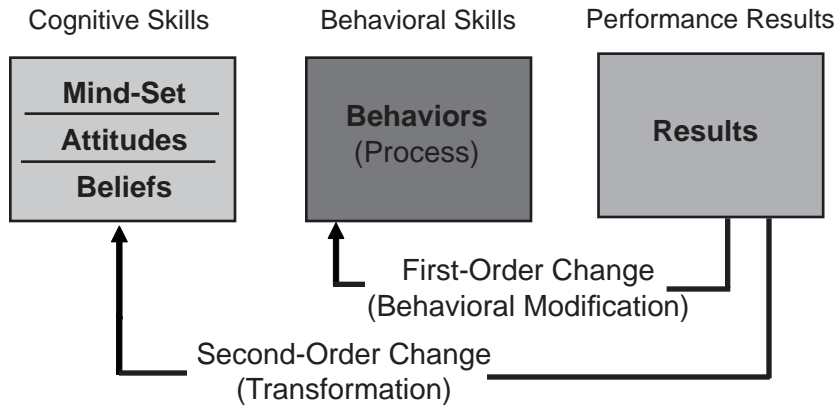
## Cultural Inclusion and Inclusive Participation

As noted above, considerable success has been made by many organizations in establishing systems, processes, and implementation strategies for achieving greater *inclusive participation*. Inclusive participation refers to greater opportunities for women and persons of color to participate in mainstream business-related activities. However, the ultimate objective of inclusion is to transform the culture such that special programs focused on these individuals are unnecessary.

The difference is between change and transformation. *Change* is externally focused on structure, systems, and processes for inclusive participation. *Transformation* is internally focused on the beliefs, attitudes, and mind-set that dominate the culture—the cognitive context of the culture. The cognitive context is simply the prevailing organizational commitment and receptivity to inclusion—which translates into behaviors that begin to transform the culture. The cognitive context is ultimately the determining factor which creates or prevents the achievement of inclusion.

The focus of social networking is on the individual transformation of leadership, management, and employees through their day-to-day interactions. These interactions are designed to not only accomplish a task, but also bring about an irreversible change in employees' cognitive and behavioral skills, as illustrated by the State of Mind Diagram shown on the following page as Figure 3.

**Figure 3: The State of Mind Diagram**



*Cognitive skills* are the driving force that makes behavioral skills effective in producing significant results. Cognitive skills include commitment, dedication, sensitivity, awareness, accountability, and responsibility.

*Behavioral skills* include mentoring, self-management, coaching, relationship, communication, cultural competence, and problem-solving. It's vital to understand that without a strong *commitment* to inclusion, behavioral skills are of limited effectiveness in bringing about cultural transformation.

**Measurement Instruments**

Innovations also designs and administers a generalized cultural inclusion instrument that is uniquely adapted for a specific network. These instruments can be designed as an online intranet email pulse survey. Once developed and perfected, they can be administered and interpreted internally; possibly by HR or the Diversity Team. This instrument is designed to measure the rate of cultural transformation through *small acts of inclusion*. Examples of these acts are listed on the following page.

## Small Acts of Inclusion

Listed below are examples of *small acts of inclusion* for one's personal transformation and for influencing the transformation of others.

- Having lunch with someone different than you
- Coaching someone culturally different
- Mentoring someone outside your comfort zone
- Thinking outside the box
- Teaming with someone with the opposite brain orientation (Right/Left)
- Confronting yourself in terms of exclusion
- Honestly evaluating your commitment to inclusion
- Noticing diversity in everything you do with others
- Sending notes of thanks to the Diversity Team
- Sending notes of thanks to managers and leaders who are visible examples of inclusion
- Seeking to understand your social network differences
- Sharing a professional learning experience
- Coaching a new skill
- Adopting a zero-defect mentality; and coaching it in others
- Learning a new skill every week; and passing it on
- Clarifying your career plan, then helping others clarify theirs
- Evaluating your skills—Interpersonal, Self-Management, Cross-Cultural, Technical, Management, Leadership, etc.
- Evaluating others in terms of results—with sensitivity
- Helping others with career planning
- Helping others adopt a mind-set of 100% responsibility and accountability
- Sharing a personal learning experience
- Discouraging gossip
- Listening to a personal problem without giving advice.
- Thanking someone for his/her support
- Doing something kind for someone with whom you work
- Forgiving someone who was unkind to you
- Creating a “space” between experience and anger
- Being sensitive to the shortcomings of others—no one is “truly” perfect
- Learning from the shortcomings of others—they may be a mirror
- Making every interaction “a moment of truth”
- Counting the number of friends you made by being “right”

### **Advantages of the *Small Acts of Inclusion* Initiative**

1. ***Cost Effective***—this initiative primarily involves the active participation of the organization after an initial investment in learning the program.
2. ***Rapid Implementation***—the implementation process can be implemented with the least amount of orientation. The “how to” is simple.
3. ***Rapid Cultural Change***—the change process toward inclusion occurs rapidly through social networking using *small acts of inclusion*.
4. ***Rapid Network Unit Transformation***—the rate of change within a network unit does not depend on the rate of change of the organization.
5. ***Selective Selection***—network units and individuals can influence change without the participation of everyone.
6. ***Ease of Implementation***—the acts of inclusion are small, everyday things we do with co-workers.
7. ***Alignment and Unity***—the process creates a focus on cooperation, collaboration, and information and knowledge sharing.
8. ***Cultural Transformation***—the process creates the most vital element for inclusion—individual and work force transformation.

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## **Organizational and Personal Drivers for Inclusion**

### ***Organizational Drivers***

An inclusive environment

- maximizes creative and innovative ideas,
- maximizes employee utilization, engagement, and performance,
- is a necessity to manage and serve as a diverse, multi-cultural work force and customer base, respectively,
- is a necessity to attract, develop, and retain the best talent available, and
- is a necessity for empowered, collaborative, and self-managed performance.

### ***Personal Drivers***

An inclusive environment

- ensures the opportunity for personal success, e.g., development, visible opportunities, and advancement,
- ensures a workplace where trust, sensitivity, and respect for the individual is ingrained in the culture,
- creates the feeling of being wanted, respected, and valued, as an employee,
- ensures work-life balance,
- ensures greater mental, physical, and emotional well-being,
- ensures supportive and collaborative relationships,
- and most of all, creates significantly improved quality of work and personal life.

## Implementing Cultural Inclusion

### *Guidelines*

1. Model the organization in terms of existing formal/informal networks (every employee identifies his or her major network units; a major network unit consists of the people with which you have the greatest interaction).
2. Brainstorm or select ten *small acts of inclusion* (small acts) for a given formal/informal network—alone or with your network co-workers.
3. Make small cards and/or posters with these ten small acts for posting and distribution (three to six months turnover).
4. Proactive change agents take responsibility for initiating the change process within his or her network unit; and solicit the participation of other network members.
5. Proactive change agents select a small act for each network member and begin by implementing each simultaneously over a two or three month period.
6. Each member of a formal network selects a small act for each network member and implements them over a period of two or three months. (Approximate time to develop a habit is four to five weeks per person.)
7. For formal networks, develop, design, and implement an informal email evaluation of the process, its effectiveness, and change in the network culture.
8. Formal networks meet to discuss success stories, challenges, and ideas for improvement (absolutely no criticism of others is allowed).
9. The second stage involves the application of small acts for employees outside of the major network(s) (less frequent interactions).

10. Make use of information technology to assist the process of interaction with a larger sphere of employees.
11. Comprehensively publish and disseminate success stories.

*Share success stories!*

### ***Organizational Role***

1. Select or appoint a Small Acts Team, e.g., existing diversity team, HR team, etc. to coordinate the organizational process.
2. Meet with each formal network as assigned or requested to facilitate their implementation process, according to the guidelines above (one person from the coordination team).
3. Brainstorm, with a network, at least fifty *small acts of inclusion*.
4. Each network member makes a confidential choice of one small act for each network member; including himself or herself.
5. He or she proceeds to implement them in the initial three month period. (Four to five weeks to learn a new habit.)
6. There is no monitoring, judgment, or evaluation of those who choose or do not choose to actively participate.
7. Coordinator meets with the network team every two weeks for a sharing of success stories, challenges, and ideas for improvement. (Absolutely no criticism of network team members)
8. The two-week meetings may involve facilitation (member of the Small Acts Team where improvements are requested).

### ***Innovations' Role***

1. Provide guideline booklets for establishing Small Acts Networks (hard copy or download formats).
2. Provide an Innovations Senior Consultant to facilitate the process of implementation into the organization (consulting visit).
3. Facilitate the design of the major formal networks.
4. Facilitate a pilot network and help perfect the process (preferably with the Small Acts Team).
5. Facilitate a train-the-trainer process of selected individuals who will serve as internal network facilitators or coordinators.
6. Design a unique cultural inclusion measurement tool, e.g., pulse survey.
7. Provide a Senior Consultant for strategy sessions to “brand” small acts in your organization, e.g., manufacturing, sales and marketing, research and development, executive leadership, and other functional units.
8. Serve ongoing consulting needs, as requested.

## The Backbone and Personal Social Networks

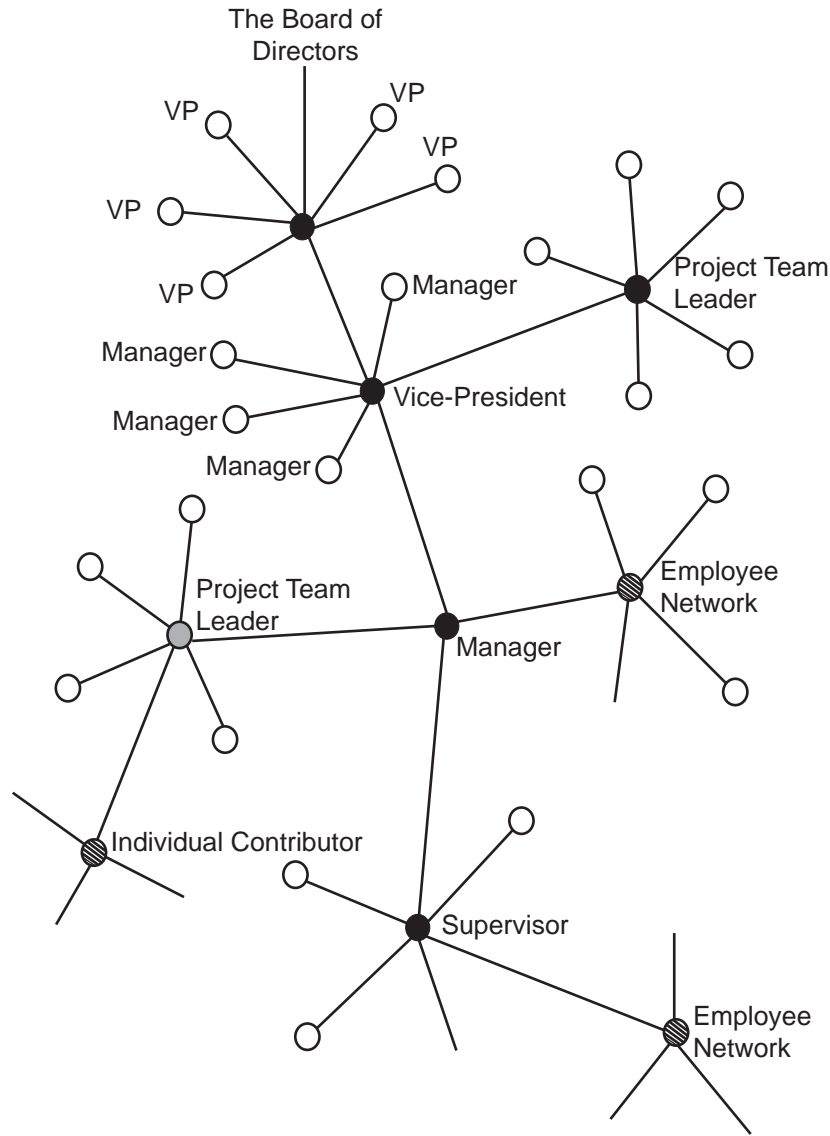
An example of a backbone network involving leadership and management is shown on the following page as Figure 4. This network group is key in establishing the behaviors expected of employees. Employees are influenced most by what leadership and management do and least influenced by what they say.

Each of the units of this network should be facilitated through this program to set an example for other network groups. The most important strategy is to begin the Small Acts Program in those network units that are most receptive to creating inclusion.

On page 17 there is a blank Personal Social Network diagram for you to complete. Begin by doing the following:

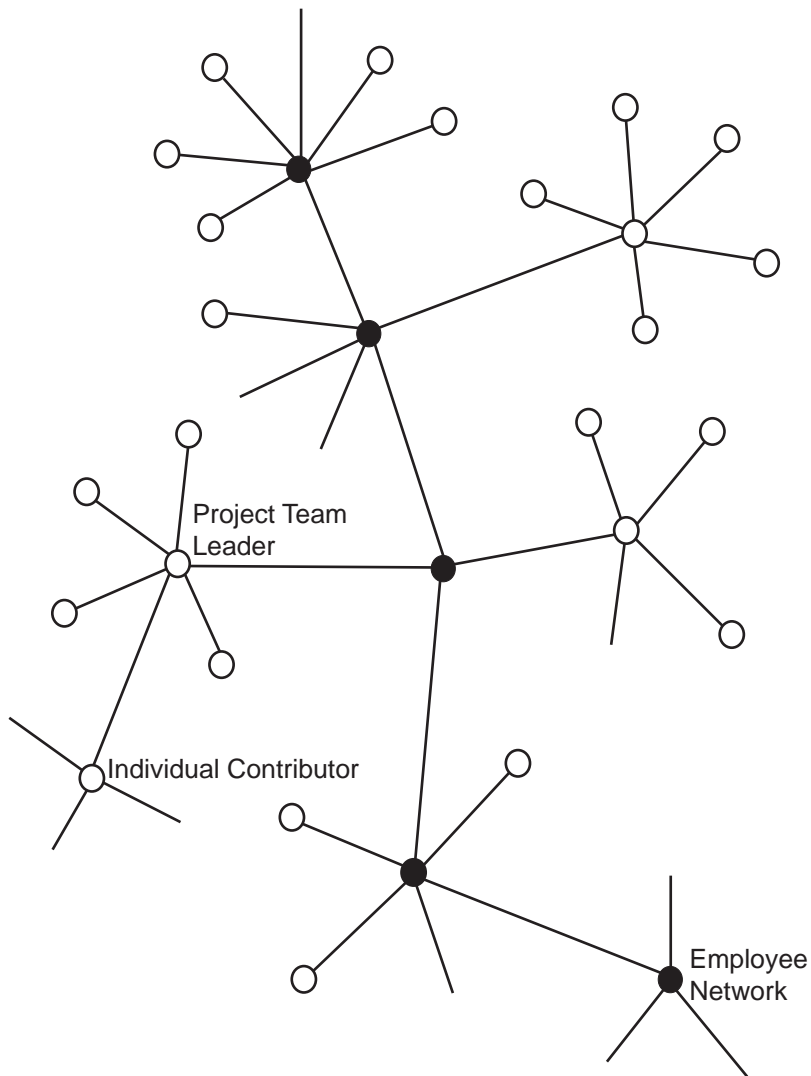
- Labeling your major workplace network units.
- Entering your most frequent co-worker associations in the workplace.
- Scanning the list on page 9 to select the most appropriate small act of inclusion or you can also create your own small act for that person.
- Practicing that small act for four to five weeks until it becomes a habit.
- Using this small act for others, where appropriate.
- Practicing three or four such small acts for other co-workers simultaneously.
- Not having any expectations of something being done for you.
- Create an “accountability buddy” to partner with.
- Encouraging others to participate in the small acts process.
- Beginning to notice how the quality of your life changes.

**Figure 4: Network Theory and Cultural Transformation—An Organization’s “Backbone” Network**



The black dots represent leadership agents of change, striped for employee agents of change, gray for natural agents of change, and white for participants in spreading cultural transformation through human interaction.

**Figure 5: Your Personal Social Network**



The black dots represent you in a variety of social network units in your organization, such as work teams, committees, projects, business unit, friends, affinity group, sports team, support group, coaches, or mentors.

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**About the Author**

William A. Guillory, Ph.D. is an internationally known business consultant, keynote speaker, and workshop facilitator. He works with public and private organizations in the areas of diversity, leadership, and high performance. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah where he is the CEO of Innovations International, Inc.—a human resources development firm.

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