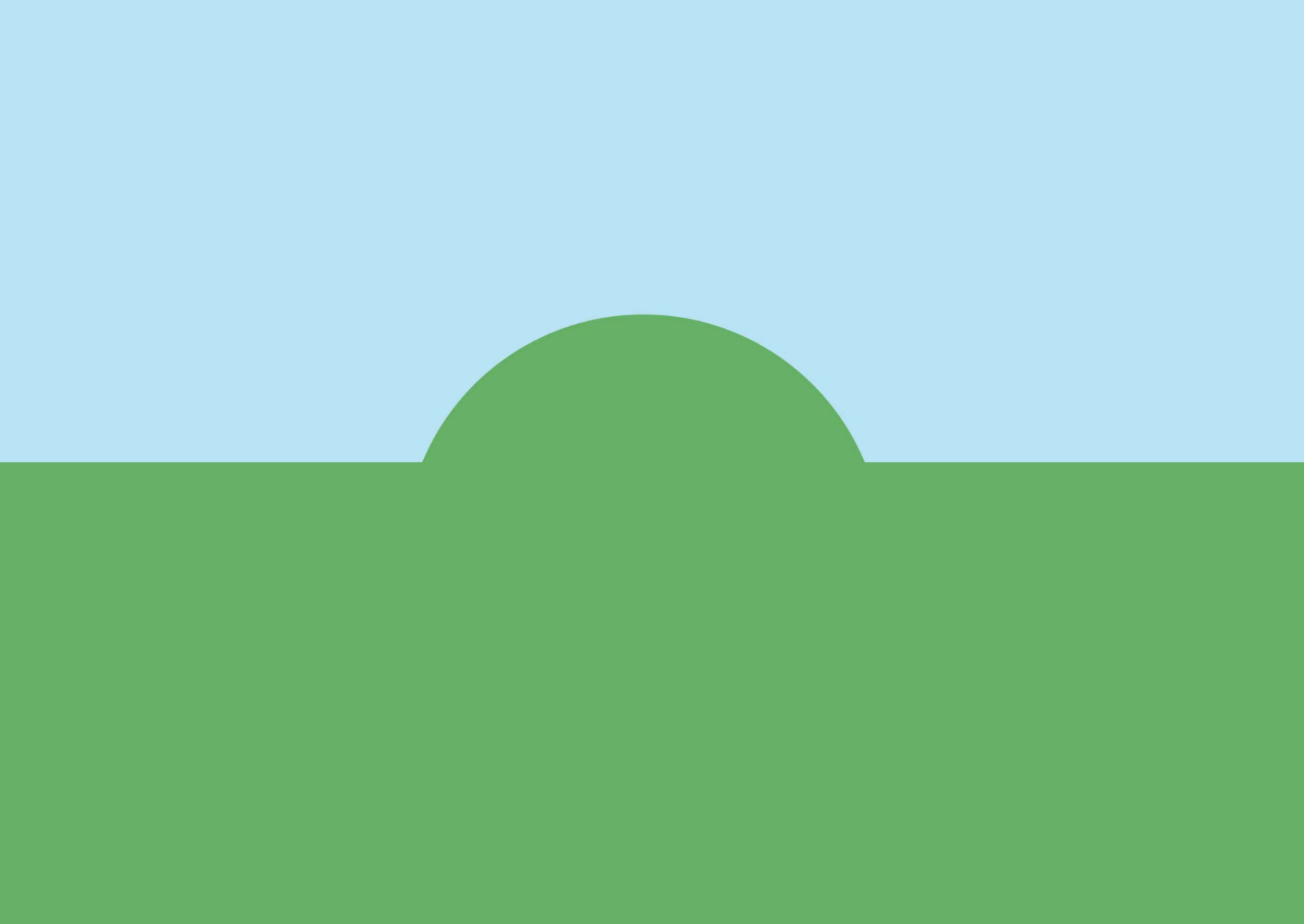


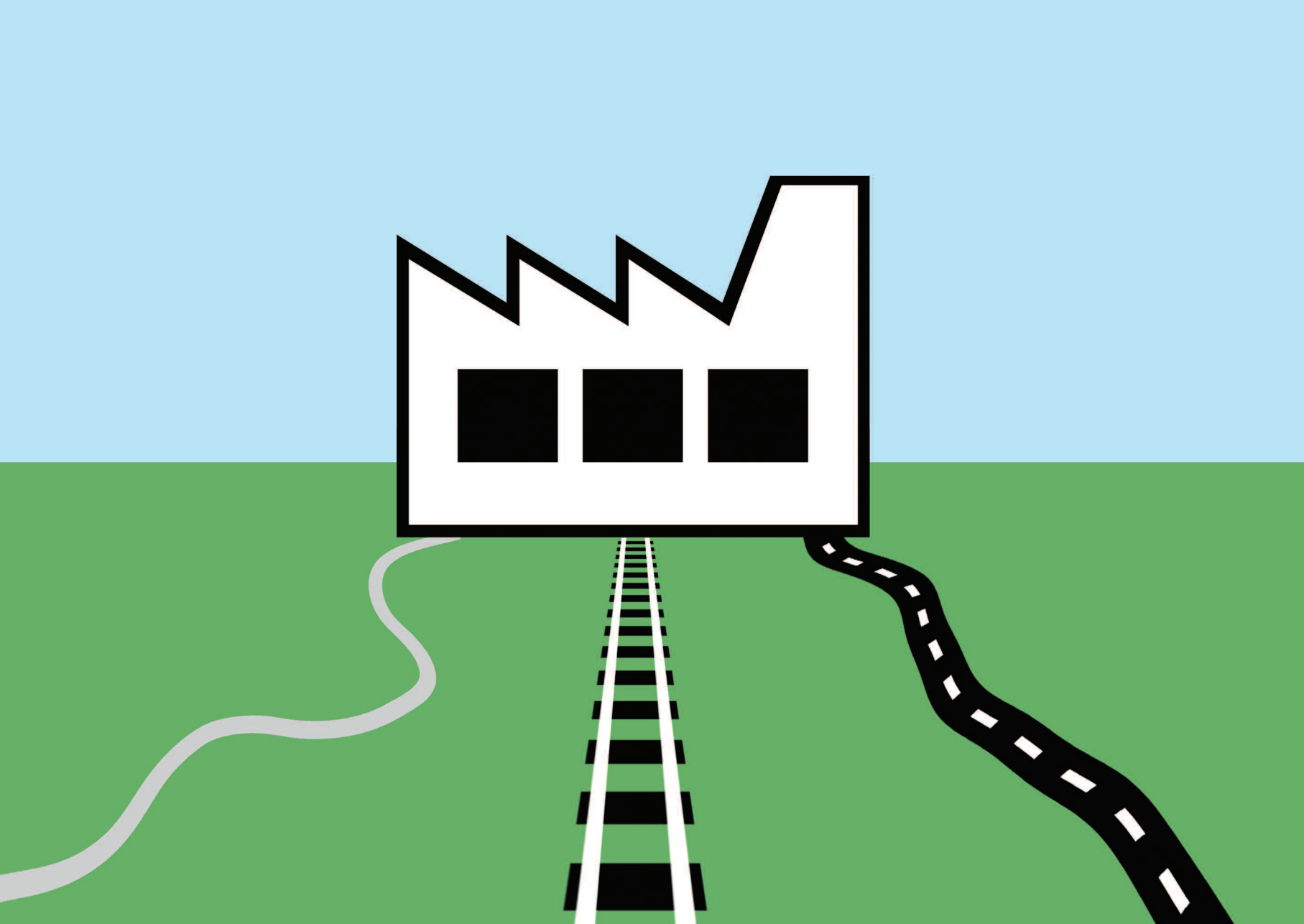
The networking landscape

Navigation for the route to networking organisations



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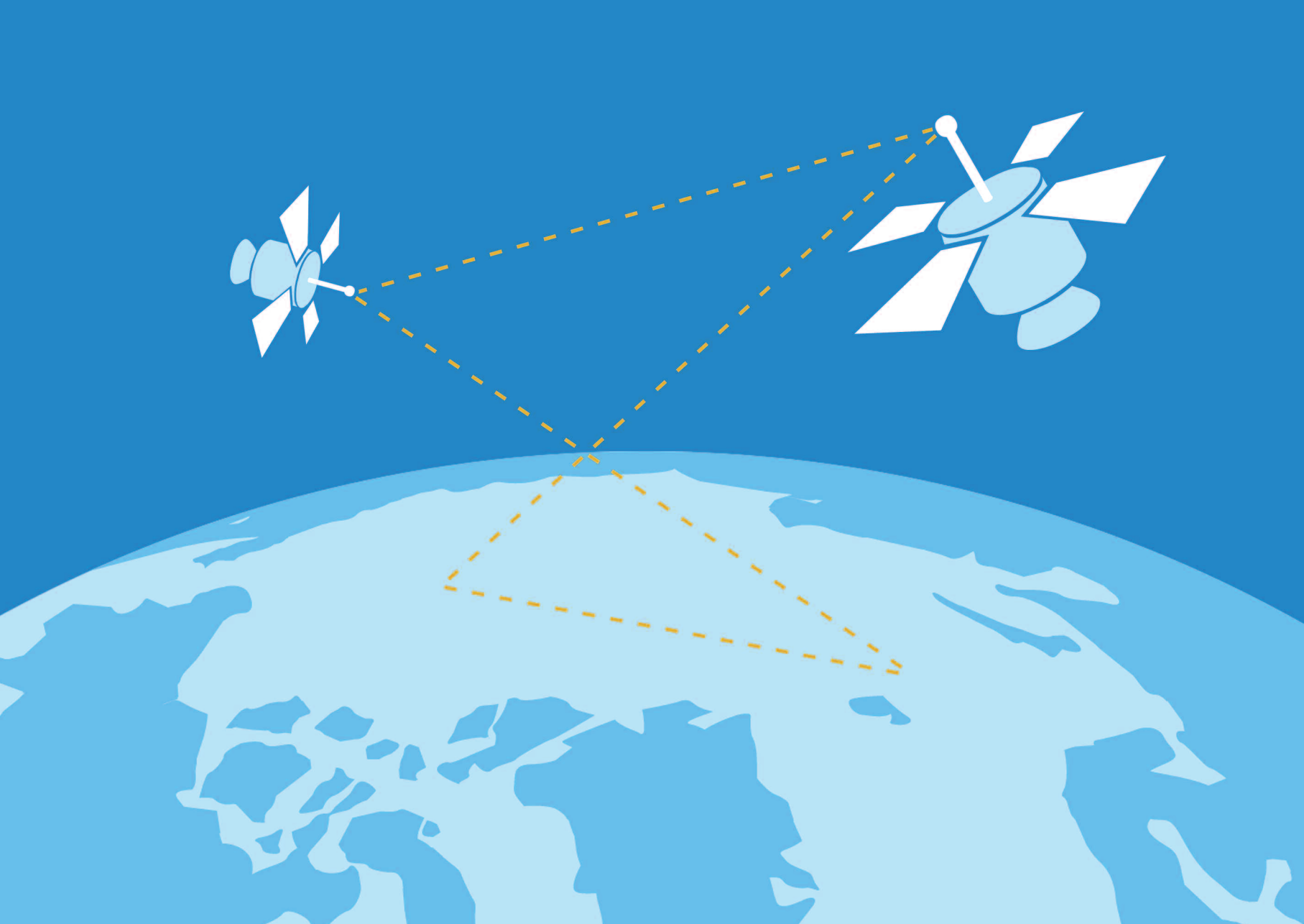
Introduction to the landscape of networking organisations

The factory at the core

In the early days of industrialisation a factory was built inside a town, thereby dominating the entire surrounding landscape. Streets, roads, canals and rail tracks carried people and goods towards this centre of activity. Residential areas were constructed around the factory, complemented later by sports fields and other social and cultural facilities. A tight community emerged around the factory. Inside the factory peace reigned supreme due to established top-down hierarchy from factory manager to the junior clerk. On the workshop floor the flexing of muscles dictated the picking order. The entire community around the factory was internally focused and upward looking once the factory doors closed. Orders were given and executed, a pattern which was replicated outside the factory. In this static world positions were crystal clear; class dictated standing and everyone knew what he/she was supposed to do in life. The factory was the central nerve system; experiences in the outside world – in its widest possible meaning – were a luxury for most.

Free flow of knowledge connections

The landscape of 21st century networking organisations paints an entirely different picture. Networking organisations have hardly or no impact on their physical surroundings. At first glance one could easily miss the notion

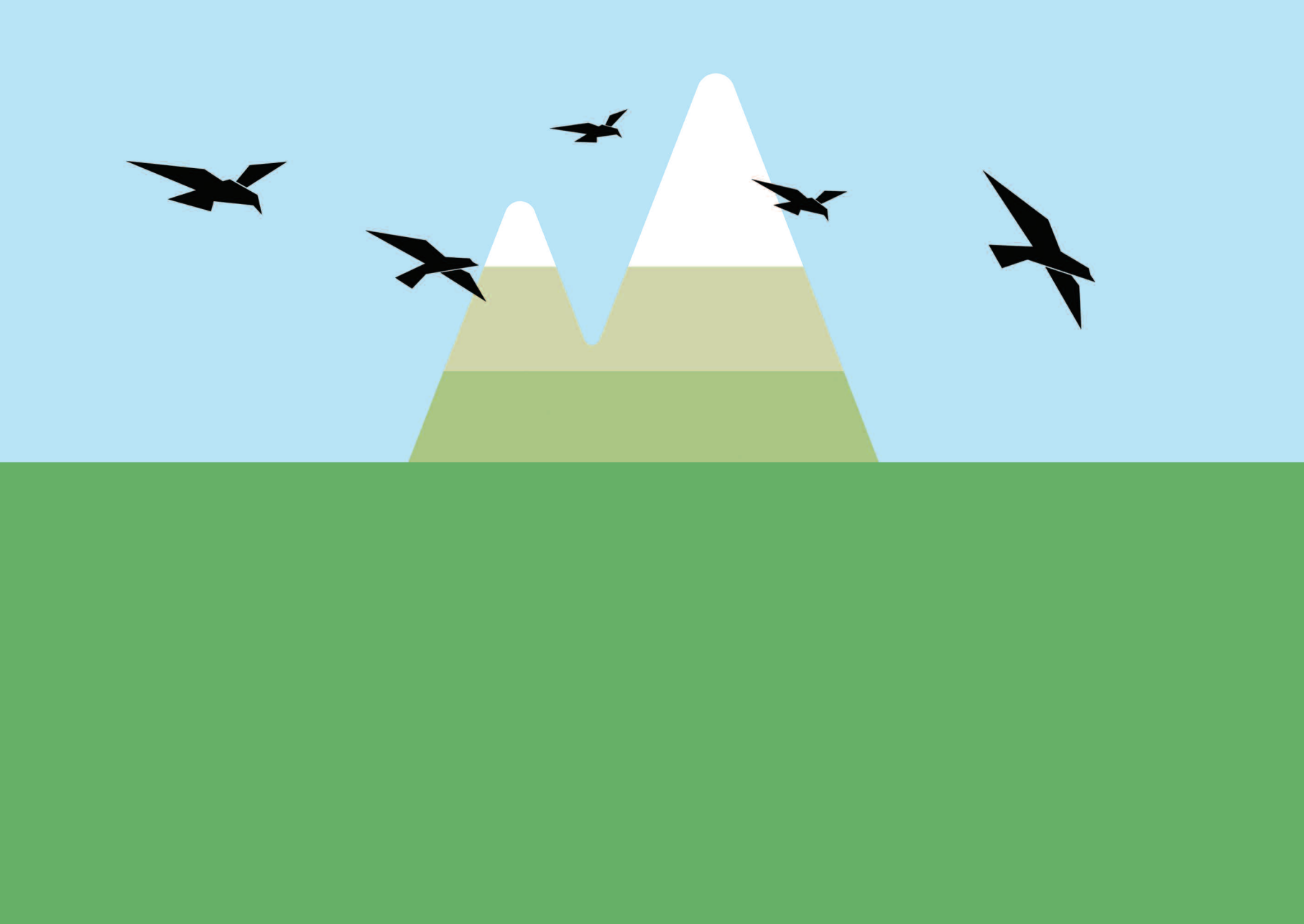


of an active company since most work is executed in a virtual world with people working in tandem from many different corners of the world. The connections are mainly multi-media based since most traffic consists of information and knowledge, not raw materials and goods.

A huge network of new and relevant contacts outside the organisation is a result of the outward looking perspective of networkers. They need to reach out in order to do their job; the world is their oyster and knows no boundaries. Organisational structures, hierarchy and physical barriers have completely moved into the background and the creation and implementation of innovative services and products has come to the fore. This means that competencies such as initiative, innovative entrepreneurship, market knowledge and a client-facing attitude have become vital characteristics of every single knowledge worker or professional. Equal working relationships are more akin to those working environments than strict hierarchical lines. The most important element is though that professionals in knowledge-intensive networking organisations tend to be constantly in motion. Any number of projects occupies their mind at a single point in time and different roles demand different actions as they physically and virtually move around this vast landscape, which forms their working environment.

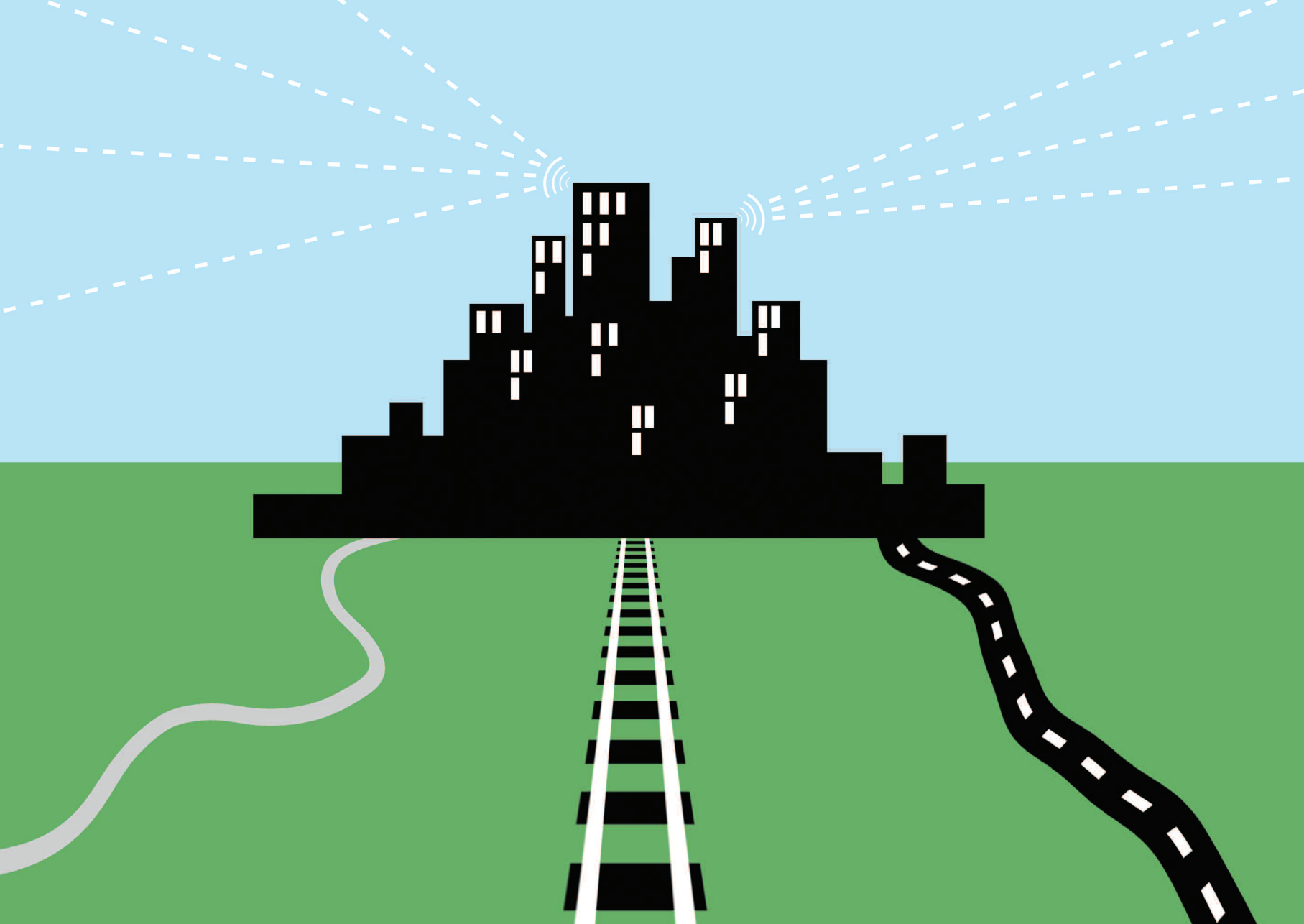
Transformations

The landscape metaphor was chosen in order to describe the transformation from a static, hierarchical company structure towards a dynamic networking hub which functions thanks to horizontal knowledge based connections. It has only been a decade ago since we saw the first networking organisations emerge. It is still the playing field of innovative leading edge organisations that cross the Rubicon by opting for a new way of working.



This new structure is already rewarding to many of them as the level of innovation, resilience and capability to embrace change shows. Moreover, knowledge workers seem to feel 'at home' in those working environments and flat structures.

However, the road towards a true networking enterprise is not an easy one. In order for it to be successful, dead wood has to be chopped, established ways rooted out and so on. In this book we describe the transformation by means of the landscape metaphor. What and who do you meet along the way? How do you deal with that? What are the obstacles and how to tackle or sail around those? What are the characteristics of a true networking enterprise and how to embed a way of working that is based on co-operation, communication, equality and trust? What binds knowledge workers and how do you 'organise' a sense of cohesion and togetherness? How do you stay on course? What kind of leadership is needed in a networking organisation? How do you turn the new networking into a sustainable approach?



Networking organisations are the frontline troopers that weave the fabric for a new knowledge economy and a connected society. A lot has been written about this topic, but very few dare to touch on the how – the way towards this new structure, the way of working and the road to true leadership. View this book as your route planner or your navigation system. It has been written on the basis of academic insight and study and many years of hands-on experience in the transformation of networking organisations in a wide variety of companies and organisations.

We trust and believe that this accessible route planner illustrated by Dario Bardic and translated by Conny Dorrestijn will turn out to be a valuable companion for any company and knowledge worker who purposefully wants to set course towards an innovative networking organisation.

Annemieke Roobeek
Amsterdam/Florence, September 2006



Knowledge flows

Open connections between knowledge sources are a necessary and vital ingredient for the development of any knowledge economy. Knowledge comes from near and far, ranging from universities, company laboratories up to and including individual resources. In an ideal world the doors to these sources are wide open in order to easily let new knowledge in and co-create and apply new views and insights. A knowledge economy indeed is a huge network with many branches and nodes in both a physical and virtual sense. Together they form the infrastructure along which (in)visible parcels of knowledge, information, experiences and observations travel. These parcels in turn are the building blocks for creativity and innovation. Progress is simply impossible without a free flow of knowledge. The stage of development and success of a knowledge economy is measured by the innovations in terms of new products, services, processes, insights and understanding of systems and complex issues.

The ancient Greeks taught us 'panta rhei kai ouden menei', which means 'everything flows and nothing remains the same'. The first part is frequently being referred to, but the second part of the phrase is probably even more relevant. Quite often indeed, new insights evolve into dynamic developments, which subsequently uproot the status quo. At that point change is inevitable. Not because anything that went on before was wrong or undesirable, but simply because a new knowledge environment offers the opportunity to do things differently, enhance products, serve clients better, exchange knowledge and co-operate in a new context.

Knowledge flows and innovation changes everything.



A sea of knowledge

Never in the history of mankind have we experienced such a wealth of knowledge at our fingertips. More people than ever have gone to school; better educational systems have been established to teach children, teenagers and also increasingly adults. Lifelong learning has become a mantra. Where in the old days a diploma would take you far, these days trainees are expected to turn up with a full portfolio of diplomas and certificates. Knowledge exchange has become an industry in itself. Knowledge gathering has become a time consuming activity for young people and professionals, and it never stops.

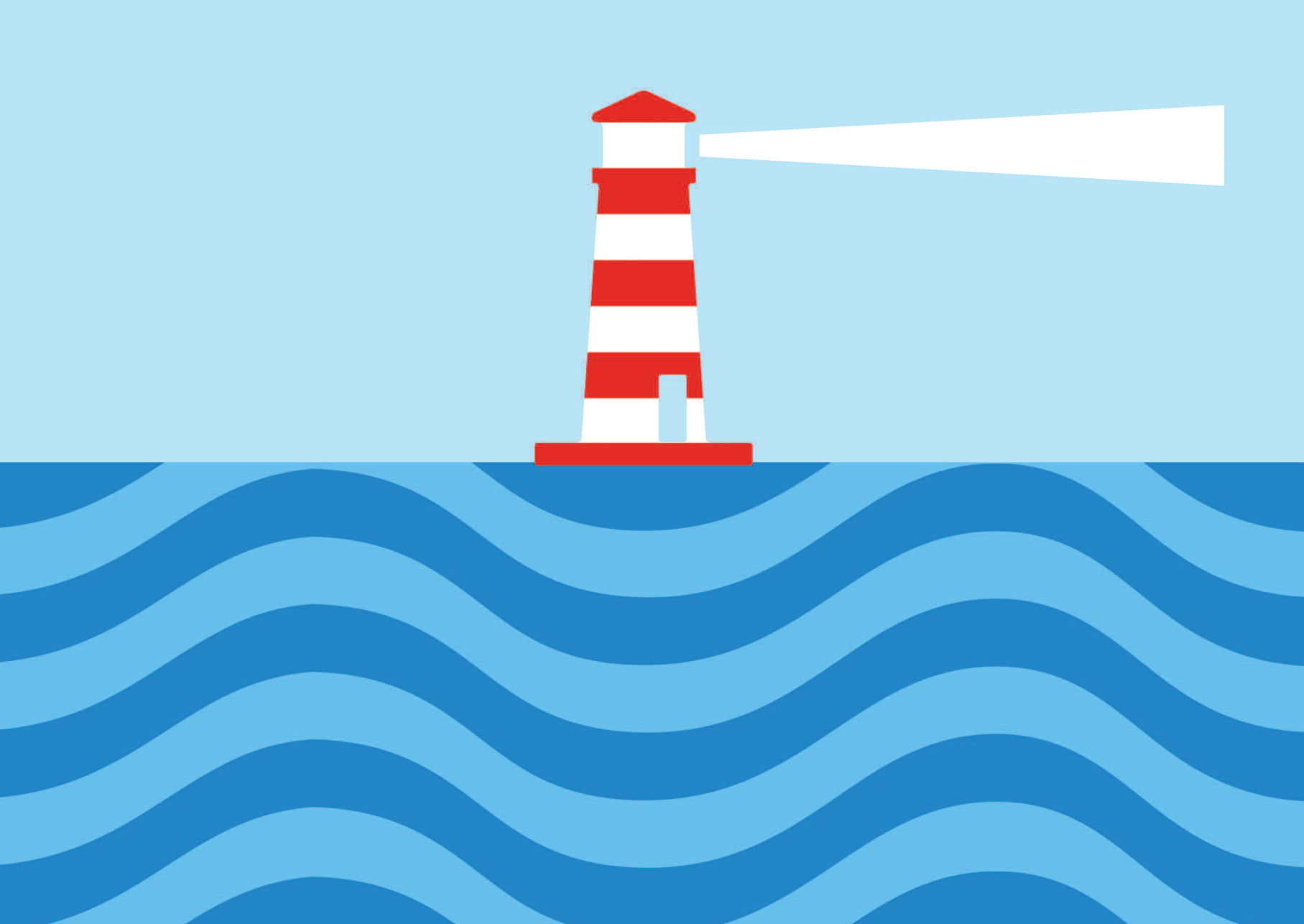
University research, and places such as labs, colleges, consultancies, knowledge intensive industries, academic hospitals and other semi-scientific institutions where applied research takes place form the basis for the so-called formal knowledge development. Articles, books, reports and databanks are the carriers in which the formal knowledge of the researched phenomena is captured.



Exploring the sea

In a sea of knowledge, there is also a flux of informal knowledge. This refers to experiences, field lessons, insights that develop over time and sometimes even become de-facto standards or wisdom. Informal knowledge is often underestimated, yet at the same time the very key to a successful application of new knowledge.

It is therefore quite astonishing that in many cases the sea of knowledge is underutilised. So much knowledge from universities never leaves 'the door' and many patents linger and wither away on the shelves of (technical) universities and companies. In more cases there is even a lack of awareness of which information is available and where and how it can be applied. At this moment in time we often struggle to find a knowledge network which points out what to find where. The sea of knowledge is wide, too wide and one can easily get lost. Time is lost and opportunities wasted, there must be a better way...



Beacons

Whoever ventures out to find new insights and knowledge needs something to hold onto. It is easy to get disoriented on the sea of knowledge, or to forget your original destiny. One does not know where to begin or how to navigate. True, sometimes it is pleasant and even fruitful to aimlessly float around and pick up accidental pieces that happen to drift by. Easy come, easy go is unfortunately often the reality; the little pieces are easily forgotten and hard to place in context.

Beacons, indicators, lighthouses are called for and in a knowledge economy these are personified in visionary leaders who keep the people around them on course. These leaders can be passionate teachers in schools, up-to-date managers in companies, conceptual thinkers and political leaders with a story that is understood by a wide audience.

One beacon on its own offers little support, once passed it is easy to wander off again. The secret lies in a system of connected beacons. This calls for preparation, organisation and agreements between people on where to position which type of beacon and how to maintain the system. Indeed, a lighthouse without light has no purpose at all in times of need. For some reason people expect a knowledge economy to simply 'have' a navigation support system. Without Google and other search engines people would have great difficulty in finding information on the Internet. Most information and knowledge is however obtained from personal contact with knowledge carriers (co-professionals) who will help you advance with the help of their network. Those carriers of knowledge who act as beacons in daily life are easily recognised and acknowledged by the people and institutions around them. They are the people everyone turns to for reflection, for information, for a hint in the right direction. They are accessible, open and have the ability to listen. On top of that they add value for they know the other beacons in the network and how to make connections.



Islands of knowledge

Sometimes you come across a company, an organisation, a department or a person with just the information you were looking for. You have arrived at a knowledge oasis. Immediately you can set out to gather information, ask questions and soak up any knowledge you can lay your hands on. You feel welcome; people help you and get involved. There seems to be a click with the other knowledge workers, even though you never met them before. They understand your issue, take you seriously, quiz you on your objectives and are in short very co-operative. At this place, where you feel instantly at home, you meet a way of working you never encountered before, but you trust the open ambiance and the hospitality on this island of knowledge.

It all seems so informal and easy, yet everybody is occupied with his or her own activities and people are constantly in touch. It feels like a busy 'beehive', but one with a relaxed atmosphere. The open workspace is available for all and hierarchy is non-existent or at the very least not visible to an outsider. No executive floors with spacious offices for board members, they simply fit in on the workshop floor. They co-operate and help you as much as any of the others; they share things with you without setting out the terms and conditions beforehand. They work on a basis of trust. Is this what they call 'working the networked way'? It certainly works here for in little time you have found your answers and met new co-workers.

This oasis, this knowledge island is a place you will return to for sure. You promise to share the progress of your project with them. After all, there is no such thing as a free lunch.

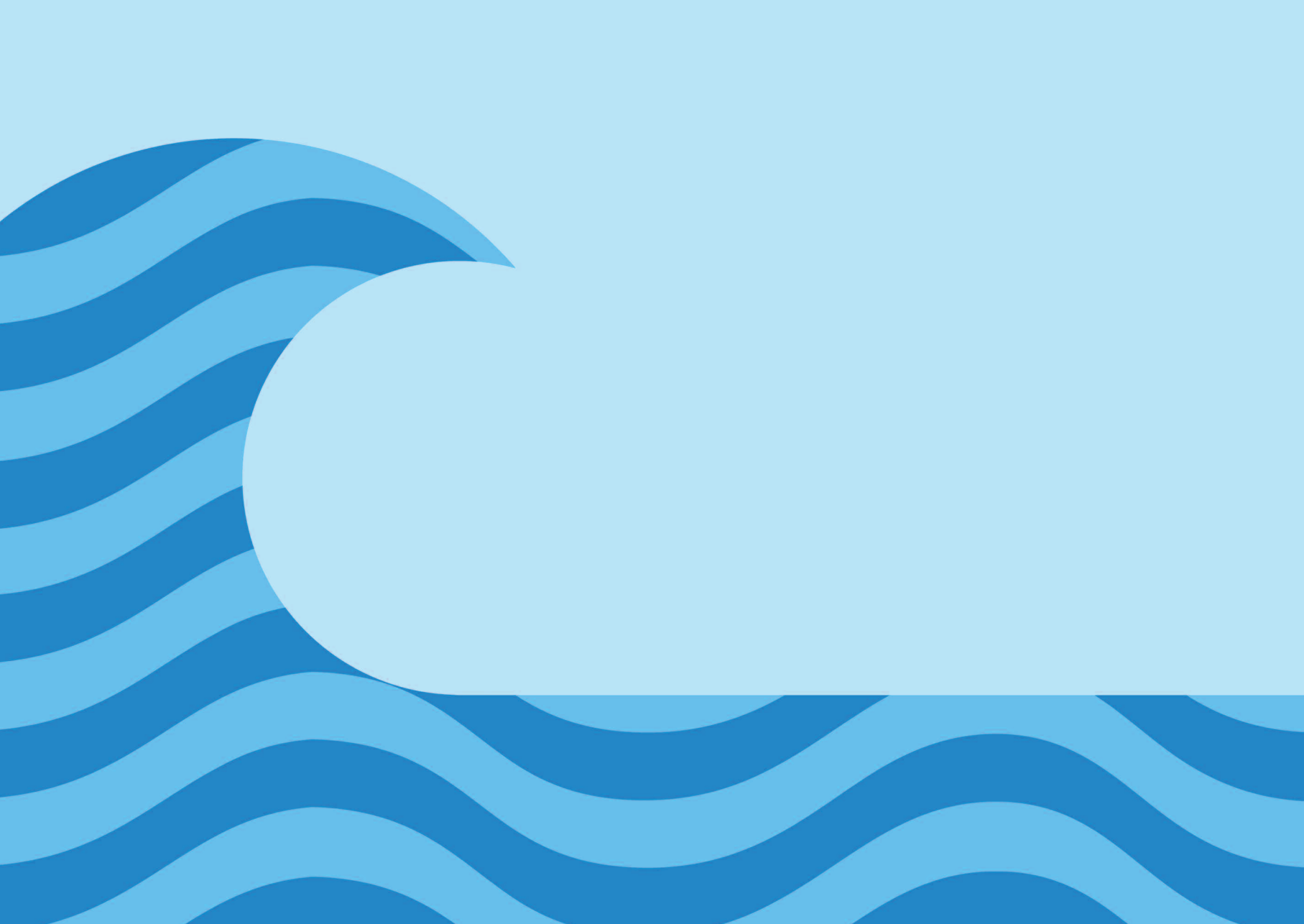


Tuning

Knowledge is something to take in, to develop and to share. Tuning is an important element in all these processes. In general you are focused on a particular goal (you know what you need the new information for) and that is why you search with a purpose and you follow the beacons that keep you on course. In most cases you are not the only one sailing those seas of knowledge. You are in the middle of a flotilla, all moving forward to find something to their liking.

Especially in overcrowded places it is useful to tune. If all people run around doing the same thing, the net result is a general hold-up. Everything comes to a stand still. If you want to do something additional or something different, it is necessary to connect in order not to be in each others way. Tuning inside and outside your company with colleagues, suppliers and clients is a prerequisite to come to an optimum use of knowledge and infrastructure. It also helps you to discover early on what particular needs others have and more often than not you will be able to help each other along the way. By tweaking and tuning you are actually building a network without knowing it. A network that becomes stronger and more connected as you work closer together.

Many ways of communicating are at your disposal for fine tuning. Personal contact remains the favourite and most compelling way of communication because eye contact builds trust. Once the foundation is there, other virtual means of communication can be applied in order to ensure a continuation of networking and collaboration.



Knowledge breakthroughs

Looking back at history one can pinpoint certain periods during which a lot of new technological and scientific knowledge came together in a short time frame. These waves of knowledge often consisted of a build-up of widely varying undercurrents. The breakthrough we experienced in the 70-s and 80-s of the last century was an amalgamation of new insights in the field of information and communication technologies, biotechnology and nano technology and new materials and coatings. Fundamental elements of these new knowledge flows were already existent in scientific circles, but certain vital links were still missing for the take-off of the new techno-economic paradigm. Links that turn the still elements into action: the networking way of working, flat structures and true leadership.

Very often a particular factor of urgency is required to intensify the search and bundling or to come to a new combination of knowledge. The applications developed in the 70-s and 80-s had a lot to do with new and emerging needs at the time. Production processes became more complex, the services industry was booming and so there was enormous need for a faster and reliable data processing. Efficiency, shortening time-to-market and increasing quality are often the main drivers of these sea changes. Sometimes political or ideological motives enforce technological breakthroughs, such as the landing of the first man on the moon, a project initiated by the Americans over the 60-s and 70-s.

These tipping points in time are tremendously exciting times, for they enable new paradigms: new insights, new ways of working and acting, new products and services and last but not least new leadership styles. This is also a moment in time where we see a spur of scenario-testing in order to prepare for times of change to come.

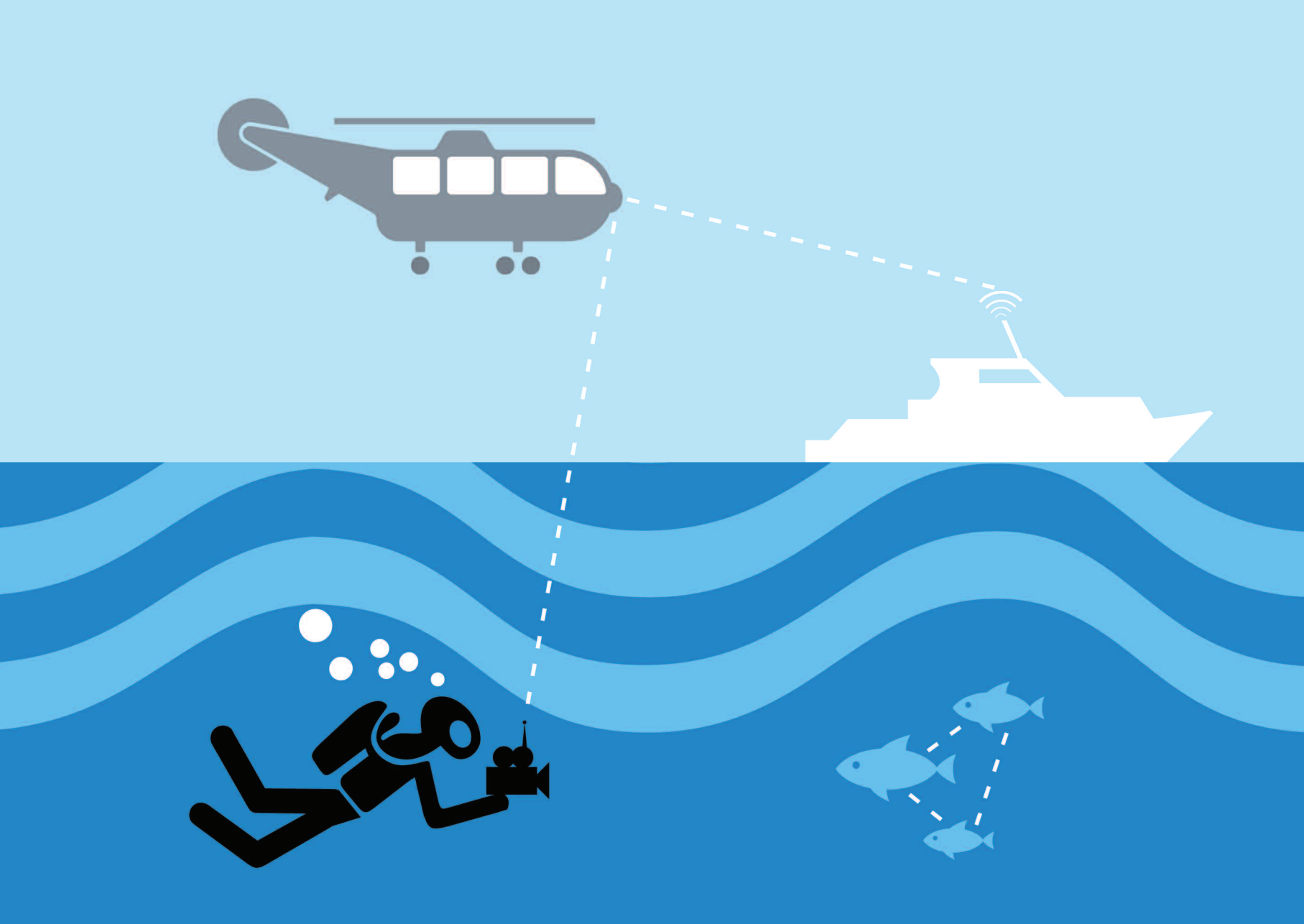


Obstacles

Knowledge development occurs in many different places at the same time, hence the 'happening' of a sea of knowledge. More and more knowledge workers set sail on the sea of knowledge. But like every other ocean, this sea is not without its dangers; we are not talking about the occasional shark, a feisty breeze or even a storm which takes true skill to skipper through. No, the real danger is underneath the surface, hidden for the eye: icebergs. The trouble with icebergs is that they put a spell on you with their enchanting and shining beauty. Truly irresistible they draw you in with sparkling colours that change with the light. Beware; these are the true killers of the sea of knowledge. Underneath the glory and shine, a much bigger and gigantic iceberg is hidden that forms a true obstacle for anyone busy with creative ideas, constructive plans, innovative concepts, new products and services.

This iceberg is the metaphor for the institutional structures on which many companies and organisations have been founded. They are the famous connecting lines in the organigram. Institutional structures are often earmarked by the fact that they are light years behind with current affairs and developments. Most organisations still pay tribute to structures which stem from the days of the industrial revolution, whilst we are already past the information age and entering the age of interactive networking.

Institutional structures however change very slowly for the simple reason that it is human nature to strive for power, claim territory, build empires and play power games. Mistrust is their lonely companion. Institutions by their very nature do not like change. The pillars of these institutions fear that change might chip away at their individual positions of power. The iceberg therefore represents collective mistrust and silent, yet stubborn collective resistance against those who think, work and produce differently.

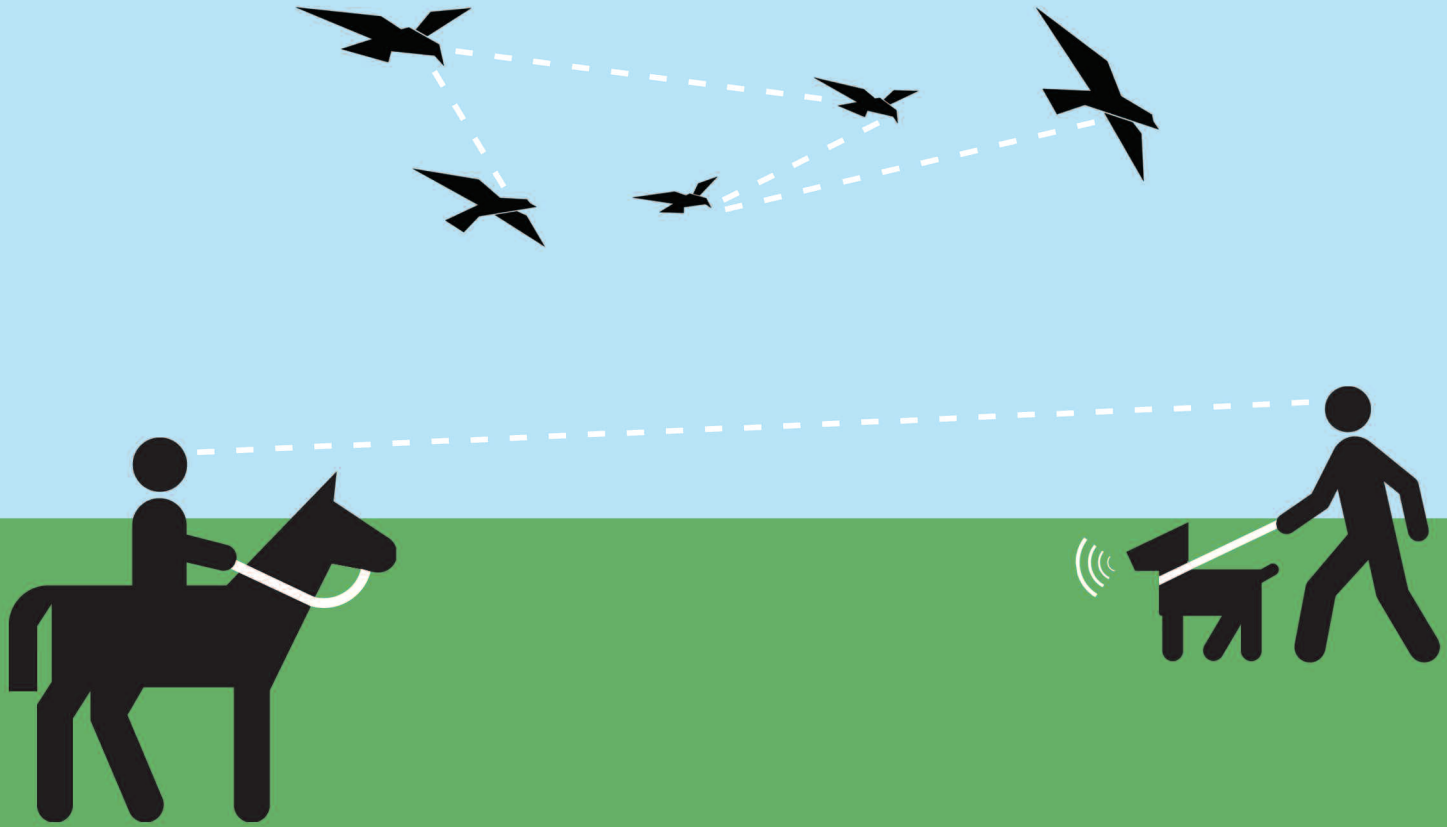


Networking on the sea of knowledge

Just like water does not always flow from A to B, but paves its own way, knowledge does not travel in a straight line either. Knowledge meanders around people, institutions and passes through many tributaries and sub systems. Bending off the main route is necessary to avoid unexpected obstacles. This means that knowledge workers need to have flexible attitudes and minds. Rigidity is an unknown word to them, improvisation their second nature, just like parallel switching between the various options whilst staying in touch with a wide variety of people and organisations. The true skill of a knowledge networker comes to the fore in his/her ability to quickly turn various sources of information into useable knowledge components which form the basis for products, services, better understanding of processes and more creative designs.

An individual knowledge worker can only be effective when operating in a network of colleagues, market competitors, study pals, clients, acquaintances and new contacts. You need to communicate and formulate your aims and what you expect from, or offer to others, very clearly in order not to run around in a cloud of misunderstanding. Networking is so much easier when you have something to offer, something to give. Networking is about exponential sharing; often giving more than receiving in a materialistic sense.

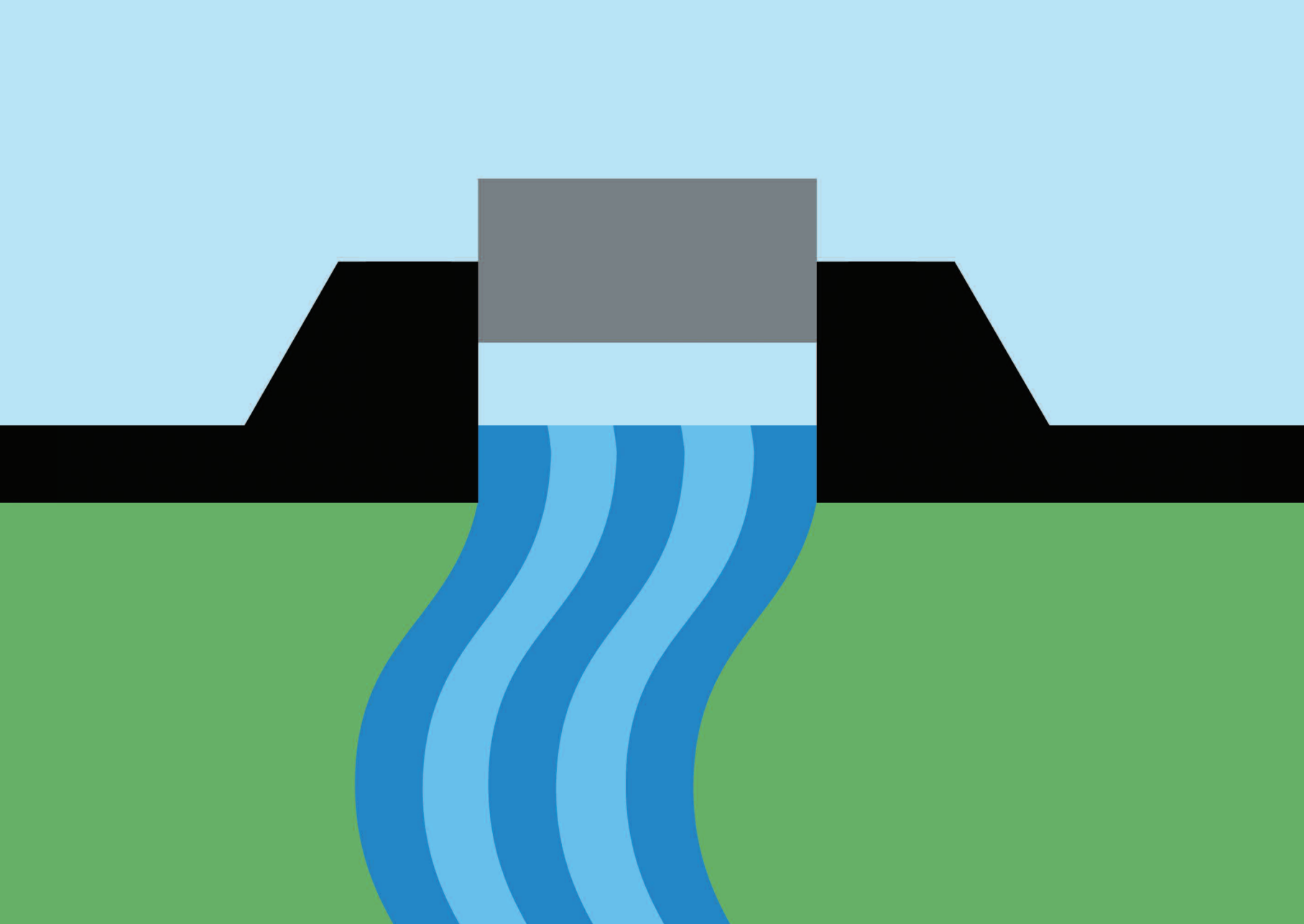




Sharing knowledge

Beware, many people still find it hard to enjoy the pleasure of giving and tend to keep things to themselves. At times, this makes even the most experienced knowledge worker uneasy, for giving is natural to them in a world where most people have been programmed to take instead of bringing and sharing. Yet in a networked society we are very dependent upon others. You might not know certain people personally, but they might be in charge of the infrastructure, logistics, care, information and the development of knowledge. All these accepted structures are interconnected by flows of knowledge and networking people.

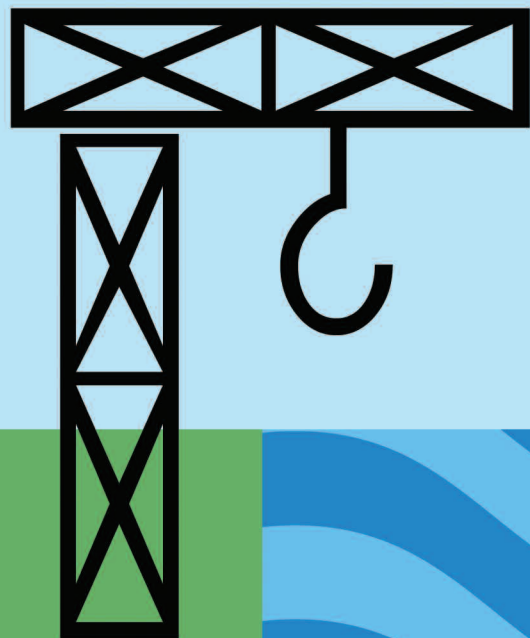
It is a true work of art to embed these connections and flows of knowledge in a natural manner in our way of working and living. Quick routes to connect to the right people, knowledge and resources help you cut time, which is of paramount importance today.



Vision and leadership

All renovation and change starts with the understanding that things can be done differently; alternatives exist. At first this might be a vague inclination by an individual or a group of people. The minute people think they might be on the trail of something good, they start searching for articles, information and people to reflect upon this idea. This active thinking process on how to constructively advance and whom to involve is a conscious step. A creative exploration of the possibilities and which things you can learn from others will lead the way to new solutions. In particular through conversing with others, you will be able to refine your thoughts and start to see the shape of things to come.

The moment at which external information is being entered into the process is a crucial one. Often this does not pass without some upheaval. In any environment you will find people who do not deem it necessary to involve external support. People, who think that everything they need to know is already there and who tend to suffer from the 'not invented here syndrome'. These are the dike wardens who would much prefer to elevate the dikes in order to keep any knowledge outside and at a safe distance. It often depends on the diplomatic skills at the top table (the CEO, the Chairman of the Board or a major influencer) to open the gates, for they know that at the very moment knowledge flows in to support the burgeoning vision, things will change. This is why it is crucial for this leader to find and have support from key people within the organisation. This support network does not always (very often not) follow the hierarchical structure. Informal leaders are the best facilitators for change and have more freedom to manoeuvre than leaders operating in formal positions. True leaders know that everything flows and nothing stays the same. Once this informal network has been informed and involved and the first scepticism has been eliminated, or even better turned into enthusiasm, the locks can be opened and new knowledge can freely enter.

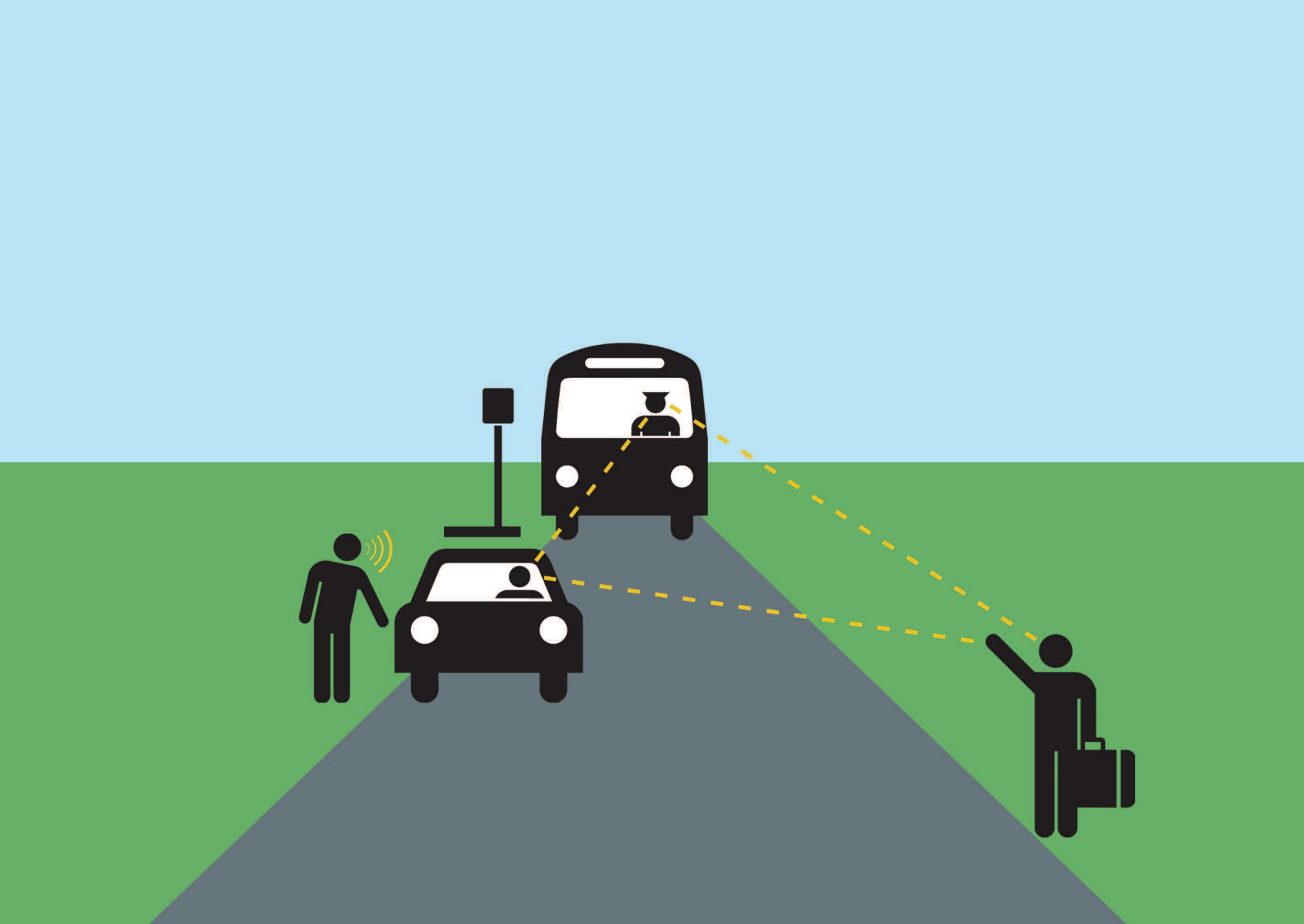


Urgency

What is the hook, the essential element to haul in this new way of working, in this case networking? Even when the willingness is there, chances are that networking and innovation will only happen if you can create a burning platform for this renovation and change. This urgency may stem from an outdated product portfolio, declining revenues from services, clients who clearly indicate a desire for change, staff 'running' out of the door, competitors who always beat you to the market, costs that bear no relation to income, suppliers who prefer to work with others, a lack of creative people applying for your jobs, a government that cuts of certain subsidies and so on. A burning platform is a generic and urgent issue that concerns the entire company and if not addressed, continuity is at stake.

Something fundamental has to happen, this is no longer a matter of putting out small fires. It is time to pull up the sleeves and jointly address the issue of how to execute strategic vision in a short time frame with renewed insights, knowledge and information. Another way of working is called for and maybe this is more vital than just developing the new products you have lined up. Maybe the how is the reason for the situation you are in, not the what. The company needs networkers. In these cases disaster can be a blessing in disguise. Suddenly the mindset is ready to embrace alternatives.

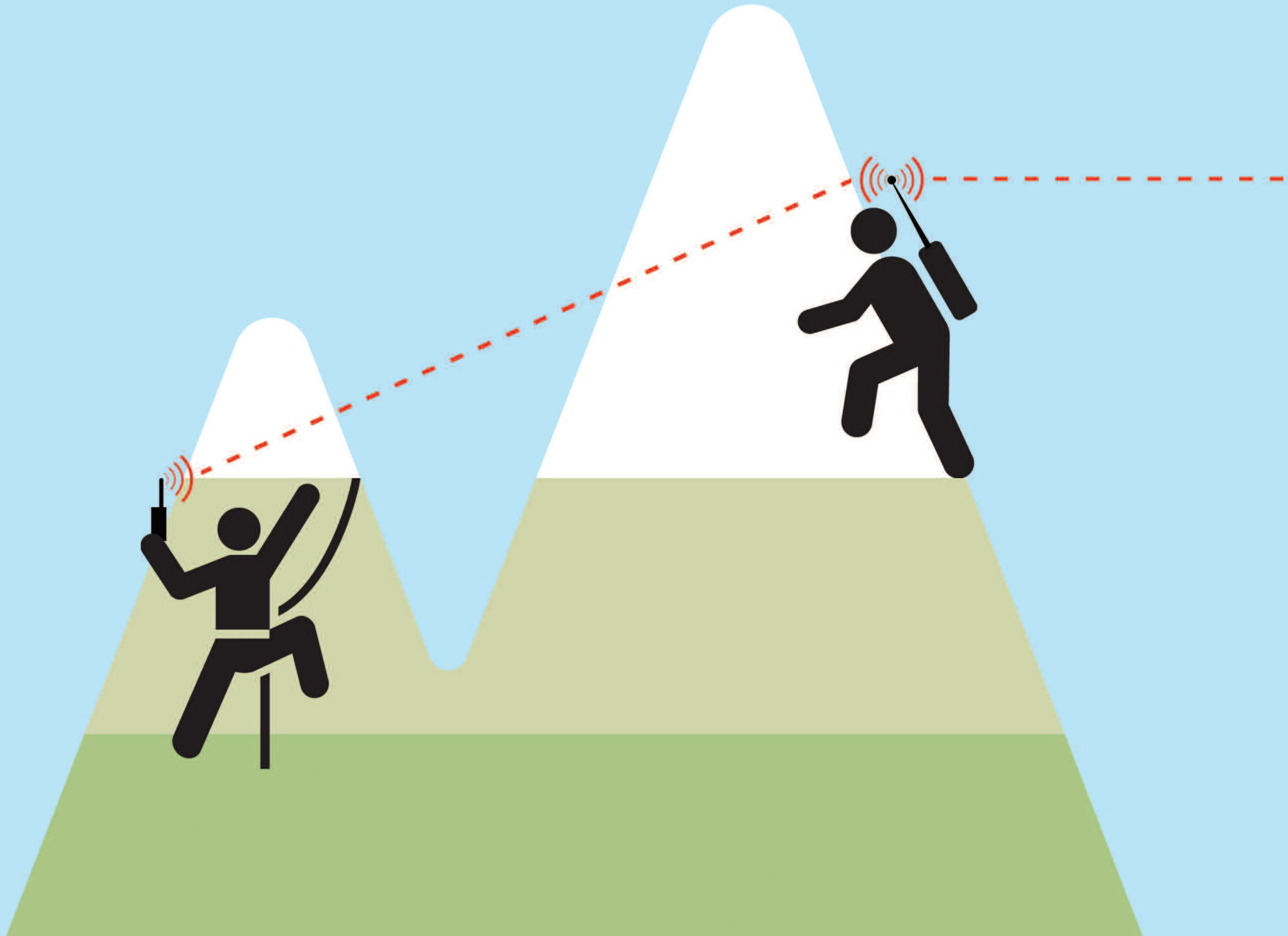
However, change does not always need a dramatic cause. Companies and organisations used to change will be far more flexible and spontaneous in allowing external knowledge in and linking these new contacts to internal knowledge workers and innovators. The preparedness for change is higher in networking organisations. Change is there seen as a flow which unleashes new energy to the benefit of all.



Diversity on board

In the transformation process towards a networking organisation, people with a variety of skills, cultural backgrounds and experiences need to be involved. Viewing personnel not merely as staff, but as knowledge workers implies that their contribution to the strategy building and execution is of vital importance. They are the people who understand the issues and problems, the market, the clients and have specific knowledge at their fingertips. On top of that they have a knowledge network both in- and outside the company. The board never has this level of knowledge and detail at their disposal. Therefore, they have become dependent on the degree in which their employees have turned into independent knowledge (net)workers. Participants in transformation projects originate from all walks of life in the company: new functional and hierarchical cross sections emerge composed of staff as well as management.

The top management also actively participates in (process) teams that facilitate the change. These network teams often consist of people who do not or hardly know each other at the outset. The widely embraced business unit structure has narrowed the working environment of many people, which has created additional barriers to internal knowledge development and exchange over the past decades. The cross sections mentioned before, enable new and natural links and ties between people in a company or organisation. Various teams can be mixed and merged throughout the process on a 'need to basis' in order to give new impetus to the formation of the network. Openness, transparency, mutual trust and horizontal relationships are the ground rules in network teams.



Talent development

In the run-up to a networking organisation most employees are blissfully unaware of the fact that they already are knowledge workers who are capable of far more than executing the functional tasks within their domain. This often extends to their managers who also functionally perform their management duties of control and supervision. This understanding needs to be taken into account at the beginning of a transformation project, but at the same time 'ignored' in that employees should be treated as knowledge workers irrespective of their background and role.

Research and practical experiences have taught us over the years that diverse teams are far more creative than homogenous ones. Diversity in networking organisations reaches far beyond enabling people with different knowledge backgrounds to co-operate. It is a very conscious way of looking at the composition of teams. Young people, experienced seniors, women, men, people with multi-cultural backgrounds should join the ranks. Network teams offer people the ultimate opportunity to show unexpected sides of their character and to eradicate existing prejudices. Hidden and latent talent comes to the fore in a spontaneous manner when new cross sections get together. Natural leaders emerge and mature for the environment invigorates initiative.

People get intrinsically motivated when offered true challenges such as helping to solve strategic issues and creating innovation and therefore will grow and become able to operate above their formal knowledge level and function. With pleasure people embrace the higher level of responsibility that comes with this change and they are able to generate results without tight and strict control. In a networking organisation (traditional) management fades away, whilst stimulating leadership takes centre stage. Thus building the basis for powerful new leaders who understand that leadership is foremost an attitude.



Working in networking teams with shadow members

It usually takes a number of networking teams in a company to detail and formulate a strategy and to develop tangible new products and services. In general these teams consist of twelve members, supported by a number of 'shadow members'. These people do not participate in physical team meetings, but are very much 'au courant' because they are in close touch with one of the regular team members. It is also commonplace that shadow members are actively involved in the definition of certain issues, business propositions or product development. This often happens in smaller 'side' teams of around three people, with expert input from shadow members. The shadow member idea stems from the need to involve more people and expertise, without increasing the work load and time spent on the project. Also, these shadow members can step in and take part in physical meetings in case of absence of the active member(s). They act as a natural sounding board for reflection.

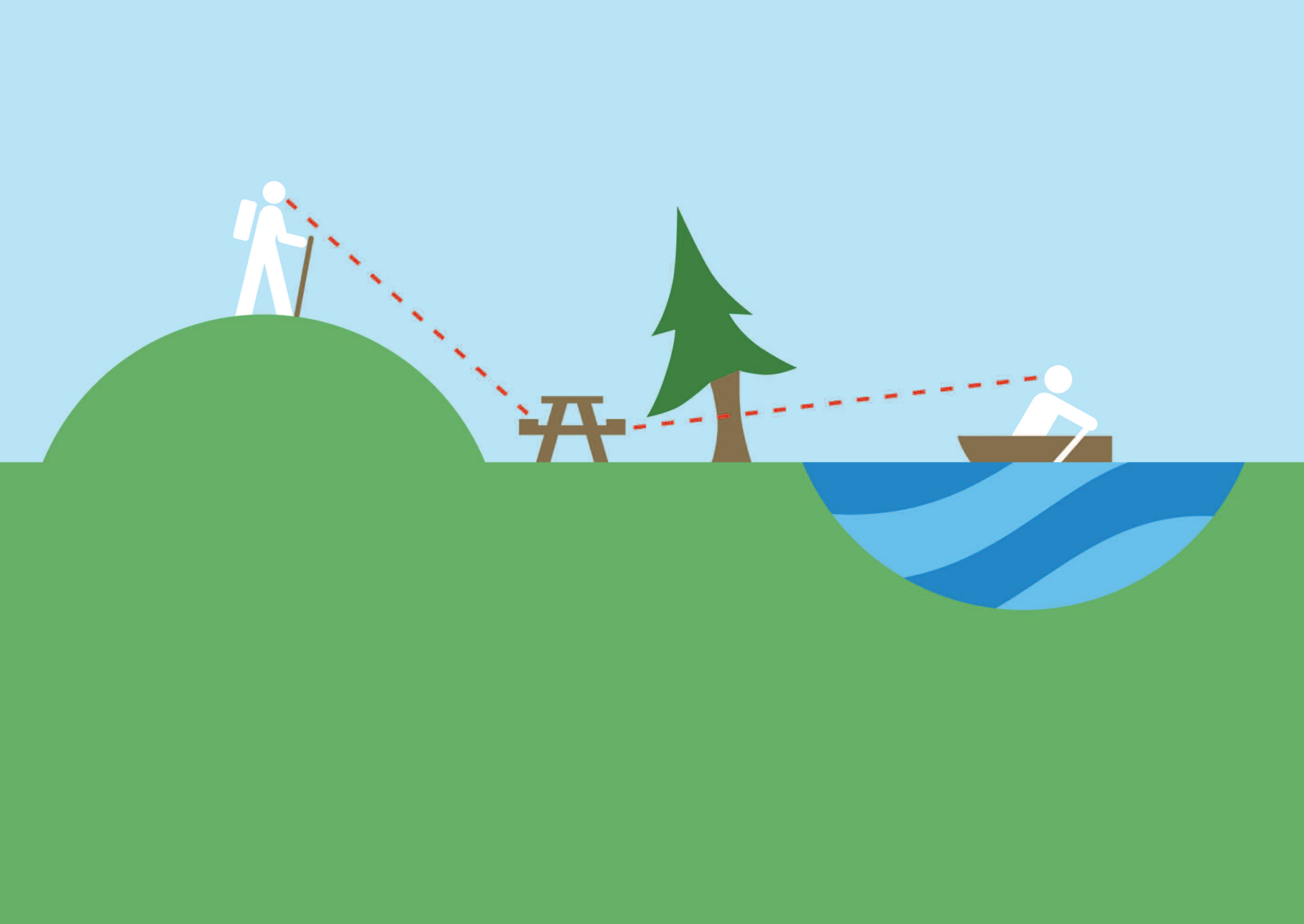
The networking teams have to operate within an allocated period of time, which in general spans three to four months. Team members participate in these projects in addition to their usual role and workload, which means that some compensation is called for.



Informal networking

Freeing up entire networking teams for a prolonged period of time is contrary to the networking practice. The reason is simple: by doing this you would undoubtedly slip back into the 'ring fenced' expert project team approach, whereas you strive to reach the opposite: knowledge workers with varied backgrounds occupy themselves with strategic issues in close co-operation and communication with their colleagues. By not isolating such teams, involvement of other colleagues - who are not part of the team but who might make very welcome contributions - is being stimulated.

Often colleagues contribute to the process by giving hints and suggestions in an informal manner or by giving constructive comments. Strategic development thus becomes embedded in the daily operation of the company and not some mysterious activity. This way you also prevent drafting strategic ideas that only 'shine on the page', because they are unworkable in real life. The results of the networking teams can be executed because they have been crafted in a language understood by all, and not in strategic expert lingo, which is a mystery to all but consultants.

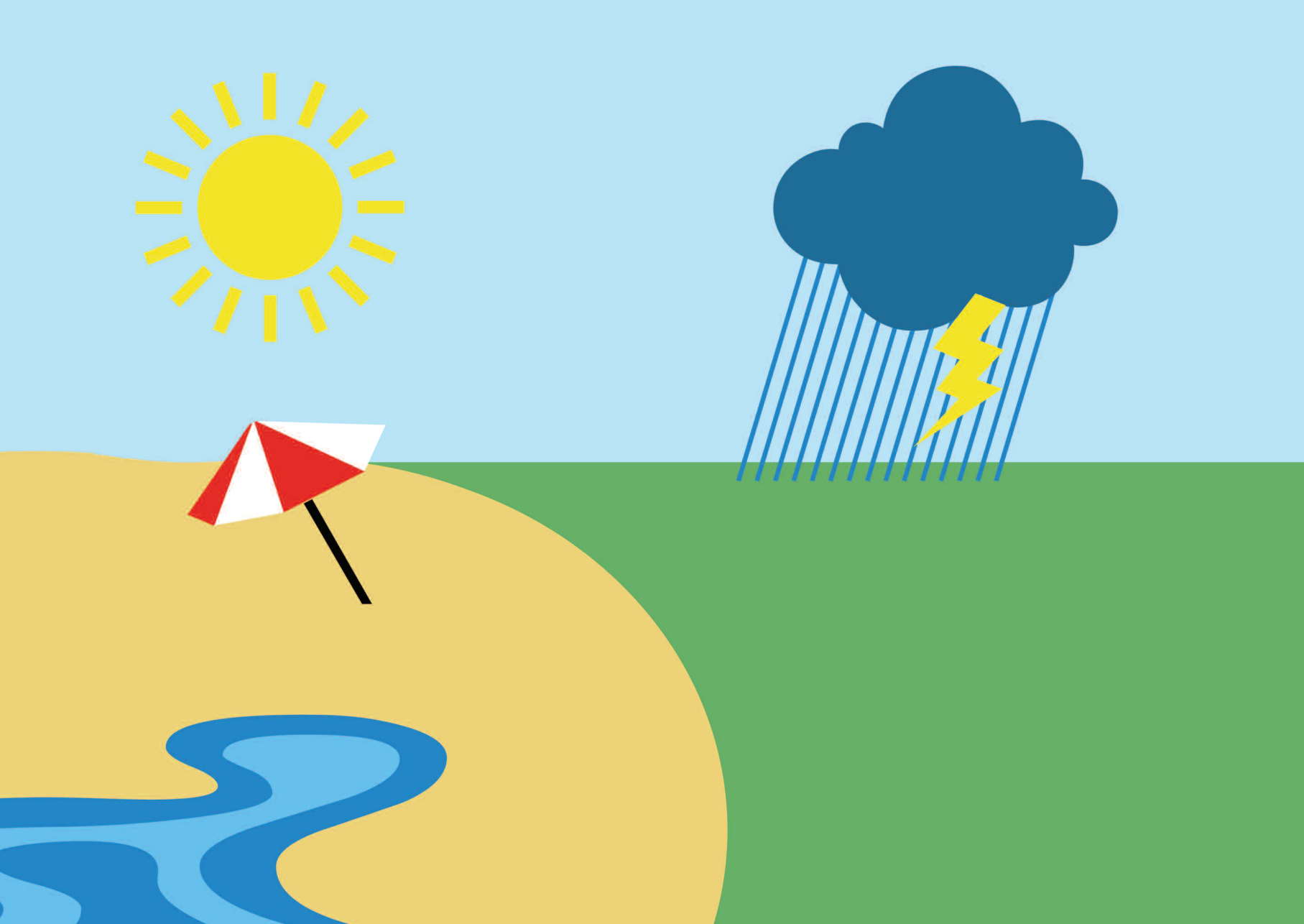


Off we go!

Taking initiative and autonomously – with colleagues and external contacts – exploring the possibilities of solving a strategic and urgent matter, forms the core of working in a networked environment. You are no longer a puppet on a string, you are the one who takes the initiative and starts the discussion. Being part of a team in a transformation process towards a networking organisation teaches you this active and alert attitude.

It is good (net)working practice for the leaders of an organisation to call a meeting of all (shadow)team members in which they set the scene, framework and rationale behind the transformation process. At this point in time the network teams actively set off to work. They outline and detail the various issues and themes and apply a level of operational reality by designing pilots in which new products and services can be tested.

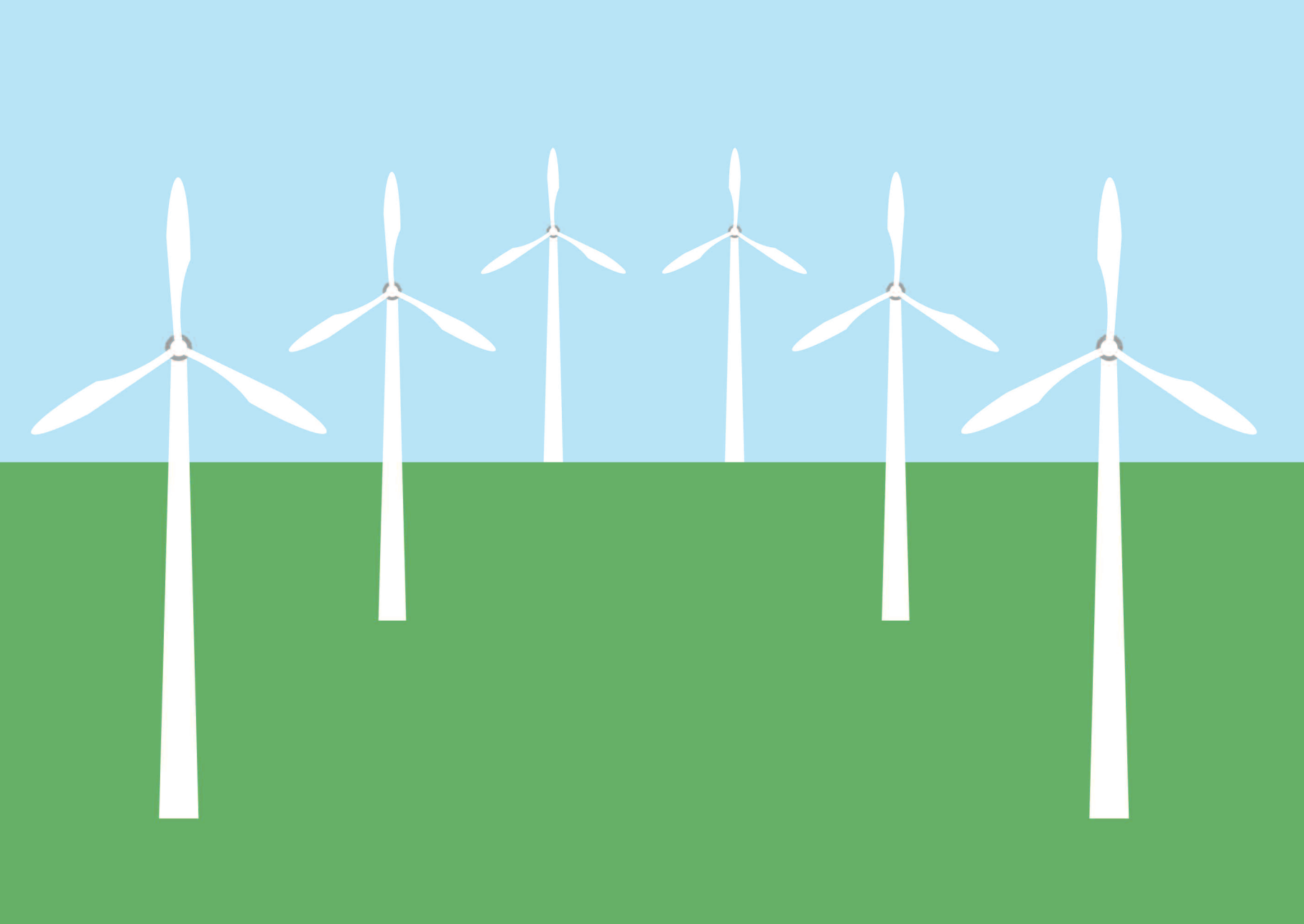
But before that stage is reached, team members have ventured out because the network has to be optimally utilised and at best even extended. Team members take off in groups of two or three to meet external contacts from their own networks or new contacts, searched and found on the Internet. Knowledge is available in many different places and most networking contacts are more than willing to make referrals and give additional information and contacts. Feedback occurs in the network teams and is logged in a digital environment for all to access and share.



Working in two worlds

Working in and between networking teams is often completely different from working in a routine daily environment. It is working in two worlds, each with their own logic. The networking teams are driven by equality, openness and transparency, taking initiatives and breaking through the barriers and boundaries of existing structures and domains. Within the objectives as outlined by the top management this seems logical, since all teams are busy with essential matters that concern the company or organisation as a whole. In their networking role the team members act as ambassadors of this new way of networking.

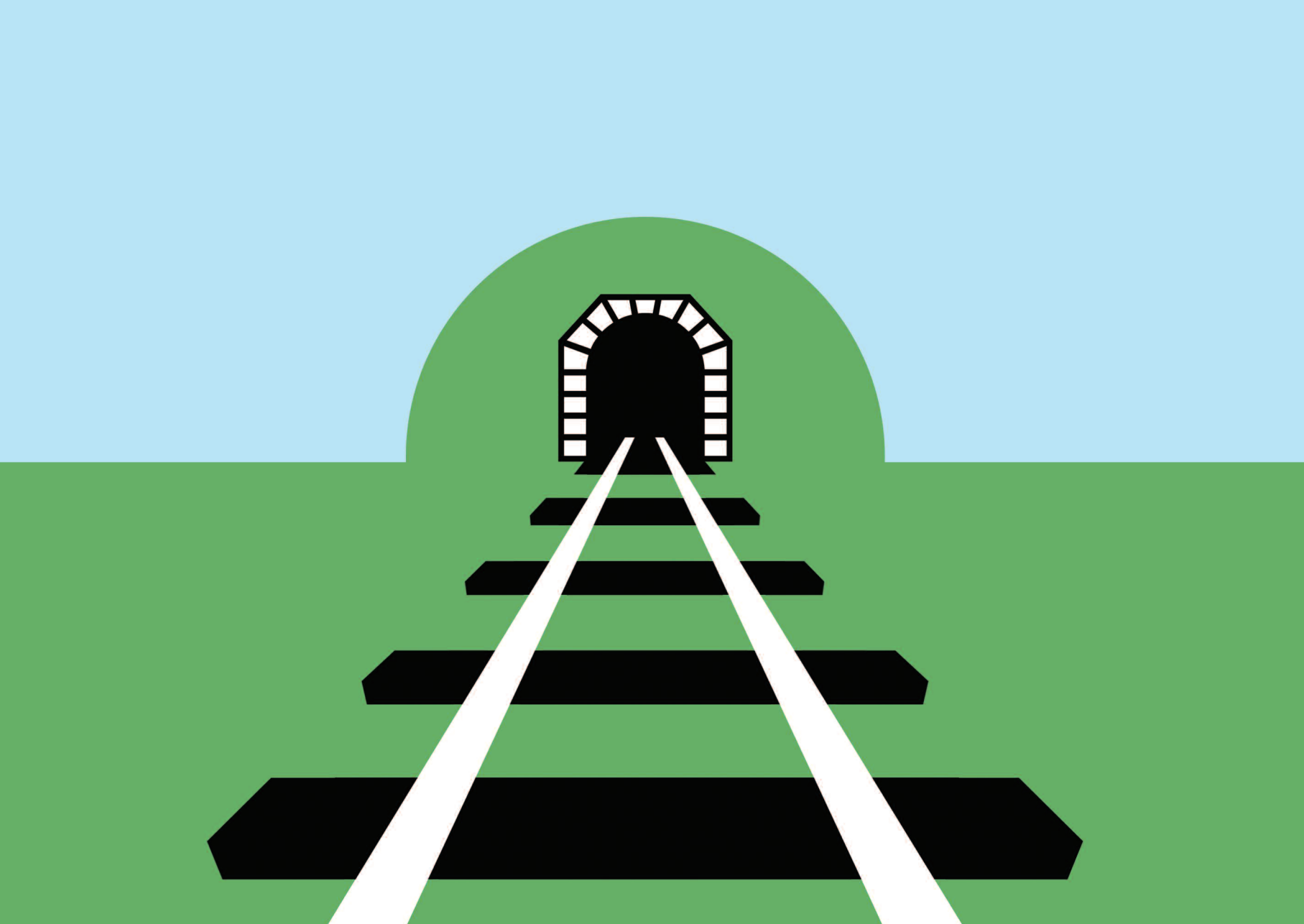
Their operational managers and colleagues see this 'slightly' different. They are aware of the progress and are being kept informed but they do not absorb the information or do not demonstrate the level of interest team members expect of them. 'It will blow over' they think, reminiscing previous projects that brought no change. Traces for this distant attitude can be found in a multitude of unfavourable experiences of failed projects.



When the weather turns

Meanwhile, as the networkers get on with their job, their enthusiasm grows. The (temporary) split between the active networkers and the remainder of the organisation is realistically inevitable. This is where the top management comes in; the role they play at this moment in time is key. It is up to them to keep focus, to keep the operational management in line, to sit down with the employee council, to communicate in internal media on the progress (think of a team member interview), etc.

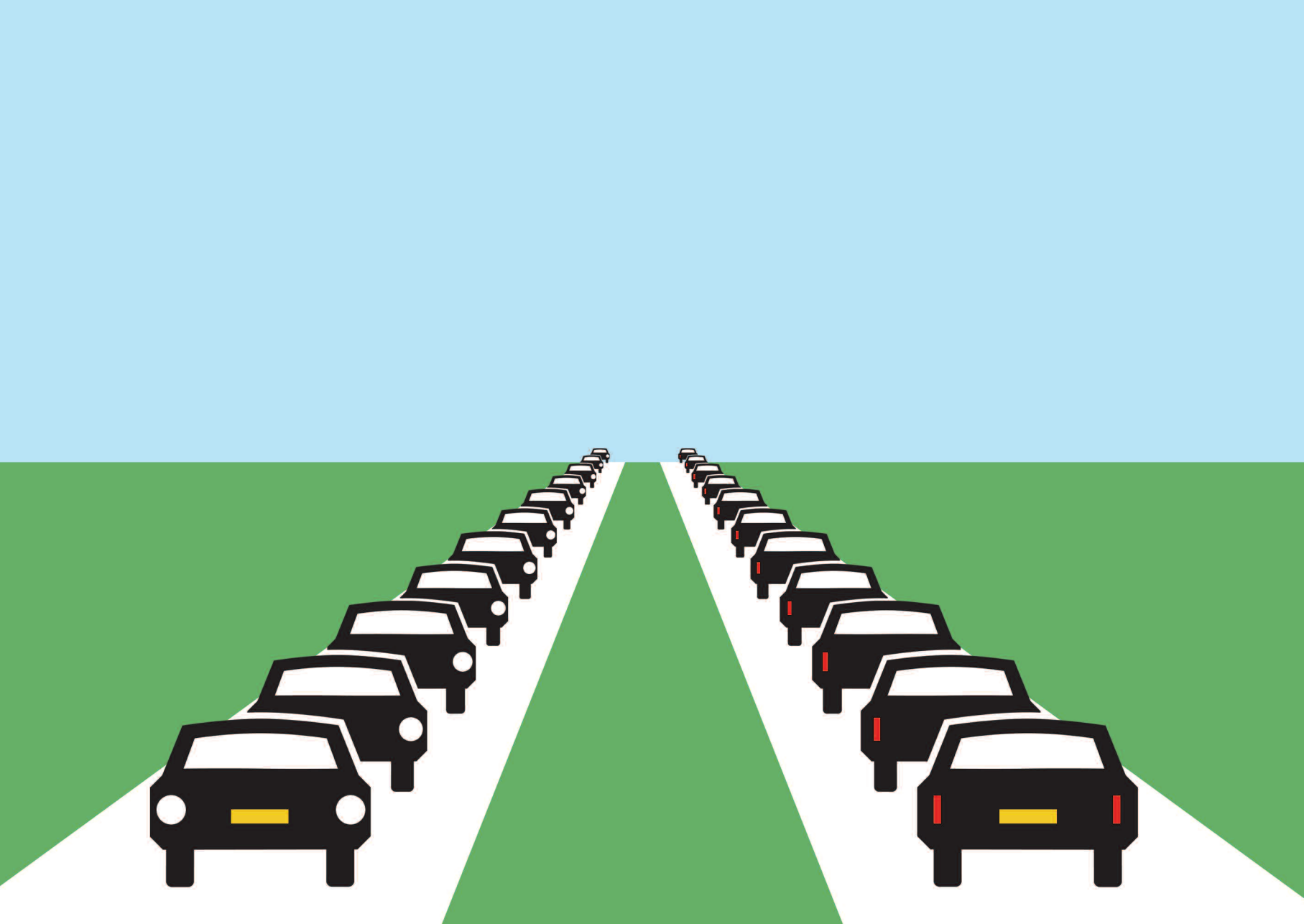
As we know from experience, projects start to cloud over when they are two-thirds along the way, so we can prepare for rough weather. The best approach is to be pro-active and to clearly communicate the results during an interactive session to which literally everybody gets invited. Create a platform where you present your achievements in an attractive and visual manner in an informal setting with time and space for dialogue.



Tunnel vision

At some stage the sub-top of a company or organisation will start to feel uneasy with the transformation towards a networked organisation. This is not hard to understand. Often these people have focused over the past years on climbing the corporate ladder. Now that they have become (business unit) managers and hit the ceiling, they will do everything in their power, even subconsciously, to maintain and defend this position. In their mindset it is best to 'follow the leader' and act upon instructions from the board. If they turn to the right, so will the (unit)manager: Straight ahead, so it is! In many ways they are the loyal 'voice' of the top. This leaves very little way to manoeuvre, hence the sub-top does not think in alternative ways and actions. This would only complicate their life and that of others.

When, however, the top of an organisation has made a courageous move in the direction of a networking organisation, taking along large numbers of employees and (in real numbers less) managers in the process, a large part of the current (unit)management and middle management is left with an uncomfortable situation. They were used to listening, obeying board orders and executing upon them. A sense of loss and lack of orientation befalls them as the board creates space to do things differently. This group of unit and middle management feels 'run over', so they will go to great lengths to frustrate this process of networking.

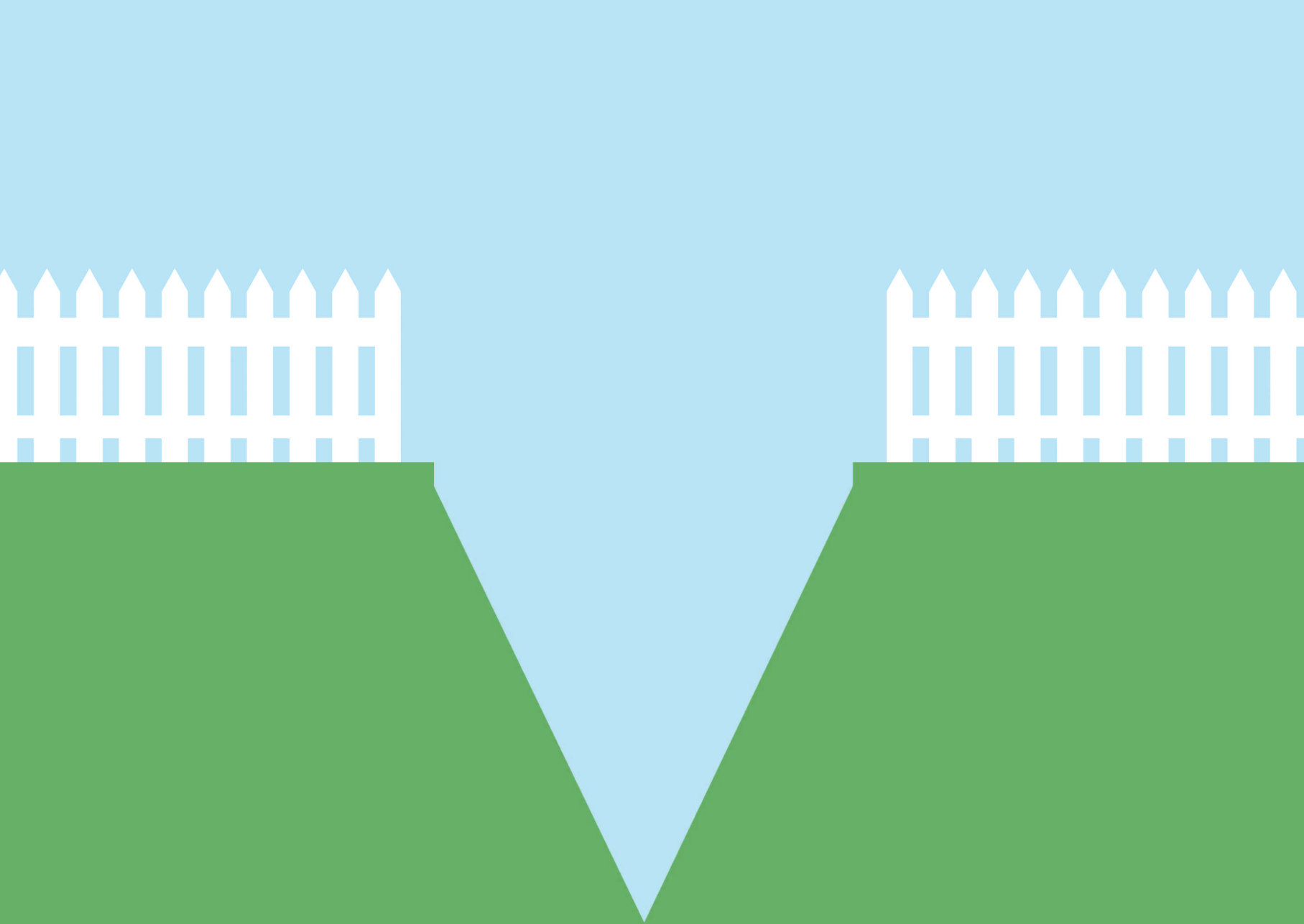


Traffic jam

Putting networkers on hold is but one of the many barriers erected during the transformation process towards a networking organisation. This can be done in an active manner by telling employees they cannot attend a team meeting because 'clients need to be visited' or by ignoring questions from networkers. Management and experts themselves can undermine the process by not attending information gatherings. There are numerous ways of frustrating change processes and mostly this is done because of a lack of trust in the expertise of others, fear for one's own position or plain arrogance on the part of the sub-top and middle management.

A good observer can hear them think: "This ridiculous enthusiasm has to be tempered, for imagine that everybody would start networking?! The positions of all of us managers, experts and others who are indispensable and unique to the company might be under threat." The networkers however, who seem to thrive on the influx of internal and external new contacts, subconsciously incite fear in the minds of others. In the future they might change the way your success and contribution to the company is measured. According to the networking philosophy the value of your network and contacts might be an important weighting factor and as a traditional (line) manager, focused on your own domain, you are then very likely to have a problem. In brief: "short-cut this networking exercise, please!"

Politicking is always driven by the opportunity an individual sees from his or her own perspective. This can lead to typical macho behaviour when one person stands up to voice in no uncertain terms that "this networking is all complete and utter nonsense", hoping other colleagues on the fence will follow in his/her tracks. This is not a sign of courage. It is fear and lack of willingness to change. Real networkers will soon see and understand that, but it is frustrating and disturbing whilst it is going on.

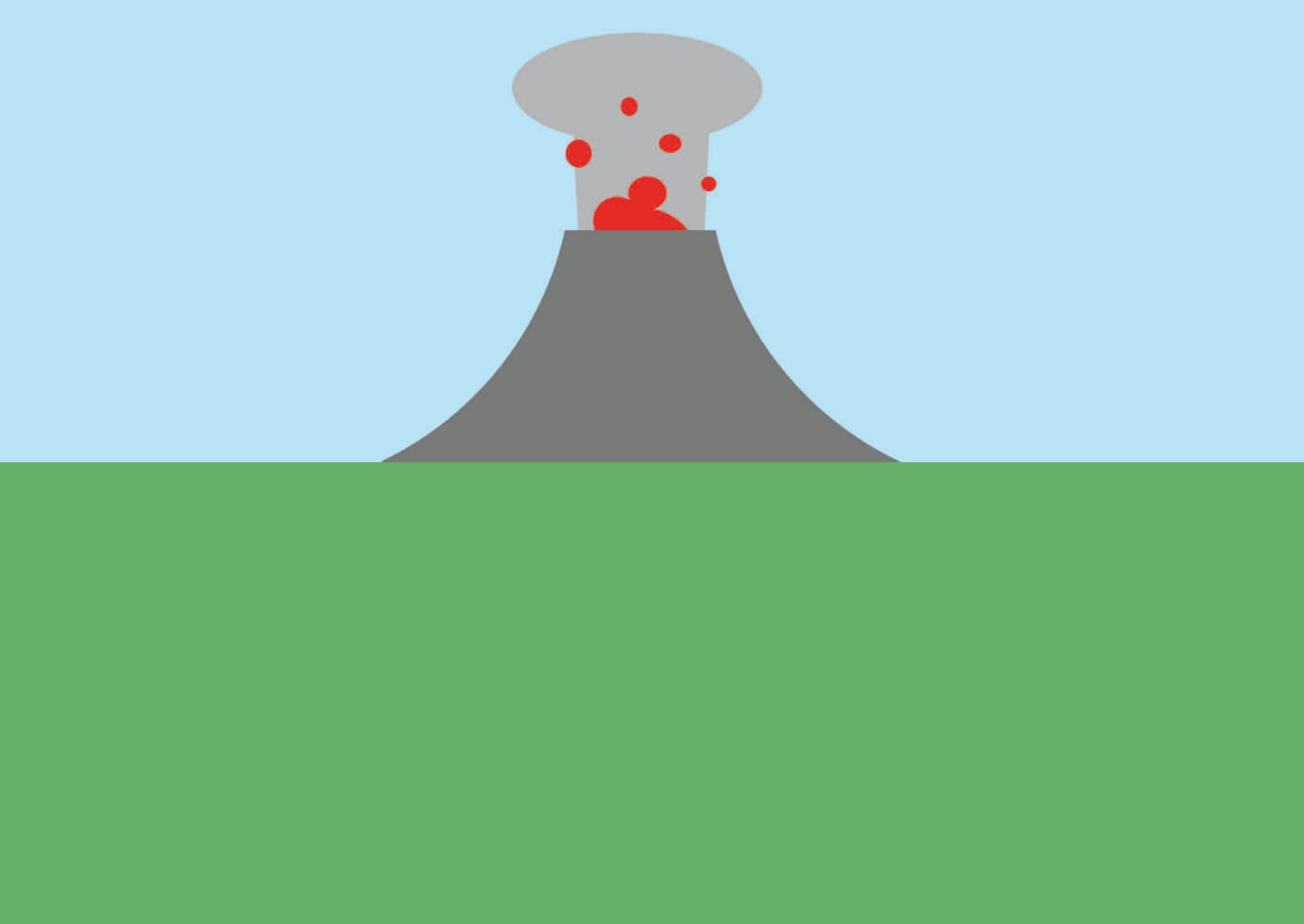


Gap

The networking landscape has many faces. The networkers travel through polders, over hills, through valleys, forests and eventually find their ways through muddy swamps. They travel for miles in cars and buses, get trapped in traffic jams and wait for the train to come. Content gets captured through the virtual ways of the internet, contacts established and information exchanged. A networker is on the move and because of that almost a 'dynamic fixture' in the landscape. As long as you are on the move, you feel you are making progress. There are however situations where you can come to a grinding halt facing a gap or a gulf and you have no idea how to bridge it.

Trouble in paradise at the top might be a reason; the project gets off course, which is a serious hindrance in networking projects. The established management might refuse to co-operate or is not keen to embrace the new way of networking. Colleagues might not part with information or be willing to co-operate actively in projects that reach beyond their own scope. Resources are cut back, people taken off the project, the scope for change becomes minimal and your own boss who supported you has been transferred to a new position. More work is loaded upon your plate and it becomes harder and harder to find time for your networking projects. You might be willing, ready and able as a networker, but when facing these kinds of gaps you face a serious problem.

This is where the power of your own network sets in, in particular if you have external (client) contacts. You will find that they are often pleasantly surprised with the new initiatives and have given you their support. In particular external pressure might often work for you and enable you to guard the continuation of the transformation towards a networking organisation.

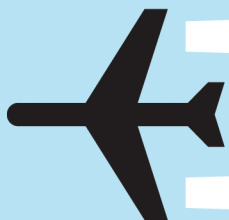


Eruptions

Sometimes transformations happen over time. In these instances we speak of a natural evolutionary process whereby the various parties and stakeholders agree instantaneously on most relevant issues. In real life things work quite differently and not in such a pleasant way. Juddering along is the more likely scenario and then suddenly it has arrived. Any change evokes emotion; people are not machines and therefore clearly show their pleasure and pain. One person might do this in a more subdued way than the other but be mindful that during a transformation process toward a networked organisation an eruption cannot always be avoided.

Eruptions, by their very nature, often occur when the environment expects it the least, with panic as its immediate effect. They happen because of a sense of insecurity at the very top level of an organisation. This might be the board, the executive committee or even the non-executive board who is not involved or aligned. Influential people who start to voice their concerns can also be a cause. Yet, white noise, rumour, muttering and feelings of insecurity are always at the basis of these incidents. Once the eruption occurs panic is the net result, together with a sense of confusion and irritation. In particular when it coincides with a clash of cultures or views which is being played out to its full extent at an unexpected moment.

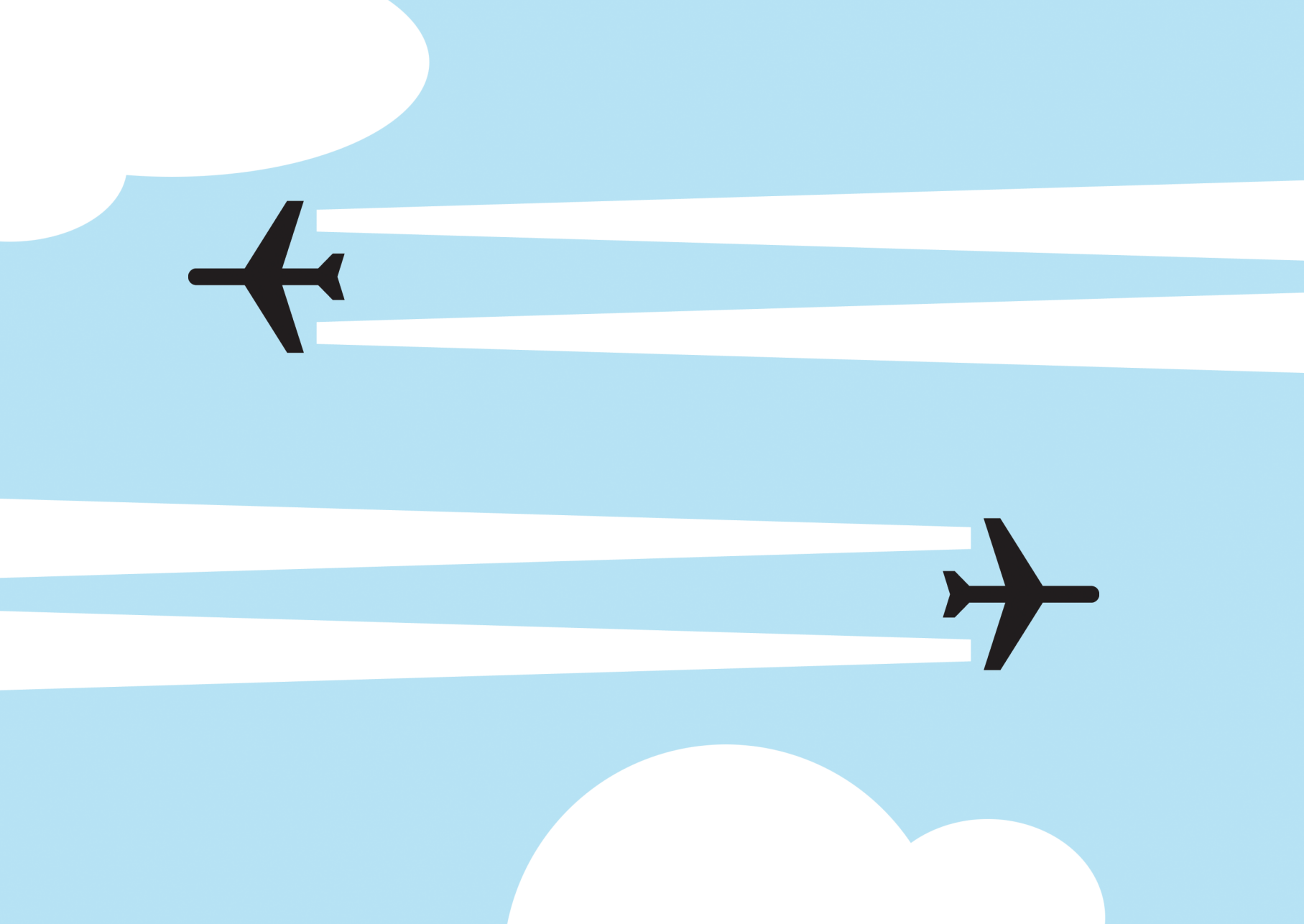
In many cases the eruption is aimed at the external process management, who then face their acid test. The mantra is clear in these cases: keep cool, keep focus on the project as a whole. Ensure that those who caused this eruption in the first place, do not get damaged (or punished) in the future. If you fall in that trap you have a cultural damage limitation process on your hands for years to come. Contrary, by showing compassion to those in the driving seat of this unexpected incident, by inquiring about the why, an explosion of this nature, however unpleasant, can be turned into a situation of more clarity and understanding.



Webbers: the networking leadership

A networking organisation offers a lot of scope for new leadership. Indeed, initiative is called for, as well as creativity and a high pace in switching between internal colleagues and external networking contacts. De-central activities are being executed in a self-sufficient manner, which is possible thanks to the fact that everyone in this networking organisation understands the strategy and the fact that 'clients matter most'. The networking teams have been involved in strategy and new developments. Managerial command and control in a hierarchical manner is no longer a necessity when people in an organisation understand the content of the strategy. Even more so if they feel empowered by their leaders to execute at a de-central level. Indeed, a functional and task oriented management and control style will have the opposite effect on networkers.

During the network team sessions members have learned to think in terms of companywide complexity and map out their actions from that central point to de-central levels. They work in different roles, have varying activities and deliver measurable results within the context of the strategy. These so-called Webbers perform a vital role in the hub of networking relationships with their birds-eye view and operational strength. They are networkers by nature and the ones to be spotted early on.



Webbers: the new leadership

These stimulating Webbers form the pushing force in a networked organisation. These are the co-working men and women who, together with other networkers, translate vision and strategy into tactics and operation. Webbers are not glued to an executive desk, they freely move around in and outside the network. They have in-depth expertise and contacts. They pave the way to new contacts and opportunities with other parties and are extremely accessible for networkers in their own organisation. These Webbers are active culture carriers and ambassadors. They are highly valued in the network and by that nature attract talent from outside the company. These are the people you want to (net)work with; they bring out the best in you and expose your talent. They allow you to make mistakes because they know that living through change means falling, getting up, learning and moving on. You trust them and they give you wings to fly.

The leaders, Webbers, are import anchors, albeit that they are not fixed to one particular location. They are the fresh wind that blows through the organisation, which keeps people at their toes and energy levels up. They are the catalysts who live and breathe the dynamics, the spirit and the exciting story. But most of all, they are the ones who live by example and ensure that the message sinks in. The new way of networking becomes a sustainable way of working and weaves its net throughout the company.



Trust & Joy

A bow long bent at last waxes weak. Networking means being in constant motion, but that can also be in a relaxing way. The world becomes a bigger place because of the increased number of contacts inside the company and the people met outside the company during project activities. Networkers tend to change gear at a high pace, not in the least because most issues can be dealt with in a virtual manner. Content driven sessions instead of meetings are part of their reality; a digital environment with the project files and background information at your fingertips instead of heaps of paper.

It might look as if networking is all about knowledge exchange and efficiency, but that would be a real shame. Networkers are excellent instigators of fun. They enjoy partying, sports events, informal outings, special get-togethers; indeed they grasp every opportunity to meet with fellow networkers.

Informal get-togethers stimulate equal relationships, allow people to show their other side and to talk about inspirational and interesting things with others. All this builds a basis of trust. Once you have truly partied with someone, shared an interesting symposium or an exciting tournament, you have made a contact for life.

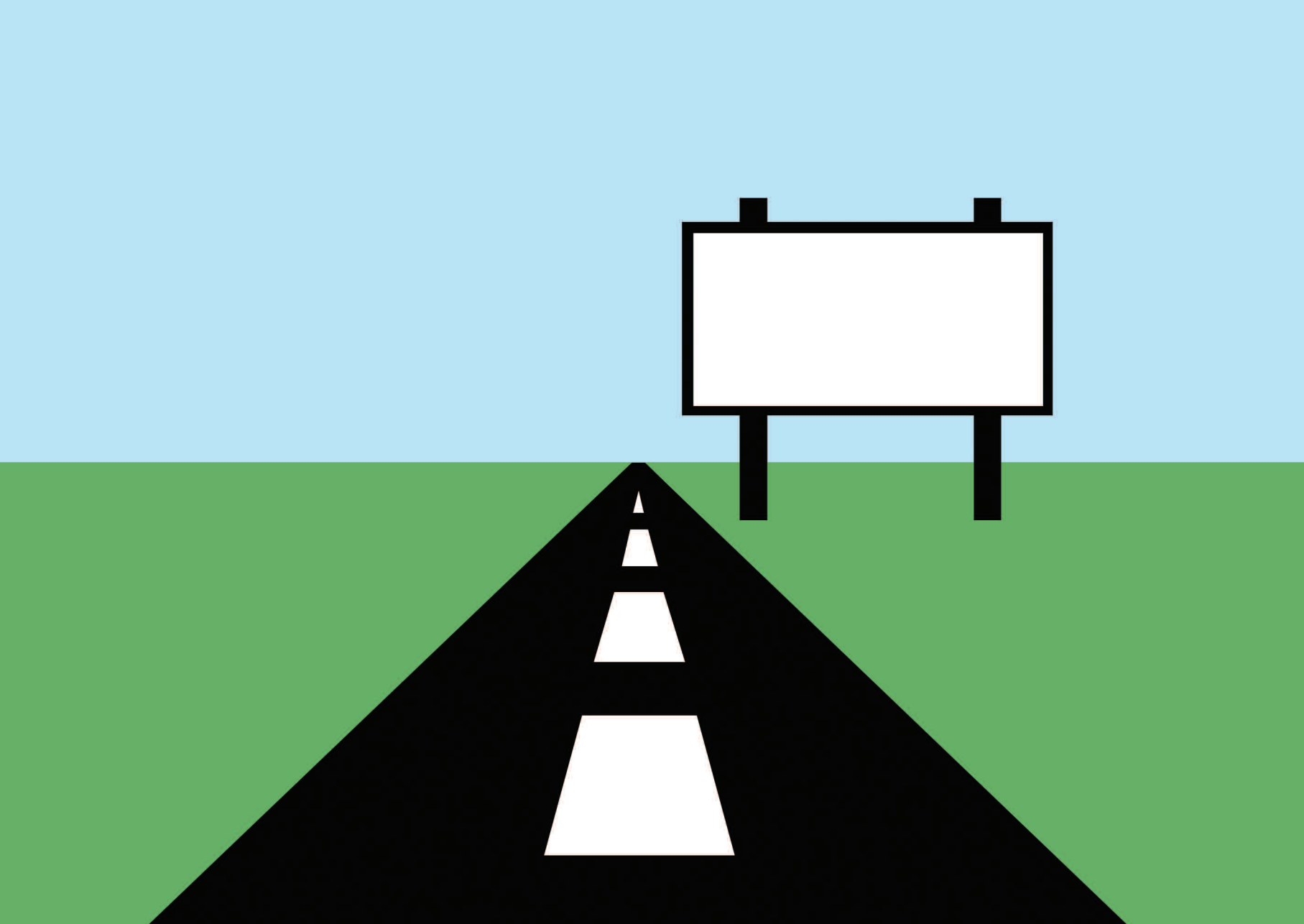


Taking root

Most networking organisations are built in thriving landscapes for the land is constantly ploughed. Fertile grounds bear rich harvests when nurtured properly and looked after with attention and passion. A networking organisation is an organic organisational structure. People are being selected with care to help build the company. Motivated people who proudly work with their clients and colleagues form the basis for this organisational structure. A networking organisation is a live organism which puts the human element central; it is a people's business. There are no rigid and strict structures in a networking organisation. Much depends on the sense of commitment amongst the networkers and Webbers.

The networking way of life is further embedded in the organisation through the network teams that each focus on a particular activity, from strategy development to market dynamics and business propositions and skill and competency development. The changing composition of the teams ensures that a wide range of people can touch and familiarise with networking in all its aspects.

Last but not least, ambassadors play a vital role in networking organisations. These are people who passionately share both the story and the experiences. They are not just the Webbers but people you find at every possible level in each and every networking organisation. People who found the ability in themselves to grow and prosper, who opened up the windows to the world by networking, driven by a desire to add value to the clients of the company they work for.



Navigation for networking organisations

A city is, in purely geographical terms, the ultimate networking spot. The road systems enable a constant flow for all types of transportation. A wide melting pot of citizens takes care of diversity. There is space to be and act differently. Just watch the way people dress, the shops and cafes that serve them, the museums and architecture erected over time, the universities and the wide spiritual and entertainment arena. A lively networking organisation resembles a dynamic city in most aspects. There is a lot going on, many activities to participate in, but you can also choose to go your own way. Whatever route you choose, you will encounter fellow networkers at one of the many meeting places along the way.

Many villagers will step back at the sight of the overwhelming presence of a city, for the wild stories in the press have made them weary. In the same vain, people from traditional organisations will feel slightly hesitant when they first get in touch with this myriad of relationships in a networking organisation. It seems a tangled web, a spaghetti junction; complex and confusing. To make matters worse, it is always up to you to take the initiative, make choices and act responsibly. In that light a traditional organisation seems an easier place to live in; what you see is what you get.



A routemap for networking

Life moves on and knowledge workers are the single most rapidly growing segment of the working population in a globalised knowledge economy. These people demand networking organisations. The structure in which the baby-boomers blossomed is no longer a place where the younger generations, born into a global economy and virtual networks, feel at home. Working and living in a networked organisation is something to be experienced, inhaled and lived through in all its facets. You need to be absorbed by the invigorating vibration of the people around and submerge in the flow and rhythm.

One tip: if you go into town, to a place you have never been before, be prepared and take your TomTom. Navigate through the new landscape with a practical aid, you will see and experience so much more. This booklet aims to be your route planner and navigation through the landscape of networked organisations. It serves as your guide and aide to make you feel at home and more importantly to get you to this networking environment in no time.

Colophon

The networking landscape
Navigation for the route to networking organisations

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MeetingMoreMinds is a live laboratory for high tech high touch inter-company networking with the aim to support transformations to networking organisations and develop adjacent working practices. MeetingMoreMinds is a pioneer in the field of participating strategy development, innovative business propositioning and interactive communication in complex environments.

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