Tool 9:   An informal network of people to be involved

What: *An informal network of people to be involved:* Defines roles for each participant of an e-strategy. By performing a network analysis, groups of people can be identified that like to work together. The roles that should be assigned are:

Role	Interpretation	Detailed description
Decide	Participant decides about specific IT related issues	Make decisions
Inform	Participant needs to be informed about specific IT related issues	Inform the rest of the participants (and the rest of the organization) of decisions and their implications
Ask	Participant can be asked to explain / train specific IT related issues	Play the role of critic / devils advocate (keep an open mind, challenge leaders' opinions and prevent group-think*)
Train	Participant needs training for specific IT related issues	Participant (with expert knowledge) on some subject should train others who lack that knowledge but need it in order to fulfill their role

*Group Think happens in groups that have high cohesion, are isolated and lack procedures to systematically solve problems. Secondly, Muntslag and Katsma [MUKA05] state that project groups (made up of managers as well as technical staff) often face difficulties. While the context of their research is that of groups implementing Enterprise Systems, the conclusions can be transferred to groups developing an e-strategy.

How: participants for the e-strategy group should both be selected from within the organization [Van Bommel] and from the external value chain [WARD02] (e.g. business partners, suppliers, customers, other members of the external value chain, IT consultants, business consultants, enterprise system vendors).

Why: since the business professionals who are working in the subunits are increasingly able to apply IT resources and provide the necessary technical support it is interesting to keep track of each role a professional could perform during the development of an e-strategy. If this kind of information is available to the entire organization, every subunit can benefit from a participants role. [BOYN87]

When: since it is useless to know whom can help with specific issues after an e-strategy has been implemented it is best to determine each of the participants' roles during the initial e-strategy planning phases. Part of the first cycle of the four cycles method.

Where: to ensure maximum results from the effort invested into determining and assigning roles, it is best to keep track of each participant's role in a central place (e.g. the centralized IS function). Because IT management stays responsible for certain activities yet relinquishes control over other activities.

Who: let subunit managers (or perhaps project leaders from a subunit) determine the role for each of the participants from their own subunit. This could be done using tool numbers 7, 8 and 11. Participants can fulfill multiple roles. Some roles go well together (e.g. decide and inform), where others are likely to interfere with each other (e.g. decide and ask).