

# Smarter Innovation: The Company Body: Innovation as a necessary process of eliminating redundancy and improving sustainability *(Abstract)*

*Editor's note: Alma Dakaj takes our innovation thinking "out of the box" by introducing a compelling metaphor, comparing the innovating organization to the human body. She calls on us to imagine the inspiration for innovation as sensory feedback, and that perpetual renewal in the organization should resemble the circulatory and renal systems. She calls on us to pause and reflect, instead of indulging in busyness. She also reminds us that social capital within organizations (represented by the nervous system) is essential for ideation. -- Katrina Pugh, Columbia University*

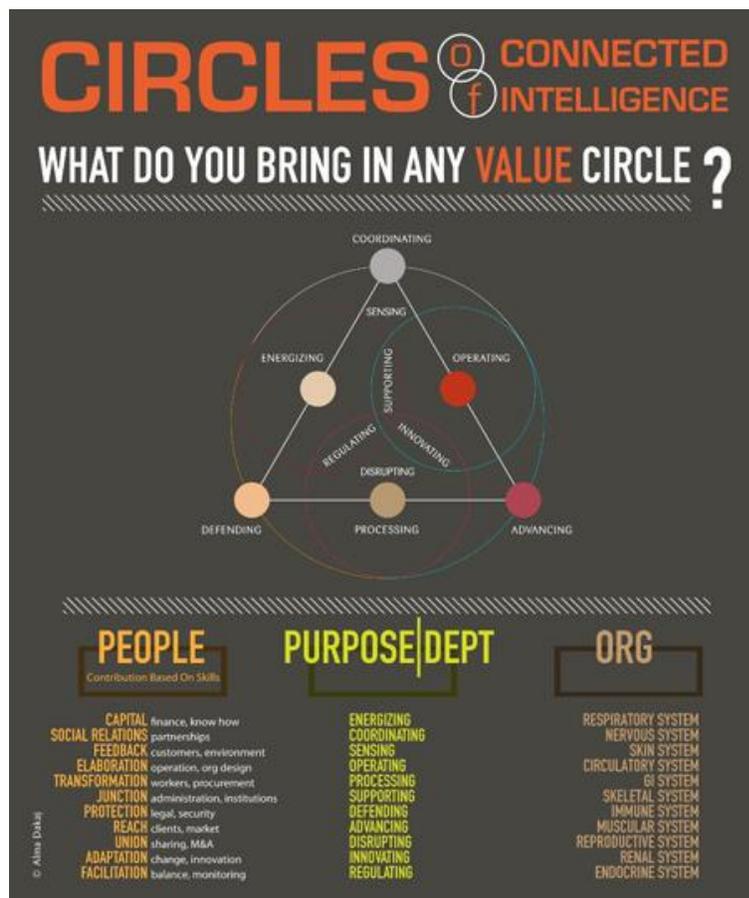
Why the human body analogy? Because it is a perfect model for organizational design. Being part of nature's design, like no other system, it is structured, yet flexible, adapting to the surrounding environment as a necessary condition for survival. In the human body, innovation takes place at every single moment. It's constantly building, renewing and re-engineering cells so that it can adapt to various external conditions. By examining this metaphor in detail, we can open a whole new avenue of insights into organizations.

Innovation is improving continuously in response to market and industry signals. A corporate network must be like a network of neurons able to send and receive such signals, and, unencumbered, interact towards a shared purpose. When effective, it transmits information over long distances through an integrated and unimpeded feedback system.

Consider Figure 1: A network of overlaid circles, reflecting skills and expertise. Skills, not competitive hierarchies, dictate action. With our metaphor, in the brain, there is no intelligence without two connected neurons. For organs, a cell alone is not enough to make a human body. Analogously, nor can a single person be a "company body."

The primary message from the Circles graphic is that collaborative intelligence, like the human body, vitally depends on coordination, connection, communication. Connections, in turn, bridge ideas into viable solutions, improvements, products and services.

Figure 1: Circles of Connected Intelligence



In our research, we find that adaptive connections, like the Company Body, make more resilient and inspired organizations.

*Alma Dakaj is a business consultant at COICIRC Consulting, based in Verona and Milan (Italy). She is author of The Company Body (CreateSpace, 2013).*