

# Lines of communication

In war, the first thing an army will attack is the enemy's lines of communication. Why? Because success depends on people, who can only act on information they have received and understood.

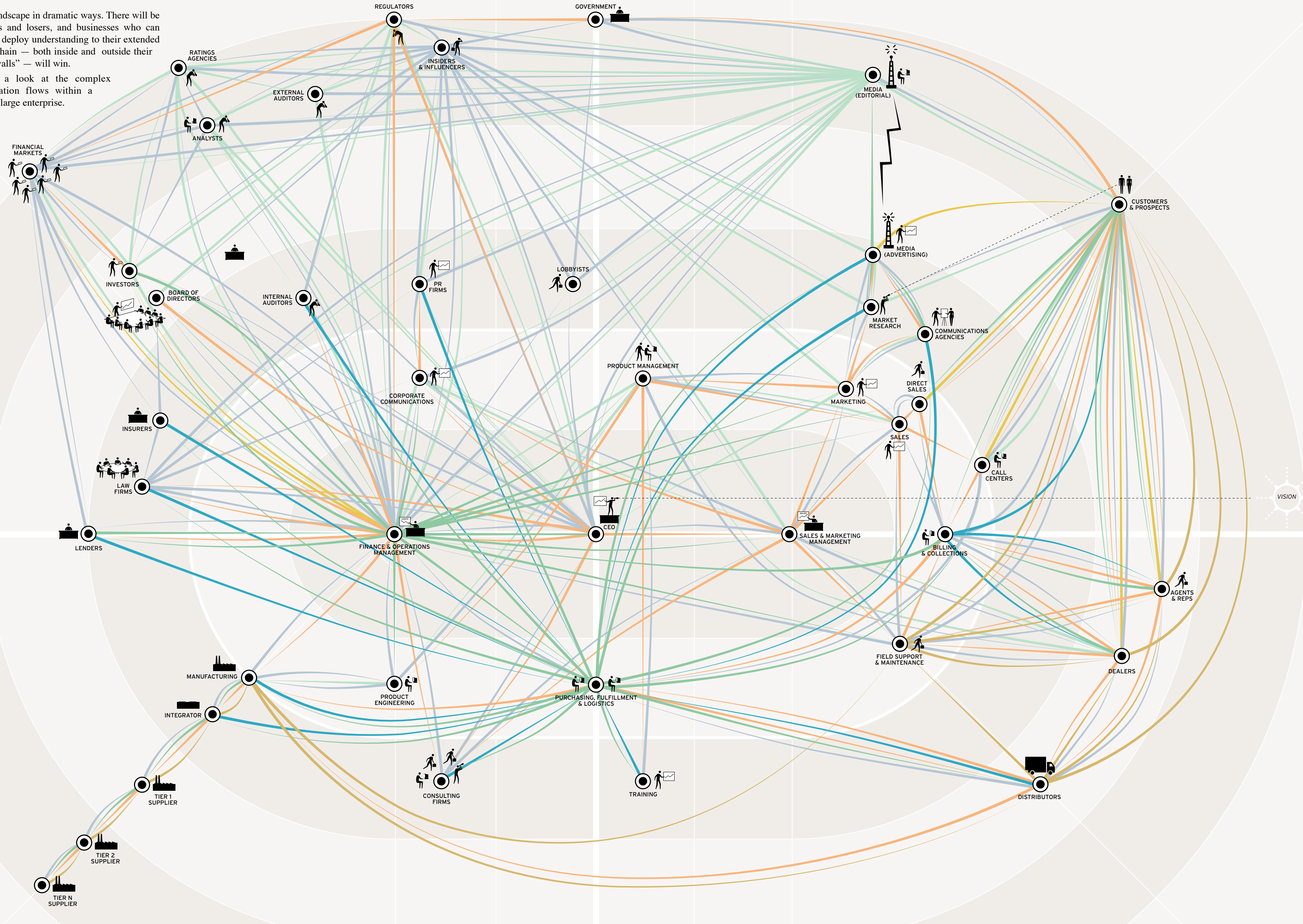
The Internet was originally developed so we could communicate rapidly and reliably in times of war. Ironically, the resulting improvements in information flow have also spawned a fog of confusion.

The volume of information that's now available leaves people overwhelmed. Change is so rapid that language must flex to accommodate it: In order to discuss new concepts, people must use old words in new ways. Lack of consensus about meaning causes more frustration and miscommunication.

The result: an overall slowdown of business cycles, just when it matters most. Advances in technology and genetics are changing the busi-

ness landscape in dramatic ways. There will be winners and losers, and businesses who can rapidly deploy understanding to their extended value chain — both inside and outside their "four walls" — will win.

Here's a look at the complex information flows within a typical large enterprise.



## Sending and receiving information

Every information exchange is generated by a sender and intended for one or more receivers. But just because information was sent is **does not mean that it was received.**

**Information pull:** Passive, or stored information must be actively sought before it can be useful. The receiver must pull this information from the system. When you enter a web address into a web browser, you are pulling information from the Internet. Here are the two primary "pull" types of information flow:

In a pull request, a sender asks a receiver for information, products, or services.

Another type of pull request is when a sender invoices a receiver to request or demand payment.

**Information push:** A sender who wants information to generate a particular result must push it to the receiver, whether it has been requested or not. When you send email you are pushing information to the receiver.

Most people are so inundated with "pushed" information that they have developed sophisticated filtering systems that help them ignore information they consider unimportant — which is why direct mail response rates of three percent are considered significant. Here are the six primary "push" types of information flows:

A sender can make an offer, which a receiver is free to accept or reject.

A sender can inform a receiver of facts or events.

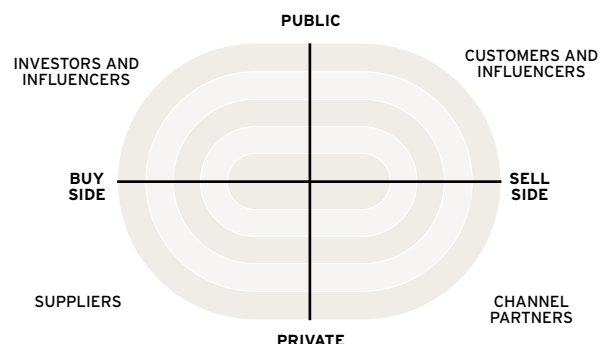
A sender can order products and/or services from a receiver.

A sender can pay a receiver for products and/or services.

A sender can deliver products and/or services to a receiver.

**Map coordinates:** The map is organized along two axes that divide the buy side of the organization from the sell side, and separates the public communications arena from the private.

The stakeholders in each quadrant have different interests and requirements, and approaches to communication that succeed in one area may wreak havoc in another.



As the primary decision maker in any company, the CEO more than anyone must balance the needs of all stakeholders, and therefore has been positioned at the center of the map.

Radiating outward, other categories are defined based on their relationship to the enterprise.

The inner two rings define the core enterprise: People whose understanding of proprietary systems ensures continued competitive advantage.

The outer rings represent the extended enterprise: Direct and indirect stakeholders whose actions, perceptions and ideas can have profound impact on the organization's situation, both today and tomorrow.

