

# The Forest and the Trees: Understanding Business Ecosystems

Companies work in complex, overlapping, constantly changing environments. Today's customer landscape is not tomorrow's. Yesterday's star employees are not today's. And who knows what the economy will do in the future? Yet companies need to continue producing and performing amidst these changes. Creative companies even find opportunities in their ecosystems amidst the tumult.

Business ecosystems are dynamic webs of interdependent organizations that rely on each other for success. The inventor of the term, [James F. Moore](#), explains that [business ecosystems](#) include those we've always considered to be part of a corporation: those inside the organization's walls plus distribution channels and direct suppliers. They also include the extended enterprise: direct customers, standards bodies, suppliers of complementary products, and so on. Finally, they include those who can have a significant effect on the core business but who are often considered afterthoughts or pesky outsiders: trade associations, regulatory bodies, unions, investors, and so on.

It's hard to see the forest—the ecosystem—when you're stuck in the weeds. Many professionals find themselves unable to see the big picture. In this session, we present a tool that can help professionals see the forest as well as the trees. Participants learn about a simple, yet robust, methodology for mapping business ecosystems. We'll walk through two case studies. We'll end with an overview of how to map business ecosystems.

## What Participants Learn

- What ecosystems are and why they matter
- How two organizations—eCopy and the Austin Health Adolescent Initiative—used business ecosystem mapping to understand their environments
- The process for conducting a business ecosystem assessment

## About the Presenter

Maya Townsend, founder of Partnering Resources, specializes in helping leaders meet complex change and collaboration challenges. The practice is based on understanding how to leverage networks: the complex, interrelated, and often messy webs of relationships that drive all organizational activity.

Maya's clients include the AHA Initiative (Austin Department of Health & Human Services), Boston Architectural College, the Elizabeth Stone House, the International Facility Management Association (Boston), MIT, NASA, Project Harmony, the National Braille Press, and Zumix. She also works with corporate clients such as Fidelity Investments, Hanover Insurance Group, and Merrimack Pharmaceuticals.

Maya's articles have appeared in *Chief Learning Officer*, *Talent Management*, *Nonprofit Quarterly*, *CIO*, *Women's Business Boston*, and other publications. She serves on the Editorial Review Board for *OD Practitioner*, the premier organization development practitioner journal in the United States. Maya blogs at [Future of Work Enabled](#) and [Complex Change & Collaboration](#). She co-edited the [Handbook for Strategic HR](#) (publication date: 11/2012).

Maya's presentations at national conferences have been acclaimed "best in conference" by participants. She is also a popular local speaker who has led sessions for the Healthcare Businesswomen's Network, OD Network, Project Management Institute, Northeast HR Association, and American Society for Quality.

She graduated with distinction from American University / NTL Institute MSOD program and holds a certificate in Organization Development from Georgetown University.

### ***What Participants Say***

“Maya was one of the most skillful presenters I have seen in terms of creating buzz, interest, engagement and participation, as well as a subject matter expert.” – VP, business services organization (NEHRA conference)

“Facilitator made everything seem easy. Maya is wonderful!” – Anonymous participant feedback, PMI conference

“Maya’s presentation was informative, engaging, and insightful. She shared a great technology, in a way that would best serve those in attendance, and received many of the highest marks on her feedback. Maya is the best of the best.” – Chair, Midwest Talent Management Forum

“Best session of the day!” – Anonymous participant feedback, Midwest Talent Management Forum