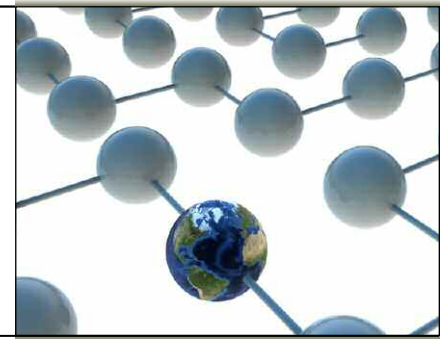


Bob Stambaugh: Consultant, Connector & Colleague

By Valdis Krebs, orgnet.com



“When the effective leader is finished with his work, the people say it happened naturally.”

– Lao Tse

Bob Stambaugh played many roles in the business world. He was an author, consultant, organizer, connector and colleague. He excelled in each of these roles. As an author, he wrote many articles about human resources and information technology, and how the two could be most effectively combined. His articles were a joy to read – he was an excellent storyteller, effectively using stories to illustrate his points. His articles were always a few steps ahead of what everyone else was writing about. As we begin 2006, social network analysis is an area of increasing interest to HR professionals. Bob was already applying the concepts and writing about it in the 1990s. His first article on the subject, “Patterns of Use,” is found in this issue of *IHRIM Journal*. His vision of the future earned him the reputation of someone who sees over the horizon and around the corner. Clients lined up to hear his wisdom, as did attendees at major HR conferences; his presentations were always well attended.

But in this article, I will focus on two of Bob’s attributes that are not so well known. These attributes, though not public, touched those he knew the most. Bob was a favorite colleague and mentor to many. As I was collecting data to map his professional network, I kept receiving e-mails with comments about how he was a key mentor to the sender. He was a mentor to me also, and I kept wondering how he could be a mentor to so many?

Bob had wisdom and was not afraid to share it.

I remember when I was first considering leaving the corporate world and going out on my own as a consultant and software developer. Bob was always the voice of support and reason. It was not just cheerleading, but a thoughtful question at the right time – “what about this...?” Although Bob helped me leave the HRIS/HRMS fold, he helped many others to grow deeper into it. As we will see in the social network maps later, Bob touched and positively affected many careers. He was always the person others would seek out when they had to test a theory or reality check a major presentation or article. Bob’s feedback was always useful. He was someone that I always looked forward to interacting with. I knew to expect a positive, friendly, learning experience, or just plain enjoyable camaraderie.

Ask people what they remember from reading Malcolm Gladwell’s book, *The Tipping Point*, and they usually mention the key network roles that Gladwell mentions – the Maven and the Connector. Bob was both.

I consider myself well-read and up-to-date on new technologies and business trends and methods, but Bob was always a few laps ahead of me. He was the best-read person I knew. As many of his friends and family will tell you, the Stanford bookstore was one of his favorite places on the planet. When considering a book to purchase, I would always check with Bob first. I don’t think that I ever mentioned a book that Bob had not read, or at least browsed, and decided not to purchase. Some people like the reviews on Amazon, but Bob’s were better.

He read widely, not just HR or IT books. Often he read science books and was a big fan of the complexity sciences. He always found a way to apply what he had learned. His presentations were full of diverse topics and unique views of HR and IT. He knew how to tie it all together. Gladwell called these types of people, *Mavens* – knowledgeable people that others seek out for insights, opinions and wisdom.

Bob knew many people in the HRIS/HRMS world. He was a co-founder of HRSP – Human Resource Systems Professionals – and later very active in the new organization, IHRIM. When Bob passed away, those of us associated with the *IHRIM Journal* decided that one way to pay tribute to Bob would be to show the lives and careers he touched. We decided to map out Bob’s professional network. We collected data from those we knew had ties to Bob. But, as these efforts go, we were not able to collect data on Bob’s *entire* network. Figure 1 is a network map showing Bob’s node in the center, with 100+ colleagues (shown by blue nodes) in a circle around him. This is just a portion of the people that knew Bob professionally.

We see that Bob was a colleague with many. What we don’t see is how Bob affected those around him – his colleagues, the blue nodes on the map. Bob was a *network weaver* – a *connector* in Gladwell’s terminology. A network weaver is someone who connects others – not just to “network” them, but also to start them off on a productive path together, like a project, an employment opportunity or a learning experience.

We all are connected to many peo-

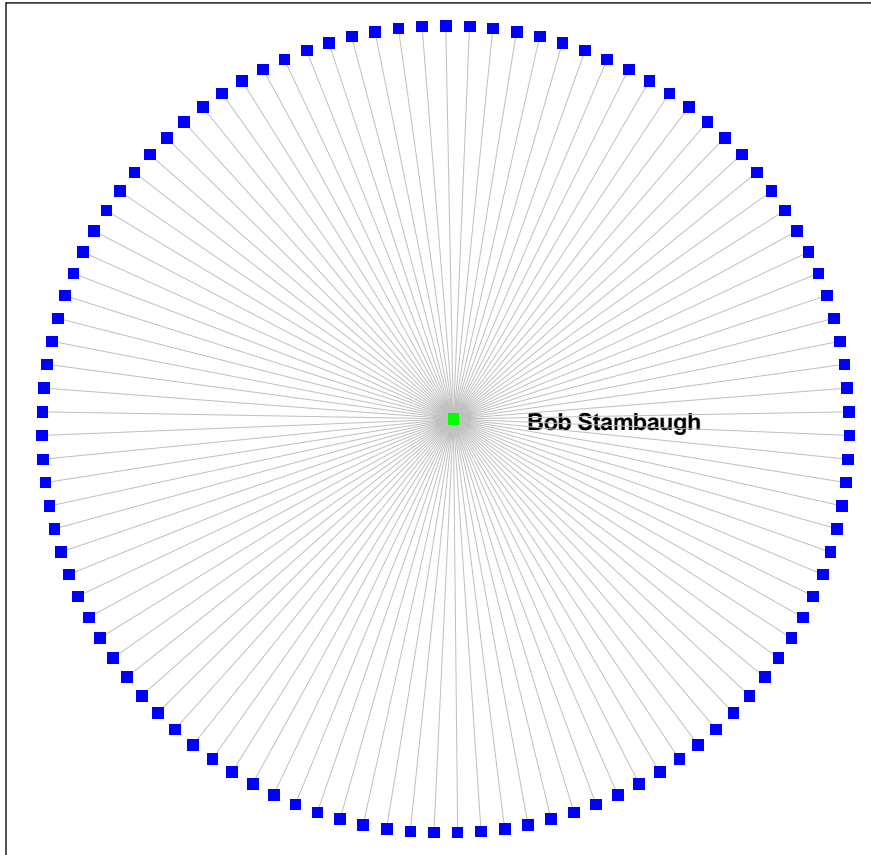


Figure 1. Bob's Professional Network.

ple in our lives. Some of them are also connected to each other – friends/colleagues of yours are often friends/colleagues of each other – but not always. This presents an opportunity for you, the person who connects two

others, who are not connected to each other – like Figure 2.

The green node in Figure 2 knows the two blue nodes, but they do not know each other. The green node has a choice, connect the two or leave them

apart. If the green node chooses *not* to connect the two, then he/she remains between them and controls any information flow between them. If the green node spots an opportunity for the two nodes to mutually benefit from, he/she will connect them. This is what Wayne Baker, one of the blue nodes in Figure 1, and an expert in social capital, calls the Union Strategy. Us mathematicians call it “closing the open triangle” – a natural state for triangles.

In Figure 3, we see an actual introduction. Bob knew both Karen Beaman, the editor-in-chief of the *IHRIM Journal*, and Gerry Falkowski, a consultant at IBM Global Services and looking for an opportunity to write business articles. Bob introduced the two. Gerry wrote a few articles for the *Journal* and now is a contributing columnist to the *Journal*. The network weaver spots an opportunity and makes a connection to exploit that opportunity.

Bob closed many such triangles in the HRIS/HRMS community. He introduced me to many interesting people. He seemed to know a lot of them. Of the 100+ people in his network in Figure 1, Bob connected over half of them to each other! Figure 4 shows many of the people in Bob's network. Bob's node is not shown in the network because he connects to everyone in the network (like in Figure 1) – this would create too many redundant lines. This

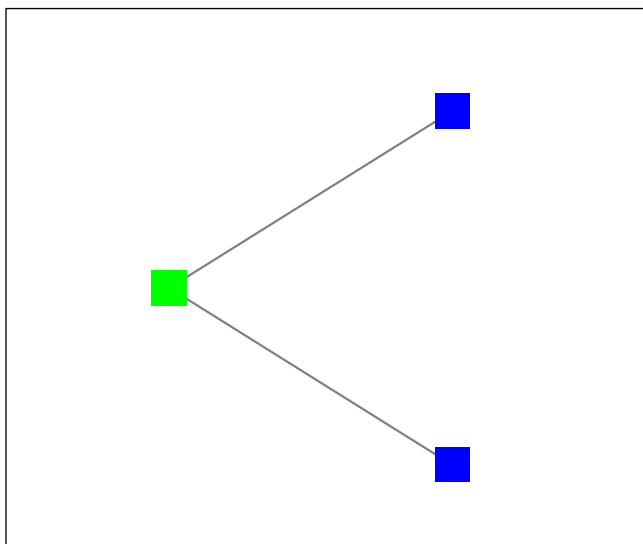


Figure 2. The Connector: Spotting Opportunities.

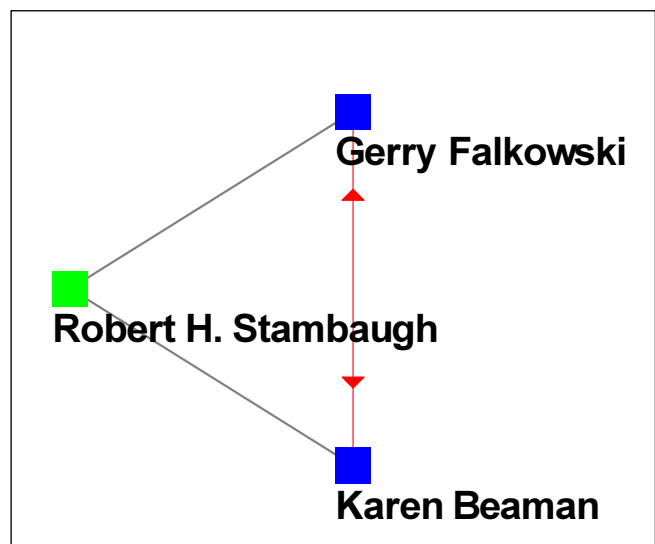


Figure 3. The Network Weaver: Connecting Opportunities.

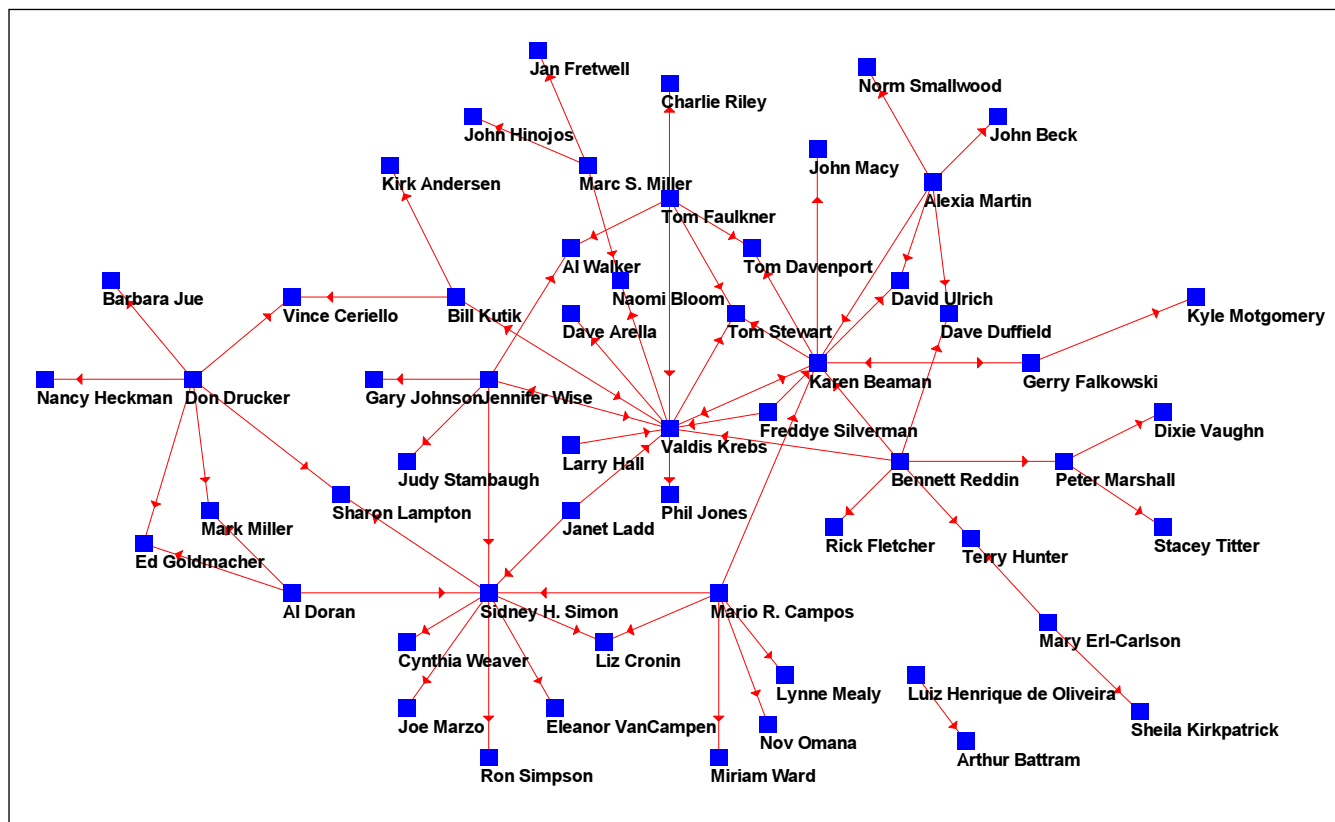


Figure 1. Bob's Professional Network.

network focuses on the introductions that Bob initiated. A red arrow is drawn between two people if Bob introduced one of them to the other. The arrow is drawn *from* the person who took the survey to the person that Bob introduced them to. A bi-directional arrow is drawn if both parties listed each other as having been introduced by Bob on the network survey form.

Bob not only shared himself with us, but he shared us with each other! It was a fine network he wove. He will be missed.

Robert H. Stambaugh (Bob), co-founder of IHRIM, passed away on December 1, 2005 at his home in Kekaha, Hawaii. As president of Kapa'a Associates, Bob explored the role of emerging technologies in future work environments with more than 50 Fortune 100 clients. He was previously employed as a financial industries analyst and project leader at SRI International. He has also developed and managed HRIS capabilities and HR information centers at Crocker Bank, Intel Corporation and Atari. He served as vice president of VRC

Consulting Group and vice president and western regional manager for The Hunter Group. Bob was co-founder of IHRIM (formerly HRSP), whose first meeting occurred in his office in San Francisco more than 25 years ago. He has served as IHRIM Bay Area Chapter director and president, and served four terms as a member of the IHRIM Board of Directors. In 2000, he received IHRIM's highest award, the Summit Award, for his lifetime contribution to the HRIS discipline. In addition to IHRIM, Bob was a member of WorldatWork, ACM, AHRI, AMA, HRPS, IEEE, SHRM and the World Futures Society. He was a frequent speaker and leader of seminars dealing with alternative futures and the use of hard/soft science tools and techniques in leading-edge HRIS initiatives on organizational effectiveness. He authored more than 100 reviews and articles, and was editor of the IHRIM Press book 21 Tomorrows, which included a look at the future world of HRIS, and he was co-founder of the IHRIM Journal. He contributed many feature articles to the Journal and had a standing column in each issue. For more than 30 years, Bob provided his insight, creative talents and in-depth knowledge of HR and HR technology to professionals and organizations alike.

Valdis Krebs is a management consultant and the developer of InFlow™, software for social network analysis. InFlow maps and measures knowledge exchange, information flow, emergent communities, networks of alliances and other networks within and between groups. This technique allows one to map and measure what was once invisible. Hundreds of major corporations and consulting firms use his software and services to map and measure networks, flows, and relationships in organizations, communities, and other complex human systems – for example, IBM Global Services, TRW, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, Aventis, Solvay, Cardinal Health, CapitalOne, Target, Centers for Disease Control [CDC], Lucent Technologies, Hiram Walker, Shell, ACENet, Sempra Energy, Scottish Enterprise and Deloitte Touche. He has undergraduate degrees in Mathematics & Computer Science, and a graduate degree in Organizational Behavior/Human Resources and has studied applied Artificial Intelligence. He can be reached at valdis@orgnet.com.