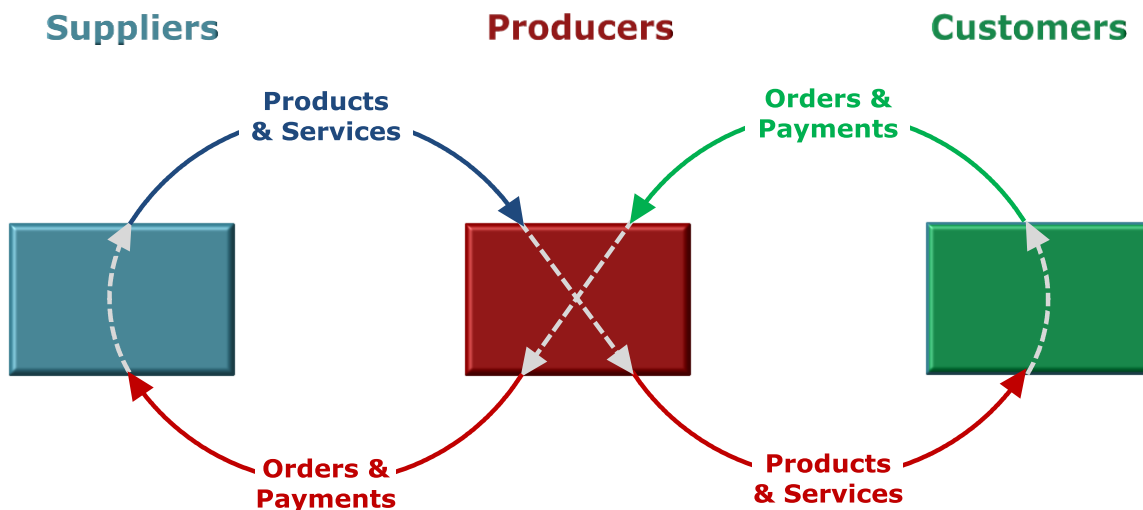


Tools for Knowledge Workers

The “Infinite Loop” Model of Organizations



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One of the great insights into the nature of organizations as open systems is that they are usefully viewed as a recurring cycle of events instead of a collection of related elements or subsystems. This view produces an “infinite loop” or Figure 8 model as shown above. The loops are streams of activity and when we set out to identify an organization’s processes, we should keep in mind that whatever we identify is most likely no more than a portion of some larger stream of activity. This reality complicates the matter of identifying organizational processes because it imposes upon us the necessity of defining which portion of that larger stream of activity will be considered the process of interest. Identifying a process is akin to driving two stakes into the bed of a river – one upstream and one downstream – and then saying that what lies between the two stakes is the river. The point is that process boundaries must be set, not simply identified. For more about this “infinite loop” view of organizations – and why the process of identifying processes can be so difficult – click [here](#).

