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## AVATAR Lecture Series

**From Disasters to WoW: Understanding & Enabling Networks in 21st Century Organizational Forms****Noshir Contractor, Northwestern University-Illinois**Jane S. & William J. White Professor Behavioral Sciences in the School of Engineering,  
School of Communication and the Kellogg School of ManagementManship School of Mass Communications D. Jensen Holliday Forum  
February 26, 2008 - 10:00 am**Abstract:**

Recent advances in digital technologies invite consideration of organizing as a process that is accomplished by global, flexible, adaptive, and ad hoc networks that can be created, maintained, dissolved, and reconstituted with remarkable alacrity. This presentation describes a multi-theoretical multilevel (MTML) model of the socio-technical motivations for creating, maintaining, dissolving, and reconstituting knowledge and social networks. Using examples from his research in a wide range of activities such as the Katrina disaster response, Communities of Practice at Procter & Gamble, public health and massively multiplayer online games (WoW - the World of Warcraft), Contractor will present a visual-analytic framework that can be used to Discover, Diagnose, and Design our knowledge networks in 21st century organizational forms.

**Speaker's Bio:**

Noshir Contractor is the Jane S. & William J. White Professor of Behavioral Sciences in the School of Engineering, School of Communication and the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, USA. He directs the Science of Networks in Communities (SONIC) Research Laboratory at Northwestern University and is a Research Affiliate of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is investigating factors that lead to the formation, maintenance, and dissolution of dynamically linked social and knowledge networks in communities. Specifically, his research team is developing and testing theories and methods of network science to map, understand and enable more effective (i) disaster response networks, (ii) public health networks, (iii) transnational immigrant networks, (iv) massively multiplayer online games (MMOs) networks and (v) environmental engineering networks. His research program has been funded continuously for the past decade by major grants from the U.S. National Science Foundation with additional funding from the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Rockefeller Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation. Professor Contractor has published or presented over 250 research papers dealing with communication. His book titled Theories of Communication Networks (co-authored with Professor Peter Monge and published by Oxford University Press in English and scheduled to be published by China Renmin University Press in simplified Chinese in 2008) received the 2003 Book of the Year award from the Organizational Communication Division of the National Communication Association. He is the lead developer of IKNOW (Inquiring Knowledge Networks On the Web), and its Cyberinfrastructure extension CI-KNOW, a network recommender system to enable communities using cyberinfrastructure, as well as Blanche, a software environment to simulate the dynamics of social networks.

