Social Network Analysis allows us to identify and examine the connections and channels through which potentially useful knowledge could, and did, flow. The network graph shown to the right is based on some of the commercial and personal relationships of Josiah Wedgwood between 1770 and 1791. Clearly a man with an extensive network at his fingertips, Wedgwood had access to the pioneers of steam, James Watt and Matthew Boulton, and it is thus no surprise that his factory at Etruria was the first in the district to install a steam engine in 1783. The advantages of external relationships and connections were not limited to physical capital and machinery, however, with much innovation in the Potteries being a result of scientific experimentation. These experiments and innovations relied heavily on the knowledge and skills of experts outside the domain of earthenware production.

Alexander Chisholme was one such expert who proved to be of crucial importance for Josiah Wedgwood's signature Jasper- and Cream-ware. Acting as a knowledge broker, Chisholme bridged the 'structural hole' between the knowledge in advanced chemistry that existed in one network but not in another.

Networks such as those constructed by Josiah Wedgwood were just one way in which the potters of North Staffordshire were able to continually innovate and adapt to an environment of increasing competition and rapidly changing consumer demands and preferences. Maintaining a competitive advantage over competing producers at a national and international level was crucial to the enduring success of the district. ‘Staffordshire Ware’ and the potters that produced it enjoyed an international reputation based on quality and design. During a period of sustained growth in both production and the number of firms, it is peculiar that the majority of potters favoured numerous short-term partnerships.

In the context of a group of potters with a strong sense of local identity and cooperation, such frequent formation and dissolution of partnerships suggests a degree of openness and transparency perhaps not present in competing regions. With the knowledge and expertise of the district constituting such a large part of their success, there is a case to be made that Staffordshire potters did not hold knowledge secretly from their fellow producers. Short-term partnerships then become an additional medium for information transfer (in a similar way to external networks) and helped create and disseminate a growing body of useful and practical knowledge which proved so vital to the region's long-term success.