

GRAPEVINE : AN EFFICIENT WAY OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

The necessary and sufficient condition for the success of any organization is their technique of managing their staff. Grapevine is the most effective tool in the hands of the managing authorities with which they can have commanding hand over their employees without having a bitter image. Grapevine is that mode of communication which drags the people away from the invisible cage of protocols and rules. It provides an alternative path of exchanging information without following the tedious path which involves formal attitude. The paper encapsulates the use of grapevine at various levels of any particular organization with its influence at every respective level. The limitation or drawbacks of grapevine is also taken into a quick glance.

Key Words: *Grapevine, communication, organization, attitude*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the backbone of any organizing firm. It is communication that allows a small group of people to manage thousands of people and that too effectively. The mode and style of communication differs from person to person and place to place. The way in which we communicate with our seniors differs completely with the way we do with our companions. Often there prevails a formal communication between a person at a higher authority and at a lower designation. But the scenario is just opposite while in case of people at the same designation. So here comes the need of defining the term 'Grapevine'.

According to Nancy Borkowski (2010),

“Grapevine communication is defined as unstructured and Informal network formed on social relationship rather than organizational charts or job descriptions. It is actually an informal vehicle through which message flows throughout the organization.”

Grapevine is a channel through which the actual communication between various troops of the organization takes place and gives out the desired outcome. Since it is unstructured and not under complete control of management, it moves through the organization in every direction. It moves upwards, downward, and diagonally, within and without chains of command, between workers and managers, and even with and without a company. It gives out an idea that grapevine is not a form of communication which follows structural path. It moves in all the direction that is up, down and even diagonally.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GRAPEVINE

Some general characteristics can be extracted out of the study of this vast topic which are:-

1. **Huge Impact:** A large number of employees in an organization depends on the grapevine because they consider this as the primary source of information as well as the reliable channel to communicate about the facts and events within the firm.
2. **Extensive:** Grapevine links the whole organization very quickly. From top to bottom of an organization, nobody is left from the touch of grapevine. That's why sometimes grapevine communication is considered very effective communication.
3. **Flexibility:** It is more flexible than formal channels because formal channels require various formalities whereas grapevine is free from those formalities. Gossiping, sharing moments or conversation are enough to create a grapevine.
4. **Speed:** Information moves very quickly through the grapevine. Grapevine runs faster than the wind.
5. **Distortion:** Information spreading through grapevine is like to be distorted as it moves point to point, terminal to terminal or person to person. e.g. Mr. X got married recently such information can be distorted as Mr. X got married outside of his country two years ago.
6. **Oral Way:** Grapevine uses oral techniques more rather than written or non-verbal techniques. As oral communication involves less time, grapevine is likely to be dependent on oral mode.

7. **Large Receivers:** As the text or essence of grapevine is catchy, there exists a large receiver to deal with it. A huge number of individuals are always there to take part in grapevine.
8. **Extra Ability:** Grapevine can pierce the strong security and can fly from mouth to mouth very easily. It has more ability to spread throughout the whole organization.
9. **Unsaid Information:** Grapevine normally carries those information that the formal communication does not wish to convey. Information based on fabrication or rumor is supposed to be transmitted more in a better way through grapevine.
10. **Contradictory Information:** The same information which is transmitted through formal chain can be distorted and therefore can raise contradiction if it passes through grapevine.

III. TYPES OF GRAPEVINE

Messages transmitted through the grapevine are normally referred to as "rumors." These are of four types:

Wedge Drivers Rumor – Wedge drivers rumor are Aggressive, unfriendly and damaging. For example, a a company x saying that Company y serves worms in their sandwiches.

Home Stretchers Rumor–home stretchers rumors are those which Anticipates in final decisions or announcements. They tend to fill the gap during times of ambiguity.

Wish Fulfillment Rumor--These are types of rumors which express the wishes and hopes of those who circulate rumors and these are the most positive and they help to stimulate the creativity of others. Often solutions to work problems are a result of employees verbally expressing desire for changes. These improvements sometimes result in increased efficiency for certain departments within the organization.

Bogey Rumor- Comes from employee's fears and anxieties causing general uneasiness among employees such as during budget crunch. In this case, employees will verbally express their fears to others. These rumors are sometimes damaging, such as a rumor about possible lay-offs, and need a formal rebuttal from management.

KINDS OF GRAPEVINE CHAINS

On the basis of travelling information, grapevine communication is classified into four types of chains:

Single Strand Chain -Single Strand Chains are those which follow single chain transmission. For example, A tells to B, who tells it to C & so on. The longer the strand, the more is the distortion and filtering effects. For example, if any employee is at the verge to be declared as the new team leader, then this message travels in a single chain.

Gossip chains– Gossip chains are those in which Group of people gather up to discuss matters of mutual interest. These chains are generally considered to be slow in passing the information. For example, a message of ‘not-on-job’ is passed through this type of chain.

Probability Chain- probability chains are those chains in which information may move from anybody to anybody. It is found when information is somewhat interesting but not really significant. And in this chain it is observed that only some people in the organization get to know the information.

Cluster Chain – in this type of chain, people tell something to a few selected individuals and then some of these individuals tell some other selected individuals. It is observed that individual communicates with only those individuals he/she trusts. Most of the informal messages flow through this chain. Vyapam scam is the best suitable example for this type of chain.

USES OF GRAPEVINE

The use of grapevine varies from place to place and from person to person. At an organizational level, the use of grapevine varies from level to level and from designation to designation. For example the type of conversation at the worker level is entirely different from the type of conversation at the manager level. Some of the cases of the use of grapevine are:

At the higher post-In an organization, there always exist certain facts that are officially not meant for the employees at lower level. These confidential facts are leaked by certain intermediate employees by the channel of grapevine. For example, suppose the profit amount of a company is known. Rumor is spread that this much profit is there and on that basis bonus is declared.

At an intermediate level-At this level, the use of grapevine differ from that at the high level. Here grapevine serves as a channel to travel personal information of the employees. For example, the chances of promotion, any attempted fraud, some personal affairs etc.

At a lower level-This level attains the title of using grapevine to the maximum extent. All the gossips related to the personal and private life of the people of lower and intermediate level originates from here.

VI. BENEFITS OF GRAPEVINE

1. Spreads Rapidly-Being a channel free from documentation and hierarchal barriers, grapevine serves as the fastest medium of exchanging thoughts and information within and outside an organization.
2. Feedback is Quick-Every action has an equal and opposite reaction,, and in the case of grapevine it is quick too. The feedback of the rumor reaches in no time back to the person from where the rumor originated.
3. Group Cohesiveness- Gossips, which is a form of grapevine often becomes the main reason for bringing people closer and making them friendly. Gossip increases interaction between the employees which directly increases workability of any organization
4. Signals that Problems/Good news exist-One of the most important benefit of grapevine communication is that it keeps the employees updated. Any news, good or bad reaches everyone and allows them to respond according to it.
5. Substitute for formal channel of communication-As we all know that formal communication is time consuming as it is full of formalities.

VII. DRAWBACKS OF GRAPEVINE

1. The grapevine is not trust worthy always as it doesn't follow official path of communication and is spread more by gossips and unconfirmed report.
2. The information is untrue most of the times as quite often the rumors are made just to pretend that any individual is full of information about any particular firm.
3. Being a form of oral communication. Only a part of the information is transmitted which keeps on reducing with the advancement of chain.
4. It hampers the goodwill of the organization or any particular individual.

VIII. PREVENTING RUMORS

1. Try to provide information through the formal system of communication on the issues important to the employees.
2. Employees should be supplied with a steady flow of clear, accurate and timely information.
3. Try to present full facts about important events, issues and topics so that the chances for rumor can be minimized.
4. Try to keep formal communication lines open and the process as short as possible.

IX. CONCLUSION

The grapevine communication among the employees and employers cannot be stopped even though the upper level of management put an effort on it. Communication is after all, a natural human activity.

There are several ways on how to deal with grapevine communication and next it can be used as a medium channel between the employer and employee in the organization.

The organization should not eliminate the grapevine communication because it can help the employees in doing their work.

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