Grapevine communication

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Abstract:

Communication is a constant part of Teaching Learning Process. The act of transferring information from one place, person or group to another is called communication. People who lie in the top hierarchy usually control formal channel of communication. Communication basically travels through informal channels, called "the grapevine." Basically the term grapevine communication originated during early Civil War days when the telegraph wires strung through the trees and resembled like grapevines. It is observed that nowadays the grapevine means "the informal transmission of information, gossip or rumour spread from person to person." As this mode of communication is informal, all information that passes through is open to change and interpretation can vary time to time. The well evident facts provide proofs that grapevine gives an outlet for imagination and truth seeking. Grapevine effect can be used to manage sharing of information amongst one another in an unofficial, or informal, manner. In this article an attempt is made to explain each and every dimension of grapevine communication i.e. Single Strand Chain, Gossip Chain, Probability Chain and Cluster Chain along with that advantages, disadvantages and significance of grapevine communication.

Key words: gossip, cluster.

Introduction:

Grapevine takes place within the organization and it is an informal, unofficial and personal communication channel or system. It is a complex web of oral information and it generally spreads rapidly and touches all the members of the organization. It stretches throughout the organization almost in all directions from ground to the authority levels. Basically it is a type of conversation between employees and superiors that do not follow any prescribed structure or rule-based system.

Significance of grapevine communication

It is observed that grapevine channels carry information rapidly. As soon as an employee gets to know some confidential information, he becomes inquisitive and passes the details to his friend and then he passes it to another person. It really spreads information so quickly and even works as supplement in those cases where formal communication does not work. Feedback received by the managers from their subordinates on their policies is quick compared to formal channel of communication.

Sense of unity is created among the employees who share and discuss their views with each other. Grapevine also helps in developing group cohesiveness and serves as an emotional support system. This type of communication is vital for leaders to understand the impact it has on the work environment.

Patterns or Types of Grapevine

The grapevine is largely horizontal in nature although it does not have any definite pattern or direction and it can flourish horizontally, vertically and even diagonally. As per the research work on the nature of grapevine, Prof. Keith Davis has classified it into four basic types -

Single Strand Chain:

In the single strand chain information is passed through a line of persons to the ultimate recipient. In the figure, person a, tells b, who tells c, who tells d, and so on, till the information reaches most of the persons concerned.
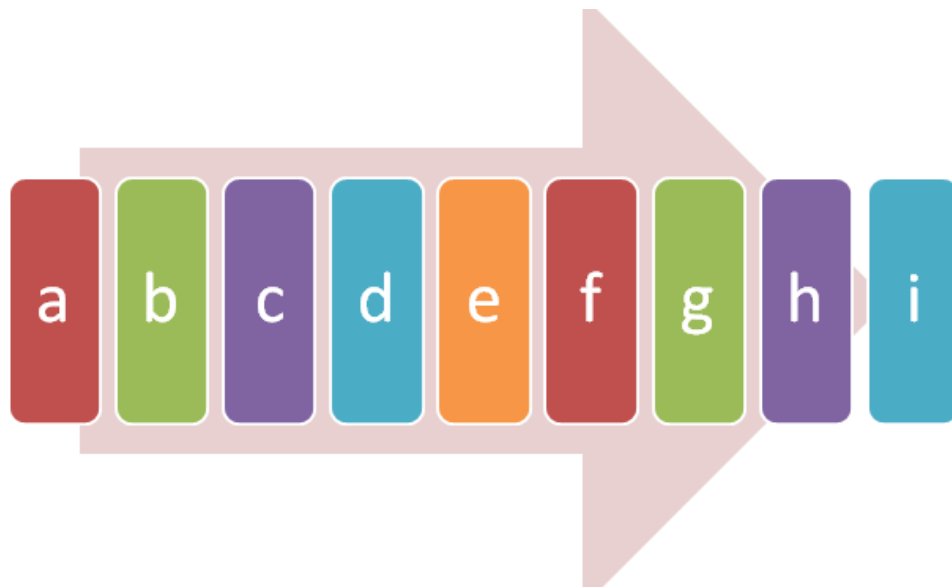
Figure 1: Grapevine Pattern - Single Strand Chain

Gossip Chain:

In the gossip chain, one person seeks and tells the information to everyone. In this chain the information passes just like the structure of a wheel, where one person stays at the centre and spreads information along the spokes of the wheel to others stationed on the rim. In the following figure a, is at the center and the information is passed to others staying on the rim of the wheel.
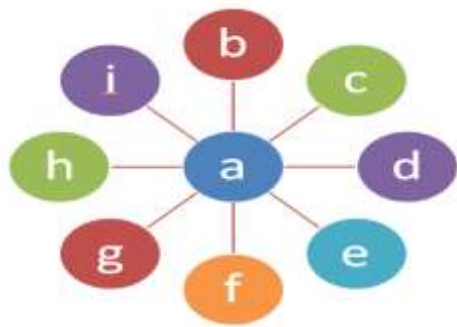

Figure 2: Grapevine Pattern - Gossip Chain

- **Figure 3: Grapevine Pattern - Probability Chain**

Probability Chain: It is a random process in which someone transmits the information to others in accordance with the laws of probability and then these others tell still others in a similar way. This chain may also be called random process. The probability chain is shown below-
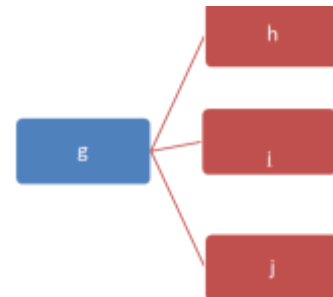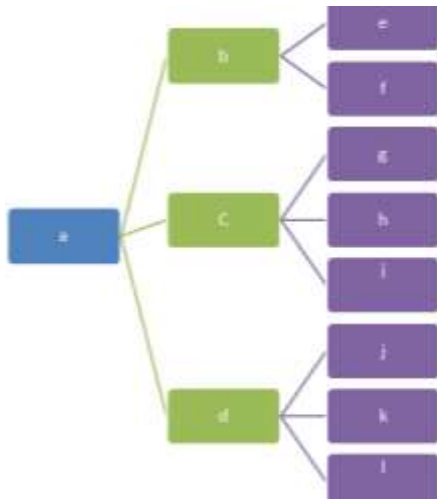
Cluster Chain: A person shares the information to the selected persons who may in turn relay the information to some other selected persons in the cluster chain. Cluster chain is followed in most of the information communication. Cluster chain is shown in the following figure-
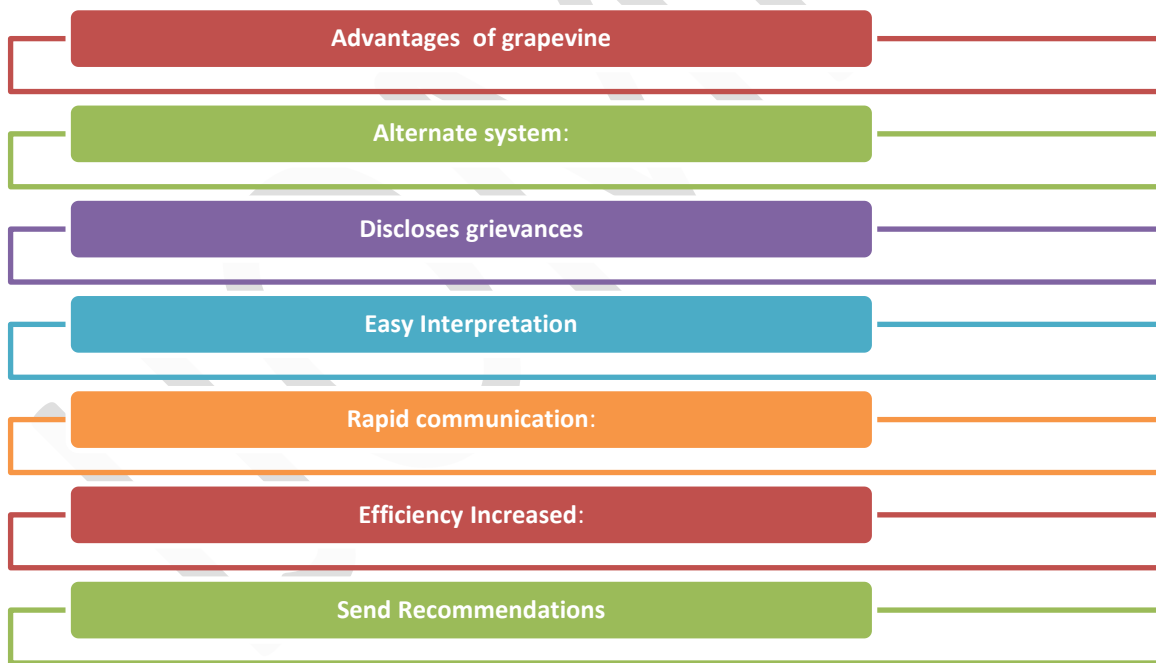
- **Figure 4: Grapevine Pattern - Cluster Chain**

Advantage of grapevine or informal communication

The advantages of informal communication are as follows:

1. **Alternate system**: Formal system is not capable to provide information to all in some cases. This gap is covered by informal system.
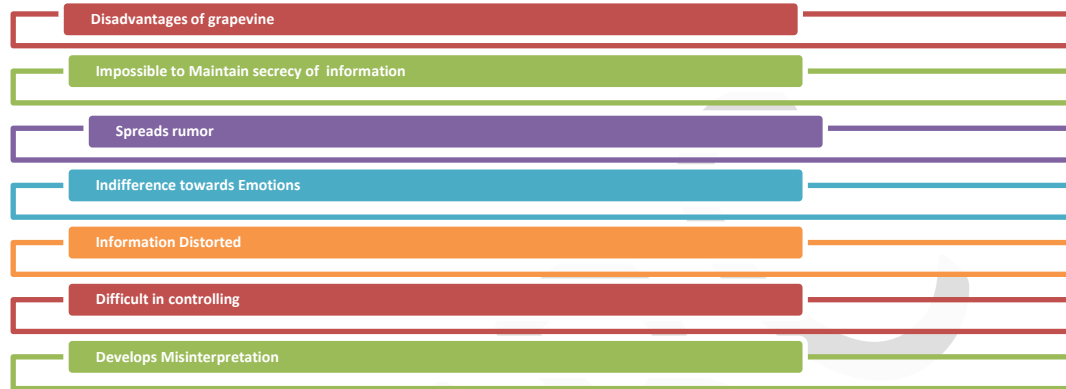
2. **Discloses grievances**: The employees disclose without any hesitation their needs, sentiments and their emotions to higher authority.

Advantages of grapevine

Alternate system:

Discloses grievances

Easy Interpretation

Rapid communication:

Efficiency Increased:

Send Recommendations

3. **Easy Interpretation**: It is observed that under the formal system the information is given by the top level management. Informal system is easy for the employees to take the explanation and information. It plays a vital role in completing any task properly.

4. **Rapid communication**: Informal communication transmits very fast. It seems significant to mention that miss-information or rumor spread rapidly in comparison to formal communication to others in the organization.

5. **Efficiency Increased**: The employees openly discuss their problems under the informal system and find solutions for them. It even develops the efficiency of the employees and the work is done properly.

6. **Send Recommendations**: The employees easily inform their superior about their demands, problems and the way to develop the implementation system of the work in this system. It also provides an opportunity to send the recommendation to their management.

Disadvantages of grapevine or informal communication

Disadvantages of grapevine

Impossible to Maintain secrecy of information

Spreads rumor

Indifference towards Emotions

Information Distorted

Difficult in controlling

Develops Misinterpretation

The disadvantages of informal communication are as follows:

1. **Impossible to Maintain secrecy of information**: In informal communication system maximum communication is made by open discussion. It really becomes impossible to maintain the secrecy of the information because maximum communication is made by open discussion.
2. **Spreads rumor**: In this system, the misinformation or rumor spreads rapidly and the original information is transformed to wrong information.
3. **Indifference towards Emotions**: Informal communication system sometimes develops the adversary culture among the employees, as open communication can sometimes hurt the emotions of other person. The efficiency of the employees may be reduced as they are not cooperative with one another.
4. **Information Distorted**: In most cases, the meaning and the subject matter of the information is distorted in this system.
5. **Difficult in controlling**: Under informal communication system there are no ground rules. It is really difficult to control the information that is disseminated.
6. **Develops Misinterpretation**: It creates the opportunity to develop misunderstanding as the employees do not obey the formal authorization system.

It is essential to take care of all the disadvantages of the grapevine and try to minimize them to make best

possible use of the advantages of grapevine.

A **sense of unity** is created by grapevine among the employees who share and discuss their views with each other. Group cohesiveness is developed by grapevine and it also serves as an emotional support system along with that it works as a supplement in those cases where we are not capable in using formal communication.

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