

INFORMAL FLOW OF COMMUNICATION

Psst... Have You Heard?



INFORMAL COMMUNICATION: GRAPEVINE

- **Unstructured and informal network** formed on social relationship rather than organizational charts or job descriptions
- Informal communication network **within an organization**
- Goes through **multiple channels and multiple versions**
- May occur face-to-face, through personal e-mail, chat, personal phone, social media etc.

GRAPEVINE: CHAIN #01

1) Single Strand Chain:

- Information passes through sequence of people to ultimate recipient
- Person A tells B, who tells C, who tells D, and so on, till information has reached most people involved or concerned
- Longer strand = more distortion and filtering effects

e.g. rumour of employee to be declared as new team leader

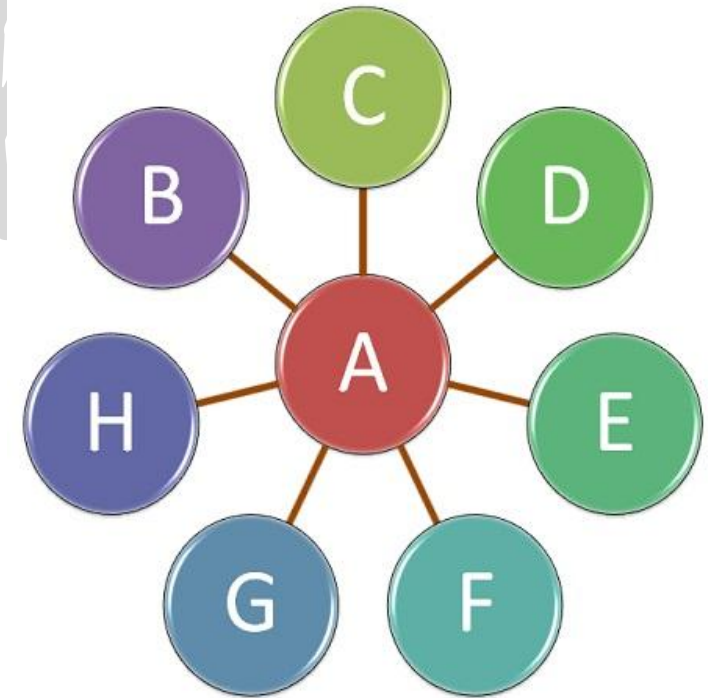


GRAPEVINE: CHAIN #02

2) Wheel/ Gossip Chain:

- Group of people discuss matters of mutual interest
- One person at centre, passing information radially to others
- Generally considered slow in passing information

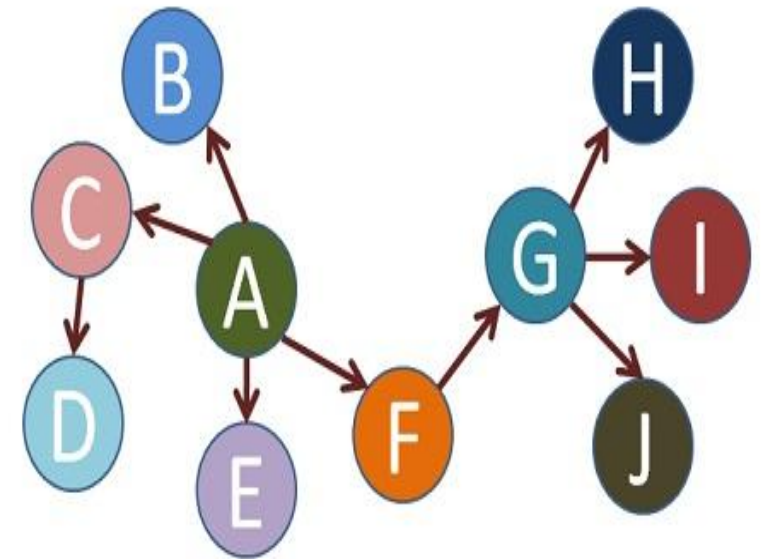
e.g. rumour of someone being 'not-on-job'



GRAPEVINE: CHAIN #03

3) Probability/ Free Flow Chain:

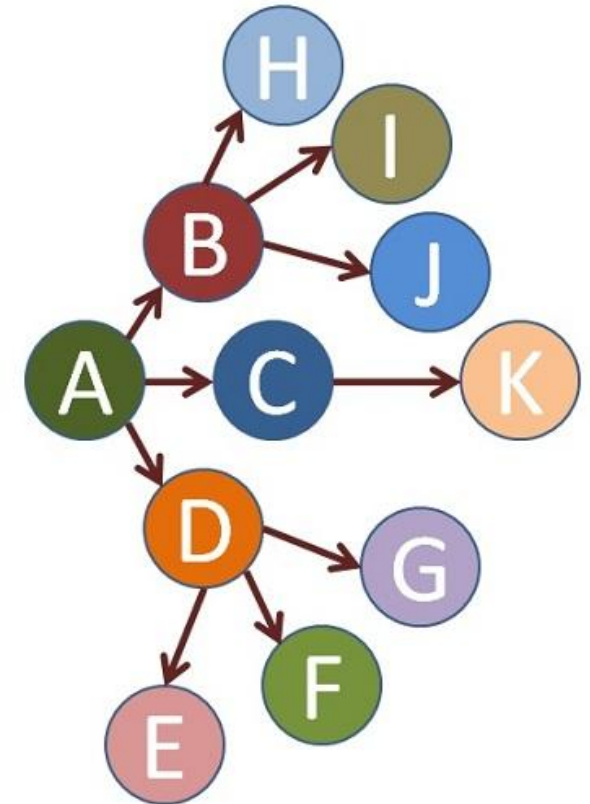
- Also called random chain/ process
- Someone transmits information to others according to laws of probability
- Only some people in organization get information
e.g. gossip about personal affairs



GRAPEVINE: CHAIN #04

4) Cluster Chain:

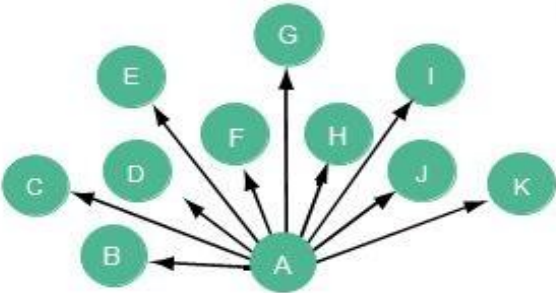
- Information passed on to selected individuals
- Some individuals relay information to other selected individuals
- Most informal messages flow through this chain
e.g. Vyapam scam



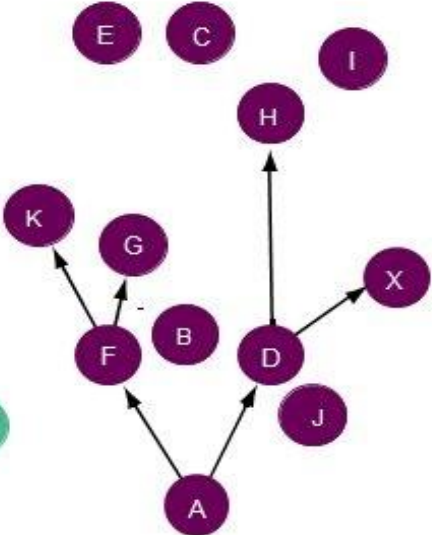
GRAPEVINE PATTERNS



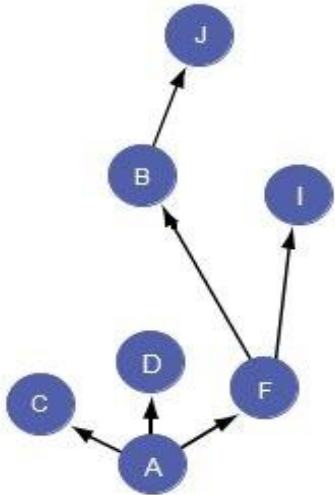
Single Strand
Each tells
one another



Gossip
One tells all



Probability
Each randomly
tells others



Cluster
Some tell
selected others

Source: K. Davis and J. W. Newstrom, *Human Behavior at Work: Organizational Behavior*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), p. 317. Reprinted by permission.

GRAPEVINE: ADVANTAGES

- **Speed:** Free from documentation and hierarchical barriers; fastest medium of exchanging thoughts and information
- **Quick Feedback:** Feedback of rumour reaches quickly back to source
- **Group Cohesion:** Gossip increases interaction between employees; directly increases workability of organization
- **Updation:** Keeps employees updated; news reaches everyone and allows them to respond
- **Substitute for Formal Communication:** Often replaces formalities of professional communication

GRAPEVINE: DISADVANTAGES

- **Trust Issue:** Not trustworthy; spread by gossip and unconfirmed report; impossible to maintain secrecy of information
- **Partial Transmission, Distortion and Misunderstanding:** Often only part of information transmitted; sometimes meaning and subject matter distorted; develops into misunderstanding
- **Goodwill Issue:** Hampers goodwill of organization and individual
- **Control Issue:** No established rules or policy; difficult to control information; as a result discipline of organization hampered; people may use rumour and gossip to control others

HOW TO PREVENT RUMOURS



- Provide information through formal system of communication on important issues
- Supply steady flow of clear, accurate and timely information
- Present full facts about important events, issues, and topics, to minimize chances of rumour
- Keep formal communication lines open and the process short

AND THAT'S THE WAY IT IS...

SDC



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