

Unit II
Channels, Networks, Forms and Dimensions of Communication

- Channel of communication refers to the way through which a message flows from the sender to the recipient
- An organization has well-ordered network of channels along which communication flows
- Most of the information flow of communication is downward and follows the formal lines of organization
- Communication channels are divided into two categories :
 1. Formal channel of communication
 2. Informal channel of communication

Formal channel of communication:

- Formal channels are those which carry the official message in organization
- Business has major well-established channels of information flow, like the network of arteries and veins in the body
- A formal channel of communication is one of the means controlled by managers or people occupying similar positions
- Formal info. flow includes the movements of info. by reports, e-mails, records, sales presentations, advertising and publicity of organization.
- Advantages of Formal channel:
 - Effective communication of any organization depends upon the formal channel of communication
 - It enables an organization to pass on information to its various branches smoothly
 - Formal channels strengthen the organization and satisfy the people in managerial position
- Disadvantages of Formal channel:
 - Sometimes it hinders free flow of information
 - While compared to other channel this consumes more time
 - Formal channel is expensive

Informal channel of communication:

- Informal communication is primarily personal communication.
- Such communications follow no set patterns.
- This communication forms an ever-changing and complex structure linking all the members of the organization.
- Based on informal relation between two or more individuals.
- Grapevine is an example of informal channel of communication.
- Whenever group meets they talk on different subjects, serious and not so serious, known as Grapevine in management.
- Unstructured and Informal network formed on social relationship rather than organizational charts or job descriptions.
- Informal vehicle through which message flow throughout the organization.
- It carries much gossip and rumours.
- It also carries more information than the formal communication system.
- Wise managers recognize the presence of grapevine and turn it into a constructive tool.

Grapevines are formed on account of following factors:

- When an organization passing through crisis
- If manager discriminates (treat differently) between his favourites and non-favourites
- If employees are not having enough self-confidence

Types of Grapevine communication:

Keith Davis has identified four types –

1. Single strand chain
2. Gossip chain
3. Probability chain
4. Cluster chain

Single Strand Chain

- It flows like a chain, i.e., 'A' tells something to 'B' who tells it to 'C' and so on.
- The longer the strand the more misrepresentation and filtering affects
- Most inaccuracies occur in this chain
- In this info. flows from one to other in a sequential order

Gossip Chain

- One person tells to other people
- This chain passes a message regarding a 'not-on-job' nature
- Generally considered to be slow in passing the information

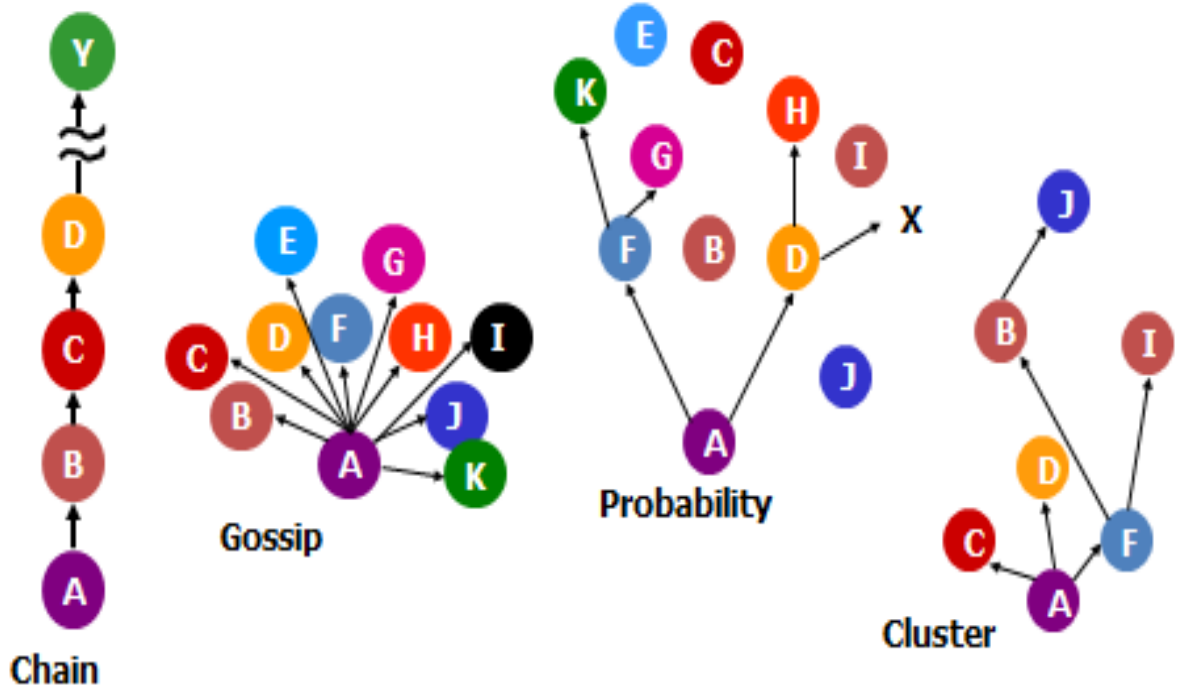
Probability Chain

- Information may move from anybody to anybody.
- This chain is found when the information is somewhat interesting but not really significant.
- Only some people in the organization will get to know the information.

Cluster Chain

- Individual communicates with only those individuals he/she trust
- Cluster chain is the dominant grapevine pattern in an organization
- Most informal communication flows through this chain

Informal Networks



- **Advantages of Grapevine :**

- Speedy transmission – it’s spread like a wild fire.
- Supplement to other channels- all info. Can’t be transmitted to the employees through the formal channels, it can be transmitted through grapevine.
- Psychological satisfaction- it gives psychological satisfaction and draws the workers nearer to each other, keeps organization complete as a social unity.
- Feedback- it provides feedback to the management which enables it to decide further strategies.
- Employees feel ownership of information.
- Management can learn / know what employees are thinking.

- **Disadvantages / limitations of Grapevine:**

- Information being spread is less authentic.
- Doesn’t carry complete information.
- It may spoil the image of the organization.
- Many a times it results in a great deal of waste of time.
- Information may get leaked at the wrong time.

Formal vs. Informal

Formal Communication	Informal Communication
(i) It follows the official chain of command or organisational hierarchy.	(i) It cuts across the formal chain of command and does not follow the organisational hierarchy.
(ii) It is a task oriented system.	(ii) It is an employee oriented system.
(iii) It is related to the position of a person in the organisation.	(iii) It is related to a person rather than a position.
(iv) It follows in vertical, horizontal and diagonal directions.	(iv) It flows in every possible direction.
(v) It is a deliberately created channel of communication.	(v) It is created spontaneously along with formal channel.
(vi) It is a time consuming means of spreading information.	(vi) It spreads information at a very fast speed.
(vii) Most of the time it carries complete information.	(vii) It does not always carry complete information.
(viii) Impersonal	(viii) Personal and social
(ix) Stable and rigid	(ix) Flexible
(x) Slow and structural	(x) Fast and unstructured
(xi) Reports, E-mail, records, orders, instructions, etc. are examples of formal channels of communication.	(xi) Grapevine is an example of informal channel of communication.