

1.5.11: Group Communication Networks

Learning Objectives

Discuss impact of group size on communication

In organizations, there are hierarchies of reporting structures. Those official links of authority and responsibility impact communication among individuals and groups. Here are some of those communication networks. In looking at these patterns, consider the lines that connect the end points to the other points as communication paths.

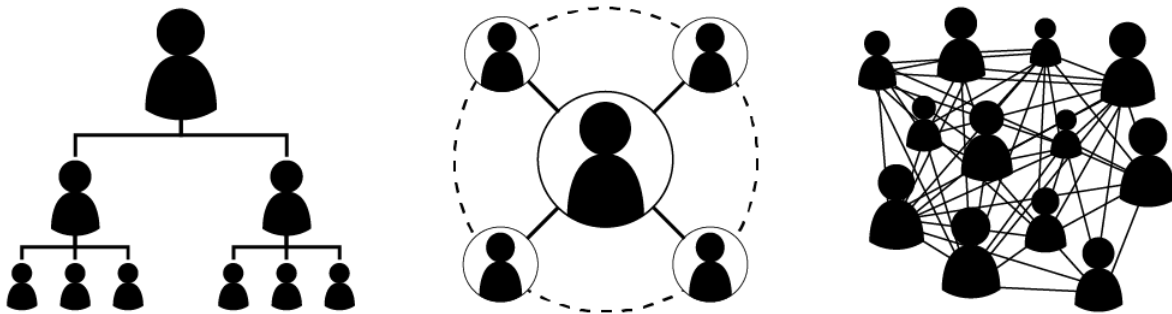


Figure 1. There is a wide spectrum of communication network styles in businesses

The importance of these patterns for team dynamics lies in the direction information flows, the power structure established, and the number of layers in the hierarchy. Think about the needs of your organization to find answers to questions and to solve problems. Communication flows in many directions, yet without structure and planning, it may overwhelm productivity and real communication, as illustrated in the third model in Figure 1.

Communication channels, the legs of these networks, multiply more quickly than people do. If everyone receives every message, “information overload” may occur, as employees are bombarded with messages in an unstructured manner. To maintain efficiency and the most effective use of the individuals on your team, take care in determining how and when information is shared. For example, some large organizations use newsletters or internal blogs as structured ways to disseminate routine updates. When structuring a communication pathway for your team, consider which team members need to know what and when as well as which tools are the most efficient for delivering which kinds of information.

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