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A Field Exploration of Informal Workplace Communication

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ABSTRACT

Two views of informal communication are developed for purposes of comparison. Multiple incidents from two US companies are described based on fieldwork. In both cases, managerial efforts were made to quell gossip. Paradoxically, the versions multiplied at the first site and a gossip spiral occurred at the second. Our inductive analysis reveals the shortcomings of the existing "best practices" and simple theories. Notably, in both cases certain aspects of informal employee organization were more functional than some of the formal practices were. Due to the complex nature of these social situations, great care must be taken in evaluating them and charting a course.

KEYWORDS

Grapevine; Informal Communication; Informal Organization; Rumor; Resistance

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