



The Magic of Networking: Who Will Exit? Who Will Be Promoted?

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Abstract

We network every day, and networking is an important tool of sharing information among individuals. Most of the successful employees develop the skills of networking to create relationships with others, meet new people, and share more information that will move them toward achieving the goals to succeed in career. Based on case studies, we analyze the advice network, friendship network, and cooperative network from the perspective of social network analysis. Our results show that people who maximize the power of network in order to achieve professional goals are more prone to offer a long-term commitment to the company and the chance of being promoted is relatively high, whereas those shy people who are not good at networking are more likely to leave.

Key words: Networking; Exit; Advice network; Friendship network; Cooperative network

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INTRODUCTION

Promotion is a powerful tool to motivate and reward an employee with good performance who is ready to undertake the next higher level job, employees who are promoted will have increased job scopes and assume more responsibilities. What do managers consider when recommending an employee for promotion? Managers consider the following: performance in the current

job, qualifications to perform the higher level job at a sustained level, and the business need for an employee to do the higher level job. Managers may also use the following questions when making promotion decisions: Does the job require the next level of work to be done and at a sustained level over time? Is the individual capable of performing the next level of work? Besides the above criteria, we may find that people who have good networking with their managers, peers, and subordinates are more likely to be promoted. On the other hand, a demotion typically occurs when an employee is not currently qualified for the job and consistently fails to meet the job expectations of the current position. People who are demoted usually feel frustrated, and some of them will choose to exit. And we could also notice that most of the people left the company finally are actually those who are not good at networking. How magic networking is! It could even forecast who will exit, and who will be promoted. In this study, social network analysis software will be used to analyze the networks of the employees of an American high-tech company (Fortune 500), and you will find the magic of networking later.

The main contents of the paper are organized as follows: In Section 2, we review the literature regarding strong ties, weak ties, advice network, friendship network, and cooperative network. In Section 3, we choose a specific case to analyze the current situations of the department from the perspective of advice network, friendship network, and cooperative network based on social network analysis software UCINET6.0. We provide practical suggestions for managers in Section 4. Finally, we summarize the study and give a perspective in future in Section 5.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

A “social network” can be defined as a set of nodes or actors (persons or organizations) linked by social

relationships or ties of a specified type. Social network can be very powerful, networks of relatives and close friends could provide access for you to find a job in a new place. A tie or relation between two actors has both strength and content. The content might include information, advice, or friendship, shared interest or membership, and typically some level of trust (Castilla et al., 2000). Granovetter differentiated between strong and weak ties that the strength of the tie is usually indexed as being either weak (acquaintances and indirect ties) or strong (relatives and friends) (Granovetter, 1973). According to the theory of “the strength of weak ties”, we call it strong tie to describe the stronger linkages of people from the dimensions of contact hours, emotional investment, the degree of trust, and mutual help; and we call it weak tie to illustrate the weaker linkages from the above four aspects. Close friends know the same people you do, whereas acquaintances are better bridges to provide new contacts and information, so new job opportunities could often occur from weak ties rather than from close friends. Lin (2002) defined social capital as the diversity of resources that can be accessed through network ties. It was presumed that the influence, advice, and communication networks, on the one hand, and the friendship network, on the other, represent instrumental and expressive relations, respectively (Krackhardt, 1990). Friendship and advice networks perform distinct functions. Advice networks are closely related to organizational power (Brass, 1992; Ibarra & Andrews, 1993). They influence work-related knowledge (Morrison, 2002), and job performance (Sparrowe et al., 2001). In contrast, friendship has been linked with organizational commitment (Morrison, 2002), resource sharing during crisis (Krackhardt & Stern, 1988), and career-related decision making (Kilduff, 1990; Krackhardt, 1992). It enables coworkers to discuss sensitive issues that they would not share with non-friends (Sias & Cahill, 1998).

The behavioral intentions studied were exit, neglect, aggressive voice, considerate voice, and patience (Hagedoorn et al., 1999). Exit includes leaving the organization, thinking about quitting, and looking for another job. Exit is active mechanisms through which employees attempt to deal with dissatisfaction (Spencer & Steers, 1980). Networking could impact the level of desirability to voluntarily exit from the joint organization, intraorganizational social networks that create organizational loyalty limit turnover by reducing the desirability of leaving (March & Simon, 1958). A strong and positive intraorganizational social network characterized by good relations with and a sense of obligation toward other staff is hypothesized to make it more likely that employees will stay (Moynihan & Pandey, 2008). Above all, we think that the relationship

between social network and the exit behavior, and the chance of being promoted is worthy of study.

2. CASE NARRATIVES AND DATA ANALYSIS

The case involved twenty employees from the manufacturing department of an American high-tech company (Fortune 500). This is a new factory of the company in the start-up phase, the top management team is looking for talented new managers from the inside of organization, and there are a lot of opportunities for the supervisors and engineers to get promotion. One department manager, eight line supervisors, six technical supervisors, and five engineers participated in the study. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted among the employees. 100% effective questionnaires were returned.

Questionnaires of social network consist of three components: advice network (e.g., “Who support you most in your present job?”), friendship network (e.g., “Among your colleagues in the company, who are your good friends to have lunch, play ball games, fall in upon for a chat, share heart-to-heart conversations, and pour out your troubles?”), cooperative network (e.g., “Whom did you collaborate with on a project? Who would you like to collaborate with currently?”). We use social network analysis software UCINET6.0 to draw advice network, friendship network, and cooperative network based on the data collected. In the network diagrams, John is the department manager; Eric, Naomi, Sisqo, Ge, Roger, and Bruce are technical supervisors; Angel, Juanito, Ben, Jing, Tony, Yong, Peter, Ivy are line supervisors; Emma, Zhao, Melody, Jun, and Jessie are engineers.

2.1 Advice Network

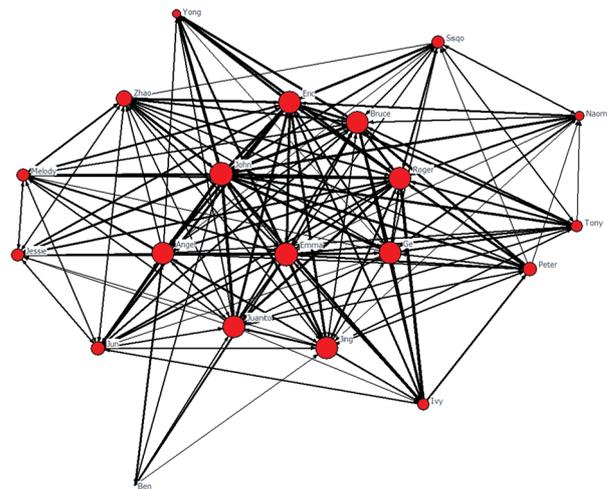


Figure 1
Advice Network

Table 1
Advice Network

Name	Degree	Betweenness	Closeness	Harmonic closeness	Eigenvector	2-Local eigenvector
Angel	18	5.298	20	18.5	0.26	258
Ben	5	0	33	12	0.087	92
Bruce	18	3.655	20	18.5	0.264	263
Emma	19	6.639	19	19	0.27	267
Eric	18	3.655	20	18.5	0.264	263
Ge	18	3.655	20	18.5	0.264	263
Ivy	11	0.091	27	15	0.184	190
Jessie	12	0	26	15.5	0.198	203
Jing	18	5.736	20	18.5	0.258	256
John	19	6.639	19	19	0.27	267
Juanito	18	5.298	20	18.5	0.26	258
Jun	13	0.291	25	16	0.209	213
Melody	12	0	26	15.5	0.198	203
Naomi	10	0.174	28	14.5	0.16	164
Peter	13	0.721	25	16	0.206	211
Roger	18	3.655	20	18.5	0.264	263
Sisqo	12	0.502	26	15.5	0.19	194
Tony	11	0.283	27	15	0.179	186
Yong	9	0	29	14	0.156	164
Zhao	14	0.708	24	16.5	0.222	226

Figure 1 and Table 1 represent the advice network of the team members from the manufacturing department. According to the statistical result of the network, we could find that most of the team members prefer to consult with John, Eric, Bruce, Roger, and Emma. The communication frequencies of people to contact them are also very high. The graphic results also show that the links between Ben and other employees are the weakest, and there is still a lack of connection with other colleagues and Naomi. John is the department manager, and he dominates most of the resources and information, so he plays an important role in the advice network. When team members encounter problems, most of them would like to ask John for advice. Eric, Bruce, and Roger are technical supervisors, and they are technical experts in specific areas, so most of the other people prefer to consult with them about technological information. The data analysis results are in accordance with the interviews, as Eric commented:

I was a technical supervisor of another company before I join this company. This company is really a great place to work compared to my last employer, and I really like the open communication atmosphere. I really feel happy to share my

working experience with other members of the department, and I hope the new technical supervisors and line supervisors could grow fast.

2.2 Friendship Network

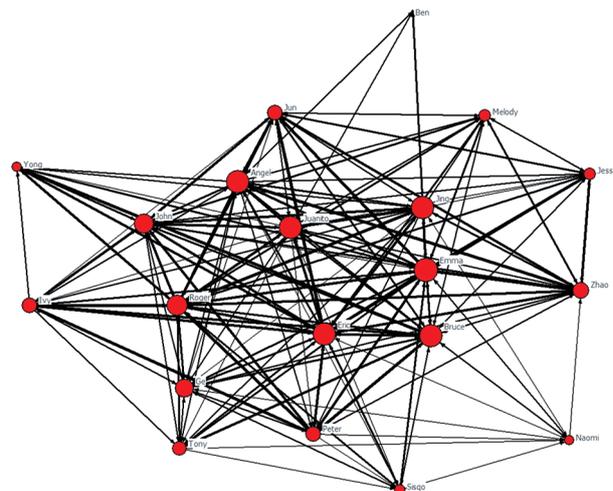


Figure 2
Friendship Network

Table 2
Friendship Network

Name	Degree	Betweenness	Closeness	Harmonic closeness	Eigenvector	2-local eigenvector
Angel	18	6.839	20	18.5	0.267	249
Ben	4	0	34	11.5	0.073	73
Bruce	18	4.673	20	18.5	0.271	254
Emma	19	8.756	19	19	0.276	257
Eric	18	4.673	20	18.5	0.271	254
Ge	15	1.809	23	17	0.238	226
Ivy	13	0.719	25	16	0.214	204
Jessie	11	0	27	15	0.187	180
Jing	18	7.347	20	18.5	0.266	248

To be continued

Continued

Name	Degree	Betweenness	Closeness	Harmonic closeness	Eigenvector	2-local eigenvector
John	16	2.179	22	17.5	0.252	237
Juanito	18	6.839	20	18.5	0.267	249
Jun	13	0.513	25	16	0.216	206
Melody	11	0	27	15	0.187	180
Naomi	9	0.394	29	14	0.144	137
Peter	13	1.125	25	16	0.211	203
Roger	17	3.255	21	18	0.262	246
Sisqo	10	0.417	28	14.5	0.163	157
Tony	12	0.923	26	15.5	0.196	189
Yong	9	0	29	14	0.159	155
Zhao	14	1.538	24	16.5	0.225	214

Figure 2 and Table 2 represent the friendship network of the members from the department. The data analysis results indicate that John, Angel, Bruce, Emma, Eric, Jing, and Roger develop friendships within the team. The diagram also shows that the friendship connections of Ben and other employees are weak. Naomi and Sisqo seldom build friendship with other people from the department. John is the department manager, and the data analysis results show that many employees treat him as good friends to have lunch or play ball games. John comes from Malaysia, and he is a good leader with charisma. He is a tough manager at work, and he is also a good friend who is willing to share with you about his own experience. He is humorous and talkative, intending to activate the atmosphere of the department and stimulate the potentials of the team members. John is also very good to build friendship with other department managers and the general manager of the company. Naomi is an introverted girl who is serious at work, but she doesn't often participate in teambuilding activities because she spends most of her leisure time for her own further education. Sisqo just get married, he often stays with his family, and seldom connects with other people after work. The interview results also reflect the friendship network, as John said:

I am a tough manager, but when you come to me to have one-on-one conversation, please feel free to talk anything with me except job task. I like to play basketball, and welcome to challenge me anytime.

2.3 Cooperative Network

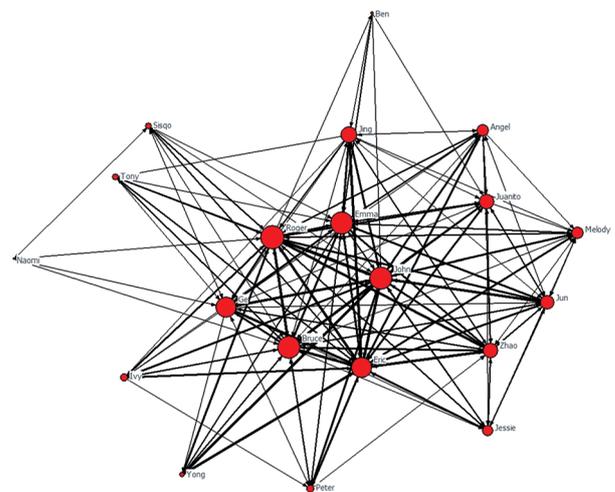


Figure 3
 Cooperative Network

Table 3
 Cooperative Network

Name	Degree	Betweenness	Closeness	Harmonic closeness	Eigenvector	2-local eigenvector
Angel	11	0.091	27	15	0.22	170
Ben	5	0	33	12	0.103	82
Bruce	18	11.405	20	18.5	0.291	213
Emma	18	9.972	20	18.5	0.293	214
Eric	17	6.822	21	18	0.286	210
Ge	17	9.914	21	18	0.276	203
Ivy	8	0.125	30	13.5	0.162	129
Jessie	10	0.091	28	14.5	0.201	156
Jing	14	3.592	24	16.5	0.249	187
John	18	9.972	20	18.5	0.293	214
Juanito	13	1.941	25	16	0.241	183
Jun	12	0.291	26	15.5	0.234	179
Melody	11	0.2	27	15	0.215	163
Naomi	4	0	34	11.5	0.075	61
Peter	8	0.125	30	13.5	0.161	128

To be continued

Continued

Name	Degree	Betweenness	Closeness	Harmonic closeness	Eigenvector	2-local eigenvector
Roger	19	15.555	19	19	0.298	217
Sisqo	7	0.75	31	13	0.136	111
Tony	7	0	31	13	0.15	121
Yong	6	0	32	12.5	0.131	107
Zhao	13	1.154	25	16	0.245	186

Figure 3 and Table 3 stand for the collaboration network of the department members. Bruce, Emma, Eric, John, and Roger often collaborate with other people on projects. Ben and Naomi seldom collaborate with other colleagues from the department. As Naomi said:

I don't like to work in the department, because this really isn't my strong suit. I tried to transfer to other department, but I failed. I really feel frustrated but don't know what to do next. Should I transfer again? What can I do?

Two years later, Naomi left the company. Then Ben and Sisqo left. Three years later, Eric was promoted to technical manager, Bruce was the new shift manger, Roger was the new shift manager, and John became the general manager. But it's strange that Emma left the company! Emma was the core person in the advice network, friendship network, and cooperative network. Emma once won the most popular star of the company according to the voting result. Why she choose to exit at last! We could find answers from the interview results, as Emma once said:

I feel so happy to win the most popular star of the company. I like to work with other colleagues, and I really enjoy the corporate culture. But I find it difficult to get along with my boss, and I don't know how to deal with my job!

3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the data analysis and the interviews of the company, we could find the result that John, Eric, Bruce, and Roger are the successful employees who develop the skills of networking to create relationships with others, and finally they are promoted. Naomi, Sisqo, and Ben are not good at networking, and finally they exit. Emma is an exception to leave the company finally. She quit her boss, not her job! The analysis above could provide helpful practical suggestions for managers. More teambuilding activities could be organized in the department to enhance collaboration. People will have more opportunities to get to know their colleagues better through teambuilding activities. The establishment of friendship network could help people to get in touch with other person's feeling on happiness and sadness. Employees could develop their technological skills to build stronger advice network and cooperative network with other team members, which could help them to be more successful employees in the future.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper discuss the advice network, friendship network, and cooperative network of the company, and find that networking could even forecast who will be promoted and who will exit. Based on the network analysis, we could find the key person in the interpersonal network of enterprises, thus providing suggestions for promotion. It could also forecast who are most likely to exit, and managers should also pay attention to those core persons to avoid collective turnover. Besides, the transition from an individual contributor role to a manager role is much more than a change in job title. The two roles require very different skill sets as well as different identities. In this case, several supervisors are promoted as managers. The top managers should help the newly promoted supervisors to understand the demands of a manager role and the management expectations to make the transition less "painful".

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