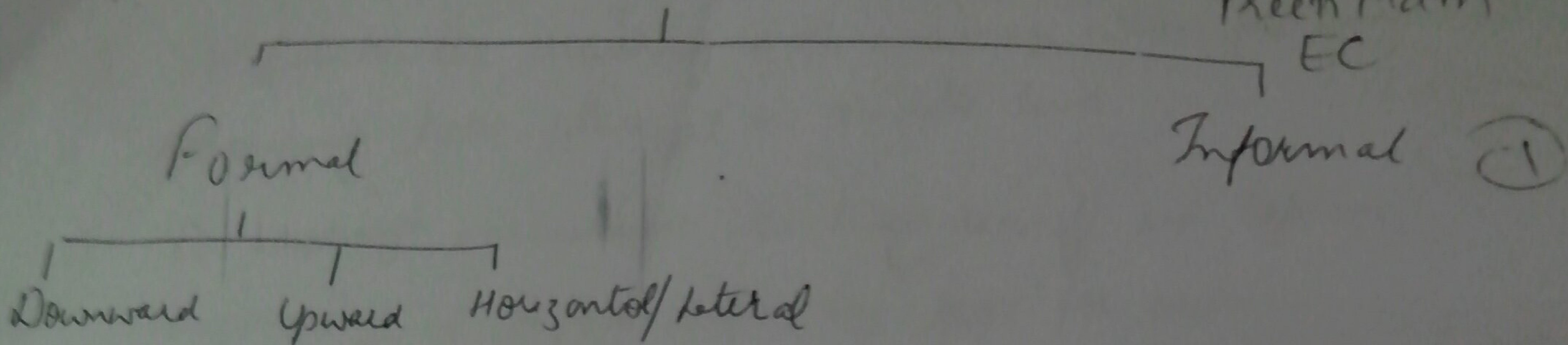


Communication Network

B.TECH
FIRST YEAR

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EC



Formal communication networks are systems designed by management to channelise the flow of communication along formal organisational structure.

Advantages of Formal Communication

1. It passes through line and authority and consequently ~~maintains~~ ensures the maintenance of authority as well as accountability of the executives in charge.
2. It helps to develop intimate relations between immediate boss and his subordinates.
3. It ensures authenticity and the genuineness of the matter communicated because of the responsibility of the person involved.
4. It keeps unity in the dissemination of information.

Disadvantages of Formal Communication

1. It increases the workload of various managers as all communications are to be transmitted through them.
2. It widens the communication gap between top executives and employees at the lower level. As a result it adversely

affects their relationships..

3. It dilutes the accuracy of the message when filtering and colouring take place at the middle level.
4. It ~~encourages~~ encourages the tendencies of red tapism, suppressing of information by boss for causing unnecessary harassment to the subordinates.

Types of Formal Communication

A Downward Channel of Communication

Downward communication flows down from top to bottom of the organisational hierarchy and carries message from higher authority to lower and down below.

Media of Downward Communication

It can be oral or written. Oral communication is mostly informal ~~also~~ whereas written communication takes the form of memos, meetings, circulars, ~~both~~ bulletin boards.

Benefits

1. It helps to convey to the subordinates the expectations of management from them.
2. It helps to explain to the subordinates the organisational plans, policies, programmes and procedures, work methodology and other necessary information for performing the jobs.

3. It provides motivation to the workers to excel their performance.

3

3

Problems

1. Distortion of Message - Sometimes conveyed message is distorted, diluted because of filling, colouring, twisting or condensing by the immediate boss. As a result the spirit behind the message is lost.
 2. Delays - The delays occur in transmission of message because of long line of authorities involved. The excessive time consumed usually results in loss of its significance.
 3. Overloaded or Underloaded Message - The chances of overloading and underloading of the message are very high in downward communication. Overloading of message results in direct dilution of the real message and underloading leads to misunderstandings.
- Bureaucratic Degeneration - Downward communication places the immediate boss in an advantageous position to exercise authority over the subordinates. Power and positions are misused against employees who are not close to the authorities. As a result, the organisation suffers because of suppressing of employee's initiatives and innovativeness.

Pre-requisites of Effective Downward Communication

1. Well Informed - The top, middle and lower level managers should be well informed about the overall objectives and detailed activities of the organisation so that they can answer any query or clarify any doubt about the message communicated.
2. Positive Communication ^{Environment} ~~Climate~~ - The success of communication depends upon the communication climate so the management must ensure positive communication ~~climate~~ environment.
3. Prevention of over concentration :- Over concentration of authority for issuing orders and instructions should be avoided. There should be sufficient delegation of authority at middle and lower level management.
4. Proper Channelisation - The information should pass through the hierarchical structure. It should not be by-pass, as it the authorities.
5. Adequate and clear message - The communicator should always convey clear and complete message in simple and straight forward language.
6. Short Hierarchical Lines - The line of communication should be shortened to avoid possibility of distortion and dilution.

Formal Downward Channels

1. The Command Chain - Order and information can either be given personally through face to face interaction or in writing via, letters, e-mails, memoranda. Written communication is usually preferred for matters that are highly confidential or important either to the management or the firm. Permanent information such as policies, procedures and rules are always communicated in writing.

The information goes from one level to another through a chain of command which is the hierarchy, along which the authority flows from the top to the bottom.

2. Posters and Bulletins - Information concerning the firm's employees is often communicated on posters and bulletin boards. But some workers might not be able to read them. So sometimes its usefulness is lost.

3. House Journal - Many firms have their own newsletters or newspapers which are often referred as house journals. A great deal of information regarding the organisation can be communicated through these newsletters - like information about new products, about its policies. Their readership increases when some space is allocated to items of personal interest to employees.

6.

Pay Inserts - Inserting a note with the paycheque may also encourage readership.

5. Direct mail - When the top management wants to communicate matters of importance, it can use direct mail intended for employees.

6. Hand Books and Pamphlets - To provide an introduction of the organization to the newcomers, handbooks and pamphlets are used during orientation process. But often they remain unread.

7. Annual Reports - Firms and organisations also bring out annual reports for stock holders shareholders as well as for employees. These reports ~~inform~~ highlight information about new plants, new products and company finances.

8. Address System

An address system is used to make announcements which are current, but such systems may also be misused.

U.C is flowing of message from subordinates to superiors. It is just the reverse of the downward communication. Usually it is of two types:

- (a) Feedback of the information asked by the boss
- (b) Voluntary communication from the subordinate conveying his suggestions, complaints, opinions, innovative ideas, etc.

Benefits/Advantages

1. Creates insight into behavioural problems: This provides the management the advantage of greater insight and penetration into the behavioural problems of employees. The management can know the attitudes, opinions and feelings of the workers regarding organisational matters. Accordingly they can mould and motivate them better or introduce other plans and package depending upon the situation.
2. Creates confidence and trust - The u.c creates mutual confidence and trust among executives and employees. Employees can convey their feelings to bosses and feel relieved of the pent up negative emotions or attitudes. By carefully and compassionately listening to employees, executives can ensure their commitment to the welfare of employees.

Enhances learning and excellence - As employees come up and convey new innovative ideas to the management, they feel themselves the part of the company and their self esteem increases if they are listened and rewarded properly. Thus healthy upward communication encourages and enhances their learning and excellence.

4) TQM and Zero Defect Marketing - U.C is imperative for TQ organisation and for marketing zero-defect products. These practices are possible, only if the upward communication is there as employees who have to deal directly with customers, can convey the attitude and expectations of customers.

Problems - The various problems are encountered in UC.

- (a) Concealments : It has been noticed that the immediate bosses deliberately conceal the problems of employees from the top management because they fear loss of their power and position.
- (b) Delays and distortions : Usually in upward communication, delays and distortions take place, especially when the lines of communication are long.
- (c) By Passing - Sometimes it happens that the workers bypass their immediate boss which results into resentment.

Poor listening - Poor listening skills of the superiors or when they do not pay any heed to the suggestions given by the subordinates - such attitude discourages the subordinates to come up with innovative ideas.

e) Hesitation of Employees - Some employees hesitate to come to the boss and convey their problems because they fear ^{that} they ~~will~~ will ~~lose~~ lose boss's favour.

Pre-requisites of Effective Upward Communication

1. Healthy atmosphere - Healthy and congenial environment for communication should be created and maintained.
2. Reward for constructive suggestions - Constructive suggestions ~~for~~ ^{by} employees should always be rewarded so that they feel motivated and involved.
3. Effective listening - The executives should always listen to the subordinates both emotionally and intellectually. With this, the subordinates will feel that the management is genuinely concerned with their problems and grievances.
4. Formal system for suggestions - There ~~is~~ should be some formal system to handle the suggestions of the employees.
5. Short lines of communication - The lines of communication should be kept as short as possible to avoid the delays and distortions.

Methods of Upward Communication

40.

1. Open Door Policy - In open door policy, employees are allowed to visit the superior's office at their ease and talk with him without any hesitation.

This policy is good, if executives and employees work by considering other party's need and convenience.

It has its disadvantages too. It creates a sense of insecurity among managers when they know that subordinates may bypass them and lodge complaints directly to upper level managers.

2. Periodical Meetings - Periodical staff or group meetings are conducted to invite suggestions, opinions or other ideas from the subordinates.

3. Questionnaires - Sometimes anonymous questionnaires are given to workers to fill in with a view to identify problem areas in the organisation. When a large number of workers rate a firm low in a given area, the management should deal with it immediately and find solutions thereof.

Whatever the case, to earn and sustain the faith of its workers the firm must take immediate measures, otherwise the purpose of using questionnaires may be lost.

Suggestion Boxes - ~~Further~~ Many firms have formal suggestion systems. They keep suggestion boxes, other encourage workers to fill in suggestion forms regularly. However, in this system every suggestion should receive sincere consideration. Employees should be promptly informed of the results of any decision whatsoever reached on each suggestion.

5. Informal Gatherings - Usually informal gatherings like get together parties or picnics are organized on a certain even or event that provide ample opportunities for employees to share their feelings with their boss.
6. Interviews - If the problem is not regular and its immediate solution is imperative, an interview is conducted with employee or concerned members. Concerned employees are encouraged to talk freely and frankly so that the real problems can be diagnosed.
7. Ombudsperson - In organisations where there is no union functioning there is a complaint person, an officer called an ombudsperson who has access to the top management, who hears employee complaint, investigates them and recommends appropriate actions. This form of grievance resolution channel resolves problems swiftly. In many cases, they help employees find people who can solve their problems.

Lateral / Horizontal communication flows between persons at the same hierarchical level either of the same or other department or division of the organisation, eg. communication between marketing manager and production manager or one salesman with another salesman.

Lateral Communication usually serves the following purposes -

- (a) Co-ordinating among various individuals or departments.
- (b) Solving problems which involve the efforts of various specialists.
- (c) Resolving conflict among various personnel.
- (d) Exchanging information among various employees of the department.
- (e) Promoting social relations among employees of the organisation.

Problems

The various problems encountered in lateral communication are as follows

- (a) Rivalry among employees - Sometimes employees at the same level feel threatened and insecure in the environment of competition among themselves. As a result they do not communicate with open heart and broad mind.

13

Specialization - The various specialists employed in the organisation have their own language related with their field which ~~is~~ ^{can} not ^{be} easily understood to non-specialists. This naturally creates problem in the free flow of lateral communication.

c Physical barriers - Physical barriers like noise in the channels and distance among employees or departments are obvious barriers in the lateral communication.

d Lack of motivation - Lack of motivation among employees to work and co-operate with other employees may be one of the major problems of communication.

Pre-requisites of Horizontal Communication

Horizontal communication helps to co-ordinate the activities of different departments and strengthens the relationship among employees. It is essential that it should be made effective by co-ordinating the following points:

1. Meetings of different departmental heads and employees should be convened from time to time.
2. The various employees and heads of departments should be linked on intercom or telephones, so that they can talk and discuss the business matters, when they feel necessary.
3. If ~~employees~~ possible, employees working at different locations should be linked with e-mail facilities as it is more cost-effective.

Informal communication takes place outside the formally prescribed and planned network or channel. Unlike formal communication, which is deliberately created or documented, it is spontaneous and off the records and beyond organisational hierarchy. It has no set rules and regulations and no particular direction. It is also called "Grapevine".

Advantages of Informal Network

1. Speedy and Spontaneous - Compared with formal communication, it flows rapidly.
2. Multidirectional - Informal communication is multidirectional, as a result, it can flow to any direction and degree, with no constraint whereas hierarchical constraints are imposed on the formal network. Because of these advantages there is easy and economical access of communication to large number of employees in the organisation.
3. Social Relations - Informal communication strengthens the social dimensions of the organisation as it provides platform for employees' social gatherings not only in organization but outside the organisation also.

Catharsis - Informal communication enables the employees to discharge their negative emotions and feel relieved through talking and meeting each other.

5. Circumventing - Informal communication can sometimes help to bypass official channels which are unnecessarily cumbersome and time consuming.

6. Supplementing - Informal communication supplements the formal communication. There are certain matters which are difficult to communicate through formal channels, like feelings of employees towards executives either general or particular with regard to certain decisions.

Disadvantages

1. Misleading - It usually happens that informal communication carries half truths, rumours false and fabricated stories. Because of lack of their accuracy and authenticity they misinform employees or executives or even mislead them.

2. Distortions - The chances of the distortions are very high as every person tries to add, delete, mould or colour the message according to his whims and wishes.

3. Disastrous for organisations :- Rumours, distorted messages, gossips etc create misunderstandings among employees and adversely affect their relations.

Sometimes executives take decisions based on wrong feedback or sometimes employees unnecessarily react to certain management decision because of their wrong presumptions and prejudices.

4. No responsibility - In formal communications responsibility for misinformation or misleading facts can be pointed. This is not so in case of informal communication.

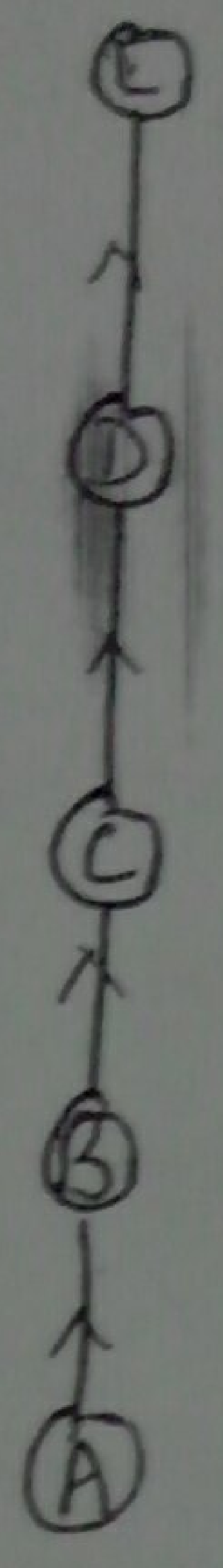
The Grapevine

The grapevine is the informal communication system of an organisation but it may also extend beyond it. But it does not respect formal hierarchy of authority. As it reaches into every unit and level of an organisation it transmits information more rapidly than the formal system does.

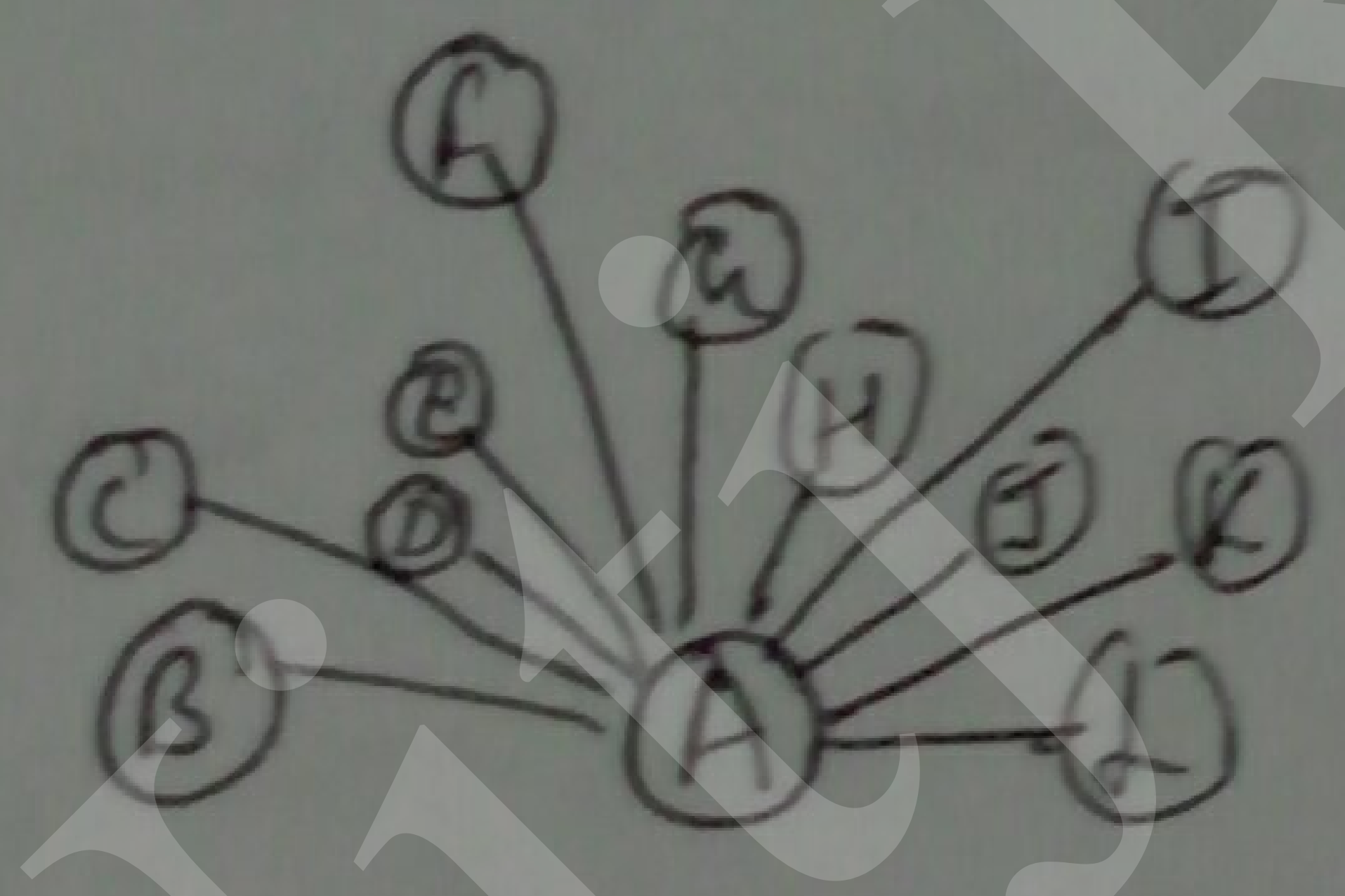
Types of Grapevine

There are four types of informal communications

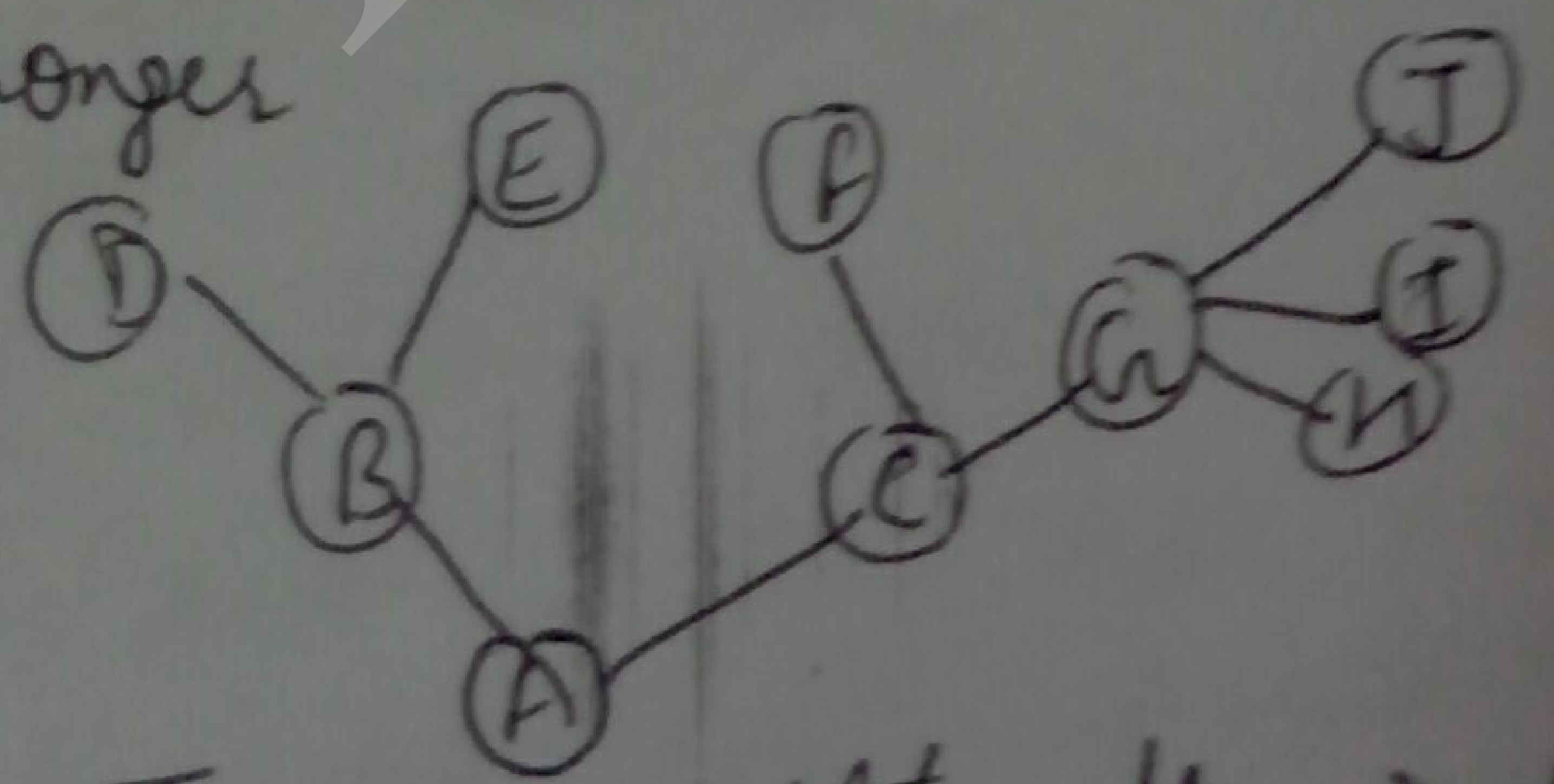
- (a) Single strand
- (b) Gossip
- (c) Probability
- (d) Cluster



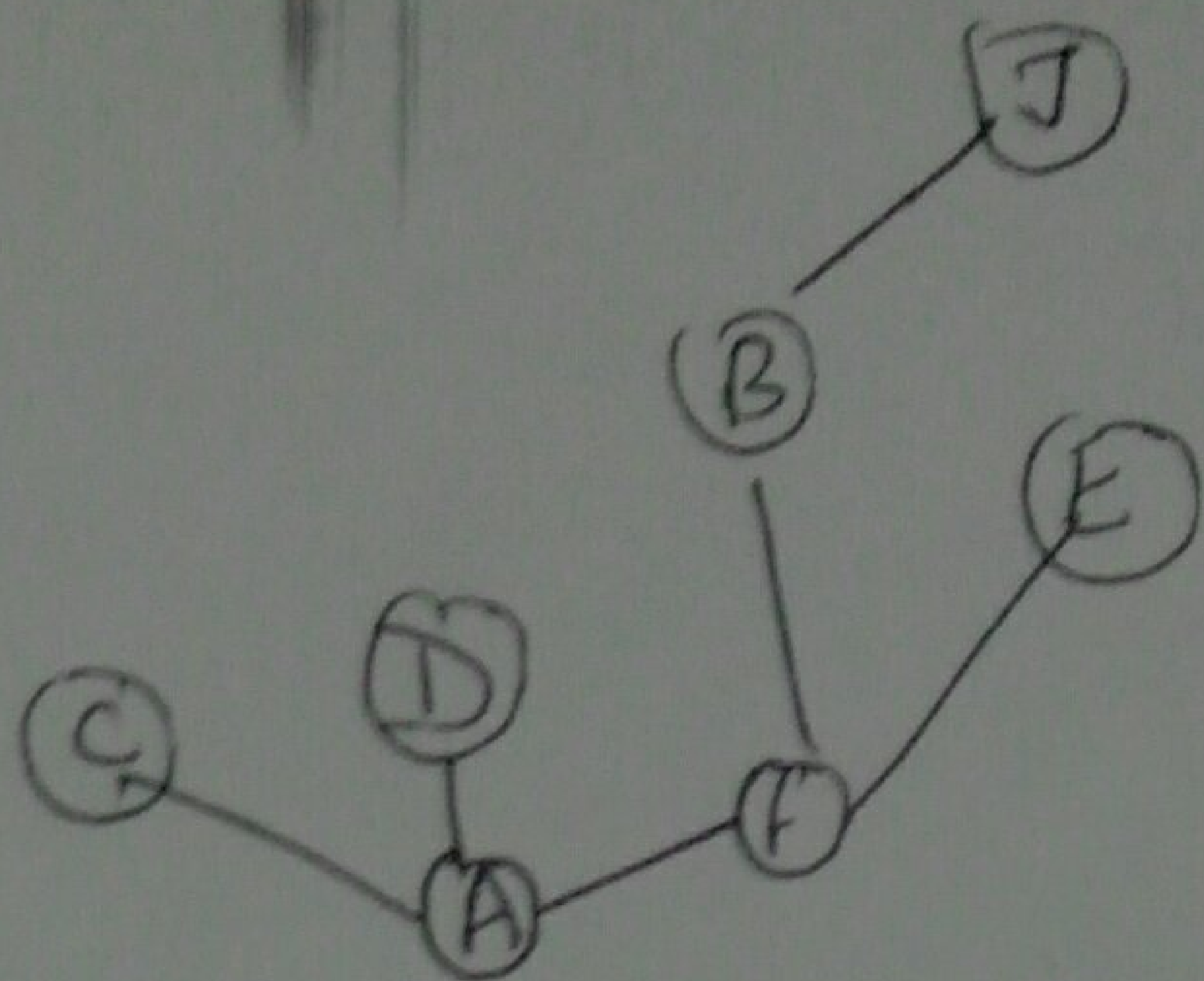
a) Single Strand - In single strand each person tells the other in sequence



(b) Gossip - In gossip one individual tells all on non-selective basis and the person is known as gossip monger



(c) Probability - In probability, the individual tells other individuals randomly according to the law of probability



18

- (d) Cluster - In cluster the individual tells the other selectively i.e. to persons whom he trusts. Of the four, cluster is most popular in the organisation.

How to use grapevine effectively

Informal communication or grapevine can both harm or help the organisation. Since grapevine is spontaneous, it is useless to curb its growth. What can be done, is either controlling or channelising it properly.

1. The management should follow the open communication policy to prevent the spreading of rumours.
2. If there is false rumour, management should immediately contradict it through proper written notice or circulars.
3. Workers should be encouraged in decision making process. With this rumours can be effectively encountered.
4. The staff meetings can be convened at regular time intervals and if it's not possible the meeting of departmental heads should be conducted and it should be ensured that information spreads through them effectively.

- 5. To spread information among employees, management can contact active members of the various groups who should be informed accurately and adequately.
- 6. The informal communications can better communicate the reaction and response of employees, therefore it should be used to feel the pulse of the employees in specific situation.

19

Rumours

Rumours are the false and fabricated messages structured on baseless and biased assumptions, which are orally spread among the members of the organization. These are modified and coloured according to the interests and the advantage of the members who transmit it.

Rumours - whether positive or negative, spoil the image of the institution and create panic among the members of the organization. Therefore management should check it with open and free communication and transparent operations.