

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar



Whom Should I Delegate to? Employee Social Networks as Prisms to Make Delegation Decisions By

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Date : 28 Jun 2019 (FRI)
Time : 10:30 am – 12:00 nn
Venue : M802

Abstract

Delegation is a critical tool for busy managers. Despite its well-documented benefits, managers are often reluctant to delegate; even when they do, they try to minimize their risk by delegating to only a few highly competent employees, potentially precluding the development of a more competent, inclusive work group. In understanding how managers balance these concerns, we integrate insights from delegation and social network research. Specifically, we argue that managers use employees' social network connections as "prisms" in making delegation decisions because they provide important informational cues about specific employees' ability to complete tasks. Using a field study and two follow-up lab studies, we find that leaders may be more willing to delegate tasks to employees with lower (marginally acceptable) competence when those employees are more central in the friendship network of the work unit as well as when they share common memberships in friendship cliques with the leaders. These network ties, however, do not matter for delegation when employees are highly competent. Our lab studies provide additional evidence for the mediating psychological processes underlying these effects. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Dr Vijaya Venkataramani is an Associate Professor of Management & Organization at the R.H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland. She currently serves as an Associate Editor for the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Her research focuses on how informal social relationships and social networks at work influence leadership, creativity, and discretionary employee behaviors in organizations (behaviors that are not stipulated as part of the job, but that still are important for organizational well-being). As a specific area of interest, her recent research aims at understanding how leaders can use their network connections in benefiting their employees as well as how such connections may influence leadership related decisions. She is also interested in studying how the influence exerted by one's social network can introduce biases in employees' cognitive processes in making evaluations about the organization. Her research has appeared in such journals as the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Organization Science*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Personnel Psychology* and *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes*.

She received her Ph.D. in organizational behavior and human resources from Purdue University in 2008. Prior to her doctoral studies, she worked in India as a human resources manager.

All interested are welcome.



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