

Career Networking as a Praxeological Communicative Practice of the XXI Century in Social Theory

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Abstract: Career networking as a praxeological communicative practice is little studied in terms of effectiveness. The lack of research into the emotional, motivational, psychological and career effects of networking necessitates a study of the relationship between the types of career networking and these effects. The effects of networking in achieving career success were identified based on the electronic confidential survey of 102 employees of Ukrainian companies. The results of assessing the relationship between career networking types and emotional, motivational, psychological and occupational effects indicate that the relationship between variables is medium, low or absent. Therefore, the career effect is not related to networking, according to employees, if there is an average level of connection between the emotional, motivational, psychological effects and different types of networking. The study proves the subjectivity of the assessment of career networking and its effects. The article reveals the perception of career development methods: networking is perceived negatively as a way to achieve professional goals, which underestimates career performance. At the same time networking is perceived positively as a way to maintain friendship, motivation and level of satisfaction. The article confirms the connection between the subjective assessment of networking and the perception of networking as a "dirty and dishonest" way to get a job, achieve professional goals or career growth. In general, the subjective assessment of career networking causes low professional effects, while the emotional, motivational, psychological effects may be overestimated due to the positive perception of such effects by respondents.

Keywords: Career growth, communicative theory, career coaching, career interaction.

INTRODUCTION

Career growth is characterized by increasing work stress and changing expectations about the role of the employee (Ren and Chadee 2017). Employees are expected to be proactive in career management (Spurk *et al.* 2015). At the same time, "career networking behavior are the "know how" aspects of proactive career behaviors' (Taber and Blankemeyer 2015), which is associated with employment and career success and the ability to adapt to career in the era of "of boundaryless careers" (Savickas *et al.* 2009; Savickas 2012; Savickas 2015). "Networking behaviors assist individuals in doing their jobs better and advancing their careers" (Huang 2016).

Modern staff management departments focus on the employee with good communication skills and the ability to adapt to the work environment. Recruitment managers note the importance of a potential employee to "join the team", because the ability to network

determines the overall success of the company. An additional negative factor in the impact of effective career networking is the hiring of professionals from different cultures and nationalities. Recruitment managers should consider the cultural aspect when hiring people (Abalkhail and Allan 2015).

The task of a modern employer is to attract professionals with the potential to work with other professionals, the ambition and traits of character which can lead to controversy and lead to reduced productivity in the workplace. Career networking as a communicative practice can ensure the achievement of various goals in professional activities: emotional, motivational and psychological ones. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the relationship between career networking types and emotional, motivational, psychological and occupational effects. According to the purpose of the study, the following hypotheses were formed:

- Employees subjectively evaluate career networking and emotional, motivational, psychological, professional effects.

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- Subjective assessment of networking is related to the perception of networking as a “dirty and dishonest” way to get a job, achieve professional goals or career growth.
- Subjective assessment of career networking causes low emotional, motivational, psychological, professional effects.

Career networking is considered as a social and professional activity aimed at the fastest and most effective solution of complex problems and business issues with the help of friends, acquaintances, colleagues (Pomaz and Tovkaylo 2015). For example, career networking can include finding clients, hiring the best employees, and attracting investors. “Career networking behavior motives proactive skill development. Career networking behavior provides a coping mechanism to attenuate potential resource loss of work pressure” (Ren and Chadee 2017). “Strong social ties and embeddedness influence performance”. Networking is an opportunity to find a job or an employee, to establish professional and personal connections using the power of communication. Experience has shown that professionals are more likely to be offered a job if they have established contacts and contacts within the employer. The latest trends in career networking are the usage of social media and professional networks such as LinkedIn, which allows you to increase the potential audience and number of contacts.

However, networking has emerged as a necessity in the repertoire of career skills for effective job searching (van Hove *et al.* 2009). M. Kuijpers, B. Schyns and J. Scheerens (2006) defined networking as the process of building contacts and relationships relevant for one’s career. M. Forret and T. Dougherty (2004) used factor analysis to identify five types of networking behavior: maintaining contacts; socializing; engaging in professional activities; participating in community activities; increasing internal visibility. These factors present networking as a proactive skill that can provide valuable career information and resources. M. Linehan and H. Scullion (2008) noted that networking provides crucial advantages, such as collaboration, information exchange, acquisition of tacit knowledge, alliance development, support, and visibility, which are also related to career decision self-efficacy.

Networking has been found to be important in achieving internal (subjective, personal evaluation) and external (objective, external appreciation) career

success (Forret and Dougherty 2004; Kuijpers *et al.* 2006). Additionally, M. Forret and T. Dougherty (2004) found that networking behaviors, particularly engaging in professional activities and increasing visibility, significantly influenced successful career outcomes. “Networking might be more effective for job seekers whose social network contains weaker and higher status ties” (Linehan and Scullion 2008). Networking can be divided into two parts: corporate and personal. The personal type of networking is simpler and adaptive, used intuitively, includes the psychological beliefs of the person. Corporate networking is a multilevel system of employee relations within the company (employees interact not only on one line of management, vertical communication is also provided) and outside (when employees “expand” connections with clients, partners, investors, contractors, employees of others profile and non-profile companies). Experienced employees of the corporate sector have been using networking for at least two decades to achieve personal goals and develop technical communications in the profession and field of activity. Networking plays a key role in building professional social knowledge and social theory (Lauren and Pigg 2016).

Networking is a skill that can be developed and that increases motivation and provides more effective results (Kuwabara *et al.* 2019). People’s beliefs determine forms of communication and networking: finding new people, using social capital and maintaining existing connections (Kuwabara *et al.* 2018). In general, the role of beliefs and attitudes determines people’s motivation for networking, which is irrational and depends on individuality and perception. This determines the motivational psychology of communication and career networking (Kuwabara *et al.* 2018). One study proves (Casciaro *et al.* 2014) that views on networking ethics tend to differ depending on the professional level. Junior professionals tended to feel “dirty” about the instrumental contacts they had to build in order to advance their careers. Senior colleagues did not feel the slightest conflict, unlike junior colleagues, because they believed that they could offer equivalent things. The difference was in the level of confidence or doubt in the value of the contribution, and younger professionals felt more like applicants than participants in a fair exchange (Casciaro *et al.* 2014).

Unlike personal networking in searching of emotional support or friendship and unlike spontaneous social connections, instrumental networking in

achieving professional goals can affect a person's psychological, emotional and motivational condition. Morally, networking can evoke different emotions and feelings and therefore be perceived differently depending on age, gender, professional level (Casciaro *et al.* 2014). "Moreover, research has documented that networking behaviors are essential to individuals' career success" (Wolff and Moser 2009). Networking is a critical factor in career development, as it is positively related to several career-related variables such as performance, motivation, career goals, received mentoring, organizational mobility, salary, promotions, and career satisfaction (Wolff and Moser 2009).

Proactive skills development and the formation of a proactive career network depend on "Future work self" or "greater clarity of future work self" (Taber and Blankemeyer 2015). Career confidence and curiosity contribute to networking (Taber and Blankemeyer 2015). Some studies suggest differences in networking between men and women (Greguletz *et al.* 2018). Women's professional relationships are less powerful and effective than men's in terms of sharing benefits. However, the motives for networking behavior remain poorly understood. Such features are explained by the indecision of women to "instrumentalize" social ties and the external barrier to excluding women from influential networks. Conflict between family, work and homophilia determine the less effective networking of women than men. Moral beliefs and gender modesty also point to the structural exclusion of women. Accordingly, gender inequality in the workplace can be proven through women's incomplete use of social ties and internal motivational barriers (Greguletz *et al.* 2018).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is based on the methodology of T. Casciaro *et al.* (2014), which provided an assessment of "professional-instrumental networking", which aims

to form social connections to perform tasks and achieve professional goals. The first experimental part of T. Casciaro *et al.* (2014) study included an assessment of employee participation in instrumental networking and its impact on results and productivity of work. The first quantitative assessment "employed a 2 (content: personal vs. professional) by 2 (approach: instrumental vs. spontaneous) between-subjects design". Participants were randomly assigned to 4 groups and participants had to indicate their experience of using networking in the past. Then some questions were asked about the results of networking in 4 groups with pre-suggested answers (Table 1).

Participants in the professional (or personal) instrumental conditions of networking received the following request: "Please remember the moments in your professional/personal life when you did something for certain purposes to build and develop a career or a professional relationship. We are interested in a situation where you have tried to make relationships that could help you build a career, fulfill professional tasks, achieve success (or for emotional support and friendship). Other respondents who carried out this type of introspective task often wrote about cases of accepting invitations to parties, celebrations, because they wanted to meet with potential clients, friends, employers. Participants in professional or personal spontaneous conditions received the following request: Please remember some moments in your professional/personal life when you talked to people at an event or party. We are interested in a situation where the relationships that might contribute to professional success and career, fulfillment of tasks, have provided your professional development (or emotional support, friendship). Participants of this group often wrote about attending birthday parties, including colleagues, informal meetings, Christmas and New Year parties.

Table 1: Career Networking Performance Scales

The variable	Efficiency scale	1	2	3	4
V1	Emotional effect/forming friendships				
V2	Psychological effect: feelings of satisfaction, joy				
V3	Motivational effect: increasing the level of internal motivation through informal communication				
V4	Career effect: achieving professional goals				
V5	Career effect: performing professional tasks				
V6	Career effect: increase productivity				

Source: author's research.

Table 2: Sampling

	Number of people	Percent, %	Cumulatively, %
Gander			
Men	38	37.5%	37.5%
Women	64	62.5%	100.0%
Position			
Leading position	56	54.9%	54.9%
Unmanaged position	46	45.1%	100.0%
Position			
Analyst	4	3.9%	3.9%
HR manager	7	6.9%	10.8%
Manager	12	11.8%	22.5%
Staff Development Specialist	2.0	2.0%	24.5%
SMM	2.0	2.0%	26.5%
Administrator	3.0	2.9%	29.4%
Auditor	2.0	2.0%	31.4%
Accountant	4.0	3.9%	35.3%
Top-manager	56	54.9%	90.2%
Economist	4	3.9%	94.1%
Informant-coordinator	1.0	1.0%	95.1%
Packer	3.0	2.9%	98.0%
Other non-managerial positions	2.0	2.0%	100.0%
Total	102.0	100.0%	-

A survey of employees of various organizations in Ukraine was conducted in order to confirm the hypotheses. We sent an electronic questionnaire filled out using Google Forms. The link to the questionnaire was sent to the HR director of the cement company using e-mail and Viber, Facebook, Telegram messengers in June 2020. The answers were automatically saved in an Excel file and then uploaded to SPSS 22.0 Statistics for processing the results. The HR Director of the cement company randomly sent an electronic questionnaire to company executives and employees. As the survey was voluntary, 234 respondents received the questionnaire. A total of 102 managers and non-managers took part in the survey (Table 2). The sample included more managers than non-managers.

So, according to the answers, the questionnaire was filled in by employees of the following companies of Ukraine: Aquarodos, CRH Ukraine, FABERLIC, Geberit, HP, IT-company, Soufflet Agro Ukraine, JSC "Podilsky Cement", Audit company, production company, own workshop, foreign company in FMCG,

logistics center of the tobacco factory, Citibank, travel company, Ukrsibbank, Department of Labor and Social Protection, garment factory. Respondents could at their own expense indicate their place of work and position to maintain confidentiality. The study also noted the voluntary nature of the survey. The following statistical methods and coefficients were used to process the results of the questionnaire: average values, minimum and maximum, percentage; standard deviation; correlation analysis.

RESULTS

The results in Table 3 show that most respondents had experience of office parties or working meetings in an informal atmosphere who were in a spontaneously and professional conditions. Those participants who were in instrumental and professional conditions mentioned most often about inviting colleagues to drink something or engaging in extra-role activities directed at others at work. Participants in the spontaneous and personal condition more often wrote about attending parties and events with friends and family (27.8%),

Table 3: Percentage of Descriptions Used by Participants in their Essay by Condition, %

Category	Instrumental Professional	Instrumental Social	Emergent Professional	Emergent Social	Percentage across conditions
Attending work-related events and gatherings	15.1	6.4	28.9	7.6	14.4
Attending office holiday party	5.5	0.0	43.4	7.6	14.1
Attending conferences or networking events	12.3	7.7	5.3	0.0	6.2
Inviting colleagues or old friends for drinks	34.2	33.3	5.3	7.6	19.9
Engaging in extra role activities directed at others at work	21.9	5.1	1.3	0.0	6.9
Attending friends party	1.4	7.7	5.3	27.8	10.8
Accompanying someone to parties/gatherings	0.0	3.8	0.0	8.9	3.3
Attending alumni events	2.7	9.0	2.6	22.8	9.5
Joining clubs or signing in for special events	1.4	9.0	1.3	2.5	3.6
Hosting a party	1.4	3.8	0.0	6.3	2.9
Other	4.1	14.1	6.6	8.9	8.5
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: author's research.

while those who had experience of instrumental and personal communication conditions, wrote about the experience of inviting others to drink (33.3%). Participants in spontaneous and professional relations most often attended an office party (43.4%).

If we compare the results in general, spontaneous professional relationships in the form of office parties are the most common type of networking (43.4%), then the most important instrumental and professional connections in the form of inviting colleagues to drink something (34.2%) and instrumental and personal in the form of inviting colleagues for a drink (33.3%), spontaneous and professional in the form of "Attending work-related events and gatherings" (28.9%), spontaneous and personal in the form of "Attending friends party" (27.8%) and "Attending alumni events" (22.8%).

Table 4 shows the results of the effectiveness of career networking, which indicate that in general the greatest effect is emotional. In particular, networking provides the formation of friendly relationships with colleagues. When writing answers about moments in professional/personal life that directly or indirectly related to the employee's career, respondents stated that they did not expect or think about the possibility of achieving professional goals through formal/informal

connections. Moreover, respondents believed that this way of achieving professional goals was not correct, "dirty", non-professional.

The psychological effect was assessed at 3.57 points out of 4 possible, motivational at 3.21 points. The career effect is estimated at 1.85 points if we are talking about achieving professional goals, 1.39 in performing professional tasks, 1.21 in increasing the level of productivity. Respondents understood networking as an opportunity to get closer to colleagues and relax from work. Some respondents reported discussing work issues during formal/informal relationships, such as salaries or working conditions and controversy at the workplace. It is better to note that the high level of relationship between the variable "V5. Career effect: performance of professional tasks" and position. A higher level of connection with types of professional and personal relations (0.567) was revealed for managerial positions (manager, head of department, shop, etc.), while for non-managerial positions such level of connection is much smaller (0.234).

Correlation analysis of career networking efficiency scales and types of professional-personal relationships (Table 5) shows a high degree of networking relationship with emotional and motivational effects

Table 4: Evaluations of Career Networking Effectiveness

Variable	Efficiency scale	Average value	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
V1	Emotional effect/forming friendships	3.68	0.56	3	4
V2	Psychological effect: feelings of satisfaction, joy	3.57	0.68	3	4
V3	Motivational effect: increasing the level of internal motivation through informal communication	3.21	0.89	2	4
V4	Career effect: achieving professional goals	1.85	2.34	1	3
V5	Career effect: performing professional tasks	1.39	2.89	1	3
V6	Career effect: increase productivity	3.03	0.78	2	4

Source: author's research.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis of Career Networking Efficiency Scales and Types of Professional and Personal Relationships

Category	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6
Attending work-related events and gatherings	0.587	0.356	0.456	0.103	0.112	0.145
Attending office holiday party	0.645	0.234	0.345	0.089	0.099	0.098
Attending conferences or networking events	0.124	0.097	0.066	0.055	0.088	0.074
Inviting colleagues or old friends for drinks	0.687	0.568	0.478	0.024	0.014	0.012
Engaging in extra role activities directed at others at work	0.235	0.021	0.022	0.024	0.010	0.014
Attending friends party	0.647	0.354	0.247	0.001	0.003	0.020
Accompanying someone to parties/gatherings	0.547	0.354	0.452	0.021	0.014	0.023
Attending alumni events	0.234	0.320	0.010	0.001	0.002	0.012
Joining clubs or signing in for special events	0.358	0.364	0.405	0.021	0.012	0.013
Hosting a party	0.463	0.413	0.475	0.024	0.023	0.014
Other	0.237	0.241	0.321	0.001	0.014	0.001
Average value	0.433	0.302	0.298	0.033	0.036	0.039

Source: author's research.

(correlation is 0.433 and 0.298), while the psychological effect is also important (0.302). It is worth noting that the career effect is not provided by any type of professional and personal relationships, as correlation analysis indicates a low level of communication. This may be due to the subjectivity of the perception of networking as a way to achieve professional goals and career growth. Another important reason for the subjectivity of the perception of career networking as a way to achieve professional goals is the lack of communicative practice among employees.

According to the results of the survey (Figure 1), employees and managers assessed the following communication issues: discussion of salaries and other

incentives (85%), company issues 74%, skills and abilities of employees (59%) are the most common topics of communication during networking. Discussions of career growth were rated at 48%. At the same time, the least discussed topics are discussing career opportunities (21%), discussing the level of dissatisfaction with the workplace, the company (19%) and discussing the goals and strategies of the company (3%).

This generally indicates a lack of communicative practice within networking. Instead, employees focus on discussing the company's current issues. The lack of established culture and career communication practices in companies may be the reason for not discussing career growth, success and productivity

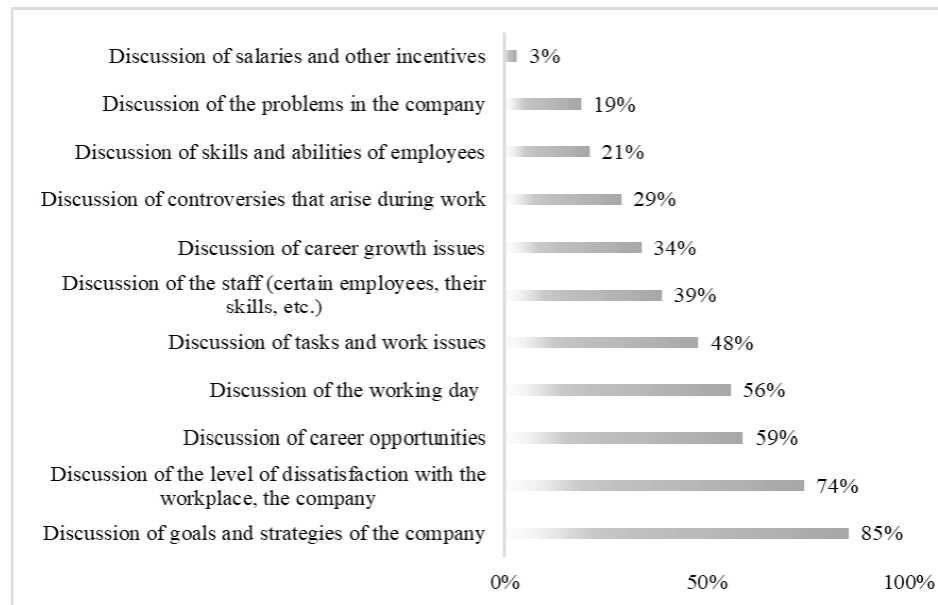


Figure 1: Topics of communication practice of networking among employees in the Ukrainian companies.

Source: author's research.

within networking. However, none of the companies provided coaching, training or education concerning career development, networking and productivity. Companies do not have the practice of assessing the productivity of an individual employee.

DISCUSSION

The study of career networking as a communicative practice allows the development of social theory, providing it with new knowledge about the effectiveness of networking. T. Casciaro *et al.* (2014) in their study found a significant relationship between networking and feeling “dirty” (correlation -0.49), seniority (0.29), self-monitoring (0.15), extraversion (0.32), conscientiousness (0.12), neuroticism (-0.21). In addition, T. Casciaro *et al.* (2014) also argue that the most widely used types of professional and personal relationships, such as spontaneous and professional relationships, instrumental and professional relationships, instrumental and personal. Due to differences in the culture of the respondents (in the study T. Casciaro *et al.* (2014) respondents Amazon’s Mechanical Turk), no differences were found in the types of connections and their prevalence. Our study complements others and explains the unexplored effect of career networking on career and professional growth.

Other studies show that short-term training (2 days) does not change behavior in networking in terms of networking effectiveness. However, “combination of the

networking intervention with a career coaching” provides an increase in the level of career planning as a variable of human capital and career optimism as an adaptive psychological resource (Taber and Blankemeyer 2015). Increasing levels of career planning and optimism have increased the level of subjective career success, indicating an indirect link between networking and coaching (Taber and Blankemeyer 2015). Our study results indicate a high level of subjectivity in assessing the effectiveness of career networking: respondents rated career effects below 2 points. This is confronting the results of B. Taber and M. Blankemeyer (2015) in the context of the subjectivity of career success. It can be assumed that employees underestimate their own career success and networking effectiveness without networking and coaching. At the same time, workers are more positive about networking as a resource for career success after interventions.

Another study, J. Abalkhail and B. Allan (2015), assessed business-women’s perceptions of mentoring and linking their careers in Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom. The qualitative study is based on interviews with 44 women who worked in the public sector. J. Abalkhail and B. Allan (2015) discuss different concepts of mentoring and networking in Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom due to different cultures. Women in Saudi Arabia associated mentoring and communication with family members with not-professional connections. British women perceived

mentoring and networking as a formality or informality at the workplace, in the professional sphere. Two groups of women faced career difficulties and received different levels of support from family or professionals. J. Abalkhail and B. Allan (2015) argue the importance of cultural differences in personnel management and leadership development. The strategies must be adapted to the culture, social and demographic characteristics.

K. Nadermann and S. Eissenstat (2018) studied the emotional, behavioral, and attitudinal aspects of networking. Authors K. Nadermann and S. Eissenstat (2018) found a link between career links and the effectiveness of career decisions based on a survey of Korean students. The results show that networking and networking skills are important for career success. Acculturation affects efficiency itself through networking. The relationship between acculturation, interaction within networking and self-efficacy in career decision-making indicates a medium or high degree of effect.

Stress and personality development should be taken into account by professional counselors and workplace conditions should be created for the development of communication skills (Nadermann and Eissenstat, 2018). The results of this study correlate with the results of K. Nadermann and S. Eissenstat (2018), as they first confirm the importance of the emotional and psychological component of the effectiveness of career networking and, secondly, indicate the impact of social and demographic characteristics on the care networking. Given that the participants in this study generally focused on personal connections (improving relationships, friendships) rather than professional growth, this may explain the low level of networking and career effectiveness. Instead, Y.-M. Huang (2016) proves that career behavior is directly related to career advancement. Here we are talking about the maintenance of relationships and contacts, participation in professional activities etc. Career-based networking behaviors mediate the link between dedication and advancement.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of assessing the relationship between career networking types and emotional, motivational, psychological and occupational effects indicate that the relationship between variables is medium, low or absent. Therefore, if there is an average level of connection between the emotional, motivational,

psychological effects and different types of networking, the career effect is not related to networking according to employees. The study confirms the first hypothesis about the subjectivity of the assessment of career networking and emotional, motivational, psychological, professional effects. The first three groups of effects are positively related to the reputation of the respondent through such psychological assessments as the formation of friendships, feelings of satisfaction, joy, increasing the level of inner motivation. Therefore, it determines the level of perception of career development methods: networking as a way to achieve professional goals is perceived negatively, which underestimates career performance. Whereas networking as a way to maintain friendship, motivation and level of satisfaction is perceived positively.

So, we confirm the second hypotheses about the connection between the subjective assessment of networking and the perception of networking as a "dirty and dishonest" way to get a job, achieve professional goals or career growth. The subjective assessment of career networking causes low professional effects, while the emotional, motivational, psychological effects may be overestimated due to the positive perception of such effects by respondents.

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