

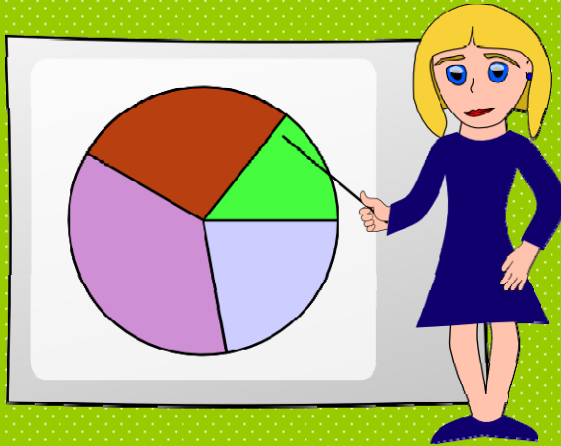
Confidentiality:



A Colleagues Perspective

How this presentation came to be:

- Surveyed Medical Laboratory Assistants from different work environments



- Survey question “What is the number one interpersonal issue in our work environments?”
- The only response in each survey was: ...

GOSSIP

The gossip was spread quite evenly in these areas:

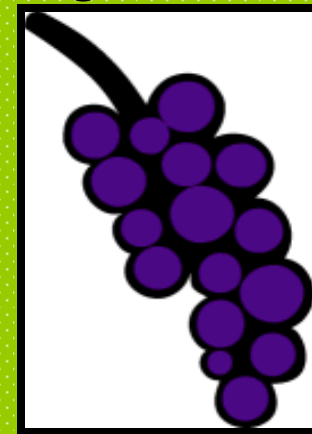


- Organizational/Hospital policies
- Union regulations
- Colleague work performance and/or personalities
- Personal information about others

Grapevine vs. Gossip

Grapevine:

- The word of mouth method of communication that spreads information quickly throughout a company.
- Good news about the grapevine:
 - Between 80-90% accurate.
 - Information spreads quickly.
 - We can learn more about self and others
- Bad news about the grapevine:
 - Impossible to dismantle, discourage or get rid of.
 - Can cause misunderstandings leading to anger, mistrust and frustrations.



Characteristics of the Grapevine

1. Information is passed along between friends and colleagues.
2. Information may be incomplete.
3. Information may be distorted because of misunderstandings, repeated telling and/or exaggeration.
4. Information may include emotionally loaded statements caused by persons own feelings towards the issue.

Rumour vs. Gossip



- The grapevine information may be based on rumour or gossip.

Rumours: are reports or statements that are taken as fact but are not confirmed.

Gossip: is more personal. It may contain information of a more personal nature about one or more individuals; or, it may be critical of an individual.

We all “Gossip”.

There is a difference between “Gossiping” and “Venting”.

Venting: to express, release, utter.

- As the definition implies we vent to release many different emotions.
- If we are selective of who, where, what and when we vent, the act of venting can be a great way to relieve stress.

Gossipers are also known as:

- Tattle-Tale
- Nosy-Parker
- Busy-Body
- Gad-About
- Pot-Stirrer



Characteristics of a Gossiper

1. Gossipers want to be “in the know” so they tell everything to everybody as a way to gain status or importance.
2. Not trusted by colleagues as they are afraid the gossiper will talk about them.
3. Friendships are based on getting and giving information.
4. Purposefully used to pass on information

Confidentiality: How do we plead?

- Power exists in the use of information appropriately.
- Gossip, the inappropriate sharing of information about others poses a grave threat to confidentiality.
- Gossip is not necessarily erroneous or untrue, but it is always unethical.
- Gossip needs to be recognized as a widespread infection attacking trust in all relationships.
- We have to stop this infection at the source.

Confidentiality Exercise

Please answer the following questions:

- 1. If I receive great news regarding my family life, I am most likely to tell:** a. my closest confidant; b. several people I'm close to; c. everyone I meet; d. no one.
- 2. If I receive frightening news regarding my health, I am most likely to tell:** a. one close confidant; b. several people I'm close to; c. everyone I meet; d. no one.

Confidentiality Exercise continued

- 3. If I have just had a discussion with my supervisor regarding my job performance and I leave it feeling dismayed at the supervisor's urging me to improve in one area, I am likely to tell: a. no one; b. a good friend in the lab; c. most of the staff I work with; d. anyone who will listen.**
- 4. When a friend tells me something in confidence, I feel free to share that piece of information with: a. only my closest confidant; b. only those I know I can trust not to tell anyone else; c. absolutely no one at all.**

How to stop the spread of the Gossip Virus

- Most of us spend a third of our lives with our workplace families. We share confidences, victories, and insecurities.
- Each of us shares different amounts of information as we just demonstrated in the Confidentiality exercise.

Let's discuss how adjusting our own behaviours can stop this spreading virus.

How to stop the spread of the Gossip Virus

1. *Limit personal information shared about yourself*

- Once private information is passed on, it is no longer a secret.
- Less than one percent of the population can keep a secret.
- Limit communicating personal information that could backfire on you. Examples of this type of information include: details of your divorce, bankruptcies, illicit affairs, salary levels, religion, political views and secrets you know about others. If you need to confess, choose a confidant who is loyal and preferably not professionally connected to you.

1. Limit personal information shared about yourself

Case Study

Your position requires you to work closely with another colleague. You have a lot in common with this person and you both shared everything and became good friends. Your friend has left and his/her replacement is very different from you and you have almost nothing in common with your new colleague other than the job. You are having a hard time working with this person.

Case Study #1 – What are your options?

1. You can tell your supervisor that you and your new colleague are not able to work together.
2. You can arrange a discussion with your new colleague and point out the problems he/she is creating for you.
3. You can examine your own attitude to find out why you are unable to work with this person.
4. You can accept the fact that you will not be friends with this person and work to establish a good on the job working relationship.

Case Study #1 – What option do you choose?

- Option 1 – Going to your supervisor could label you a “tattle tale” as part of our success is being able to work with everyone.
- Option 2 – Not a bad idea if approached correctly. If there are specific “work performance issues” that need to be addressed.
- Option 3 – Examining your attitude is always a good place to start. Is this your problem just because you miss your friend.
- Option 4 – The best option as there is no rule you must be friendly with everyone at work. Your career is not to adopt all your colleagues as personal friends, but to form the best possible working relationships by putting our feeling aside.

How to stop the spread of the Gossip Virus

2. Do not spread gossip, but listen to it

- Remember 80 – 90% is true.
- When a colleague wants to commiserate with you about a personal or professional issue they are dealing with, listen with concern as a cousin would and not a parent.
- Limit your advise and judgments. The information is hearsay and we can only respond to situations we see and/or hear ourselves.

2. Do not spread gossip, but listen to it

Case Study #2

You are happy with your career. You are good at what you do, the position is interesting and you know what is expected of you every day. You worked well with your former supervisor who retired last month. You are looking forward to working the new supervisor but you hear rumours that he is going to make sweeping changes in the department and he is horrible to work for.

Case Study #2 – What are your options?

Option 1 – You can dwell on what you have heard.

Option 2 – You can pass what you have heard along to others.

Option 3 – You can decide to wait until you have a chance to meet with and talk to the new supervisor yourself before worrying.

Case Study #2 – What option do you choose?

Option 1 – Why allow a rumour to destroy your peace of mind and interfere with your work record? Most rumours are based on misinformation.

Option 2 – It is natural to want to share worries and talk about our fears, but little can be resolved with misinformation.

Option 3 – The best option. Keep doing your job and you can assess the new supervisor and his policies when he arrives.

How to stop the spread of the Gossip Virus

3. Don't engage in negative discussions about your colleagues

- Work with everyone equally - The reality is we like some people we work with and we want them to be part of our team and others we do not. Just because we do not like someone it does not give us the right to talk negatively about them.
- We cannot ignore these colleagues, make our feelings known or speak negatively about them.
- Focus on the processes and tasks and not the person.
- If a performance issue exists choose the right time and place to discuss it with your colleague directly.

3. Don't engage in negative discussions about your colleagues

Case Study

At coffee, Charlie, a colleague, asks how Pam, another colleague, is doing. Earlier in the day Pam told you she was really struggling with her marriage and felt devastated because she didn't think her marriage was going to work out. You respond to Charlie by saying:

Case Study #3 – What are your options?

- Option #1 – You can become defensive and tell your colleague to mind their own business
- Option #2 – You can refuse to interact with your colleague and ignore the question.
- Option #3 – You can spread the information Pam had confided to you.
- Option #4 – You can deflect the question and put the responsibility on the person inquiring to ask Pam herself as you are sure she would appreciate the concern.

Case Study #3 – What option do you choose?

- Options #1 - #3 – I think we would agree are not really options. In:
- Option #1 – you would be aggressive
- Option #2 – you would be rude
- Option #3 - you would be a gossip
- Option #4 – It is always best to respond positively to any questions regarding the health and welfare of others. We have to show respect to our colleagues and entrust personal information given to us and keep what we know to ourselves.

How to stop the spread of the Gossip Virus

4. Stand up for your colleagues/yourself when others talk about them/you.

- Think first before you speak.
- Try to say what you feel, think or mean without offending the gossiper.
- You must consider others' feelings and actions when your words come out.
- You do not want to be demeaning or disrespectful.
- Stand up for your colleague by using tact and the "I" statement.

**4. Stand up for your colleagues/yourself
when others talk about them/you.**

Case Studies using the “I” Statements

- A colleague is complaining constantly about “being short staffed and all the new people do not know how to do their job especially (a specific person/s is named)”
- Appropriate “I” statement could be:
 - “I know we have been short staffed a lot lately but the new people are doing their best. How do you think we could help them?”

4. Stand up for your colleagues/yourself when others talk about them/you.

Case Studies using the I Statements continued

- You began your new job with high hopes and a positive attitude but were not prepared for the testing, teasing and criticism you encounter from your colleagues. You dread going to work.
- Appropriate “I” statement could be:
 - Testing Situation - “I’m sorry I have more then I can handle right now, so I would appreciate it if you asked someone else.”
 - Teasing Situation – “I feel embarrassed when you tease me. I would appreciate you not doing it anymore
 - Criticism Situation – “I’m confused about how you want me to process these specimens, could you please repeat the intructions.

How to stop the spread of the Gossip Virus - Summary

- **1. *Limit personal information shared about yourself***
 - People appreciate hearing information from the source, choose your self disclosures carefully.
- **2. *Do not spread gossip, but listen to it***
 - Always respect and never betray confidences
- **3. *Don't engage in negative discussions about your colleagues***
 - Keep each other informed and be direct, honest and specific with everyone. If constructive feedback is necessary choose your time and place carefully.
- **4. *Stand up for your colleagues/yourself when others talk about them/you.***
 - Show concern for each other as colleagues and as individuals

Quote from William Shakespeare

*“Love all
Trust few
Do harm to
none”*



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