The information gatekeeper – one for all or all for one? a new perspective for looking at the human information gatekeeper as a majority in the organization and not as a minority /

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Abstract:

In today's knowledge environment, individuals and groups who gather relevant information about the organization's external environment and distribute that information for the use of their colleagues, get increasing attention and are viewed with great importance. These individuals have been named Information Gatekeepers. Heretofore, researchers have yet to establish a unanimous and interdisciplinary definition regarding the human information gatekeeper. Nonetheless, a recurrent motif entwined in previous papers regards gatekeepers as a selective few throughout the organization while the majority does not get such recognition. This approach creates two kinds of employees based on a specific set of criteria – those who are gatekeepers and those who are not.

The main goal of this research is to examine whether gatekeeping is a dichotomous attribute that exists or does not exist within members of the organization as researches tend to believe so far, or whether gatekeeping is a continuous attribute that exists within each and every member of the organization in varying intensity subject to differences in personal characteristics and other factors.

The research hypotheses are that gatekeeping is a continuous attribute rather than a dichotomous one, influenced by personal characteristics and other factors.

Based on the reviewed literature throughout the research and on the definitions suggested thus far to the term 'Information Gatekeeper', a wider

and more comprehensive definition is proposed. The four research variables embody the suggested definition, and are: attitude towards updating, updating in practice, information distribution and sharing, and self recognition.

The research's variables, hypotheses and questions were examined using a questionnaire filled out by 261 members of a leading financial organization in Israel.

The research findings show that gatekeeping is indeed a continuous attribute rather than a dichotomous one, and that looking at each and every member of the organization as a gatekeeper in various aspects may open the door to a world of knowledge yet unknown and untapped. Further findings show that gender, age, position and seniority affect gatekeeping saliency and that the most common causes for sharing information are the desire to achieve organizational success and establishing one's professional status. Additional findings show that the subjects prefer using human information sources rather than other kinds of information sources.

The findings of this research alongside the existing literature accentuate the need for developing a new model to describe the human information gatekeeper, a model that is suggested in this paper and which consists of four sections: the gatekeeper's interaction with the external environment, the gatekeeper's interaction with people within the organization, the activities performed by the gatekeeper not relating to the external environment nor to people within the organization, and the factors that influence gatekeeping saliency.

Finally, operational suggestions are proposed in order to fulfill the hidden potential in each and every single member of the organization; the research limitations are reviewed, limitations that mainly consist of the fact that there is no unanimous definition to the term 'information gatekeeper' and of the fact that the research was carried out on a specific financial organization based on

the subjects' self testimony; and a few possible topics for future research are suggested.

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