

**V. Yakubovich (University of Pennsylvania), S. Shekshnia (INSEAD)**  
**The network of task interdependence and mobility in organizations: a case of russian corporate bureaucracy**

The importance of interpersonal networks for organizations is a core insight of economic sociology and organization theory. Numerous studies persuasively show the relevance of networks to a variety of individual outcomes in organizational contexts, such as promotions and rewards, turnover, learning and knowledge sharing, and innovation. By and large, researchers deal with networks of communication, advice, friendship, or trust, and provide explanations of their effects in terms of fundamental theoretically-grounded characteristics such as tie strength, closure, structural holes, and status. In this paper, we use a network perspective on organizations to understand the impact of task interdependence on promotion chances. Task interdependence is a foundational concept in organization theory, and vast body of literature explores its technological and social origins as well as its implications for organizational design. Yet, few studies approach the phenomenon as a network and look whether it impacts individual outcomes. When they do, they treat ties of task interdependence as formal ties among positions exogenous to the occupants of these positions. At the same time, some studies of the effects of informal networks on individual outcomes use the kind of data on relationships that result directly from task interdependence, for example, 360° performance evaluations or work in temporary task forces and permanent teams. Even ties of information exchange, advice, trust, or friendship, which are arguably interpersonal, are often driven by task interdependence. Organization members strive to create and maintain helpful, pleasant, and trustful relationships with the people with whom they have to work. When asked to analyze their own networks, they tend to report network structures that are shaped primarily by their current formal positions and task assignments. For example, a person involved in a team-based project finds herself exchanging information and socializing in a dense clique-like network of the team members while a person assigned to coordinate multiple teams ends up as a broker in the advice network of the teams' leaders. It is possible that the structure of a member's Ego-centric network of task interdependence explains her promotion, wage increases, or turnover chances while the information, advice, and trust exchanged simply buffer some otherwise harsh realities of dependence. The relevance of this interpretation might grow with managers' growing appreciation of the importance of networks and consequent attempts to cultivate them strategically. To sum up, we want to see how far the network of task interdependence alone takes us in explaining individual mobility in organizations. As task interdependence emerges by organizational design as well as through the everyday practice of organization members, the empirically observed network of task interdependence has inter-positional and interpersonal components. The interpositional component characterizes a task relationship's location on the organizational chart along and across chains of commands. Often, a task relationship is not explicitly defined on the organizational chart but follows from job descriptions, work flow charts, and other documents which are not readily available to organization members or researchers. Yet, its interpositional status is taken for granted by organization members and causes them to interact on the job whether they have a personal rapport or not. The interpersonal component of the network of task interdependence results from tie formation on the basis of individuals' socio-demographic characteristics, the history of their interactions in other positions within the same organization, or prior joint affiliations with other organizations. As work becomes increasingly knowledge-intensive while formal organizational structures

become increasingly flexible, through the use of technology, individuals gain more freedom to shape their task interdependence, and their personal relations guide them in the process. To understand the contributions of the interpositional and interpersonal components of observed networks of task interdependence toward individual mobility, we use a unique data set from the headquarters of a large Russian energy company. The data include the network of the most critical directed ties of task interdependence surveyed at the end of 2005, and the complete work histories of the company's managers for 2006-2008. To the best of our knowledge, it is the first study of networks and mobility that does not rely on cross-sectional or retrospective data. The paper is organized as follows: First, we lay out a multi-level network perspective on task interdependence using rational, natural, and open system approaches to organizations. The work of contingency theorists' treatment of "organizations in action" offers most of the tools we need to develop our network model of task interdependence. Next, we outline testable hypotheses about the links between an individual's position in the network of task interdependence and her mobility. Then, we describe the empirical setting in which we test these hypotheses, explain the data and statistical method used, and present the actual findings. Using Cox event-history model of the hazard rate of promotion, we find that both the interpositional and interpersonal components of an individual's task dependence network affect his or her upward mobility. Specifically, chances for promotion increase with the centrality of his or her work unit in the unit-level network of task interdependence, and the presence of a former boss in the network. We conclude with a discussion of theoretical and empirical contributions of our findings to the organization literature, in general, and its contingency and network theories in particular.