Workplace Connectors as Facilitators for Work

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Abstract. The creation of a knowledge-sharing corporation—one that discourages knowledge hoarding but encourages sharing across internal and external divisions—is a goal which many organizations strive to achieve through explicit policies and procedures. Formal communities is a key design strategy that organizational architects often use to promote knowledge sharing and interaction. An 11-month ethnographic investigation with 10 informants was conducted in an organization in the nascent stages of implementing formal communities of practice. Each informant was shadowed for three and a half days. Contrary to the common characterization of communities of practice in the workplace as the dominant social arrangement through which work is accomplished, our data revealed that there exists a range of identifiable and distinct *connectors*, commonalities or affinities, that facilitate the formation of diverse groups in an organization. The seven major types of connectors we found were: work home, company, common work role, formal community, professional, private and social. Each connector provides a purposeful way for workers to not only accomplish their work tasks more effectively, but to legitimately cultivate social constructs such as communities.