

Using Sociograms to Improve Mellie's Ice Cream Parlor

In early 2015, a group of entrepreneurs raised funding for their start-up, Mellie's Ice Cream Parlor. After hiring qualified executives, store managers, and ice cream "artists," to kick start a great opening quarter for the company's first three locations, the entrepreneurs and investors have decided to take a look at the distribution of power in the company to ensure the company is run as effectively and efficiently as possible. According to the sociogram, the most central people in the company are Dawn, Frank, Garret, and Haley.

Dawn is one of the four most powerful people involved in this network because she is directly connected to six people, more than any other person at Mellie's Ice Cream Parlor. Dawn's position allows her to transport information quickly to Barbara, Alex, Christine, Eli, Frank, and Garret. If Dawn's position was cut from the company, it would be difficult to communicate information quickly and efficiently. Therefore, Dawn has the highest degree of centrality in the sociogram.

While Dawn has the highest degree of centrality, Frank and Garret are also tremendously important people in the business. The sociogram shows that they are structurally equivalent to each other, which means that both Frank and Garret are situated so that they are able to send and receive information with the shortest path links. Not only do Frank and Garret have the second highest degree of centrality after Dawn, they connect Haley, another powerful executive at Mellie's, to the other half of the business network. Thus, Frank and Garret are important executives at Mellie's with their high degrees of centrality and, more importantly, their close positions to other important people in the company.

Haley is the most valuable to the network. She connects the two outliers, Janet and Ian, to the rest of the group. According to her position in the sociogram, Haley acts as a valve that delivers information to both sides of the network. This is referred to as 'betweenness'. If Haley is removed from the network, Mellie's would essentially be removing Janet and Ian as well, because Haley is the only connection to Janet and Ian. Haley also utilizes her 'closeness' to communicate with anybody in the network in two people or less as indicated in the sociogram. These particular skills of 'betweenness' and 'closeness' make Haley the most important asset of the group.

After analyzing the sociogram, it is evident that Haley holds the most power in Mellie's Ice Cream Parlor. While the current network structure is not *ineffective*, it could be more *effective*. To prevent miscommunications that may arise, there should be a path from Haley to Dawn which would further unite the four leaders and would make Mellie's Ice Cream Parlor even more successful in years to come.