

## **WORKPLACE STRUCTURES THAT FOSTER COLLEGIALLY: A CASE STUDY OF ONE ORGANIZATION'S KNOWLEDGE ENABLING SOCIAL CONTEXT.**

The language of organizational advantage is often highly competitive, using battlefield talk and highlighting ever greater efficiency, accountability and individualism. But researchers in organizational knowledge creation (Von Krogh, Ichijo & Nonaka, 2000) found that the type of social context that underpins organizational knowledge creation is characterized by rather different qualities. They describe this social context as a knowledge enabling 'right context' and term the qualities that characterize it as 'a climate of care' and 'structures that foster solid collegial relations'. This paper investigates the social context of a small IT workplace that has maintained an excellent competitive position over many years and at the same time is repeatedly voted amongst the best places in the IT sector to work. Using Hymes' (1974) ethnography of communication framework, and a broadly sociolinguistic approach, the investigation focuses on the management of collegial relations in three dimensions of the organization: a field focused community of practice; two task focused 'micro-communities of knowledge' and activities that involve all members of the organization. The analysis of naturally occurring interactions draws on Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management framework in examining discourse strategies of politeness to determine how the two sociolinguistic dimensions of collegiality (power and solidarity) are enacted in the day-to-day activities of the organization. The analyses identify the purpose of each community as having a strong impact on participants' rapport orientation and the type of collegiality that develops, whilst regular activities that involve all organizational members underpin a different kind of collegiality that carries over into both types of communities as well as conditioning the social context of the organization as a whole. Holmes, & Stubbe (2003) identified humour and small talk as aspects of collegial behaviour in the workplace, and this study found them to contribute to participants' collegial behaviour in all dimensions of the organization.

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