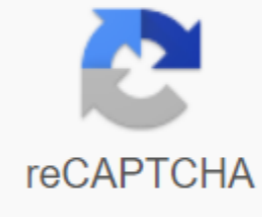




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Offices are social places. Employees and managers take coffee breaks together, go to lunch, hang out over drinks, and play in sports leagues. Companies often encourage this socialization, in the hope of fostering strong team ties that lead to higher performance and fewer conflicts. But have you ever wondered if these interactions affect your career? Could coffee or fantastic football with the boss tip the scales when you're up for this next promotion? In a recent study, we find evidence that schmoozing with the manager can indeed be consistent for your career. In addition, we show that this importance of schmoozing can be a disadvantage for the advancement of women in the workplace. Consider the significant gender gap in promotions in companies around the world. McKinsey's data show that in the United States, 48% of entry-level employees are women, but women's representation falls to 38% at the intermediate level, 22% at the C-Suite level and 5% at the CEO level. While the gender gap has narrowed on other fronts, such as in the level of education, the improvement in the promotion gap has been horribly slow. Anecdotal accounts suggest that this gender gap arises, at least in part, because men can schmooze with more powerful men in a way that is less accessible to women. This is sometimes referred to as the old boys' club. For example, 81% of women say they feel excluded from working relationships, and many cannot participate in post-work socialization. This limits women's access to those who have the power and influence to support their advancement. To study the effects of socialization at work, we partnered with a large commercial bank in Asia. We used their administrative records to track assignments between employees and managers, as well as changes in employee compensation, effort and performance. We also conducted a series of surveys to measure other aspects of employees' lives, such as taking breaks with their managers, or knowing the manager's preferred sports team. We began by measuring the effect that a manager's gender had on an employee's career, using what economists call a quasi-experience. We examined the natural rotation of managers between teams, as these transitions were almost as good as random. We then reviewed the results of employees in the months and years leading up to the and followed him. This allowed us to compare, for example, two male employees — one in a unit that went from a woman to a male manager, the other in a unit that went from a female manager to another female manager. These two employees have undergone a transition, but only one has made the transition to a male manager. According to the old boys' club hypothesis, a male employee who switches to the male manager should progress more quickly, because he would have better access to a network of male leaders. Our evidence was consistent with this question: male employees made more progress over the organization after being assigned to male managers, compared to how they would have fared if they had been assigned to female managers instead. Two and a half years after the transition, male employees who switched to male executives were paid about 13% more than male employees who switched to female managers. On the other hand, the gender of the manager had no effect on the employees' careers. Employees assigned to female executives did not appear to have the same socializing advantage as men after being assigned to male executives. This could mean that female executives do not socialize with their employees — or, as our data suggests, that, unlike male bosses, female executives also socialize with male and female employees, thus not giving one sex an advance over the other. Or maybe male managers were just better at motivating male employees and getting them to be more productive, and that's why they were promoted faster? We found no evidence to support this. After the transition to a male manager, male employees worked a similar number of days, spent a similar number of hours in the office and had sales revenues similar to everyone else. Nor did we see that male managers were better at retaining male employees. This brings us back to schmoozing. Were men able to move faster under male bosses because they were able to schmooze more easily? We have a lot of evidence to suggest that this was the case. For example, the benefit of having a male manager did not materialize immediately. It took about a year for these effects to come into effect, which makes sense when you think of schmoozing: Employees needed a little time to bond with their male managers and get their support. We also found that the disproportionate increase in promotions for male employees assigned to male executives appeared only in positions where socialization was more common, such as customer support specialists. To more directly test this schmoozing mechanism, we also collected survey data on how employees and managers socialized. Have male employees interacted more with their managers after being assigned to a male boss? The data say yes: male employees were a lot likely to share work breaks with their manager after this transition. And we found that employees who took more breaks with their managers were more likely to know certain personal preferences, such as their favorite sports team, suggesting that this socialization helped them get to know each other well enough. The problem with this man-man advantage is that it can generate a self-perpetuating cycle: Men are more likely to be promoted under male managers, so they are more likely to become managers themselves and pass on the same benefit to their male men Our back envelope calculations suggest that schmoozing with the manager may be responsible for a third of the gender gap in promotions in this organization. We also wondered if there were anything other than sex that made it easier to schmooze with the boss. After all, men may not have equal access to the old boys' club. We used another quasi-experience to explore this, this time by looking at the smoking breaks. We analyzed data from the survey on smoking habits of male employees and male managers. We assumed that when a male employee who smokes switches to a male manager who also smokes, he spends more time together during the smoking breaks. The data from our investigation confirmed this. More importantly, we found that after the transition, male employees who smoke were more likely to be promoted than non-smokers and smokers who transitioned to non-smoking managers. This smoking advantage was similar in timing and magnitude to the advantage of getting a male pattern that we documented above. These results suggest that yes, getting face time with the boss can make a difference to your career - but maybe only if you're a man with a male boss. Of course, each organization is unique and therefore the conclusions we document in this particular organization should be taken with a grain of salt. We hope that future research studies will measure these effects in other contexts. With these caveats in mind, we have some tips for employees: Be aware that your relationship with your manager may affect your chances of being promoted. Make an effort to engage with your manager whenever you have the opportunity, and even create those opportunities if possible. If you are shy, you will have to make an effort. If you're a woman, you might have to try even harder. We also have some tips if you run an organization. To run a profitable business, you probably want to promote employees who are the best at their job and not just those who are the best at schmoozing with their bosses. We hope that future research can provide evidence on policies that minimize these biases in promotions and salaries. In the meantime, we can come up with potential solutions. First, increasing diversity at the top can help it affect the rest of the organization. Our data suggest that, unlike male managers, female managers treated male and female employees with Way. Thus, increasing the number of female executives would level the playing field for women. Even if all managers remain the same, it could help if employees are reviewed by multiple managers for promotions - it can be more difficult to schmooze two or three managers than to schmooze one. Second, you can try to create opportunities so that all types of employees can interact with their managers. Do male managers regularly play soccer with male employees? Maybe you can you can other activities that will also engage employees. Finally, make sure you use all the objective information you can in your promotion decisions. Do you keep track of the hours employees spend in the office? What about their sales income? How many ideas did they bring to the table? Relying on algorithms for performance reviews may still be prone to bias, but at least employees cannot schmooze with algorithms during smoking breaks. If you buy a pre-built system from a provider like Dell, HP or Gateway, it probably doesn't come with a very good mouse. Most OEMs offer mouse upgrades, but skimming on mouse quality is one way they help keep prices low. Enthusiastic PC companies like Falcon Northwest or Voodoo PC tend to ship better standard mice, but really high-end things is always an option at best. The end result is that there is a fairly large retail market for mice. Standard mice that come with pre-configured computers often stink, mice break easily, sometimes they get lost in travel... There are dozens of reasons why computer users from neophytes to head hardcore in their local computer store to pick up a new mouse, and no one wants to spend a lot of money. While we make individual reviews of extreme high-end gaming mice with lots of fancy features and extremely high ip ratings, we thought it might be fun to watch the flip side of mouse upgrades. So we went to our local Fry's Electronics and picked up five mice, each with a price tag of less than \$20. Is that one of those cheap mice all good? Continued... Continued...

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