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AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF THE DETERMINANTS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY USE AND ITS IMPACT ON SUPERVISOR- SUBORDINATE INTERACTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Continued advancement in computer and telecommunications technology provide new options for organizational restructuring and process redesign. A common area of activity is the use of a combination of computer and telecommunication technology to operate and effectively support remote work sites. This paper provides preliminary findings regarding the factors determining the use of electronic communications technology and the impact of its use on supervisor-subordinate communications where the supervisor is located at the core organization and the subordinate is located at a remote site. The sample consists of eighty-five subordinates and fifty-seven supervisors based on 360 questionnaires from three major public accounting firms. Results indicate that accessibility to the technology, a critical mass of communication partners, the social symbolism of the technology, and the organization of work are the most important factors associated with communication media use. Electronic mail is highly dependent on network externalities and some of the more popular technologies such as voice mail and facsimile machines were used with equivalent frequency in core and remote locations. As predicted, supervisor-subordinate interactions were affected by the supervisor-subordinate relationship and the organization of work.