

COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

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“The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives.” ~ Anthony Robbins

The impact of technology on how we communicate comes with a variety of benefits and consequences. We know that communication is an essential part of every aspect of our lives. The ability to communicate in a clear and concise manner is an important skill that employers look for in their employees, and that individuals look for in their relationships. Technological advancements in the modes of communication, cell phones, email, text messaging, instant messaging and social media, have promoted faster communication, faster idea development, faster decision-making, and faster conflict resolution, all of which satisfy today's demand for instant gratification.

BENEFITS

With the advancement of technology the world has become much smaller and we now have the ability to communicate with anyone across the globe and get a response within minutes. This ability to get a rapid response allows individuals and businesses to exchange thoughts and find quicker and better solutions to any problem. In cases when you want to communicate something urgently cell phones and emails can come in handy. Social media has allowed people to rekindle friendships, make new friends and gain new interests. Strengthened relationships are also a result in today's technology as it is easier to stay in touch with friends and business contacts. Another significant benefit is on-line education which allows many people to attain a skill or an education that they might otherwise not be able to due to cost or geographic location.

CONSEQUENCES

There are some negative consequences that today's technology has had on communication. For the most part, most of us have stopped hand writing letters, notes and face-to-face conversations are few and far between, replaced by texting or chatting on-line. For today's generation this lack of face-to-face conversation has created a void in development of important interpersonal skills such as the ability to verbalize ideas and thoughts to others in person. With little face-to-face interaction important non-verbal cues are lost. This can be a critical blow to effective communication as research has shown at least 80% of all communication is non-verbal. Not being able to read non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, eye movements, hand gestures, pacing and body language significantly diminishes effective communication and leaves a lot to our interpretations, which often are incorrect. Today's technology has also increased the generation gap as well. In many cases parents are not as tech savvy and are not used to the communication style of their children. The young people today often choose social media instead of socializing in person creating the potential for isolation and limited success in future endeavors such as college, intimate relationships and in the work environment.

The frequency by which we receive emails and the tendency to check emails frequently has become very distracting and thus impacts the productivity of employees and individuals. Also, a poorly written email often leads to confusion rather than clarity, requiring even more time to clarify. The actions of texting may seem rude under our conventional social norms and thus can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. Social media allowed people to connect on different levels. Caution should be exercised as to what is posted because many employers check social media sites of candidates they are considering hiring!

We know that technology is here to stay so let's embrace it and adapt it to improve our communication. How? We should be communication face-to-face when possible and through visual technology as a second choice! We know that face-to-face meetings allow us to process non-verbal cues that we use as a basis for building clear communication and trusting relationships.

According to Eric Yuan, CEO of Zoom, a five minute video meeting can accomplish more than 20 emails. Visual communication is so important, both in our personal lives but in business as well. Our visual signals can account for a large portion of what we communicate, more than what we are actually saying. People are most likely to remember more of that they see than what they hear, and people are more persuasive when they are seen and heard.

Effective collaboration in business is mainly about building relationships and a way to build and maintain them through effective communication. Direct visual contact (video) is the answer when you can't do it in person. Today's communication choices are many and need to be carefully selected based on the desired effect needed to elicit the responses desired.

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