Association for Business Communication

Southwestern United States

2009 Refereed Proceedings
February 24-28, 2009
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the 36th meeting of the Association for Business Communication-Southwestern United States. Many thanks are given to the planners, program chairs, reviewers, presenters, and other contributors responsible for making this a great conference. Special thanks go to Marcel Robles, Vice President and Program Chair of ABC-SWUS, who has assembled a great program that will appeal to business communicators.

The program this year includes 29 presentations by 49 authors from institutions in Illinois, India, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington. Eleven of the papers are included in these proceedings. Papers are organized in these proceedings in the order of presentation.

Each year completed papers that are submitted for the program are considered for the Irwin/McGraw Hill Distinguished Paper Award. This year's distinguished paper was awarded to **Susan Jennings, Ann Wilson, and Judith Biss.** This paper will be presented on Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Congratulations are also in order for **Roger Conaway**, who is being awarded the 2009 Prentice-Hall Outstanding Educator Award. In these proceedings, you will also find information on previous program chairpersons, Distinguished Paper Award recipients, and recipients of the Outstanding Research and Outstanding Teacher awards.

In this proceedings you will also find a call for papers for next year that includes the dates for both presentation proposals (September 15) and the proceedings (January 15) of the accepted presentations. This is my third and final year of my three-year term as editor of these proceedings, so these papers will go to the new editor next year. Information as to who this is will be included in the acceptance letters. Thank you to all of the authors and reviewers who have submitted and reviewed these papers to make these proceedings possible each year.

I hope this conference becomes a memory of professional enhancement and great times with colleagues as we share our collective knowledge and research.

Susan Evans Jennings

Editor

2008 – 2009 ABC-SWUS OFFICERS

President:	**Ann Wilson,** Stephen F. Austin State University
Vice President & Program Chair:	**Marcel Robles,** Eastern Kentucky University
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CONGRATULATIONS!
Recipient of the 2009 Cengage Outstanding Educator Award

Roger Conaway, University of Texas at Tyler

CONGRATULATIONS!
Recipients of the 2009 McGraw-Hill/Irwin Distinguished Paper Award

Is Email Out and Text Messaging In?
Communication Trends in Secondary and Post Secondary Students

Susan Evans Jennings, Stephen F. Austin State University
S. Ann Wilson, Stephen F. Austin State University
Judith Biss, Stephen F. Austin State University

2009 Conference Program

* By the title indicates the presentation has a published proceedings paper. Papers are presented in the order of presentation.

ASSOCIATION FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION
SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES

February 26, 2009
(Thursday)

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Room 8

SESSION A Welcome by ABC-SWUS President Ann Wilson

Business Communication Courses: Is Change on the Horizon Or Is It Already Here?

Session Chair: **Marcel M. Robles**, Eastern Kentucky University

The Changing Face of Business Communication Instruction
Betty S. Johnson, Stephen F. Austin State University
Marsha L. Bayless, Stephen F. Austin State University

How Current is Your BCOM Course?
Jean Sellers, Fort Hays State University
Wally Guyout, Fort Hays State University
Jim Rucker, Fort Hays State University
Scott Jones, Fort Hays State University

Developing a Comprehensive Business Communication Program: An Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Approach
Brad Stratton, University of South Carolina

Defending the Faith: Toward an Apologetics of Business Communication
William Wardrope, University of Central Oklahoma

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Ballroom C

FBD Coffee Break

Please make plans to visit the exhibits for information on the latest books & newest educational technologies.
Please let exhibitors know how much we appreciate their presence and continued support!

Drawings for a complimentary FBD 2010 & FBD 2011 registration fee only and an I-Pod Must be present to win.

ASSOCIATION FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION
SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES

February 26, 2009 (Thursday)

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Room 8

SESSION A Technology Issues in Business Communication

Session Chair: **Marsha L. Bayless**, Stephen F. Austin State University

Winner of the McGraw-Hill/Irwin Distinguished Paper Award

**Is Email Out and Text Messaging In? Communication Trends in Secondary and Post Secondary Students*
Susan Jennings, Stephen F. Austin State University
Judith Biss, Stephen F. Austin State University
Ann Wilson, Stephen F. Austin State University

The Impact of E-communication on Students' Writing Skills
Faridah Awang, Eastern Kentucky University

**Overcoming Challenges in Cross-Cultural Virtual Teams*
Debbie D. DuFrene, Stephen F. Austin State University
Carol M. Lehman, Mississippi State University

**Social Sites: The Impact on Our Future Cyber Socialites*
Margaret Kilcoyne, Northwestern State University
Brenda Hanson, Northwestern State University
Glenn Maples, Northwestern State University
Sue Champion, Northwestern State University
Margaret Garland, Northwestern State University
Julie McDonald, Northwestern State University

Noon – 1:30 p.m. **--Lunch – on your own**

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Room 8

SESSION A Facilitating the Thought Process in Communication

Session Chair: **Faridah Awang**, Eastern Kentucky University

Teaching Critical Thinking for the First Time
Jim Larsgaard, Eastern Kentucky University

\‘\‘Stuck-in-a-Rut\’\’ Thinking: Recognizing Filters that Anchor Our Ideas
Renee King, Eastern Illinois University

Teaching Methods: Lecture and Hands-On
Harold A. Hurry, Sam Houston State University

From Complex to Simple: Teaching the MBA Student to Simplify the Message
Teresa Taylor Sekine, Purdue University

February 26, 2009
(Thursday)

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Ballroom C

FBD Coffee Break

Please make plans to visit the exhibits for information on the latest books and newest educational technologies.
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Drawings for 2-night regular hotel room at 2010 FBD conference ($325 value) and an I-Pod.
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3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Room 8

SESSION A	**Special Session**
Session Chair:	**Ann Wilson**, ABC-SWUS President Stephen F. Austin State University
Meeting Facilitator	**ABC-SWUS Business Meeting** **Ann Wilson**, President
Discussion Facilitators	ABC in Action **Jim Dubinsky**, ABC President **Betty S. Johnson**, ABC Executive Director

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Ballroom C

FBD Swap Meet

Entertainment and fun

Bring something from your school (T shirt, coffee mug, etc.) to trade

Cash bar (with first drink free)

Please make plans to visit the exhibits to receive information on the latest books and newest education technologies.
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February 27, 2009
(Friday)

8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Room 8

SESSION A **Writing Negative Messages**

Session Chair: **Carol M. Lehman**, Mississippi State University

**Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word: Legal Effects of the Corporate Apology*
Geraldine Hynes, Sam Houston State University
Griffin Pivateau, Sam Houston State University

Indirect Approach: What Is Taught and Why?
Kathy Hill, Sam Houston State University

**The Case of Wind River Farms: Using the Direct Approach in Bad News Messages*
Lucia Sigmar, Sam Houston State University

**Implications of Using Incivility in Workplace Communications*
Marguerite P. Shane Joyce, Sam Houston State University

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Ballroom C

FBD Coffee Break

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February 27, 2009
(Friday)

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Room 8

SESSION A Real Communication Lessons

Session Chair: **Margaret Kilcoyne**, Northwestern State University

**Hurricanes Gustav and Ike: One University's Communication Lessons Learned and Applied after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita*
Betty Kleen, Nicholls State University
Shari Lawrence, Nicholls State University

**Cross-Cultural Training in Costa Rica: Communication and Cultural Adjustment*
Stephanie Graves, Stephen F. Austin State University
Marsha L. Bayless, Stephen F. Austin State University

Practicing What We Teach: A Communication Audit of a College of Business
William Wardrope, University of Central Oklahoma
Lisa Miller, University of Central Oklahoma

Blurring Fact-Fiction Boundaries: A Distinct Opportunity to Enhance Communication Research Texts
Kathryn Rybka, University of Illinois

Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch – on your own

1:30 p.m.. – 3:00 p.m. Room 8

SESSION A Instilling Professionalism in Business

Session Chair: **Betty Kleen**, Nicholls State University

**Twenty-First Century Communication: The Effects on Today's Business*
Carolyn Ashe, University of Houston Downtown
Chynette Nealy, University of Houston Downtown

Developing Business Dress Guidelines
Beverly Block, Missouri Southern State University
Jean Anna Sellers, Fort Hays State University

Creating a Professional Image: A New Course for Business Students
Lorraine Krajewski, Louisiana State University-Shreveport

**The Dream Job Portfolio: An Experiment in Heightened Relevance*
Eve Dobkins-Ash, Oklahoma State University-Tulsa

February 27, 2009
(Friday)

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Ballroom C

FBD Coffee Break

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Drawing for an I-Pod. ***Must be present to win.***

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Room 8

SESSION A Communicating in the Corporate Environment

Session Chair: **William Wardrope**, University of Central Oklahoma

Storytelling Strategies to Convey Policy in Business Organizations
Marcel M. Robles, Eastern Kentucky University

Communication Strategies for Effective Human Resource Management
Apoorva Bharadwaj, Institute of Management Technology

Do You Speak English: Expatriate-Local Staff Communication and Its Impact on Employee Perception Toward the Organization
Li Liu, University of Washington

**Cognition and Marketing Communication*
Manaswini Acharya, Mudra Institute of Communication, Ahmedabad, India

Qualities Needed in the Workplace: Views of College of Business Undergraduate Students
Donald English, Texas A&M University-Commerce
Edgar Manton, Texas A&M University-Commerce
Janet Walker, Texas A&M University-Commerce

Please make plans to visit the exhibits to receive information on the latest books and newest education technologies.
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Future National and Regional Meetings
2009 – 2010

Association for Business Communication-Southeastern United States
March 19-21, 2009
Columbia, South Carolina

Association for Business Communication 73rd Annual Convention
November 4-7, 2009
Portsmouth, Virginia

Association for Business Communication-Southwestern United States
March 2-6, 2010
Dallas, Texas
Program Chair: Faridah Awang

ABC-SWUS Program Chairpersons 1973 - Present

2009-2010	Faridah Awang
2008-2009	Marcel Robles
2007-2008	Ann Wilson
2006-2007	Carolyn Ashe
2005-2006	Harold A. Hurry
2004-2005	Lana W. Carnes
2003-2004	Marsha L. Bayless
2002-2003	Betty A. Kleen
2001-2002	William Sharbrough
2000-2001	Carol Lehman
1999-2000	William P. Galle, Jr.
1998-1999	Anita Bednar
1997-1998	Timothy W. Clipson
1996-1997	Debbie D. Dufrene
1995-1996	William J. Wardrope
1994-1995	Roger N. Conaway
1993-1994	Donna W. Luse
1992-1993	F. Stanford Wayne
1991-1992	Beverly H. Nelson
1990-1991	Marian Crawford
1989-1990	Marlin C. Young
1988-1989	Sallye Benoit
1987-1988	Tom Means
1986-1987	Lamar N. Reinsch, Jr.
1985-1986	Sara Hart
1984-1985	Betty S. Johnson
1983-1984	Larry R. Smeltzer
1982-1983	Daniel Cochran
1981-1982	Nancy Darsey
1980-1981	John M. Penrose
1979-1980	R. Lynn Johnson
1978-1979	Raymond V. Lesikar
1977-1978	Jack D. Eure
1976-1977	Phil Lewis
1975-1976	Dale Level
1974-1975	Bette Anne Stead
1973-1974	Sam J. Bruno

ABC-SWUS lost a strong supporter and former President in 2009.

Dr. Marlin C. Young

1939-2009

Dr. Young will be fondly remembered for his contributions to ABC, ABC-SWUS, and SWFAD.

First Call for Papers

Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States
Dallas, Texas
March 2-6, 2010

You are invited to submit a proposal or paper for presentation at the 2010 ABC-SWUS Conference in Dallas. Research papers or position papers related to the following areas are encouraged:

Communication Technology	Technology and Education
Innovative Instructional Methods	Business Education Issues
International Business Communication	Paradigm Shifts in Communication
Training and Development/Consulting	Interpersonal Communication
Nonverbal Communication	Executive/Managerial Communication
Legal and Ethical Communication Issues	Organizational Communication

Papers or proposals should include a statement of the problem or purpose, methodology section (if applicable), findings (as available), a summary, implications for education and/or business, and a bibliography.

If you are submitting a proposal only, it should contain 750 to 1,500 words and must be submitted on the ABC website: http://www.businesscommunication.org. Click on the link for the 2010 ABC-SWUS conference.

If you are submitting a completed paper please submit your proposal online as indicated above. Then email the completed paper to Faridah Awang at faridah.awang@eku.edu. All submissions must be in Microsoft Word.
Personal and institutional identification should be removed from the body of the paper. Identify yourself and your institution only on the cover page. Submissions will be anonymously reviewed. A cover page is required with the title of the paper and identifying information for each author: name, institutional affiliation, address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address.

For your research to be considered for the Richard D. Irwin Distinguished Paper Award, you must submit a completed paper rather than a proposal.

Submitted papers should not have been previously presented or published or be under consideration or accepted for presentation elsewhere.

All authors and co-authors are expected to join ABC-SWUS and pre-register for the FBD meeting.

<u>Deadline</u>: Papers and proposals must be received by September 15, 2009.

The deadline for submitting accepted papers to the Proceedings will be January 15, 2010.

For more information, contact Program Chair Faridah Awang.
Email Address: faridah.awang@eku.edu
Phone Number: 859.622.2416

Cengage, Thomson, and Prentice-Hall

Learning Outstanding Educator Awards

for

The Association for Business Communication
Southwestern United States

To be eligible for the award, recipients must have received the ABC-SWUS Outstanding Educator Award, must not be a previous recipient of either the Prentice-Hall or Thomson learning awards, must be a member of the Association for Business Communication, and must teach in the business communication discipline. This top tier ABC-SWUS award began in 2001 to honor outstanding educators in ABC-SWUS who were already recognized by our association. The award was sponsored by Prentice-Hall in 2001 and 2002, and by Thomson Learning in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008. The 2009 award is being sponsored by Cengage (formerly Thomson). The award winner must also have been recently active in the association as evidenced by attendance at recent ABC-SWUS conferences. The award winners are listed below:

2009	Roger N. Conaway, University of Texas at Tyler
2008	Bobbye J. Davis, Southeastern Louisiana University
2007	Betty A. Kleen, Nicholls State University
2006	William Wardrope, University of Central Oklahoma
2005	Betty S. Johnson, Stephen F. Austin State University
2004	Marsha L. Bayless, Stephen F. Austin State University
2003	Lillian H. Chaney, University of Memphis
2002	Debbie DuFrene, Stephen F. Austin State University
2001	Anita Bednar, University of Central Oklahoma

The Association for Business Communication

Southwestern United States

Outstanding Researcher and Teacher Awards

These awards were developed and first awarded in 1992 to recognize the accomplishments of the region's members. Nominated candidates are evaluated by a panel of previous award winners. No awards were given in 1998, 2001, 2003, or 2007. The association began alternating the awards every other year in 2000 between researcher and teacher. The recipients below each received a plaque and award of $100.

2008	Geraldine E. Hynes, Outstanding Teacher Award
	Roger N. Conaway, Outstanding Researcher Award
2006	Janna P. Vice, Outstanding Researcher Award
2005	Bobbye Davis, Outstanding Teacher Award
2004	Marcel Robles, Outstanding Teacher Award
2004	William Wardrope, Outstanding Researcher Award
2002	Lillian H. Chaney, Outstanding Researcher Award
2002	Jeré Littlejohn, Outstanding Teacher Award
2000	William Sharbrough, Outstanding Researcher Award
1999	Betty Kleen, Outstanding Researcher Award
1999	Robert Olney, Outstanding Teacher Award
1999	William Wardrope, Outstanding Teacher Award
1997	Al Williams, Outstanding Teacher Award
1996	Betty S. Johnson, Outstanding Researcher Award
1995	Marsha L. Bayless, Outstanding Researcher Award
1995	Anita Bednar, Outstanding Teacher Award
1994	Nelda Spinks, Outstanding Teacher Award
1993	Timothy W. Clipson, Outstanding Teacher Award
1993	F. Stanford Wayne, Outstanding Researcher Award
1992	Debbie D. DuFrene, Outstanding Researcher Award
1992	Beverly H. Nelson, Outstanding Teacher Award

The Association for Business Communication

Southwestern United States

Irwin-McGraw Hill Distinguished Paper Award Recipients

2009 Susan Evans Jennings, S. Ann Wilson, and Judith L. Biss
Is Email Out and Text Messaging In? Communication Trends in Secondary and Post Secondary Students

2008 Debbie D. DuFrene, Carol M. Lehman, and Judith L. Biss
Receptivity and Response of Students to an Electronic Textbook

2007 William J. Wardrope and Roger N. Conaway
Readability and Cultural Distinctiveness of Executives' Letters Found in the Annual Reports of Latin American Companies

2006 Janna P. Vice and Lana W. Carnes
Professional Opportunities for Business Communication Students That Go Beyond the Course Grade

2005 Lillian H. Chaney, Catherine G. Green, and Janet T. Cherry
Trainers' Perceptions of Distracting or Annoying Behaviors of Corporate Trainers

2004 Patricia Borstorff and Brandy Logan
Argumentativeness and Verbal Aggressivenes: Organizational Life, Gender, and Ethnicity.

2003 Ruth A. Miller and Donna W. Luce
The Most Important Written, Oral, and Interpersonal Communication Skills Needed by Information Systems Staff During the Systems Development Process

2002 Roger N. Conaway and William Wardrope
Communication in Latin America: An Analysis of Guatemalan Business Letters

2001 Annette N. Shelby and N. Lamar Reinsch, Jr.
Strategies of Nonprofessional Advocates: A Study of Letters to a Senator

2000 Donna R. Everett and Richard A. Drapeau
A Comparison of Student Achievement in the Business Communication Course When Taught in Two Distance Learning Environments

1999 Susan Plutsky and Barbara Wilson
Study to Validate Prerequisites in Business Communication for Student Success

1998 Jose R. Goris, Bobby C. Vaught, and John D. Pettit Jr.
Inquiry into the Relationship Between the Job Characteristics Model and Communication: An Empirical Study Using Moderated Progression Analysis

1996 Beverly Little, J. R. McLaurin, Robert Taylor, and Dave Snyder
Are Men Really from Mars and Women from Venus? Perhaps We're All from Earth After All

1995 Bolanie A. Olaniran, Grant T. Savage, and Ritch L. Sorenson
Teaching Computer-mediated Communication in the Classroom: Using Experimental and Experiental Methods to Maximize Learning

1994 James R. McLaurin and Robert R. Taylor
Communication and its Predictability of Managerial Performance: A Discriminant Analysis

1993 Mona J. Casady and F. Stanford Wayne
Employment Ads of Major United States Newspapers

1992 Betty S. Johnson and Nancy J. Wilmeth
The Legal Implications of Correspondence Authorship

1991 Rod Blackwell, Jane H. Stanford, and John D. Pettit Jr.
Measuring a Formal Process Model of Communication Taught in a University Business Program: An Empirical Study

2008 McGraw-Hill/Irwin Distinguished Paper

Is Email Out and Text Messaging In? Communication Trends in Secondary and Post Secondary Students

Susan Evans Jennings, Stephen F. Austin State University

S. Ann Wilson, Stephen F. Austin State University

Judith L. Biss, Stephen F. Austin State University

Abstract

Many Baby Boomers are still just discovering email while many members of the younger generation have already written email off as an antiquated communication method. High school students from multiple public high schools and students from both online and on-campus sections of business courses participated in a survey to determine their current communication trends. Results from the current study confirm the literature review findings that the younger generations are not embracing email with the same ardor of previous generations. It is impossible to know to what degree the use of email will increase for these participants once they enter the workforce. The shift away from using email is not only generational, as more people whose email in-boxes are overflowing want faster ways to interact digitally.

Introduction

Now, when many of the Baby Boomers are still just discovering email, many members of the younger generation have already written email off as an antiquated communication method. In a new 2008 television series, "The Secret Life of the American Teenager," a teenage boy says to a girl he likes, "I tried to ask you. I called your cell. I called your house phone. I left a note in your locker. I emailed you. I sent you a text." Her immediate response was, "No one emails anymore, and I didn't get your text." (Life of the American Teenager, 2008).

Email began with computer engineer Ray Tomlinson who invented Internet-based email in late 1971 (Bellis). However, it took until the mid 1990s for this Internet technology to become generally accessible to the typical homeowner. From then, however, email usage quickly increased with recent statistics showing that 74.5% of people in the U.S. have Internet access, which allows for email use (Internet Users - Top 20 Countries - Internet Usage). However, the question becomes whether or not email has already passed its prime.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the current communication trends and preferences, focusing primarily on email and instant/text messaging, of secondary and post secondary students in order to determine how this usage may affect both future technologies use in the business world and our instruction of students in today's classroom.

Literature Review

Current generations in the workplace are the Traditionalists (born between 1925 and 1945), Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation Xers (born between 1965 and 1979), and Millennials (born between 1980 and 1999). Of the four generations, Millennials represent the second largest group with an estimated 76 million people, closely following the Baby Boomers (Kyles, 2005).

Immediacy has become the norm in American life. Technology has fed our insatiable desire for instantaneous gratification and immediate connection to those around us. Many teens view email as less convenient, too formal, and not immediate. Some reserve it for communication with teachers, keeping up with assignments, and sending attachments. Two studies conducted in 2007 by the Pew Internet and American Life Project showed that teens perceived email as an "old-fashioned medium" (Leibrock, 2008). While 92 percent of surveyed adults said they regularly used email, only 16 percent of teens used it daily (Leibrock, 2008). Microblogging sites such as Twitter and programs like Skype, which allow users to use the Internet for phone calls, are also popular among teens (Leibrock, 2008).

As early as 2005, reports emerged suggesting that email was not being significantly used by the "younger" generation. Gonsalves (2005) suggests that teens see email as a way to communicate with adults or for sending lengthy information to large groups. He goes on to say that teens view email like adults view written letters.

What has taken the place of email? For young people the preferred method of communication is text or instant messaging (IM). According to Barrett, director of research for Parks Associates (2006), a market research and consulting firm, though more than 40% of adults aged 25-54 use email as their primary communication method, less than 20% of people aged 13-17 follow suit. A proposed reason is that the younger group is used to an "always-on world where friends and family are instantly accessible" (¶4). Barrett goes on to speculate, "Once these individuals graduate and join the workforce, they may not have as much time to instant message" (¶5).

Cell phones have gone from merely a wireless telephone to miniature computers capable of email, web surfing, and text messaging. As a result of the increase in availability, Millennials have adopted texting as their preferred communication mode. According to Hardiman (2008), text messages are the preferred form of communication for teens, professionals, and those who want to get a quick message out to masses of people. According to Joe Farren, as reported by Hardiman, assistant vice president of public affairs with CTIA: The Wireless Association®, "It's how people are communicating, and if you want to stay in touch with your consumers and your customers, you gotta get in the game" (¶36). Even though young people were initially the driving force behind texting, CTIA-The Wireless Association® reports that texts exchanged nationally by all users have increased from just under 10 billion in December, 2005 to 48 billion in December, 2007. Continuing the trend, AT&T reported in the second quarter, 2008, that text messaging volumes tripled, while Verizon Wireless handled roughly 58 billion text messages in the first quarter and 70 billion in the second quarter of 2008 (Hardiman, 2008). Even for those who have not embraced the texting era, the increase in texting may also be attributed to the new technology of text messages being sent to landlines (Reed, 2008).

An increasing number of Fortune 500 companies use texting for mass marketing. Schools are starting to use it to alert parents and students of announcements and emergencies. In one geographic region, a texting Amber Alert sends text messages to notify cell phone users of a missing child. The American Red Cross uses texting to fundraise for disaster victims (Hardiman, 2008). The texting trend will only increase as more people and businesses realize that if they want to communicate with people, they will need to use the methods of communication preferred by their audiences.

Consumer technology has a significant impact on the business world. According to Andy Dornan, InformationWeek, (2006) employees bring their new iPods, PDAs, phones, and other "gadgets" to work and then make technology demands that raise the bar on their company IT groups. Rather than resist employee demands, Dornan encourages IT groups and businesses to view consumer technology as an opportunity, both inside the company and among customers. Dornan believes that there is a power shift, with consumer technology setting the agenda among technology vendors. These vendors are focused on the mass market, rather than businesses, which is evidenced in the evolution of Wi-Fi, cellular networks, Ethernet, storage networking, instant messaging, search engines, processors, and DVD drives (Dornan, 2006). In the past, the vendor tradition was to sell to the IT department, but now consumer tech companies are taking a new approach: "Get employees hooked in their personal lives, then move in for the business" (Dornan, 2006).

Dornan believes that this shift tests IT's control and role, but can drive innovation; for example, the Apple iPod, intended to play music, is now a tool for business and education. Instant messaging, which came to the workplace via consumer online accounts, is now used by professionals who need fast-paced communication (Dornan, 2006). Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative, serving 56,000 customers in East Texas, learned the importance of consumer technology demands. An elderly customer asked if he could submit power-outage information through short message service (SMS), and as a result, a new system is in place to support text messages and email. Automated messages are sent about when power will be restored (Dornan, 2006).

An InformationWeek Research survey found that four out of five business tech professionals think their companies need to support at least three "digital lifestyle" technologies. Three-quarters of those surveyed say employees' use of consumer technologies will have a significant impact on their business (Dornan, 2006). In retrospect, email and Internet access were once viewed as too distracting for most workers. Some companies now see instant messaging as threatening security. But consumers will continue to bring the latest technology into the workplace, and according to Dornan (2006), "companies must contort it to their needs." Scott Lindgren, director of product marketing at Nokia Americas, says "The market is still dominated by individual choice, but IT departments are flexing their muscles" (Dornan, 2006). More companies are giving users freedom, but with limits, such as using models that let the IT department delete data remotely or run specific applications.

According to Kizer (2008), texting (or instant messaging) is widely used in today's workplace as a way to get a quick response. However, generational differences between the baby boomers who are entrenched in using a landline and today's twentysomethings who grew up texting on their cell phone could create misunderstandings or total miscommunication. In spite of the generational differences, many companies are recognizing the benefits of using texting, especially for marketing and communication. Robinson (2008) gives several reasons for businesses to use text messaging. These ideas include: (1) Text Loyalty Programs where people can sign up to receive text messages from businesses, (2) Info on Demand where cell phone users can text a key word to a specified number for more information, (3) Promotional Text Games and Quizzes to mix entertainment into the message, (4) Micro-journalism to post short updates, news, or opinions, and (5) Text-to-Screen to display meeting notes to an audience. With increased ease of use and availability, the texting phenomena begun by young people will surely expand into mainstream business applications just as email has done.

Methodology

High school students from multiple public high schools and students from both online and on-campus sections of business courses at a public university, all located in a single southwestern state, participated in a survey to determine their current communication trends. The survey was administered electronically at both the high schools and at the university. In high schools, however, the administration of the survey took place in the classroom; whereas, the university students took the survey online at their own choice of times by accessing the URL link from their WebCT/Blackboard course page.

A total of 1,081 students participated in the survey. This was a convenience sample, and students were not required to take the survey. All participation was voluntary. Demographics from the survey population are shown in the following figure.

Figure 1: Age Groups by Gender

Participant Ages		Frequency	Percent
14-16	Female	227	51.7
	Male	212	48.3
	Total	439	100.0
17-21	Female	271	51.4
	Male	256	48.6
	Total	527	100.0
22-28	Female	41	59.4
	Male	28	40.6
	Total	69	100.0
Over 28	Female	34	73.9
	Male	12	26.1
	Total	46	100.0
Totals	Female	573	53.1
	Male	508	46.9
	Total	1081	100%

As seen in the table, the largest group in the study was the 17-21 year old group with a total of 527. From there, as the ages increased the number of participants decreased significantly. Averages from each group were used to report the findings. However, the smaller size of the last two groups did allow an outlier to make much more impact on the results than the larger-sized groups.

Findings

In the first set of questions, students were asked to rank on a scale of 1-7, with 1 being the most used, the way they communicate with people on a daily basis. Items to be ranked were: Home Telephone (Landline), Cell Phone, Instant Messenger, Text Messaging, Email, Typed or Handwritten Note, and Leaving a Message on Someone's Wall (i.e. Facebook, MySpace). Figure 2 presents the total results of all responses given. The number provided in parentheses under each method is the average ranking.

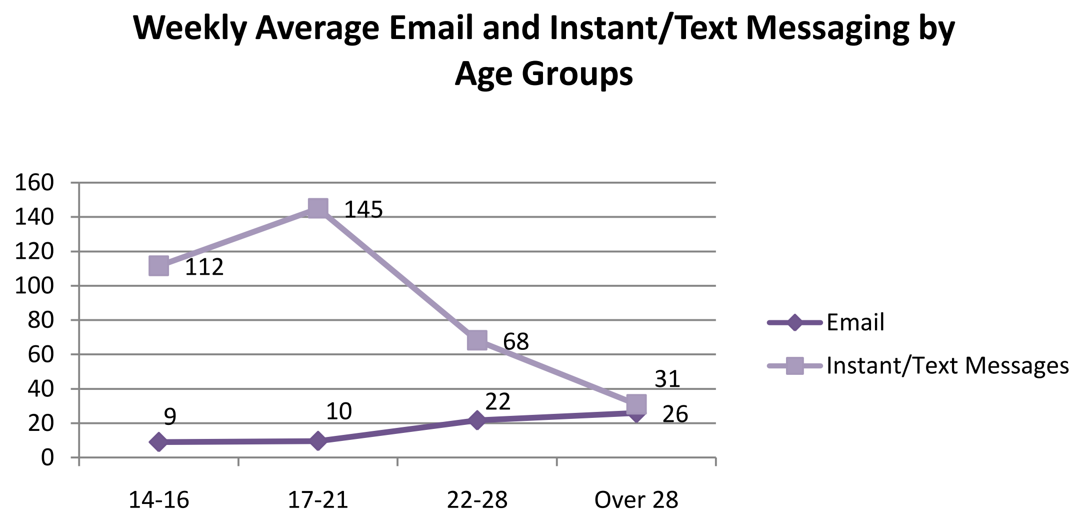
Figure 2: Average Ranking of Communication Method Most Used by Age

Participant Age	Ranking #1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
14-16	Cell Phone (2.57)	Text Messaging (3.17)	Landline Telephone (3.75)	Instant Messenger (4.24)	Email (4.42)	Typed or Written Note (5.08)	Writing on "Wall" (5.33)
17-21	Cell Phone (2.17)	Text Messaging (2.70)	Email (4.24)	Landline Telephone (4.31)	Instant Messenger (4.37)	Writing on "Wall" (5.14)	Typed or Written Note (5.31)
22-28	Cell Phone (1.67)	Text Messaging (2.35)	Email (3.49)	Landline Telephone (4.72)	Writing on "Wall" (5.03)	Instant Messenger (5.14)	Typed or Written Note (5.38)
Over 28	Cell Phone (2.13)	Email (2.98)	Landline Telephone (3.54)	Text Messaging (4.13)	Typed or Written Note (4.57)	Instant Messenger (4.85)	Writing on "Wall" (5.63)

Though there were a few differences in usage patterns between males and females in each group, the numbers were close enough not to appear significant. As can be seen in Figure 2, Text Messaging was the #2 preferred method for the three youngest groups. However, Text Messaging fell to #4 for the last age group. For Email, the opposite trend occurs. Email begins at rank #5 for the youngest group, then moves to #2 or #3 for the next three groups. When looking at 17-21 year-olds, Email is #3 with an average ranking of 4.24, but it is very close to Landline Telephone with a 4.31 and Instant Messenger with a 4.37 average.

The next section of the survey asked participants to indicate the number of each form of communication he or she used in an average week. The categories were the same with the exception of Text and Instant Messaging being combined. For this study we are focusing only on the communication modes of email and instant/text messaging. These averages by age group are shown in Figure 3.

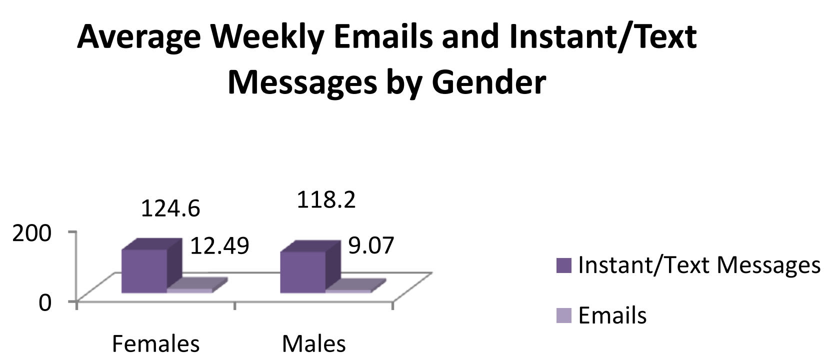
Figure 3: Weekly Average Email and Instant/Test Messaging by Age Groups



As shown in Figure 3, the instant/text messaging peaks in the 17-21 year age group at an average of 145 per week. The lowest average for text messaging was the over 28 year-old group with an average of 31. The highest email average (26) was also seen in the over 28 year-old group.

Next we looked at the average weekly emails and instant/text messages by gender. The breakdown of weekly average emails and instant/text messaging by gender is shown in Figure 4.

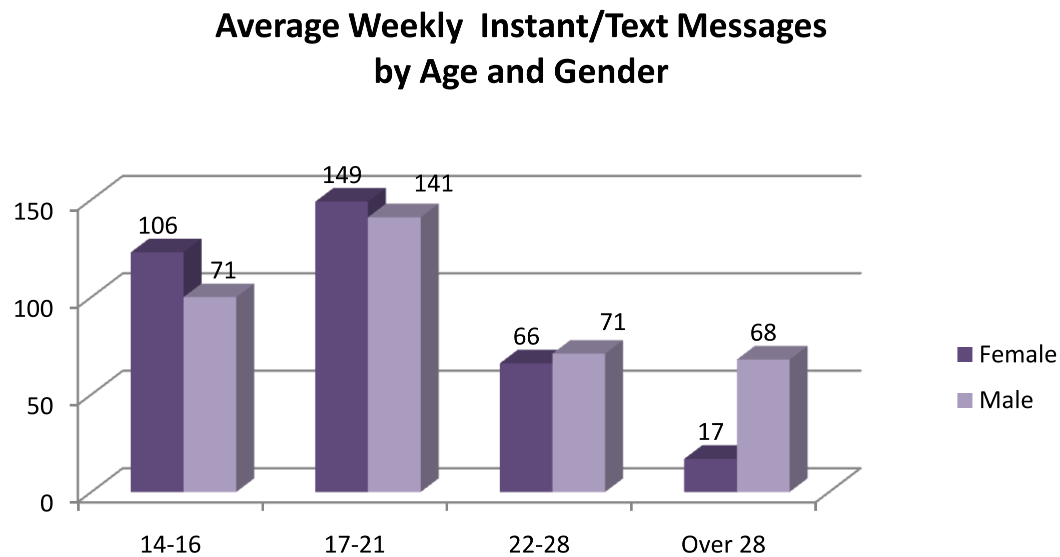
Figure 4: Weekly Average Email and Instant/Text Messaging by Gender



As can be seen in Figure 4, the ratio of emails to instant/text messages for females would be approximately 10:1 and the ratio for males is 13:1 indicating that in this study, males were more likely to instant/text message instead of emailing than were females.

To further look for trends across age and gender, a breakdown by age and gender was considered for the average weekly instant/text messaging and average weekly emails. These results are shown in Figures 5 and 6.

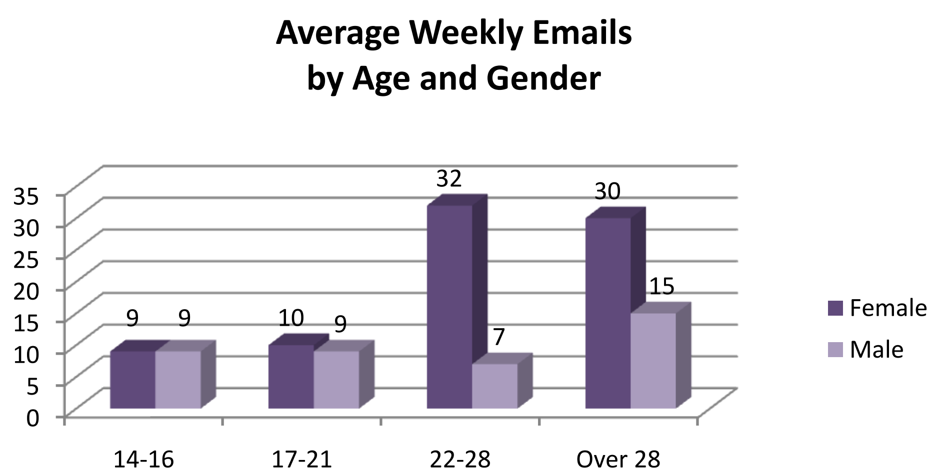
Figure 5: Weekly Average Instant/Text Messaging by Gender



As shown in Figure 5 above, when looking at the average weekly instant/text messages by age and gender, it is interesting to note that in the 14-16 age group the ratio of messages male to female is 1 : 1.5; whereas, in the 17-21 age group the ratio drops to 1 : 1.06. The direction then begins the other way with males sending more text messages than females. The ratio of male to female messages in the 22-28 age group is 1.08 : 1, and the over-28 age group jumps to 4 : 1.

As can be seen in Figure 6, the average weekly emails by age and gender are almost identical in the 14-16 and 17-21 age groups. However, the females jump to dramatically more emails in the 22-28 age group (4.6 : 1) and still remain significantly higher in the over-28 age group (2 : 1).

Figure 6: Weekly Average Email by Gender



Summary

As Millennials, currently aged 8 to 28 years old, enter the workforce in increasing numbers, their presence will, no doubt, alter the work environment. Traditional work processes and communication styles that have been successful with earlier generations will need to be examined and, perhaps, modified to accommodate the changes this new generation brings to the workplace. Generally, Millennials embrace technology as no other generation has, using it to develop and sustain their networks of friends and to stay connected for 24-hour information access. They are accustomed to immediacy and multi-tasking. As a result, they usually exhibit short attention spans. Cell phones, text messages, and instant messages are the Millennials' chosen communication methods (Center for Digital Education, 2007).

Results from the current study confirm the literature review findings that the younger generations are not embracing email with the same ardor of previous generations. It is impossible to know to what degree the use of email will increase for these participants once they enter the workforce. The shift away from using email is not only generational, as more people whose email in-boxes are overflowing want faster ways to interact digitally. In fact, according to Brady (2006) some companies are now initiating "no e-mail Fridays." A computer programmer who works in Sacramento reported that he receives 200-500 email messages a day—too many to go through. In cases like this, email is frequently used to send information to a large group of people at one time rather than for conversations. In businesses, email is still used but is often augmented with other platforms, such as Skype, texting, or instant messaging. The real-time aspect of other platforms is far more convenient and attractive (Leibrock, 2008). However, according to Steve Jones, a senior research fellow with the Pew Internet & American Life Project, "The death of email has been greatly exaggerated (¶24)" (Leibrock, 2008). "It's easily saved, stored and searched (and) it provides a record of our conversations in ways that some other mediums can't. It's considered as good as paper in a business sense (¶30)" (Leibrock, 2008).

Implications

While the results found in this study are not necessarily generalizable to all other groups of high school and university students, the research findings do raise several issues that will have to be addressed in order for business communication students to go into the workplace and be successful.

Like email, which has gone from a fad communication tool used only by the few who embraced the Internet, text messaging may soon become a business standard as well. With this in mind, it would seem reasonable that as business communication instructors that we begin teaching and encouraging more professional use of this channel.

Instructors should be open to and encourage students to develop ways to use text messaging in developing professional applications following more business-like protocol.

The way we communicate is consumer driven. Common usage may dictate what becomes the business standard of the future.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study has prompted additional avenues for future research. Additional investigations should be conducted in other geographical areas with similar populations to substantiate the results of this study. As pointed out in the methodology section, the population of this study was a convenience sample.

Due to the limited number of students falling into older age brackets (over 21), a larger sample size might prove beneficial to strengthening the internal validity of future studies. Another avenue of participants to be explored is recent college graduates and those who have been in the workforce for varying lengths of time. This would allow viewing the transference of these findings or trends into actual business practice.

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Overcoming Challenges in Cross-Cultural Virtual Teams

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Abstract

In the global business environment, the success of many organizations is dependent on effective functioning of cross-cultural virtual (CCV) teams, and individuals possessing the skill set to be successful in such teams are highly marketable. While much attention has been given to the technologies that support virtual teams, little has been written about the cultural influences on communication that occur within them. CCV teams face various challenges as they move through the classic stages of team development that include forming, storming, norming, and performing. Adaptations in cultural behaviors and expectations may be necessary in order for the team to progress. Strategies for CCV teams are offered, along with identification of qualities necessary for successful membership in CCV teams.

Introduction

Virtual teams enable organizations to combine specific talents of employees located in various places. As international business communication expands, more and more work is done by virtual teams that have culturally diverse membership. Such teams consist of geographically dispersed members who use technology to complete project tasks. For virtual teams, traditional face-to-face communication is replaced with technology mediated communication methods including telephone, email, fax, synchronous chat programs, video, and phone conferencing (Nawati & Craig, 2006). While much attention has been given to the technologies that support virtual teams, little has been written about the cultural influences on communication that occurs within cross-cultural virtual (CCV) teams. Serious challenges to team effectiveness can result when cultural differences are not recognized or addressed.

Challenges with Virtual Teams

Virtual teams have various challenges, even when their membership is homogeneous. Virtual teams can lack cohesion, and members may feel isolated. Coordination of work is also more challenging in virtual teams; furthermore, virtual teams need special leadership. An effective team leader must be able to skillfully leverage team talent, include all members, provide the team with necessary information, promote trust, encourage healthy discussions, and help manage conflict (Hawkrigg, 2007).

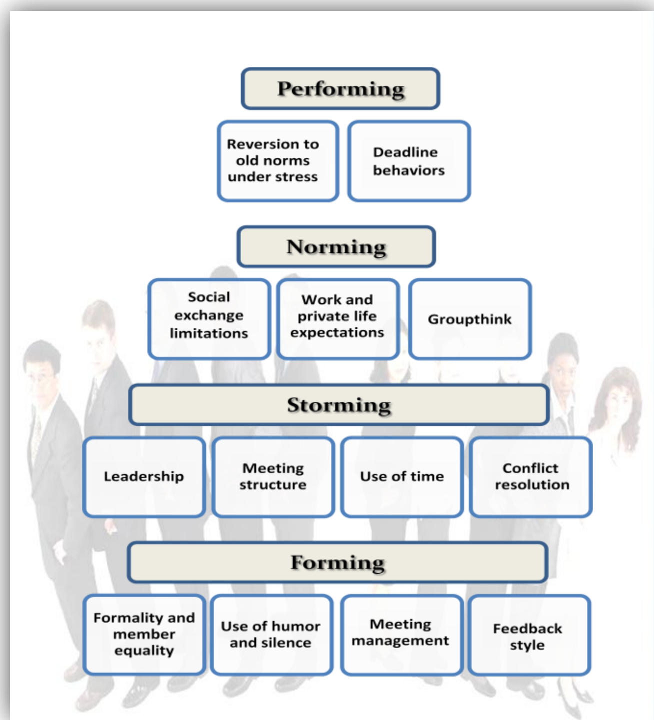
Research indicates that virtual team performance typically peaks and then declines after their first year (Hawkrigg, 2007). Unless teams can effectively deal with interpersonal communication challenges, members quickly face burnout. Some strategies that have proven helpful include reviewing team communication strategies regularly, defining team roles, maintaining accountability of members for assigned tasks, and monitoring team performance. Face-to-face meetings, when they are possible, do help to build team cohesion. Meeting together even once adds to members' ability to understand and appreciate one another, to feel cohesiveness, and to tackle challenging group tasks with trust and shared purpose. In situations where face-to-face meetings are not possible, videoconferencing can help provide the high touch influence needed for continued success (Hawkrigg, 2007).

Additional Challenges Faced by Culturally Diverse Virtual Teams

Culturally heterogeneous groups have the potential for greater conflict than in groups where members are culturally similar (Thomas, 1999). While diversity can lead to more creativity and greater problem-solving ability, it can also impede communication (Valenti & Rockett, 2008). Members of diverse teams often have communication styles that differ as well as varying ways of conveying information (Nawati & Craig, 2006). Obviously, a certain degree of fluency in the common language used by the team is a requisite to effective communication. Avoidance of slang, jargon, and acronyms increase the likelihood that messages will be clearly understood by all (Nawati & Craig, 2006). Beyond basic language considerations, team members must also recognize other challenges of cultural diversity and adapt their behavior accordingly. Recognition of cultural patterns and expectations and adaptations to spoken and written messages can improve cross-cultural virtual team interactions (Nawati & Craig, 2006).

According to many experts on team development, every team, whether face-to-face or virtual, advances through a series of predictable stages toward optimal performance. Tuckman (1965) described the four stages in team development as forming, storming, norming, and performing. As culturally diverse teams move through these progressive stages of team development, various adaptations in behavior and expectations may be necessary due to challenges summarized in the following figure.

Figure 1: Challenges Faced by Cross-Cultural Virtual Teams During Team Development Stages



Forming Issues

In the forming stage, members get to know each other and to understand their team's tasks (DuFrene & Lehman, 2008). In this initial stage, cultural expectations for formality influence the ease with which members get acquainted and interact with one another. Members of some cultural groups, Asians and Latin Americans for example, need to patiently build personal relationships before transacting serious business (Hurn & Jenkins, 2000). Ideas about equality of members can pose challenges to team development. For some cultural groups such as Germans, team members are considered hierarchically equal (Dunkel & Meierewert, 2004), while for others hierarchical structures play an important role, with subordinates hesitant to speak out if a superior is on the team (Dunkel & Meierewert, 2004). Issues can also arise from cultural differences in expectations for the appropriate use of humor, the use of silence, how meetings should be organized and run, and how feedback should be offered (Hurn & Jenkins, 2000).

Working relationships during the forming stage are typically guarded, cautious, and noncommittal, even in the best of circumstances (DuFrene & Lehman, 2008). As team members size up one another in terms of strengths and commonalities, those who perceive themselves to be dissimilar from the rest of the group are likely to feel alienated and to lack commitment (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Research indicates that when teams are unable to meet face-to-face, even once, they are less able to handle cultural differences and to understand and appreciate one another (Hawkrigg, 2007).

Storming Issues

In the storming stage of team development, conflict occurs in interpersonal relationships (DuFrene & Lehman, 2008). Interpersonal conflict resulting from cultural differences may be heightened because of different views on a variety of issues, including leadership, meeting structure, and use of time. The typical leadership style in some cultures (southern European) is relation centered, while in others (northern European) it is task centered (Neyer & Harzing, 2008). Some cultural groups, such as Spaniards, are likely to feel that the leader should be followed even if differences of opinion exist (Dunkel & Meierewert, 2004), while others, such as the British expect consensus to be sought. In some cultural groups, such as the Japanese, preliminary meetings are preferred and expected prior to moving to the main formal meeting (Hurn & Jenkins, 2000). Like the U.S., some cultures are more monochromic than others in their use of time, expecting exact times for meetings scheduled well ahead and specific start and stop times for meetings; lack of punctuality may be intolerable (Dunkel & Meierewert, 2004).

The manner in which those of various cultures handle conflict differs widely. Those of some cultures disdain conflict and will often not speak out when a difference of opinion arises. This approach can be viewed by others as aloofness, a lack of commitment, or even as a passive boycott (Dunkel & Meierewert, 2004). Disruption can occur over different expectations for appropriate delivery of criticism. Germans are representative of direct delivery of criticism, while southern Europeans tend to prefer indirect levying of criticism. Austrians tend to prefer an approach somewhat in the middle of the two extremes. Other potentially confrontational points for diverse groups are the status of women, degree of politeness (Neyer & Harzing, 2008), and leadership styles (Hurn & Jenkins, 2000).

Norming Issues

During the norming stage, team members find harmonious cohesiveness. Good feelings and free exchange of ideas and feedback abound (DuFrene & Lehman, 2008). Collaboration is achieved in the norming stage, though it typically takes longer to achieve in CCV teams than in groups of people with similar cultural characteristics ("Collaborative Teams," 2008). While greater friendliness typically occurs, some cultural groups tend to make a clear distinction between private and business spheres. Members of such cultures might be more comfortable keeping their interaction strictly business and avoiding casual conversation. Understandably, such behavior might be perceived by more socially driven members as snobbish or rude. On the other hand, Italians and Portuguese typically consider it essential to have positive personal relationships with their team members (Neyer & Harzing, 2008). Extended social exchanges that might occur over a meal in face-to-face teams are played out online or via telephone in virtual teams (Dunkel & Meierewert, 2004).

Care should be taken during the norming stage to assure that groupthink does not occur. Groupthink can happen when the team striving for unanimity refuses to realistically appraise alternative courses of action (DuFrene & Lehman, 2008). Diverse teams are not as likely as homogenous, cookie-cutter, teams to exhibit groupthink. But for diversity to promote creative expression of ideas, individuals must be encouraged to utilize their talents and experiences. Some members, such as is typical of the Japanese culture, will wait to be invited to voice their opinion. Silence may be interpreted as passive agreement by other members. The eloquent language of some members, such as the British, may be interpreted by some as agreement, when in fact it is not (Nawati & Craig, 2006).

Performing Issues

During the performing stage, the group becomes a truly collaborative team, with members inspired to go the extra mile to reach the team's objectives (DuFrene & Lehman, 2008). In this phase, coordination of deadlines and meeting schedules is essential to success. Under pressure, team members tend to revert to their own culturally-determined behaviors and ignoring the group norms (Neyer & Harzing, 2008). Members of cultural groups who are accustomed to tight schedules will see those with a more relaxed view of time as idle and uncommitted. Some cultural groups are more willing to work through their private time, while for others working time and leisure time are starkly separated. Last-minute completion of tasks is easier for some to deal with than for others who prefer to work steadily (Dunkel & Meierewert, 2004).

Strategies for Cross-Cultural Virtual Teams

Culturally diverse virtual teams do have a greater potential for conflict than do teams that are homogeneous and are able to meet face to face. While variations in beliefs, behaviors, and expectations occur within all cultural groups, certain generalities about a person based on his or her cultural group can be useful for others seeking better understanding. Given little or no other information about an individual's values and behaviours, culture provides a good first impression of that person (Maznevski & Peterson, 1997). Neyer and Harzing (2008) found that experiences in cross-cultural interactions do serve to improve one's abilities to adapt in such situations. One advantage gained through experience is the overcoming of cultural stereotypes, which often stand in the way of effective communication. Cross-cultural experience also leads to the establishment of norms that support interaction among individuals and to the development of mutual consideration for others (Neyer & Harzing, 2008). Several studies have established that individuals who learn a foreign language also gain appropriate culturally-determined behavior and are thus better able to adapt to specific characteristics of the other culture (Harzing & Feely, 2008; Yang & Bond, 1980).

Some individuals are better suited than are others for membership in CCV teams due to their temperament and experiences. In addition to possessing strong technical skills, qualities that are important to successful membership on cross-cultural virtual teams include the following (Adler, 1991; Hurn & Jenkins, 2000):

- Flexibility and adaptability
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Ability to think both globally and locally
- Linguistic skills
- Listening (interpretive) skills
- Initiative
- Enthusiasm
- Consensus building skills
- Patience and empathy
- Nonjudgmental attitude

A primary goal of CCV teams should be to harmonize differences between cultures so that normal business activity can occur. Some suggestions for building harmony include the following:

- Provide cross-cultural training to increase ability to identify and cope with potential conflicts (Dunkel & Meierewert, 2004).
- Select a skillful leader who can perceive and facilitate handling of potential cultural misunderstandings (Hurn & Jenkins, 2000).
- Strive for transparency in all stages of activity, which aids in the development of trust (Hurn & Jenkins, 2000).
- Set clear, specific agenda with no surprises that could be seen as hidden agendas (Hurn & Jenkins, 2000).
- Encourage the use of questions to solicit input and check for understanding (Nawati & Craig, 2006).

Advantages derived from diversity are not automatic. To reach a high performance level, CCV teams must work diligently to overcome barriers that could be easily resolved in homogenous, face-to-face teams.

Summary

Cross-cultural virtual teams are increasingly common in the global business environment, and individuals who possess the specific skill set to be successful in such teams are in great demand by various organizations. The refinement of technical and interpersonal skills, as well as intercultural exposure, is valuable in preparing workers for CCV assignments. Obviously, it is impossible for any team to pay constant attention to cross-cultural differences. However, virtual teams whose members recognize, respect, and respond to cultural expectations for behavior enhance their prospects for achieving high levels of performance. Education about other cultures and experience in cross-cultural exchange serve to strengthen team members' ability to interact effectively in cross-cultural virtual teams.

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Social Sites: The Impact on Our Future Cyber Socialites

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Abstract

Are college students using digital tools like social networking sites and instant messaging in their daily activities? We collected information about college students' current use of social networking sites including Facebook and MySpace and their current use of Instant Messaging (texting or IMing). One hundred eighty-two students participated in the study. This report only presents findings for Facebook and MySpace. Analysis of the data collected is being used to implement revision to the subject matter taught in an educational setting involving required business courses at a post-secondary level.

Introduction

Several authors have labeled today's students as the tech-savvy, digital generation (Jones, 2007; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2006; Skiba & Barton, 2006). Based on current research, this group of students, born between 1982 and 1991, use instant messaging (also known as texting and IMing) and social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook as their primary communication tools. Megan Scott (2008) stated that Don Tapscott, author of "Growing up Digital" and "Grown up Digital", believes that social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook are second only to texting as the way young adults communicate technologically. This group of young adults is the first generation to have literally grown up digitally, and they are part of a global cultural phenomenon that is here to stay.

Do students use these tools to communicate with others? Do they use these tools as social gathering sites? How are they using them, and how much time do they devote to communicating with these tools? The purpose of this study was to try to answer these and other related questions by surveying and reporting students' use of Facebook, MySpace, and Instant Messaging. Objectives of the study are: (1) to gather and report information about the students' current use of the social networking site known as Facebook, (2) to gather and report information about the students' current use of the social networking site known as MySpace and, (3) to gather and report information about the students' current use of Instant Messaging (texting or IMing). Data collected from this study will be used to implement revisions to the subject matter taught in business courses offered at the post-secondary level. This paper will focus on Facebook and MySpace; the data collected on Instant Messaging will be discussed in future research findings.

Literature Review

Social networking can best be described as the grouping of individuals into specific groups usually with some kind of similar interests. When it comes to online social networking, websites such as Facebook and MySpace are commonly used. These websites are known as social sites. Social networking websites function like an online community of Internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online community members share a common interest such as hobbies, religion, or politics. (Brown, 2008)

Facebook was designed to support distinct college networks only. Facebook began in early 2004 as a Harvard-only social networking site. Originally, to join the site a user was required to have a valid Harvard University e-mail address. (Cassidy, 2006) As Facebook began spreading to other schools, users were required to have university e-mail addresses, a requirement that kept the site relatively closed and contributed to the idea of an intimate, private community. In 2005, Facebook expanded to include high school students, professionals inside corporate networks, and, then eventually, everyone (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). According to the figures compiled by the research firm comScore, Facebook is the largest international social network of the major social networks. In June 2008, Facebook had 132 million unique visitors. (Schonfeld, 2008)

MySpace is an international social networking website with an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs, groups, photos, music, and videos for teenagers and adults. Its headquarters are in Beverly Hills, California, where it shares an office building with its immediate owner, Fox Interactive Media, which is owned by News Corporation. In June 2006, MySpace was the most popular social networking site here in the United States, attracting 230,000 new users per day. Internationally, Facebook is ranked number one. (Sellers, 2006)

Texting and IMing are two popular forms of one-to-one communication, especially among young adults and teenagers. These typically involve using personal computers for instant messages and mobile phones for transmission of text messages (Baron & Ling, 2007).

Instant messaging (IM) is a form of real-time communication between two or more people based on typed text. The text is conveyed via devices connected over a network such as the Internet. Text messaging, or texting, is the common term for the sending of "short" (160 characters or fewer, including spaces, newer phones can hold up to 20 pages of 160 characters) text messages from mobile phones using the Short Message Service (SMS) (Baron & Ling, 2007). It is available on most digital mobile phones and some personal digital assistants with on-board wireless telecommunications. Initially popular with teenagers and young adults, texting is growing tremendously among adults and businesses (Clark, 2008).

Methodology

The target population of the study was defined as entering college/university freshmen and students enrolled in a sophomore level post-secondary Business Communications course. For the purpose of this study, the term “socialites” was defined as both male and female participants. The accessible population of the study is operationally defined as entering college/university freshmen (0 earned hours) at a small regionally accredited four-year university and students enrolled in OFAD 2200 (Business Communications) at that same university.

The development of the survey instrument was the result of combining two sources. The first source was information from a module session presented as part of a presentation on Facebook created for a freshman orientation course. Used in the course was a survey adapted from Syracuse University. (Doyle, Glassmann, Price, & Wiemer, 2006) The second source was an informal survey of people currently using Facebook, MySpace, and Instant Messaging. Students were not required to record any personal or identifiable information. The instrument was divided into three sections, one for each of the three areas.

In the fall of 2008, entering college/university freshmen enrolled in the College of Business freshmen orientation section and students enrolled in OFAD 2200 (Business Communications) were surveyed. Blackboard, a web-based course management system used as a component for all courses taught at the university, hosted the survey. The students were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and confidential. Verbal directions related to the study and the survey content were given to the students prior to their access to the survey on Blackboard.

Analysis

One hundred eighty-two students participated in the study. The study examined student usage of technology in using three applications: Facebook, MySpace, and Instant Messaging (IM). A "gatekeeper" question at the beginning of each section asked students to complete the questions in the section only if the students actively used that technology.

For this report we focused on the students' self-reported usage of and attitudes toward Facebook and MySpace. Of the 182 students participating in our study, 133 indicated that they regularly used Facebook and were allowed to complete that portion of the survey instrument. Similarly, 110 of the subjects indicated that they regularly used MySpace. Table 1 shows students' usage of the systems was not independent; that is, students who used Facebook tended to use MySpace and that students who did not use Facebook tended not to use MySpace (p-value = .001).

Table 1 – Use of Facebook and MySpace

		Use MySpace		Total
		No	Yes	
Use Facebook	No	26	22	48
	Yes	45	88	133
Total		71	110	181

Chi Square statistic p-value = .001

Students were asked how frequently they used Facebook. Approximately 86% (107/124) indicated that they used Facebook 5 hours or less per week. Caucasian students had a significantly higher average weekly usage than African-American students (p-value = .012). The numbers of students used in these analyses vary slightly from those reported in Table 1, as 14 students reported races other than African-American or Caucasian are not considered due to the need to limit the number of categories in order to get meaningful Chi Square analysis.

Students indicated a very similar average weekly usage for MySpace, 86% (89/104) indicated that they used MySpace 5 hours or less per week. There was not a significant difference by race.

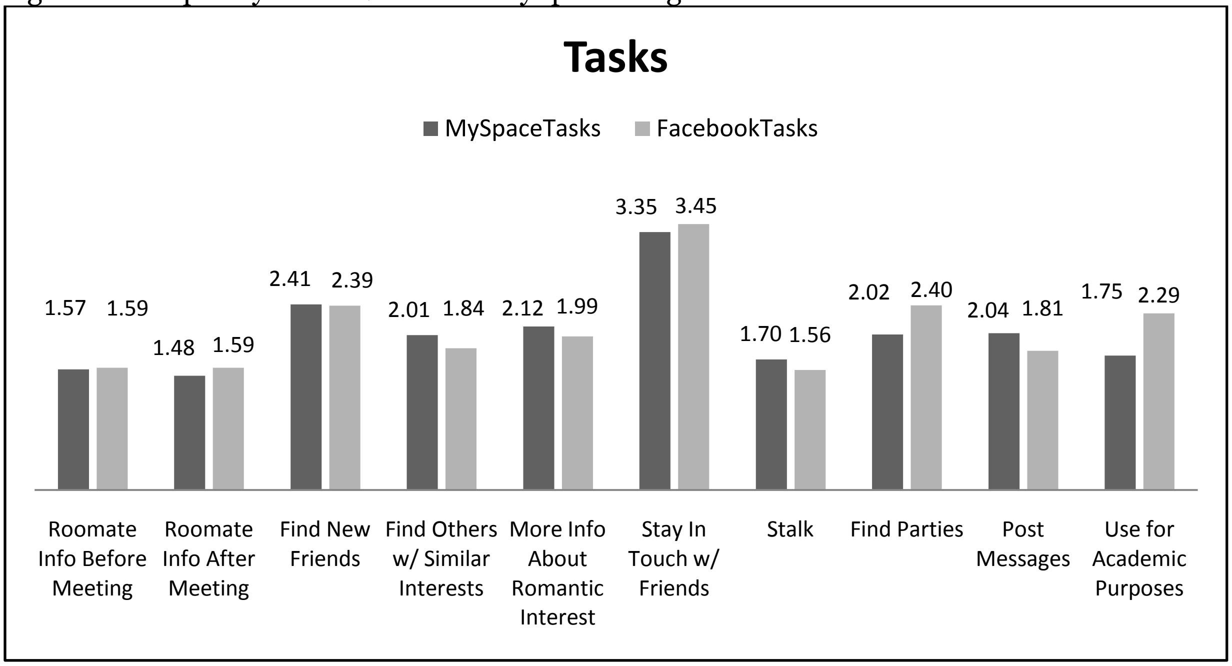
Table 2 - Race and Facebook Usage per Week

		On the average, how much time to you spend on Facebook per week?				Total
		Less Than one hour	1-5 hours	5-10 hours	More than 10 hours	
SRace	Caucasian	25	31	9	4	69
	African-American	35	16	4	0	55
Total		60	47	13	4	124

Chi-Square Test of Independence p-value = .012

Students were asked how frequently they used Facebook and MySpace for various tasks. Figure 1 summarizes these results.

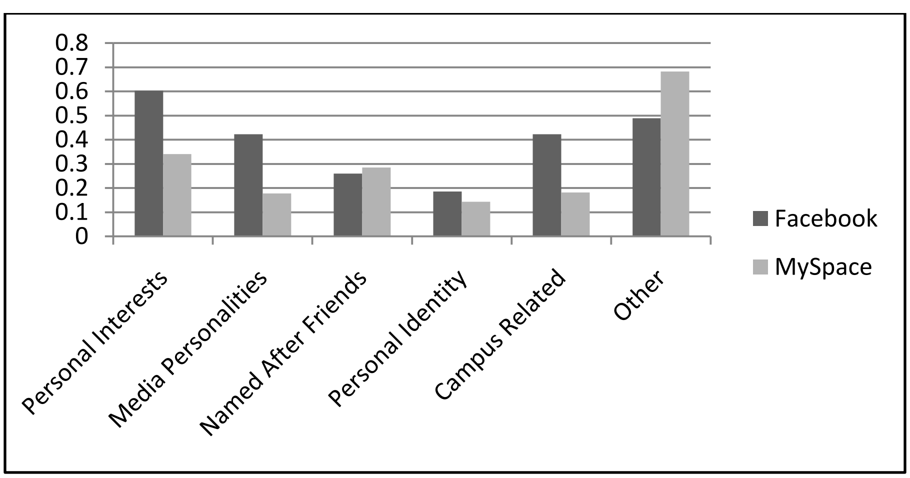
Figure 1 - Frequency of Facebook and MySpace Usage for Tasks



Paired T-tests were used to determine the significance of differences between Facebook and MySpace task usage. Students were significantly more likely to use Facebook for Academic Purposes (p-value = .000) and to Find Parties (p-value = .008). Differences in the other tasks were not significant.

An important part of social networking sites is subscribing to groups that share information. 69% of the students (94/136) subscribed to 10 or fewer Facebook groups. 93% of students (107/115) subscribed to 10 or fewer MySpace groups. Students were asked the reasons that they subscribed to groups; these results are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Reasons Students Subscribe to Facebook and MySpace Groups by Percentage of Students



Paired t-tests were used to determine the significance of the differences between Facebook and MySpace group usage. Personal Interests, Media Personalities, Campus Related, and Other were all significantly different (p-values <= .000).

Significant differences were found between Campus Related use of Facebook between Caucasian and African-American students, with African-American students being significantly less likely to use Facebook for these group activities.

Discussion

Table 1 demonstrates the relationship between the use of Facebook and MySpace. It is no real surprise that students who use one of these services tend to use others, but this has a couple of critically important implications for instructors wishing to use these and similar services for their classes. First, students who do not currently use these services are likely to be reluctant to use them for classes. And students who do use these services are likely to spend much more time on them (as they are likely to use several) than students who do not.

Much has been made of the digital divide, and in particular, differences between the adoption and use of technology between Caucasian and African-American students (Portera & Donthub, 2006). This research, as shown in Table 2, tends to support this prior work, in that there were significant differences between the African-American and Caucasian students in their usage of Facebook. Table 3 shows a similar significant difference in the reasons students join Facebook groups. But, the differences in the use of MySpace were not significant and the absolute differences were rather small.

Table 3 – Usage of Facebook Groups for Campus Related Reasons by Race

	Join Groups for Campus Related Reasons		Total
	No	Yes	
Caucasian	33	36	69
African-American	40	15	55
Total	73	51	124

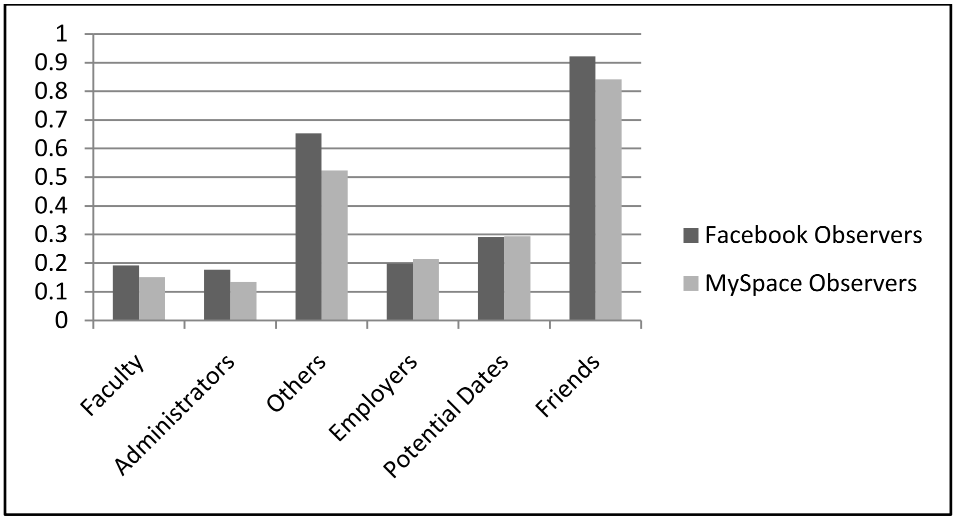
Chi Square statistic p-value = .004

From this perspective, educators wishing to use social networking approaches with their classes should be aware that racial differences might evidence themselves, but our work seems to say that these differences are unlikely to have much real world impact.

Figure 1 demonstrates two points. The first is that while students primarily use these social networks for “staying in contact,” students are willing to use these services for academic purposes. The second important fact for educators trying to use these services is that students are significantly more accustomed to using Facebook for academics than MySpace. This difference between Facebook and MySpace is further underscored in the different response rates to reasons for joining groups shown in Figure 2.

Finally, Figure 3 shows that students generally do not consider academics (or employers) to be important consumers of their pages.

Figure 3 – Students' Perceptions of Who Looks at Pages



This attitude will need to be changed by educators in order to get a mindshare of students using these social networking sites.

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Sorry Seems to be the Hardest Word: Legal Ramifications of the Corporate Apology

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Abstract

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 calls for, among other things, increased transparency and a re-orientation of corporate behavior toward the public. Since then, shareholders and disgruntled consumers alike have found their voices and escalated their complaints. In response, corporations have increased the frequency of issuing public apologies and admissions of responsibility. But does this trend result in more or less litigation? And what are the implications of this trend for business communication courses? Our paper explores the risks and advantages of apologies, reviews the legal literature, and identifies implications for consultants and educators who teach crisis communication.

Introduction

On January 1, 2009, a family of six adults and three children ages 7, 4, and 2 boarded an AirTran flight at Reagan National Airport. They were headed for a religious retreat in Florida. All but one are U.S.-born citizens, but because they are practicing Muslims, the men wore beards and the women wore head scarves. Three are of Pakistani descent, two are of Turkish descent, and one is African-American.

As they walked to their seats at the rear of the airplane, one woman in the group wondered aloud to her sister-in-law about the safest place to sit. Two passengers overhearing the remark became alarmed and complained to a flight attendant, who alerted two federal air marshals on board, who reported it to airport police. Federal officials forced the family off the plane. Then all remaining passengers were deplaned and re-screened, as was their luggage. The plane finally took off for Orlando – two hours late and without the nine family members. The FBI subsequently cleared them of suspicion, but AirTran refused to rebook them, and the family had to buy tickets to their destination on another carrier.

Two days later AirTran Airways issued a public apology, provided free return airfare to the nine passengers, and agreed to refund the travelers the cost of their tickets to Orlando. The company statement includes the following:

We regret that the issue escalated to the heightened security level it did....We apologize to all of the passengers – to the nine who had to undergo extensive interviews from the authorities and to the 95 who ultimately made the flight. Nobody on Flight 175 reached their destination on time on New Year's Day, and we regret it. (Gardner, 2009, p. A4)

What makes this story remarkable is not the racial profiling or the heightened travel security, but the corporate apology. One of the detained family members said he was glad for the apology. "They are being very conciliatory," he told the press. A more typical corporate response to an incident is Wal-Mart's official statement issued after eager customers trampled an employee to death the day after Thanksgiving. Hank Mullany, Senior Vice President and President of the U.S. Northeast Division said:

We expected a large crowd this morning and added additional internal security, additional third party security, additional store associates and we worked closely with the Nassau County Police. We also erected barricades. Despite all of our precautions, this unfortunate event occurred....Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family of the deceased. We are continuing to work closely with local law enforcement and we are reaching out to those involved." (http://walmartstores.com)

Note the lack of apology in Mullany's statement. Apparently Wal-Mart's public relations department hasn't learned what the airline industry has learned. Predictably, the family of the deceased Wal-Mart employee filed a wrongful death suit ten days after the tragedy.

Last summer the airline industry became a major target of unhappy customers. Continental Airlines and Southwest Airlines, among others, responded in an unprecedented manner by issuing public apologies for delayed flights and other passenger inconveniences. Further, they even emailed apologies to passengers. Southwest mailed more than 26,000 individual letters of apology last year, most of them with vouchers for free or discounted flights. Colleen Barrett, president, said, "We've never been afraid to say we're sorry" (Steffy, 2007).

Southwest Airlines' policy stands out because it is unexpectedly personal, simple, and sincere. Why is this change taking place? Because it resonates with customers. Then why don't all corporations issue apologies when incidents occur? Because of the risk of lawsuits. Smith (2005) points out that the public doesn't forgive corporations, but they do care about people. "It's people they are eager to forgive" (p. 12). By personalizing the relationship with public jurors, Southwest hopes to improve the odds of forgiveness. This paper explores the controversy and legal ramifications of corporate apologies during crisis communication and describes implications for educators teaching how to compose negative messages.

The Risks of Apologizing

The key issue that parties must confront is the tension that exists between doing what is morally "right" and what is legally "right." In the past, the legal system has provided a poor setting for the apology. The law penalizes the party who makes an admission against self-interest. An apology—even a carefully phrased apology—carries with it an acknowledgement of guilt, of fault, and thus may generally be used as an admission of liability. Under the laws of most states, a defendant who apologizes completely and fully, shortly after the injury, faces the risk of increased legal liability.

In determining whether to apologize, a corporate defendant faces additional pressures. The nature of corporate identity means that a corporation has a large number of stakeholders: officers, directors, employees, shareholders, customers, even the community in which the corporation does business. Each of these stakeholders may be adversely affected by a corporation that seeks to acknowledge fault and redress injury. It is little wonder then that a corporate defendant would be reluctant to engage in any behavior that may increase its exposure to liability.

Patel and Reinsch (2003) reviewed the literature addressing the legal risks of corporate apologies. In a comprehensive discussion, they identified three sorts of complexities that need acknowledgment: the complexities of a federal system of government, the complex goals of the

U.S. legal system, and the complex task of defining an "apology." Patel and Reinsch concluded that these issues lead corporate attorneys to routinely recommend against apologies.

The Advantages of Apologizing

Nevertheless, a rational case may be made that a corporate defendant that apologizes early, without reservation, may in fact lower its liability exposure. The lawyer who counsels his client to make an apology may better serve his client's interests than the lawyer who advocates silence.

Although there is much that remains to be done, the legal system has taken its first steps in recognizing the efficacy of the apology. For some time, scholars have advocated the use of the apology in the legal context. Wagatsuma and Rossett (1986) contrasted the role of apology in dispute resolution in Japan and the United States. These scholars believe that the use of the apology in the American legal system would minimize litigation and would reduce the impact on the court system by reducing the number of suits filed. According to Wagatsuma and Rossett, certain injuries, especially those aimed at character, are particularly amenable to resolution with an apology. Character injuries such as defamation, insult, degradation, loss of status, and emotional distress, "can only be repaired by an apology" (1986, p. 487).

The apology has also proven its place in the field known as the "restorative justice" movement. Restorative justice includes three fundamental components:

- Crime is viewed primarily as a conflict between individuals that results in injuries to victims, communities, and the offenders themselves, and only secondarily as a violation against the state.
- The aim of the criminal justice process should be to create peace in communities by reconciling the parties and repairing the injuries caused by the dispute.
- The criminal justice process should facilitate active participation by victims, offenders, and their communities in order to find solutions to the conflict (Galaway & Hudson, 1996, 2).

Restorative justice requires the presence of the apology in the resolution of offender-victim disputes. The process of including both wrongdoer and victim presupposes the use of an apology.

The medical profession has recently begun to recognize the advantages of apologies. Physicians, for instance, now at least consider apologizing to a patient for a medical mistake. New laws have made it significantly easier for medical professionals to apologize to their patients without increasing their liability for malpractice accusations. In 2003, Colorado enacted a law stating that an apology extended by a health care provider would, in any civil action, "be inadmissible as evidence of an admission of liability " (Kellerman, 2006, p. 74). Several other states have ruled that expressions of sympathy are inadmissible in court, though not full apologies. In a recent study of malpractice cases in England, 37 percent of patients said they would not have sued in the first place if an explanation and an apology had been offered (Kellerman, 2006). Thus, contrary to conventional wisdom, apologies may actually be helpful in preventing rather than encouraging lawsuits.

Types of Apologies

Research indicates that there are essentially three types of corporate apology. The partial apology is an expression of sympathy or remorse. An example is, "We acknowledge that you have been injured, and we are saddened that you have been hurt." In a partial apology, there is no actual acknowledgment of fault on the part of the speaker.

Even a partial apology, however, carries benefits along with it. The best example is the story that led to the Massachusetts statute that permits the expression of sympathy. A Massachusetts legislator lost his daughter in an auto accident. The driver of the other vehicle did not apologize and instead maintained silence throughout the litigation that followed. The legislator later learned that in fact the driver wanted desperately to apologize and express his sympathy to the victim's family, but was concerned about the effect the apology would have in court. The father subsequently drafted legislation that would shield such expressions of sympathy. Clearly, even a partial apology would have aided the driver's cause as well as the father's healing.

In recent years, the law has made provisions for the apology in a "safe context." Unfortunately, the law will generally protect only "partial apologies," expressions of remorse or sympathy that do not in fact acknowledge any degree of fault or liability. Legislation has made provisions in two areas: the rules of evidence and the alternate dispute resolution system.

One can see the growing acknowledgment of the value of the partial apology by examining legislation permitting the use of the partial apology in a lawsuit. In recent years, a number of states have enacted evidence codes permitting the use of expressions of remorse or sympathy in the course of a suit. See, for example, Massachusetts ALM GL ch. 233, §23D (1986), Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code 18.061(1999), and California Evidence Code 1160 (2000). These changes in evidentiary law are designed to facilitate apologies and ease the reluctance to express sympathy for fear of the language being used against the defendant.

Nevertheless, these amended evidentiary laws protect only those apologies that express remorse, the "partial apology," and not full admissions of fault. Currently, the Federal Rules of Evidence and most state codes of evidence treat an apology that admits fault as an admission of guilt.

The second type of apology is the complete apology. The complete apology not only expresses sympathy, but it accepts responsibility for having caused the injury. Although little hard data exists, a review of the literature certainly indicates that many would doubt the usefulness of the complete apology. "The admission of responsibility for the transgression is a necessary gesture of an apology because it conveys to the listener that the speaker is aware of the social norms that have been violated ... , and therefore conveys that the speaker will be able to avoid the offense in future interactions" (Scher & Darley, 1997, p. 130).

In their study, Scher and Darley identified several potential components of an apology: an admission of responsibility, an expression of remorse, a promise of forbearance, and an offer of repair (1997). They found that each of these components independently contributed to the effectiveness of the apology. Nevertheless, "the greatest improvement in perceptions came from the addition of one apology strategy - i.e., the offering of an apology, compared to no apology" (1997, p. 137). Presumably, in the legal context, even a partial apology offered in a "legally protected setting" would prove more effective than no apology at all.

The third type of apology is the compelled apology. This apology is issued in response to a court order. Recent scholarship indicates that even an apology issued unwillingly could promote resolution. White (2006) argues that civil rights plaintiffs pursuing cases against governmental defendants should be entitled to receive court-ordered apologies as an equitable remedy. He notes that traditional forms of compensation fail to provide adequate relief to civil rights victims. In these circumstances, simple compensation fails to treat the psychic injuries of the victims. White advocates the use of compelled apologies "as an effective means of healing psychological wounds, reinforcing norms, restoring social equilibrium, promoting social change, and compelling governmental reform" (p. 1279).

Apologies in Mediation Contexts

Today, most civil disputes are forced into an alternate dispute resolution procedure before the case can be brought to trial. Generally, most parties will attempt to resolve their dispute in a nonbinding mediation procedure, before an impartial mediator. State laws regulating mediation usually provide for complete confidentiality for all statements made during mediation. These confidential mediation settings often provide a forum for a wrongdoer to make his apologies directly to the victim.

Research has shown that an apology, even a partial apology, may help in dispute resolution. Mehrabian (1967) studied instances in which a person who violated the rights of another (e.g., by usurping one's right-of-way at an intersection) subsequently either apologized or gave a substitute for an apology. The apology substitute was a "cognitive restructuring of the offensive experience" in a way that "minimizes the admission-of-guilt ... and emphasizes the target's voluntary participation in the offensive interaction (e.g., "Thank you for waiting for me," versus, "I am sorry I was late.") (1967, p. 687). According to Mehrabian, even the apology substitute proved effective in mitigating the victim's injury, and was equally effective as the actual apology when the offensive act was "relatively ambiguous."

An apology in the alternate dispute resolution context carries with it disadvantages as well. First, the legal concern: even though statements made during mediation may not be used against the defendant at trial, there is no rule to prevent further investigation of a statement that was made.

Secondly, the apology in the course of mediation is a partial apology. As such, the apology is by its very nature incomplete, which may prove less than satisfying for the recipient.

Finally, mediations generally take place late in the litigation process. The injury has occurred long before, all parties have expended large sums of money, and the apology may have lost its power. Cohen (1999) notes the problems associated with a late apology. While recognizing that a later apology may be a safer apology, Cohen recognizes the hazards of a late apology: "the longer one waits following a call [for an apology], the more difficult it is to apologize, the more carefully one's words must be chosen, and the less the apology is worth" (1999, p. 1049).

Exceptions

In light of the difficulties inherent in making an apology in a legally protected setting, some have suggested a statutory exception for a complete apology. This proposed exception would exempt apologies from use in civil proceedings. Under one proposed "apology exception" to the Federal Rules of Evidence, the rules would be changed to make apologies inadmissible in civil cases "as evidence of negligence or wrongdoing, even for impeachment purposes" (Orenstein, 1999). Under Orenstein's proposal, "any statement of self-blame and contrition would be inadmissible" (1999, p. 248). Such an exception would allow persons to apologize in a manner that admits guilt, (for example, "I'm sorry I hit your car") and would prohibit such statements from being used against them as admissions of guilt.

Conclusion

Recent trends are clear. Apologies, once a forbidden subject in the law, now form part of a corporate defendant's litigation strategy. Several states have taken the lead in attempting to protect the apology-maker from liability based solely on their willingness to express sympathy and remorse. Proposals exist that would further extend liability protection for corporate statements of apology and regret. Such steps almost guarantee that the corporate apology will see increasing use.

Further, recognition of the effectiveness of the apology can be found in the increased use of the apology by corporate defendants. Recently, corporations appear reluctant to take what has always been the default choice of stony denial and presumed legal protection. Instead, corporate defendants appear increasingly willing to express sympathy for the victim, to acknowledge remorse and even wrongdoing.

The corporate apology is not meant merely to promote healing of injured victims. Instead, the act of apologizing has direct, tangible benefits. The apology is an effective means to curtail lawsuits and to promote settlement. Together, such acts limit liability exposure. An apology can be a pragmatic solution, one that benefits all parties.

The implications for business communication professionals are clear – we need to help our students and corporate clients understand the complex issues and possible consequences (both positive and negative) of including apologies in crisis communication. And we need to show them how to compose negative messages that include appropriate acknowledgments of wrongdoing and expressions of remorse.

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Implications of Using Incivility In Workplace Communications

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Abstract

Literature about incivility in workplace communication between and among employees and managers and its influence on their interaction and organizational performance is abundant, yet few, if any, organizational rules or policies exist to decrease the incivility in communication phenomenon occurring in today's workplaces. It is imperative to reflect on how workplace communication is changing and its impact.

Introduction

It is perhaps more common in the workplace today to hear managers yelling , shouting, or even cursing at employees due to the many pressures upon them to meet organizational goals at any cost. However, the workplace environment plays a paramount role in organizational performance. Naturally, it will ultimately affect the bottom line of the organization through its constituencies. Hartman and Wang (2004) state, "A properly designed work environment supports positive communication and therefore relationships among a company's constituencies and contributes to a satisfied work force and customers" (p. 310). The study sought to arouse people's attention to the impact of the work environment on a company's healthy development by proving that the work environment is an essential organizational intangible asset.

Literature Review

Workplace Violence

The past 20 years have been plagued with an onslaught of workplace violence incidents between managers and employees. Definitions of "workplace violence" vary, but the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH, 2003) sets for one of the more commonly used definitions of "workplace violence:"

> Any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting. It includes, but is not limited to, beatings, stabbings, suicides, shootings, rapes, near suicides, psychological traumas such as threats, obscene phone calls, an intimidating presence, and harassment of any nature such as being followed, sworn at, or shouted at or overt incivility toward others, of a severe and pervasive nature.

The Workplace Violence Research Institute estimated that over 17,000 employees are subjected to verbal threats, and some 44,000 are harassed in various unwelcome ways. On a yearly basis, that equates to almost six million verbal threats and well over 11 million incidents of harassment. Given the high magnitude of such numbers, and the high probability that most were delivered verbally, it is most likely that the vast majority of these occurrences are between co-workers in the workplace, according to Matchulat (2007). It is ironic that companies have zero-tolerance for sexual harassment, yet other types of anti-social behavior go largely unchecked even though they can be equally harmful. Zeisel (1981) states that the workplace can be defined as "physical, administrative, and social attributes of settings" in which people work.

In today's dire economic times with more and more layoffs occurring daily, which are the number one reason for workplace violence to erupt, few employers have firm policies in place for effective communication practices of delivering bad-news messages and for dealing with angry or disgruntled workers. It has been suggested that these incidents have been the direct result of ineffective or poor communication between management and subordinates.

Undoubtedly, many managers do not even know that their communication style, whether it is yelling, shouting, or cursing at employees is a form of workplace violence and could be precursors to violence. One of the biggest problems in workplace communication is to assume that "it" has taken place.

Civility

Civility can be defined as the absence of rudeness in our interactions with others; thus, it covers both verbal and non-verbal communication—the use of words and gestures aimed at others or used in the presence of others. Such a workplace culture makes for better relationships among co-workers. Forni (2002) says that civility is a form of goodness.

Fyfe, Banninster, and Kearns (2006) state that to be civil is to have regard for the effects of our actions on others and to care for the space(s) we share with others, whether or not we are present in those spaces at the same time as others. They quote Boyd who points to the need to grasp civility as "an active and affirmative moral relationship between persons" (p. 875).

Terry Bacon, an expert in talent management and author of "What People Want: A Manager's Guide to Building Relationships That Work," conducted a nationwide survey of 500 employees to learn what matters most in their relationship with a manager. The October 2006 news release for the book says, "Ninety percent of workers rank honesty, fairness, and trust as their top three needs." (LoreNet.com/About-Press.asp)

OSHA is a federal law that requires employers to provide a safe working environment for workers. Civil communication is reflective of a safe working environment, free of uncivil communication that is toxic and a precursor to workplace violence. Troester (2007) reported on the need for civility in business and professional communication. The Baltimore Workplace Civility Study states from a study it conducted that uncivil behavior was defined as "actions or verbal exchanges you would consider rude, disrespectful, dismissive, threatening, demeaning, or inappropriate" (January 2003).

Encouraging civility in the workplace is becoming one of the fundamental corporate goals in our diverse, hurried, stressed, and litigation-prone society. A civil workplace is good for workers, since the workers' quality of life is improved in such an environment. But a civil workplace is also good for the customers, since the quality of the service they receive from happier and more relaxed service providers is improved (Forni, 2002).

Naturally, both employees and supervisors have responsibilities to maintain a professional relationship. Andersson (1999) defines workplace civility as those behaviors that preserve the norms for mutual respect in the workplace and that reflect concern for others. Conversely, workplace incivility can be characterized by behaviors that are rude and discourteous, that display a lack of regard for others.

Incivility

What is incivility? Essentially, it is any disrespectful behavior: a boss chewing out a subordinate in front of colleagues, an assistant refusing to lend a hand in a crisis, or an employee spreading rumors about a co-worker. Though it is sometimes visible and isolated, it is often covert, retaliatory, and repetitive, which makes it all the more harmful and difficult to manage (Morse, 2005). Additionally, Vickers (2006) states that incivility tends to connote breaches of etiquette, professional misconduct, moral decay, and it is not a welcome additive to the workplace.

Kerfoot cites Frost (2007) who defines "toxic employees" as those who are rude, temperamental, abusive, spread gossip, create factions, distort communications to their ends, and sabotage work processes, colleagues, and managers. Eventually, organizational performance suffers. According to her, there are those preceptors who talk down to new hires, who question their training and preparation for the job as well as their university's credentials. While this behavior does not fall in the realm of bullying, it is equally dehumanizing and difficult for new hires to grasp. Morse (2005) states that incivility, whatever its form, is more prevalent and destructive than most managers think. It corrodes people's productivity, performance, motivation, creativity, and helpfulness.

Incivility in the workplace is also the display of disrespectful or inconsiderate behavior such as interrupting someone who is speaking, shouting, using profanity, and even physical aggression. Unfortunately, these are just a few of the behaviors common in today's workplace. Naturally, rudeness and disrespect in the workplace can compromise communication, teamwork, and overall employee morale. The basic foundation of all behavior is communication. Unfortunately, many individuals, managers in particular, do not realize how their words and actions are perceived by subordinates.

Other research (Johnson & Indvik, 1996) suggests that factors such as stress, small working areas (cubicles), new technology, trickling down effect of negative information perpetrated upon managers then being thrust upon subordinates, corporations using fewer employees and requiring them to do more work with less time and resources or extra pay, and single parent households create increased stress at home.

The methods that today's millennials, employees, and businesses use to communicate have changed over the past decade with the use of e-mailing, texting, and faxing. With the development of electronic communication, a sense of anonymity was brought to the workplace. The short terse messages have replaced carefully thought-out and worded memos and speed of communication is emphasized rather than the content and delivery of information (Pope, 2008). Mobile phones, pagers, texting, and e-mail make it easier to send a nasty or rude remark without facing the recipient. It is this lack of personal communication in today's workplace that sometimes affords more opportunities for misinterpretation of information and potential incivility.

Business Communication Psychology

Business communication psychology has shown that it is more effective to help the receiver understand the reasoning for unpleasant messages before delivering the bad news. Use of a buffer to maintain the goodwill of others is the preferred approach (Lesikar, Flatley, & Rentz, 2008). Arguably, it has been suggested that management does not need to sugar-coat messages; when decisions are made, subordinates must accept them. However, it is the communication delivery of the message that is key to stemming the tide of workplace violence and professional misconduct.

Consider the following scenarios which I have witnessed:

Scenario 1:

You are on a conference call with about eight other co-workers. You hear a supervisor on the other end yelling and cursing at one of the co-workers because his team did not meet the number of enrollments wanted. What would you do or say?

Scenario 2:

You are in a meeting with other administrators and with a consultant for the Company; the accreditation review report received was negative for your area. You have been with the Company for only a year now, and the consultant proceeds with a scathing attack on you about the problems uncovered which occurred before you arrived. No one in this meeting says anything in your defense. What do you do?

Scenario 3:

You are the President of your College. You, along with several of your senior administrators, are on a conference call with the corporate office in Chicago. One of the Chicago Vice Presidents starts to verbally attack one of your senior administrators. As President, you state that you do not want the Chicago administrator to talk to your senior administrator that way. The Chicago administrator tells you (the President) that he will talk to your senior administrator any way he likes. What do you say or do?

In Scenario 1, the employee just accepted the uncivil behavior as usual. In Scenario 2, the senior administrator left the company within two days of the event, and in Scenario 3, the President let the verbal attack continue on his senior administrator.

All three of these scenarios contain instances of workplace violence. The problem is that these companies' senior officials do not know what constitutes workplace violence. In each scenario episode, the employee could have brought a suit against the company for workplace violence due to the intimidating workplace environment and uncivil communication practices.

Management's Role

While these scenarios show intentional workplace violence, many organizations have not taken the time to train management on what constitutes workplace violence or have any type of civil communication training in place. To be civil to others should not depend on whether we know the persons or on whether we like them. Pearson and Porath (2005) state that executives should use peer feedback and other methods to gauge their own civility; they must teach civility and crush incivility when it occurs.

Snavely and Ankeny (2007) state that training managers and instituting respectful communication practices in performance reviews and terminations can keep such situations from spiraling out of control. While workplace incivility occurs more often that realized, this is due to increased pressure upon managers for higher organizational performance that is then internalized and thrust upon employees, thus putting profits before human respect. This pressure can result in speaking unkind remarks to subordinates. Naturally, uncivil remarks can be easily made by managers as well as subordinates. But the manager is the role model for subordinates who can readily decipher the intent of a message.

Implications of Using Incivility in Workplace Communication

It is my contention that incivility in workplace communication is professional misconduct that creates:

1. An atmosphere of disrespect for employees
    - Employees will begin to feel unvalued
2. Low employee morale and energy
    - Employees will exhibit unhappiness and less enthusiasm
3. A social void
    - Victims will fear/shun future interactions with perpetrators
4. A workplace culture that stifles the well-being of its employees
    - Employees will display an uncaring attitude
5. A dehumanized workplace
    - Employees will use uncivil communication
6. Minimum organizational performance
    - Unhappy employees will transfer their feelings onto customers

Sutton (2007) listed 12 characteristics that constitute the Dirty Dozen relative to incivility in workplace communication as presented in Table 1:

Table 1: The Dirty Dozen

Personal Insults	Humiliation
Invading Personal Territory	Public Shaming
Uninvited Physical Contact	Rude Interruptions
Threats and Intimidation	Two-faced Attacks
Sarcastic Jokes and Teasing	Dirty Looks
Toxic E-mail	Treating People As If They Are Invisible

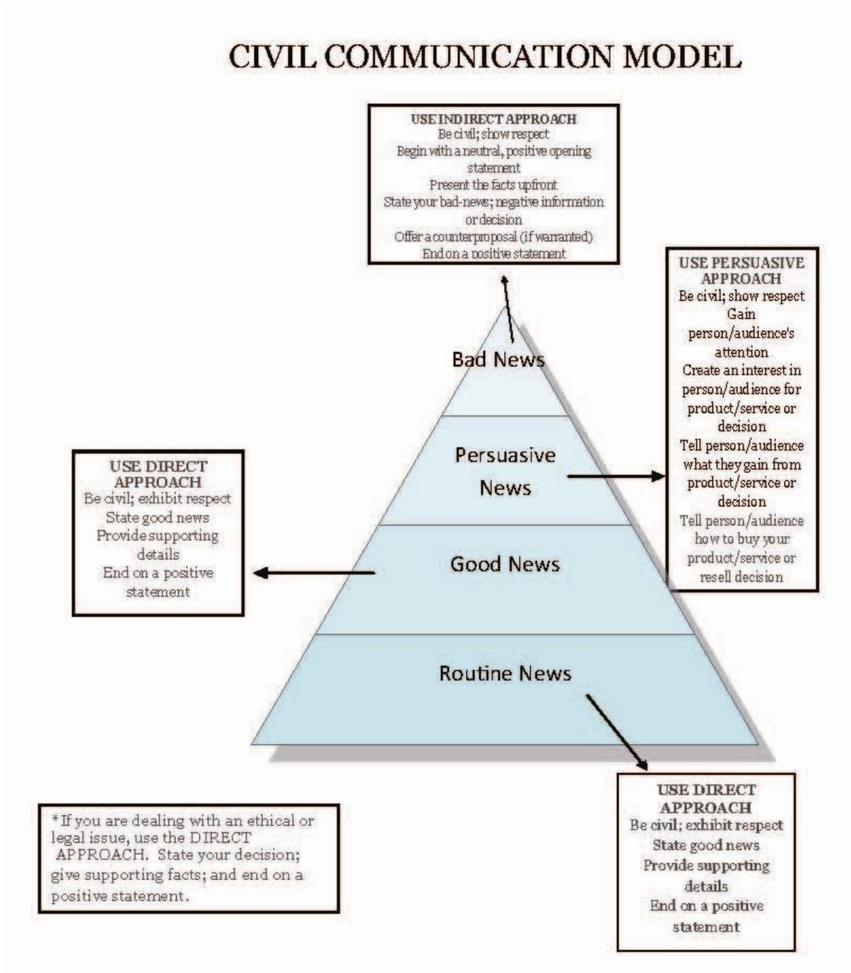
He posits that the damage done to the victim, to the innocent bystander, to the perpetrator, and the cost to the organization in performance and managerial, legal, and human resources is significant and cannot be ignored. Employees who are subjected to these behaviors may become distracted and withdraw to protect themselves from such people.

Managers are faced with numerous opportunities for communicating on a daily basis; some estimates are as high as 90 percent of a work day is spent in communicating. With today's work world that is full of layoffs and a recession, it is highly probable that tempers will flare and escalate problems even more. CNN reported on January 9, 2009, that in December 2008, there were 246,000 jobs lost; and for the year 2008, the total is 2.6 million. With impending job layoffs, predicted job layoffs, and depressing job losses in today's news, stress is ever prevalent in society. Stress is considered a major cause of incivility. Because incivility is often invisible and sometimes retaliatory, it is mainly unchecked in organizations. What makes incivility particularly insidious is that most organizations have no written policies on it.

Alinda Lewris, the volunteer director for the nonprofit International Association of Protocol Consultant in Washington, D.C. states that data from the past 10 years suggests that we think society is getting less civil, that workplace bullying is rising, and that co-workers, for the first time, are the No. 1 cause of work-related stress according to Washington (2008). Forni (2002) notes that civility relates to an ethical code that we must live by and that incivility is the rapid breakdown in these codes of ethical behavior in our culture.

Communication Model

There is a need for civility in all workplace communications; to do otherwise is to invite workplace violence. To that extent, I propose the following Communication Model as shown in Figure 1.



Typical communication tasks are routine, good-news, bad-news, or persuasive. The communicator should consider the effect or reaction of his or her message BEFORE choosing the channel (oral or written) and the communication style in message delivery. The communication style can be direct, indirect, or persuasive. In the Triangle, notice that the bottom sections reflect more routine, good-news, and persuasive messages while the top section shows fewer bad-news messages. Bad-news messages are sometimes required in business, but it is the indirect delivery approach that can enhance workplace communication.

Today's students must be knowledgeable of the need to use civility in all their communication tasks in the workplace and the ramifications of not doing so. Naturally, business educators must stay up to date on workplace communication practices and problems. All employees want to receive civil communication in the workplace; however, uncivil communication is rising as stated by Vickers (2006) in her article about uncivil communication practices in public administration. Luparell (2004) wrote about faculty encounters with uncivil nursing students. How many business educators have had encounters with uncivil business students as well as administrators?

A pleasant work environment that is free of uncivil communication can substantially improve employee satisfaction and performance, thereby improving customer satisfaction. It is common knowledge that there is a definite, proven connection between employee happiness and customer happiness. When people feel valued, they tend to spread the happiness. Schlesinger and Heskett (1991) argue that customer satisfaction is rooted in employee satisfaction. Moreover, Eskildsen, Westlund, and Kristensen (2003) found that employee and customer satisfaction are good predictors of financial performance. Thus, this satisfaction reflects a need for civil communication practices in the workplace.

Lately, corporations have been quick to admit mistakes and to apologize, but using an indirect approach and positive tone in workplace communication is needed to promote civility in the workplace and a happy, productive work environment.

As business educators, we must include curriculum that prepares prospective employees, future managers, and leaders about behaviors that constitute incivility in workplace communication and to exhibit a professional image in all their communication tasks.

Summary

The use of uncivil communication in the workplace is rising and has a negative impact on the work environment and on organizational performance. An unpleasant work environment will result in unhappy employees, poor working relationships, and negate optimum customer service. It is the manager's responsibility to use civil communication at all times regardless of the situation. Human resources are the paramount resources a company possesses. Employees who feel valued and respected bring added value to the company. Communicating with them in a positive manner at all times will ensure a pleasant work environment, thereby resulting in their feeling valued by the organization.

Therefore, it is important to cultivate a climate of civility within the workplace; a failure to do so can have a negative impact on the organization, both in terms of employee morale and employee productivity. Future and present managers and leaders are obligated to ensure that people have a healthy environment in which they can be nurtured and grow. Civility in workplace communication is not just a nice concept to employ in the workplace; it is a necessity for maximum organizational performance and positive employee morale and performance.

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The Case Of Wind River Farms: Using The Direct Approach In Bad News Messages

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ABSTRACT

We developed this case to use with Lesikar, Flatley, and Rentz's Business Communication: Making Connections in a Digital World (11th edition) after coverage of negative and persuasive messages. This case concerns the development of an escalating communications strategy for a scenario where expectations have diverged between a Consignor and Consignee concerning prior verbal and written agreements. Although most strategies for bad news messages advocate using the indirect order in these types of messages, the writing strategy for this scenario uses the direct approach in a series of negative messages. In addition, this case lends itself well to strategic considerations involved in higher-level communications strategies (handling or making requests) and draws on techniques from Blakeman, Keeling, Pierce, and Carkuff's Interpersonal Skills for Correctional Management (1977).

Introduction

The following case was created based on an actual situation. We use it in a 300-level business communications course to illustrate the necessity at times of deviating from the standard practice of using the indirect order in bad news messages. In this case, the first letter (mild request) in the escalating series would be written in standard indirect order. The following letters (moderate and strong requests) would be written in direct order--to avoid the legal consequences of not stating the request (the bad news) directly and clearly at the outset of the message, and to document the communication (or lack of communication) chain of events. This case appeals to our student population because many of them can identify with its connection to farming and agriculture. The students, acting as the Consignor, usually write a series of three letters (mild, moderate, and strong requests).

Case Synopsis

Wind River's owner, Alan Shaw, a miniature horse breeder, initiated Wind River Farms' First Annual Consignment Sale as a way to help small farms market their registered horses in East Texas. Marilyn McKenzie thought the consignment sale would make an ideal venue for the sale of five of her horses. Despite the ideal weather on the day of the sale, the event was poorly attended, and Marilyn sold only two of the five horses that day. When Marilyn did not receive payment for her livestock within the ten-day period following the sale, she repeatedly attempted to contact Shaw by phone, and left messages asking him to contact her regarding payment for the two horses she had sold at the sale. When Shaw finally answered her call, he expressed surprise that she had not yet received his check and assured her that he would get another one in the mail to her the very next day. Shaw's next check was refused for payment due to insufficient funds, and Marilyn's account was debited $25.00 by her bank because funds were not collected. Again, after several unsuccessful attempts to contact Alan, Marilyn documented her complaint in a letter sent via certified mail, with return receipt requested. Although the return receipt indicated that Shaw had received the letter, Marilyn still received no reply. At this point, Marilyn feels further compelled to document Shaw's evasive conduct with respect to paying her, to hold him to the terms of their initial agreement, and to document the deterioration of their business relationship for possible legal action.

Introduction

Wind River's owner, Alan Shaw, a miniature horse breeder, initiated Wind River Farms' First Annual Consignment Sale as a way to help small farms market their registered horses in East Texas. Shaw required a non-refundable consignment fee of $250.00 per horse and promised construction of a marketing website and a sales catalog to be distributed prior to the sale. Shaw also specified a commission fee of 10%, along with an additional $400.00 fee for shavings. The shavings would be delivered to the Pinehurst Equestrian Center the day before the sale on Saturday, April 30, 2005. Marilyn McKenzie thought the consignment sale would make an ideal venue for the sale of five of her horses, and she agreed to Shaw's terms and conditions. She sent her completed entry form, fees, and promotional photos of her horses to Shaw by the specified February 5 deadline.

Shaw assured Marilyn that the event would be well-promoted in the industry and within the state. He was presently working with a website designer and graphic artist who was coordinating the production of the marketing materials for the sale. They hoped to have the website completed and the sales catalogs distributed by mid-March at the latest. Shaw would also secure the facility, hire an auctioneer, and handle all marketing efforts and sales transactions. Consignors would provide registration and transfer papers to Wind River Farms; after the buyer's checks had cleared, registration papers would be sent to the new owners, and the proceeds would be sent to the Consigners. Marilyn was optimistic that, with comprehensive advertising efforts to members of various horse associations, the sale would attract not only other horse breeders but other persons interested in owning quality miniature horses for show and as pets.

When Marilyn arrived at Pinemont on the Friday evening prior to the sale, she unloaded her horses and bedded them down for the night. She arrived at the Equestrian Center at 7:00 a.m. the next morning to care for her horses and field questions from buyers. The sales preview began officially at 9:30 a.m., but Marilyn began to be somewhat concerned at the obvious lack of buyers in the barn at that time. Shaw confided to Marilyn that he had encountered some delays in the production of the marketing materials. They were distributed almost a month behind schedule—just two weeks prior to the sale. Shaw quickly excused himself to complete last-minute arrangements for the auction, which was scheduled to begin at 11:00 a.m. Marilyn sold two of her five horses that day, and P.O.'d the sale of the other three horses since the reserve price was not met.

When Marilyn did not receive payment for her livestock within the ten-day period following the sale, she attempted to contact Alan by telephone and left a message asking him to contact her regarding payment for the two horses she had sold at the sale. Her concerns escalated when repeated phone calls to Alan over the next few weeks were not returned. When Shaw finally answered her call, he expressed surprise that she had not yet received his check and assured her that he would get another one in the mail to her the very next day.

Marilyn received the $2,400.00 check on July 15 and immediately deposited it into her farm account. The following day, Shaw's check was refused for payment due to insufficient funds, and Marilyn's account was debited $25.00 by her bank because funds were not collected.

Again, after several unsuccessful attempts to contact Alan that day, Marilyn documented her request in the form of a mildly worded letter sent certified mail, with return receipt requested. Although the return receipt indicated that Alan had received the letter, Marilyn still received no reply from Shaw. Marilyn then sent another, more moderately worded letter which reiterated her initial request for payment and detailed reasons, again sent certified, return receipt requested. When she again received no response, Marilyn's strongly worded letter documented Alan's evasive conduct with respect to paying her, held Alan to the terms of their initial agreement, and documented the deterioration of their business relationship for possible legal action.

Teaching Commentary

This case enhances student understanding of effective writing strategies in composing a complex message that is thorough and tactful, concrete and behavioral, yet clear and concise. Ideally, it must also maintain goodwill between the parties involved, especially in circumstances where it is feasible to resolve a conflict without getting into litigation. Students are further instructed that how a request is made, rather than the nature of the request, often determines the success or failure of the response.

Before beginning the first letter of the series, students are asked to consider the relationship between Alan Shaw (the Consignee) and Marilyn McKenzie (the Consignor) in this case. Their "relatedness" is primarily governed by the terms of the oral and written terms agreed upon prior to the Wind River Farms Consignment Sale. Students review those terms before writing their initial indirect claims letter in which the traditional buffer paragraph would ideally mention the terms of payment initially agreed upon by both parties.

Assuming the role of Consignor, students are then encouraged to begin this series of letters with a mild (indirect) request for reasonable action. At this stage, it is generally preferable if direct confrontations are avoided. Mild requests are often quite effective in getting a desired result and allow the Consignor room to move to a stronger negotiating position later, if necessary.

After receiving no response from the Consignee, however, the Consignor now moves to a direct request for action. Although the second letter still communicates the Consignor's request for payment, it must also document the Consignee's non-response and perhaps also the consequences the Consignor faces due to the lack of timely payment. The students are encouraged to depart from the typical indirect approach of bad news letters and begin directly with the bad news—the request for payment. The request should be specific and should detail what the Consignor wants the Consignee to do and when. In addition, the students must pay particular attention to strengthening word choice and constructing shorter sentences, both of which add emphasis to the overall message.

After again receiving no response from the Consignee, the Consignor can now move to an even stronger request for action. The third and final letter must communicate the Consignor's request for payment. It must also document the Consignee's lack of response and also perhaps the consequences the Consignor faces due to lack of timely payment. Additionally, the Consignor can now detail to the Consignee the consequences of his not responding to this final request. In this letter, the students begin directly with the bad news—the request for payment. Again, the request should be specific and should detail what the Consignor wants the Consignee to do and when. In addition, documentation of the Consignee's inactions must be documented using concrete and specific language and dates. Selective word choice and shorter sentences add emphasis and urgency to this final appeal.

Hurricanes Gustav and Ike: One University's Communication Lessons Learned and Applied after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

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Abstract

This paper discusses how one university has reacted to the communication challenges faced by Louisiana colleges after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita made landfall in 2005. Learning from the challenges faced by several New Orleans colleges and universities, as well as McNeese State University in southwestern Louisiana, Nicholls State University has put various communication policies, processes, and procedures in place. Specifically, Nicholls has updated their hurricane preparedness plan, established an electronic delivery system to keep education going following an extreme emergency, provided training for faculty and staff, implemented a First Call Interactive Network, and ensured that multiple communication channels are available during a crisis. The system was tested in the fall of 2008 with Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. Nicholls continues to modify its communication system in order to be better prepared for the next emergency situation.

Introduction

Just three years and three days after Hurricane Katrina came ashore and ravaged the Mississippi and southeast Louisiana coasts and flooded much of the New Orleans area, Hurricane Gustav roared ashore in southeast Louisiana, causing billions of dollars in damage (www.insure.com) and taking out electricity to at least a portion of residents in all but two of the 64 parishes in the state of Louisiana (www.emergency.louisiana.gov). In as many as 20 parishes, mostly in the southeastern portion of the state, over 76% of the metered accounts lost power for time ranging from one or two days to three weeks or more. Just eleven days following Gustav's landfall, coastal parishes of southeastern Louisiana experienced record flooding from Hurricane Ike's movement through the Gulf of Mexico and Texas landfall. In nearby Terrebonne parish, at least 10,000 homes were flooded, a level of flooding that exceeded earlier flooding records of Hurricane Rita in 2005 (www.houmatoday.com/article/20080913).

Many will recall watching news clips after Hurricane Katrina's landfall--the wind-ravaged areas, flooded areas, rescues of citizens, and press conferences of local, state, and national officials. The lack of communication capabilities within individual parishes and among parishes, as well as communication problems among state and federal governmental agencies also made headlines. Katrina recovery continues as an occasional story in national evening news programs. However, although weeks of continuous coverage were given to Katrina recovery, those outside the region may not have learned what transpired at the various colleges and universities in the New Orleans area following Katrina.

Although the university that employs the authors of this paper, Nicholls State University, did not experience major damage from Katrina, the university took in hundreds of students who wanted to continue their education in the fall of 2005 but who could no longer do so at a New Orleans school at which they were previously registered. Even today, three years after Katrina, enrollments at schools such as the University of New Orleans, Loyola, and Tulane have not returned to pre-Katrina levels; for example, The University of New Orleans had 35% less students in fall 2007 compared to fall 2004 (Alcantara, 2008). Alcantara noted Tulane University actually closed its doors in fall 2005 because of Katrina and reopened for a late start semester in the spring of 2006. Following Hurricane Katrina, the ultimate impact on colleges and universities in the New Orleans area even went beyond cancelled semesters; some faculty lost their jobs because of program cuts and/or closures (http://chronicle.com, 2006).

As Premeaux and Breaux (2007) note, effective crisis management requires that managers "learn from tragedy when it strikes and try to be better prepared the next time" (p. 39). In an effort to be preemptive so that our university would do everything possible to avoid a lost semester such as Tulane experienced, or experience such a significant enrollment drop that programs would have to be cut and/or faculty dismissed, the university began planning policies, processes, and procedures that would allow continuity of the semester and academic year in future crisis situations. Paying close attention to what had worked and what had not worked at other south Louisiana universities in 2005, Nicholls assessed key weaknesses in its crisis management plans and targeted to become better prepared before the next direct threat of a major hurricane or other crisis. This paper specifically addresses improvements over the past three years that relate to the communications component of crisis management.

Purpose and Methodology

The major focus of this paper takes a detailed look at the various communication policies, processes, and procedures put in place between September 2005 and August 2008 to provide accurate and timely information both preceding and following hurricane landfall and to support continuity of the semester and all programs offered at the University in a crisis situation. Upgrades in technology that impacted communication with key stakeholders will also be addressed. In addition to presenting a discussion of policies, processes, and procedures, the authors will draw observations of successes and the remaining problem areas in regard to communication for continuity in a hurricane crisis. In addition to various secondary sources, the authors conducted interviews with three assistant vice presidents, the computer services director, the Blackboard technician, and university relations personnel.

Specific issues addressed include the following:

- Update of hurricane preparedness plan
- Electronic delivery system to keep education going following extreme emergencies
- Training provided for faculty and staff
- Implementation of First Call Interactive Network
- Emergency preparedness crisis communication through multiple communication channels.

Update of the Hurricane Emergency Plan

Following assessment of what worked well and what needed improving following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the University improved its Hurricane Emergency Plan (Hulbert, 2008b). Mike Davis, Assistant Vice President of Administration (personal interview, January 9, 2009) reports major updates since 2005 included three major areas: (1) proper notification system of complete campus evacuation, (2) establishment of a pre-position team, and (3) development of individual department plans for evacuation and return after a crisis event. Prior to Katrina, the University had NOT had an actual evacuation plan for the entire campus. Because of major shelter problems during the 2005 hurricane season, the governor's office had decreed official shelters can no longer be provided south of Interstate 10. Thus Nicholls could no longer offer a shelter to students, faculty, and staff who could not or chose not to evacuate. With the updated plan, Davis perceives the University is much better prepared for evacuation and protection of students. The modified plan also clearly identifies the communication channels and timelines to be followed in communicating evacuation plans.

Davis further reports that the University's new pre-position team identified in the revised plan was the first group of people to return to campus to assess damage. This pre-position team must be able to communicate with the president (who had been ordered to evacuate to Monroe in north Louisiana by the University of Louisiana System office), university police, and those who traveled with students evacuated to Louisiana Tech University in northern Louisiana. Having observed the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Nicholls administrators knew they could not assume cell phone networks would support their communication needs in the aftermath of a hurricane's direct hit. They clearly remembered when various south Louisiana parish presidents could not communicate with each other or with state and federal offices to report their damages, emergency assistance needs, and so forth. Therefore, the university purchased four satellite phones, including three portables and one base station. While the base station was located at the University Police office, other units went with the President, the head of the pre-position team, and one with the students who were evacuated to Louisiana Tech University. While this upgrade in communication equipment should have increased communication capabilities immediately after the hurricane, Davis reported that the satellite phone system failed, in large part because the satellite phone company kept "losing" satellites. Fortunately, the region did not experience cell phone problems in 2008 to the level of dysfunction in 2005, and those who had non functioning satellite phones were able to communicate through cell phones and text messaging.

Continued Learning Following an Extreme Emergency

Following hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Nicholls administrators decided to investigate the possibility of having faculty conduct their classes via an electronic delivery system in the event of an extreme emergency that would likely result in the University being closed for an extended period of time. Although Nicholls was only closed for one week following Hurricane Katrina, several universities in the New Orleans area were forced to remain closed for the remainder of the fall 2005 semester. Many classes at these universities were converted to an electronic delivery system during the fall 2005 semester in order to serve displaced students and faculty better. In addition, an electronic delivery system of courses continued to be used after fall of 2005 at many New Orleans area colleges and universities. The observations of events at the New Orleans area universities by the Nicholls Administration are what prompted them to begin discussing a complete electronic delivery system.

Laynie Barrilleaux, Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs (personal interview, January 9, 2009), noted that discussions began regarding the implementation of a full electronic delivery system at Nicholls in the fall of 2005, subsequent to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These discussions were originated by the Academic Council, Deans, and the Provost. The Faculty Senate formed a committee, and it was agreed that the Deans' Council would submit a draft of a proposed electronic delivery system for the Faculty Senate to review. Since the University was already using Blackboard for class administration, it made sense that Blackboard should provide the platform for an electronic delivery system. The draft was in committee for approximately one year before being adopted in May of 2007. Effective in the fall of 2007, the University added Title 2.7.1.1.6, Electronic-Learning, to its NSU Policy and Procedure Manual ("Electronic Learning," 2007). The reason for the one-year delay in Faculty Senate was due to some confusion about the interpretation of the policy. Specifically, some faculty members were worried about losing control of their classes to administration. This led to specific wording about procedures in the final version of the policy.

The electronic learning policy mandates that faculty use Blackboard and email for completing education requirements for courses in progress when the emergency begins. Although faculty members are required to use only Blackboard or email to continue their courses, they are allowed the freedom to choose the best way to accomplish this task. In other words, faculty members are encouraged to be creative and continue their courses in whatever way they see fit. In addition, faculty are encouraged to be flexible and show compassion in determining the precise course of action. They are also required to include the guidelines for an electronic delivery system in the event of an extreme emergency in their course syllabi.

Of course faculty members are required to acquire the skills necessary for effective electronic delivery utilization. Dian Leger, Blackboard Technician (personal interview, January 14, 2009) reports that she has continuously offered classes in Blackboard use. In addition, she offers one-on-one instruction to faculty upon request. Unfortunately, faculty attendance at the advertised sessions has been poor. Therefore, Leger discontinued them in fall of 2008 and now just offers one-on-one training.

There may be several reasons for the lack of interest in the Blackboard training sessions. One reason may be that faculty who are proficient in Blackboard are assisting their colleagues in how to use the software. Another reason may be that instructors are learning about Blackboard on their own. Yet another reason may be that some faculty members are simply not motivated to learn how to use Blackboard. It is likely that all three of these reasons have played a role in the poor response to Blackboard courses offered at Nicholls. Leger does state, however, that the only way to ensure that all faculty members become proficient in Blackboard is for the University to mandate that faculty attend training sessions.

It should be noted that the electronic delivery system at Nicholls has yet to be tested. Since the campus was closed for only one week following hurricane Gustav and only seven days of actual class meetings were missed, the majority of faculty did not deem it necessary to utilize the electronic delivery system other than to send email updates to students or post announcements. Although a computer assistance lab was set up for faculty to use on campus one week following hurricane Gustav, only nine faculty utilized this facility (D. Leger, personal interview, January 14, 2009). However, the poor turnout is likely due to the short time period during which the campus was closed.

Ensuring Multiple Communication Channels Are Available During a Crisis

Crisis communication is overseen by the Office of University Relations at Nicholls. Becky Pennington, Assistant Vice President of Development (personal interview, January 9, 2009), noted that covering various communication channels is essential during the hurricane crisis. As posted on the Nicholls emergency website (http://emergency.nicholls.edu/crisis-communication/), the following tools are now used to notify students, faculty, and staff in a crisis situation:

- Website – www.nicholls.edu, http://emergency.nicholls.edu, and Blackboard
- E-mail – campus e-mail addresses

- Telephone – voice mail to campus extensions and to emergency alert hotline
- Text messaging – emergency alert to registered cellular phones of students, faculty, and staff
- Media – broadcast on university television and radio stations and media alert distributed to area print and broadcast representatives
- Call boxes – broadcast message to passersby
- Public address system – broadcast to occupants of university student union and cafeteria
- Siren system – broadcast emergency siren and message to campus and surrounding area.

For the 2008 hurricane crisis, the University Relations office used VOCUS software to send each announcement that was posted to the website to over 700 media outlets locally and across the state of Louisiana (R. Piper, personal communication, January 9, 2009). The Nicholls Police Department composed and sent the text messages related to each of the web postings. Because key personnel had evacuated to different geographic locations with their families, Pennington perceived that the technology that made all the coordination possible was actually the Blackberries that had been provided to essential Nicholls crisis team members and top administrators early in 2008. For example, Piper was able to post to the websites from her evacuation point in Baton Rouge.

A total of 13 emergency messages were posted to www.nicholls.edu and http://emergency.nicholls.edu related to Hurricane Gustav. The first posting was made almost five days before Hurricane Gustav's landfall, while the last emergency message specifically related to Gustav was posted on Monday, September 8, one week after the storm's landfall. By then, Hurricane Ike was also a potential threat to the geographic region, and five emergency messages that followed focused on Hurricane Ike information for students, faculty, and staff. Table one provides an overview of the dates, times, and topics of the messages distributed (University Relations Office, 2008).

Table 1: Emergency Messages – Hurricanes Gustav and Ike Postings

No.	***Date and Time***	**Title of Each Message**
1.	Wednesday, Aug. 27, 2008 at 4:13 p.m.	University initiates Standby Alert
2.	Thursday, Aug. 28, 2008 at 10:53 a.m.	Phase 1 alert issued at Nicholls
3.	Friday, Aug. 29, 2008 at 11:47 a.m.	Phase 2 alert issued at Nicholls; Phase 3 alert to be issued tomorrow at 3 p.m.
4.	Friday, Aug. 29, 2008 at 1:33 p.m.	Evacuation of Nicholls ordered; no shelters will be available
5.	Saturday, Aug. 30, 2008 at 11:48 a.m.	**Nicholls issues Phase 3 alert**
6.	Monday, Sept. 1, 2008 at 11:26 a.m.	Nicholls to remain closed until Monday, Sept. 8th 2008
7.	Wednesday, Sept. 3, 2008 at 10:23 a.m.	Attention all essential campus personnel
8.	Thursday, Sept. 4, 2008 at 12:57 p.m.	Nicholls remains closed, campus repairs underway
9.	Thursday, Sept. 4, 2008 at 4:17 p.m.	Nicholls Post-Gustav Update #1
10.	Friday, Sept. 5, 2008 at 3:48 p.m.	Post-Gustav Update #2
11.	Sunday, Sept. 7, 2008 at 8:27 a.m.	Attention Campus Residents
12.	Monday, Sept. 8, 2008 at 3:07 p.m.	Attention Nicholls Students
13.	Monday, Sept. 8, 2008 at 8:18 p.m.	Post-Gustav Update #3
14.	Thursday, Sept. 11, 2008 at 9:38 a.m.	Hurricane Ike Standby Alert Issued

15.	Thursday, Sept. 11, 2008 at 3:10 p.m.	Nicholls cancels classes, closes Friday due to Hurricane Ike
16.	Thursday, Sept. 11, 2008 at 5:25 p.m.	Residence Halls & La Maison to Close; Student Union to House Resident and Commuter Students if Needed; Campus Water Quality Warning Issued
17.	Friday, Sept. 12, 2008 at 5:42 p.m.	Residence Halls & La Maison to Reopen at 6 p.m. Friday, Sept. 12
18.	Saturday, Sept. 13, 2008 at 3:23 p.m.	Nicholls Residence Halls and La Maison due Bayou Apartments Reopen, Classes Resume Monday, Sept. 15

Website Accessibility

Charles Ordoyne, Director of University Computing Services (personal interview, January 12, 2009), recalls that following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the University lost its Internet connection to the outside world, and the school's webpage was inaccessible for several days. In 2005, the University was mandated to purchase its Internet service through the state's Office of Telecommunications in Baton Rouge. The Baton Rouge location was down for several days following Katrina's landfall, and this impacted the www.nicholls.edu accessibility during that time. In September of 2005, Ordoyne was chairman of the University of Louisiana System's Technology Committee; he deemed it essential that an always accessible webpage should be available during future crisis events. Through his efforts, Louisiana state colleges and universities are no longer required to purchase Internet access through the Louisiana Office of Telecommunications. In January of 2007, Nicholls contracted with AT&T for Internet able to access service. Ordoyne reports that during the Gustav crisis, AT&T Internet service never went down, thus those with functioning computers and Internet access could always reach www.nicholls.edu for updates. Additionally, following the aftermath of Katrina and Rita, to ensure redundancy of access, Nicholls contracted for rented space from NTG, whose server is in Baton Rouge. This is where http://emergency.nicholls.edu resides. Following Gustav, both these sites provided important information to those who were them.

Stakeholders' Reliance on Website

Hurricane Gustav's landfall occurred on Monday, September 1, and Nicholls remained closed to all except the cleanup crew, campus police, and response team until Monday, September 8. Web statistics reveal 7,609 daily visits were made on average to www.nicholls.edu from September 1 through September 7. During that same time period, an average of another 3,307 daily visits were made to http://emergency.nicholls.edu. Classes resumed on Wednesday, September 10, but by Thursday, September 11, Hurricane Ike's impact on the region was uncertain. For the four-day period of Monday, September 8, through Thursday, September 11, the main Nicholls website averaged 11,694 visits per day, and the emergency site averaged 2,747 visits per day during that same timeframe. Since Nicholls notified subscribers of the First Call alert system on Saturday, September 6, that power had been restored on campus, it is probable that many website visitors may have abandoned use of the emergency site and moved over to the regular webpage at that point. Table 2 shows the number of visits at each of the two websites for September 1 through September 11. Together the two sites logged slightly over 134,000 visitors to the sites in the 11-day period. This is a large number of visits to a website of a school with an enrollment of approximately 7,000 students and reflects the value of the website during a crisis situation.

Table 2: Website Visits – Day of Hurricane Gustav Landfall through September 11*

Date	Number of Visits to www.Nicholls.edu	Number of Visits to http://emergency.nicholls.edu
01 September 2008	7,888	3,339
02 September 2008	7,441	2,128
03 September 2008	7,186	3,053
04 September 2008	8,450	4,743
05 September 2008	8,309	4,364
06 September 2008	6,691	2,387
07 September 2008	7,303	3,135
08 September 2008	11,464	4,467
09 September 2008	10,375	2,388
10 September 2008	11,887	811
11 September 2008	13,050	3,320
Totals for 11-day period	**100,044**	**34,135**

*Source: http://www.nicholls.edu/stats/awstats.pl?month=09&year=2008, accessed 1/12/2009.

While cell phone services were in general more reliable following Hurricane Gustav than what was experienced after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, text messages were still relied upon heavily in 2008 when networks became overloaded. One potential result of this cell phone limitation was that people from other parts of the country may have visited the Nicholls website for updates about school status when voice messages could not get through. Statistics for September 2008 reflect visits to the website from Internet addresses across the country and beyond. For example, website visits were logged from the Russian Federation, Canada, Norway, the Netherlands, Australia, France, Taiwan, Italy, Jamaica, Malaysia, Pakistan, Nepal, Nicaragua, Barbados, and Austria during the September 1 – 11 timeframe.

First Call Emergency Alert System

In March of 2008, Nicholls activated a first-alert phone and text messaging system (Hulbert, 2008a). "First Call" provides dissemination of important emergency information through cell phones of stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and administration. The First Call system is currently available to all University of Louisiana system schools and is being funded by the University of Louisiana System offices, as it was implemented in partial response to the need to notify people on campus in events such as the killings at Virginia Tech. While the funding is currently picked up by the University of Louisiana System offices, Nicholls administrators (M. Davis, personal interview, January 9, 2009) anticipate that at some point the University will be expected to pick up the annual costs. Individual sign up for the notification service is free, and all stakeholders have received numerous reminders encouraging them to sign up (C. Ordoyne, personal communication, January 9, 2009).

Because of extensive electrical outages covering many parishes in south Louisiana, the first alert text messaging system proved to be the only direct way some people were receiving accurate, if limited, information about the Nicholls status in days immediately following Gustav's landfall. However, valuable as this system can be as a communication tool, to date many stakeholders are not taking advantage of it (C. Ordoyne, personal interview, January 9, 2009). As of January 2009, University Computing Services reports only 4,742 students (78%), 251 administrators/staff (69%),and 113 faculty/adjunct faculty (31%) have signed up for the notification system.

Call Box System and Other Crisis Notification Outlets

Since 2005, Nicholls also chose to implement an emergency call box system throughout the campus. While designed in large part to provide a means for someone to summon aid in a localized emergency situation, public address ability is present at these call boxes and could be used for communicating messages to anyone nearby. In the spring of 2008, Nicholls also added a siren and public address notification system on the campus, and emergency messages can be broadcast over that system as well. Newer buildings on campus built over the past 18 months have voice notification systems in the fire alarms. Future plans include using this system for more than just fire alarm notification – coordinated through University Police. Communication means such as these can also be used as Nicholls would progress through various hurricane emergency stages and/or need to evacuate the campus.

Reflections of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike: Room for Improvement

As noted in the literature, crisis management is not perfect, and lessons are learned after any crisis. Nicholls administration, faculty, and staff continue to identify improvements that can be made to enhance the next crisis management event.

Davis suggested the University will investigate a radio channel with its own frequency and power to reach as far as Monroe or Ruston, Louisiana (M. Davis, personal interview, January 9, 2009). This would be a failsafe communication means if the satellite phones fail again. Because the University of Louisiana System office orders the Chief Executive Officer out of harm's way prior to a storm's landfall, it is essential that the pre-position team be able to communicate with the President while he/she is still located in another geographic area.

Davis noted that in the event of another emergency such as a hurricane, even more specific instructions will be detailed and communicated on total evacuation of the campus. While administrators had perceived their explanation and communication was adequate, Davis reported a faculty member stayed inside a classroom building during Gustav's landfall (from Sunday through Tuesday), even though the building had been ordered evacuated and was locked down on Saturday.

Pennington (B. Pennington, personal interview, January 9, 2009) noted another equipment upgrade goal is to ensure that key personnel have laptops that can run off car chargers and have mobile laptop connect cards that use a cell-phone provider's wireless network for Internet access. Although most key personnel already have laptops, when electrical power to homes is out, many people hesitate to plug in a laptop to a generator's power because of potential power surges. Additionally, while AT&T DSL service may have been available to its subscribers continuously, many people were without Cable service for a week or more after the storm and therefore could not get Internet access through their cable provider.

Barrilleaux noted the future establishment of a laptop leasing program for students and faculty would have a positive impact on both the faculty member and student's ability to complete courses (L. Barrilleaux, personal communication, January 9, 2009). Given the potential for lengthy power outages of several weeks or more in a severe hurricane crisis, this would provide students and faculty easy portability of technology to allow continuance of the semester while physically at another geographic location.

Barrilleaux further noted that there is some conflict regarding the timing of when faculty should implement their electronic delivery system. Some administrators believe that the system should be implemented immediately following an extreme emergency, whereas others believe this is not warranted if the duration of the campus closure is projected to be relatively short. Another issue is whether or not Nicholls administration should monitor faculty compliance of the electronic delivery system and if so, what is the best approach to accomplish this task? In addition, Leger noted that if the administration wants to be sure that all faculty are proficient in the use of Blackboard, they must mandate that faculty take a course in Blackboard proficiency (D. Leger, personal communication, January 14, 2009).

The authors of this paper can share personal anecdotal evidence that some faculty also interpreted the timing of the electronic delivery implementation differently than others. Because most faculty did not implement significant electronic plans immediately, those few who did so encountered confused students over the first weeks after classes resumed. This confusion was further compounded when the University revised the fall semester schedule and added three additional class days at the end of the semester prior to exam week to make up lost class time. While there is perhaps no way to eliminate all confusion, more clarity of implementation time must be established before a future hurricane crisis event.

Conclusion

Emergency situations can affect any university and need not be weather related. Thus, it is important for universities to be prepared to handle a crisis situation resulting in school closure ranging from a few days to as long as a semester. As this paper has illustrated, Nicholls State University's administrators, faculty, and staff learned from the crisis situation of the fall 2005 hurricane season and enacted changes to specifically address some identified crisis management weaknesses. As a result, the University's communication before, during, and after Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in 2008 better met stakeholder needs than in 2005. Of course no crisis management plan will ever identify all contingencies that can arise from every type of crisis. Thus there will always be the need for careful reflection after a crisis and continued planning for the future.

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Cross-Cultural Training in Costa Rica: Communication and Cultural Adjustment

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Abstract

This qualitative study involved interviewing upper-level business professionals in Costa Rica about the training they received in order to facilitate their adjustment to the environment when beginning employment in Costa Rica. The data gained is expected to shed light on the current awareness of the need for cross-cultural training and adjustment as well as the effectiveness of contemporary practices in this field. Furthermore, the findings indicate that adjustment ranges from training on how a company's products and services are different in Costa Rica than the United States to more comprehensive training about the culture of the country and living assistance in Costa Rica.

Introduction

Preparing employees for work overseas has long been recognized as an important concern for corporations and companies that engage or hope to engage in international business activities. Adequate preparation of employees and their families is vital when an overseas assignment is imminent in order for a successful transition to occur--one that will allow the employee to conduct his or her work effectively while also allowing the employee's family to adjust to a new environment in a foreign culture.

Such preparation and training involves specific awareness of cross-cultural communication, dimensions of cultural variability, and insight into one's own cultural identity. This project focused on the Central American nation of Costa Rica due to the fact that the country has signed on to participate in the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). As a result, many more American companies and corporations will be seeking to engage in business activities in Costa Rica. An additional reason that Costa Rica is of interest is the trend of nearshoring.

Nearshoring occurs when a company sends work outside of the country but to a location that is nearer in terms of time zones, travel location, and culture than a country that might be half a world away. Additionally, nearshore locations reduce infrastructure-related expenses (Nearshoring increasing…, 2007). By using nearshoring, a company could hold more face-to-face meetings to resolve problem issues as the country might be an easy plane flight away.

Costa Rica is a country that would be very suitable for nearshoring from the United States (Kvedaravičienė, 2008). In fact, many companies are looking at nearshoring as an alternative to offshoring. An outsourcing consultancy in Oregon found that outsourcing had saved American and European companies less than 10% by using overseas labor (Cinquegrani, 2008). Thus, nearshoring combines the operational efficiencies of close (in location) overseas labor, combined with all of the other aforementioned benefits.

Review of Literature

While the international component of business in United States corporations is well established, the ease of international business relations has become more and more prevalent, made possible in part by studies in communication technologies. Cross-cultural training offered by corporations is becoming a key feature of the globalization of international business and those relations that co-exist within that field.

Nearly three decades ago international business was a distressing area for corporations. What was the problem? American personnel were ignorant of the proper techniques for conducting business abroad (Copeland, 1984). Performance becomes sub-par when a lack of cultural understanding exists.

Some international companies decided to put an end to the problem by pulling back from their ventures overseas, while others began taking corrective measures to ensure their employees were prepared for these international relations. The emergence of cross-cultural training offered by employers became a key issue (Odenwald, July 1993).

Cross-cultural training offers benefits for all involved. It enables individuals to improve their performance, while helping multinationals to avoid unproductive and costly ventures, and ultimately to prevent impairment to business relations (Odenwald, July 1993).

The Cultural Aspect

In order to understand cultural differences, one must first know and examine his or her own culture (Wade, 2004). A simple definition of culture is given in *Riding the Waves of Culture* by Dr. Fons Trompenaars, 1998, as, 'the shared ways in which groups of people understand and interpret the world' (Kneebone, 2007, p.80). In order for there to be a successful experience, competency in global cultures must exist (Cultural savvy, 2008). It is not enough for the employee to have a list of things to do and not to do, because, invariably the employee will use them in the wrong situations (Rabotin, 2008). Thus, it is also important to have an understanding of the term, 'cultural intelligence' (CQ), defined as, "the ability to interact with others from diverse cultural backgrounds, being aware of our cultural values that drive our attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs" (Rabotin, 2008, p. 58).

When establishing operations in a foreign location, the language is not the only barrier. In fact, each culture has unique customs and expectations in the workplace (Katz, 2007).

When firms decide to provide training for employees, they must first consider the extent of the training that will be necessary. They must answer questions such as: will they offer pre-departure training as well as upon-arrival training. In addition, the firm must decide to which degree to offer the training beyond the employee. Will they provide training for the spouse and children? What about any other family members who are affected by the move? Upon-arrival training is just as vital as pre-departure training because upon-arrival training could help prevent culture shock (Kneebone, 2007).

Training beyond the employee may not seem to be a major issue with some firms but in some cases turns into quite a quandary. They may overlook the simple fact that there may be more than just one person who is impacted by this major change. First, we have to look at the possible immediate family members who are going to be relocating with the employee—the children and the spouse. The spouse is not just going to need the same basic training as the employee--language and cultural norms. The spouse may need living skills to maintain the home environment such as shopping in completely different types of stores, which hold products with which the spouse may be unfamiliar.

Not to be neglected in the midst of all the transition are the people who are going to be left at home. This may range from other relatives to close friends. Setting up ways to stay in contact with each other is crucial to the satisfaction of all individuals included.

As mentioned before, upon-arrival training is just as crucial to the adapting process as pre-departure training. While sitting in a seminar for a day or two, and having a speaker lecture about all the possible obstacles that may be faced is a great way to get a jump start on learning, it will not be 100% of everything that will need to be known. Watching slide-shows and reading pamphlets will be secondary to the training that can be received while physically at the destination point. Being shown the grocery store, having someone pick out the best kinds of food, and how to prepare those foods, all lead to a positive experience. Without this aid, the experience of grocery shopping and preparing the meals could lead to a negative outcome. The instructor can introduce new customs, all in preparation for possible occurrences, which will make the over-all transition run more smoothly.

Culture Shock

Culture is the composite of a society's knowledge, beliefs, and practices. It includes the music, the art, the customs, and day-to-day living (Wright, 2004).

The essence of culture shock is less the culture but all the changes that one has to handle on top of the cultural issue. When people speak about culture shock, they focus on what the individual needs to do and plan for in order to cope with all the changes they go through in a short time frame. Not only communication, but the language barrier, signs, non-verbal communication, traffic signs, and so on change, but also the house, new colleagues, the boss, the office, the grocery store, food, sports, schools, movies; everything. How much change can one cope with when most people get stressed when they move houses in the same city? This all needs to be addressed in the training—both pre-departure and upon-arrival. Hess (1994) indicates a person can become a new cultural person by expanding his or her viewpoint from a narrow view to embrace a larger world where new ideas, responses, and beliefs are absorbed and incorporated.

In *Culture Shock Inventory*, W.J. Redden explains culture shock as a psychological disorientation caused by misunderstanding or not understanding the cues in another culture. It arises from such things as lack of knowledge, limited prior experience, and personal rigidity (Kneebone, 2007). Culture shock can be minimized with proper training and a willingness to expect new experiences. Some corporations such as Intel have found cultural training a valuable component for successful business.

Intel: The Case for Success

Intel Corporation is a worldwide leader in not only technology, but also innovative ideas with education, culture, and social responsibility. Through trial and error, Intel found that they could not be successful with sending employees to work abroad without engaging the individuals in the culture they would soon be experiencing. The training and development offered by Intel takes places through classes at Intel University, the worldwide internal training organization which offers more than 7,000 professional personal growth courses in topics, with the inclusion of cultural training. Since the mid-1980s, Intel has offered language learning courses, cultural specific courses, and many other programs. The instructors of these courses are employees who volunteer to teach. Originally, Intel had external instructors, but they were unable to communicate Intel's culture well enough to suit the company (Meyer & Rottier, 2001). The extent of this training has made Intel very successful with their international endeavors. While other corporations were failing with the international aspect of their business, Intel was working hard at coming up with developing successful strategies. Other companies began looking outward at what was and was not working.

Business in Costa Rica

Upon further research into the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA), it became clear that the people of Costa Rica were opposed to this treaty. The people were afraid that CAFTA would undermine workers' rights, drive countless family farmers off their land, and expose communities throughout Central America and the United States to privatization of essential public services like water, electricity, health care, and education (Mora, 2004). However, the President of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, overlooked this and signed the treaty in 2007. Once Costa Rica became a member of this treaty, they became the destination of choice for United States-based companies interested in benefiting from off-shore plants. CAFTA will liberalize agriculture and other export sectors, services, intellectual property, labor laws, and areas involving natural resources. Unlike many other countries, Costa Rica has a stable economy, a democratic government, and lower entry barriers, thus making it a top candidate (Diaz, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to investigate the degree and effectiveness of cultural training offered to selected employees and their families who were relocated to Costa Rica and to determine how that training (or lack of) impacts the family, as well as the corporation.

Research Questions: The following questions were posed to selected business professionals working in Costa Rica. Interviewing different companies and people is one of the best ways to gain insight into how different companies are responding to cross-cultural training.

The interviews included the following:

> Does your company offer cultural training to employees and family members who are designated for overseas assignments?
>
> Would you describe any training efforts conducted by your company to prepare employees for working and living in a foreign country?
>
> How effectively have new American employees adjusted to their work in Costa Rica?
>
> How have their families transitioned to a new culture and a new environment?
>
> Has your company experienced any employee attrition as a result of their move to Costa Rica? If so, what are the repercussions, if any, for the employees and for the company?
>
> How has this cross-cultural international experience influenced your professional growth and understanding?
>
> How has this experience affected your understanding of globalization?

In general terms, how would you characterize the benefits you have derived from your participation in this international experience?

Procedure

This study sought to gather data relating to how companies prepare their employees and families for living and working abroad. Personal interviews with business professionals currently at work in Costa Rica were conducted during a visit to the country in summer 2008 as part of a study abroad program. The data gathering process focused on cultural awareness and the role of culture in general in contributing to peoples' success in new cultural environments.

Many issues arose during the process of conducting research while in Costa Rica. The most obvious concern was the language barrier between English and Spanish. In the interview with the native of Costa Rica who knew a fair amount of English, an additional student in the study abroad trip was also present, due to his knowledge of a comparable amount of Spanish to the interviewee's English. In addition, the questions asked were translated into Spanish through an online dictionary. In the event that the 'translator' could not understand the professional, the translated questions were used. The problem with these translations was that the translation still proved to be just as confusing as our dialect. Due to this factor, during parts of the interview, little information was collected.

Another interview issue came as a result of difficulty in finding cooperative interviewees. During one particular interview, the gentleman had little interest in the questions and found the meeting to be of little importance.

For this study, four business professionals including one woman and three men were interviewed at their businesses in Costa Rica. One of the interviews resulted in less complete information and is summarized.

Findings

After interviewing the business professionals in Cost Rica, the following information was summarized. The demographic information on the four interviewees is listed in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1: Demographic Information Related to Business Professionals	
Professional A	Native Costa Rican, female, 25-27 years old, international shipping company, single, supervises American employees. Has worked in customer service in the United States.
Professional B	European, male, 35-40 years old, Client Partner-Consultant of a training company. Now lives permanently in Costa Rica.
Professional C	American, male, 30-35 years old. He was sent by Fortune 500 Technology company to work in Costa Rica.
Professional D	English, male, 40-45 years old. Works two weeks in the United States and then two weeks in Costa Rica. Global science-based firm working on women's health issues. International firm.

The responses to the seven qualitative research questions in this study are summarized in the following tables. Cultural adjustment and training can be a key issue as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Cultural Adjustment and Training	
Question 1: Does your company offer cultural training to employees and family members who are designated for overseas assignments?	
Professional A	It depends on the project. There are currently no projects.
Professional B	The company does not provide pre-departure training. They believe it is better to do post training because it is much more effective.
Professional C	The company offers all expatriates an optional opportunity for cultural training. This training is usually contracted with a provider in the local country. It is at the employee's discretion to utilize the training for themselves and their family.
Question 2: Would you describe any training efforts conducted by your company to prepare employees for working and living in a foreign country?	
Professional A	Training is about those products and services in-country. The training is different than what the Americans are used to. For example, in Costa Rica there are no zip codes so teaching the employees the new system is different than the shipping process in the United States. Many Americans come to work in Costa Rica.
Professional B	Services provided depends upon the training the company paid for. Typically when a company hires trainers, they provide the training in two sessions. The first session looks at the culture, different aspects, history, communication styles, management (if training Americans). The second session takes into account everyday issues by working with the relocation consultant who helps with finding the grocery store, getting cable hooked up, looking at houses, etc.
Professional C	In this case, a full day of cultural training about Costa Rica was provided. In addition, a Spanish language tutor was provided for about one year and audio CDs with Spanish lessons. Finally a relocation specialist spent time orienting him with the city and pointing out the locations of places such as hospitals, restaurants, malls, theatres, major roads, etc.
Question 3: How effectively have new American employees adjusted to their work in Costa Rica? How have their families transitioned to a new culture and a new environment?	
Professional A	The process to adjust is very easy because the Costa Ricans are very simple people. The company provides all the information needed. For example, the company provides a list of schools if the employee has any children. Depending on the length of the contract, the company will provide a house and a car for the employee. For the employee, working at the company is very easy. The worst

	experiences are the security issues, which do not occur in actually working for the company.
Professional B	It has been said that 60% of all expatriates fail in their assignment, but new articles debunk that. All the cases he has worked on have had 100% success in fulfilling their duty abroad. The number one issue for failure is the family not adapting. The move is not just an issue for the expatriate. The people involved in the move who do not go through the training, such as the spouse and children, sometimes end up going home, thus leaving the employee to commute. He said 80% of the employee's life stays the same while 80% of the spouse's life changes. This is due to the fact that the employee will be maintaining the same job, the same job duties, and may even keep some of the same colleagues, given they have also transferred. The spouse, more than likely, will have given up most of everything he or she knows. The children, however, may need special attention. Not only are they going to need to learn the new language and lifestyle, they are going to have to learn about making new friends and adapting to a completely new way of life.
Professional C	He said it depends. He was not familiar with other cases, but it took him time to adjust to the new living—about four months to find his way around, learn the roads, language, and more about the culture to be comfortable in his job and social life. In his daughter's case, it only took about three weeks and she was very comfortable.

If an employee is unable to complete the international assignment, the results may vary as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Impact of Employee Attrition	
Question 4. Has your company experienced any employee attrition as a result of their move to Costa Rica? If so, what are the repercussions, if any, for the employees and for the company?	
Professional A	Not that she was aware of.
Professional B	Failure in overseas assignments are major, which usually lead to two consequences. One, it costs the company a lot of money and two, it shortens the expatriate's careers. When they leave their international assignment early, they do not last long in the company.
Professional C	There was no attrition that he was aware of. However, in most cases once an employee completes an expatriate assignment, they must find a new job at their original site as their former job has normally been back-filled with another employee. This process can be difficult for some employees and can make "re-entry" back to the homeland more difficult. Nearly every employee on assignment for

	more than six months that he spoke with was in this situation. It is one of the hidden downsides of taking an international longer-term assignment. If the company requests an early return, the company will pay all expenses. If the employee requests an early return, most, but not all of the expenses would be covered. However, the employee must remain with the company for one year after a paid-for relocation or the costs will be charged on a prorated basis back to the employee.

The professionals in the study felt that the international experience was rewarding as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Communication and Cultural Awareness	
Question 5: How has this cross-cultural international experience influenced your professional growth and understanding?	
Professional A	Unable to determine response due to language barrier.
Professional B	It changed him completely. After his study abroad in Costa Rica, he realized he could not stay in any one place for long. The experience enlarged his world view and gave him a larger perspective in life.
Professional C	He said it was an amazing experience, and has influenced across the board on how he interacts with customers, cross-site meetings, cross-cultural employees, his communication in email, verbally and non-verbally. It has helped him relate to a wider variety of interests and people.
Question 6: How has this experience affected your understanding of globalization?	
Professional A	When she worked in the United States, she was surprised that co-workers did not great each other with hugs and kisses which was more natural for Costa Rica.
Professional B	Globalization has different aspects. It is a force that is disrupted by man. Cultures are always globalizing. He said no pure culture exists, that the idea of preserving your culture will not last. He said cultures are always changing. His example was to look at a country and then imagine it in twenty years. His point—it will be different.
Professional C	Globalization had become quite a subject of interest. A key take-away for him is that every country of the world is part of globalization, no matter how large or small (like Costa Rica). While many of the larger countries such as India, China, and the U.S. get the lion's share of attention, globalization is even more important, he believes, to the smaller countries. An example he provided was when he was in Costa Rica on Oct 7, 2007 when CAFTA was ratified by the people of Costa Rica. Before the election he had the opportunity of

	talking with and listening to the concerns of citizens on both sides of the issue.
Question 7: In general terms, how would you characterize the benefits you have derived from your participation in this international experience?	
Professional A	It has helped her become a better employee and improved her knowledge on culture.
Professional B	He has become more aware of the world, more flexible, more secure. He said no matter the problem, he knows a solution always exists.
Professional C	First and foremost the experience made him re-evaluate many priorities in his life. During the experience, priorities of family, love, work, music, dance, people, and places were challenged and changed for the better. Another amazing benefit was working with, meeting, making friends with such amazing, interesting, and great people. Finally, he said he has a lot to learn about Latin culture, but what he did learn has continued to benefit him back home with interacting with people, speaking Spanish, understanding the political situation and Central America, etc.

Professional D

This professional has been working for the company for a few years now and enjoys his work. The company is a leading developer, manufacturer, and supplier of premium diagnostic and medical imaging systems dedicated to serving the healthcare needs of women, and a leading developer of state-of-the-art digital imaging technology for general radiography and mammography applications. He spends two weeks with the company in the United States, and then returns to the company in Costa Rica for two weeks and repeats this pattern. He had this to say about the possible language barrier, "No matter where I go, even if I don't speak a lick of the language, humans are humans." He believed that it was unnecessary for him to know and be able to speak Spanish while working in Costa Rica, and hence, that he could be just as successful with only knowing English. He downplayed the notion of cultural differences as far as being a tourist is concerned but still understood its encompassing nature. The interview took place in Puerto Viejo.

Conclusions

First, it was determined that working in Costa Rica was not a difficult adjustment for any of the professionals interviewed, but instead, one of simplicity. Furthermore, the research resulted in the observation that the professionals encountered varied types of training, but all led to the same outcome—success. Lastly, after interviewing all professionals, the common thread among them was how much they enjoyed living in Costa Rica. One interviewee liked it so much that he finally moved there to work on a permanent basis.

Implications for Future Research

Future research should specifically be given to the notion of nearshoring, not just in Costa Rica, but also looking at other Central American countries. Particularly from the aspect of the United States, more attention should be given to Mexico and Canada due to their bordering location.

Another study could focus on interviewing more professionals throughout Costa Rica in order to determine if there is a difference between the locations in Costa Rica. For instance, an urban environment might be a different adjustment than a rural one. Likewise, additional questions should be posed to the next set of interviewees in order to gain a deeper awareness of cross-cultural training in Costa Rica.

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The Effects of Communication on Twenty-First Century Businesses

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Abstract

Technology has evolved tremendously over the last century, especially in the area of telecommunication. The purpose of this presentation is to examine emerging forms of electronic communications such as cell phones, text-messaging, smart phones, instant messaging, and e-mail to determine how they have changed the business landscape. Also the research was used to determine if these forms of communication are found to be effective forms of business communication.

Introduction

Technology can be a major factor for the success and growth of a business. Twenty-first century technology allows business and industry to communicate by increasing accessibility and responsiveness.

Forms of communication such as mobile phones, text-messaging, smart phones, instant messaging, and e-mail continue to evolve. Business and industry must determine if these new forms of communication are acceptable and how they currently affect today's business environment.

The following terms are defined for reader clarity:

- *Email* **-** telecommunications technique which allows information to be composed, sent, stored, and received in the form of "messages" thru an electronic communication system (Internet.Com, Webopedia Online Encyclopedia, 2008).

- *Instant Message (IM)* **-** communication between two or more people through typed text conveyed via computers connected to the Internet (Internet.Com, Webopedia Online Encyclopedia, 2008).

- *Short Message Service (SMS)/Text Messaging* **-** allows the ability to send and receive short messages in text from to a mobile phone device (Wireless Developer Network, 2008).

- *Smartphone* **-** wireless telephone set with special computer-enabled features with access to the Internet (PCMeg.com, 2008).

Different forms of electronic communication currently affect the twenty-first century organization. Electronic communications have gained popularity in the workplace by allowing organizations to communicate effectively with employees, customers, and colleagues.

Traditional telephones, landlines, are basically those installed at a certain location. Businesses today still use traditional phones to communicate. Earlier landlines were basically the primary source of communication. But, throughout the years there has been a major decline in usage of traditional telephones. One of the main reasons for this decline is due to the introduction of wireless phones.

Americans use wireless phones as their primary means of communication. One of the main reasons why wireless phones have become so popular in the workplace is because it enables people to communicate at anytime anywhere. Wireless phones are upgrades of traditional telephones that include many more benefits, e.g. long distance at a reasonable price. This has helped many small companies to expand their businesses overseas by helping them communicate effectively with target customers (Zaragoza, 2003).

A smartphone "is a device that can take care of one's communication, handheld computing, and multimedia needs" (Lin & Brown, 2007, p.1). Smartphones are making their way into the business sector with the various positive benefits they have to offer.

Personal Information Manager (PIM) allows professionals to install a range of applications that facilitate document revision and intranet access. Microsoft ActiveSync program allows automatic synchronization of data with a laptop or desktop that can also be carried around. Basically this feature permits professionals to carry their offices in their pockets.

The fast and secure wireless feature enriches professionals with fast and secure access to information and the ability of staying connected anytime and anywhere. Having the ability to obtain connection at anytime anywhere, professionals can retrieve information such as E-mails (read and compose) and talk to clients while away from the office (Lin & Brown, 2007).

Bluetooth is a wireless technology that allows professionals to transmit documents back and forth from a mobile device to a computer. Bluetooth can also be used to backup the company's server and network (Lin & Brown, 2007). Smartphones are fairly new hardware and therefore are known to have very few limitations.

Electronic mail, often known as E-mail, e-mail, or email is a method of composing, sending, storing, and receiving messages over electronic communication systems. During the 1990s, E-mail was seen as the fastest device to deliver clear and concise short messages (McCune, 1997). Besides the benefits that are made available, limitations unfortunately still exist with the usage of this electronic delivery mode.

Junk mail complicates the ability for people to connect with new users for the first time. This can become costly for companies that obtain software to block junk mail in order to communicate effectively (McCune, 1997).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine emerging forms of electronic communications such as cell phones, text-messaging, smartphones, instant messaging, and e-mail. The intent is to determine how they have changed the business landscape and if these forms of communication are found to be effective forms of business communication. As electronic communication evolves, businesses need to develop policies that prohibit or embrace the use of new forms of communication.

This study will contribute to the resources necessary to assist business when considering whether or not to adopt one or more of these forms of communication. The following research questions are addressed:

- Are new emerging forms of communication widely used?
- Are new emerging forms of communication found to be effective?
- What advantages and disadvantages do these forms of communication present?
- Do current forms of communication affect the way the business world communicates?

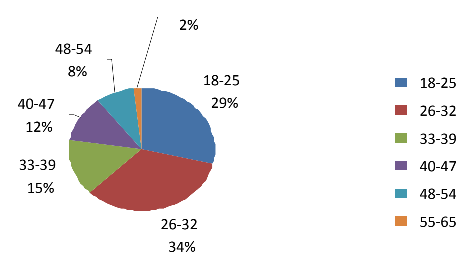
Methodology

In order to determine how the general population views the various forms of electronic communication, primary research was done in the form of a normative survey. The survey was designed to obtain data related to how often electronic technologies are used to obtain information and how effective the technologies are. The sample population for the survey was selected using the convenience sampling method. Surveys were distributed primarily to friends and co-workers of the research team. A total of 107 surveys were returned and then tabulated.

Benefits and Limitations

One of the primary limitations of the sampling method chosen is the uneven distribution of the age groups of the respondents. As shown in Figure 1, almost two-thirds of the survey respondents were between the ages of 18 and 32 and over three-quarters of the respondents were under the age of 40. Having fewer respondents in the upper three age groups allows for the data to be skewed more easily by just a few extreme survey responses.

Figure 1: Age Group Breakdown



The benefit of the sampling method used is that it more accurately reflects the current and future generations of the corporate workforce. Since most of the data comes from those respondents between 18 and 39 years old, the data will be more relevant for drawing conclusions that can relate to those workers who will be in the workforce for the next 20 to 40 years.

Findings

Survey Results – Frequency of Use for Various Technologies

Figures 2 and 3 reveal cell phones and E-mail were the most often used technologies by all responding age groups. An overwhelming majority of respondents in each of the age groups rated these technologies as being used *very often*. While some of the respondents listed that they used cell phones and e-mails either *occasionally* or *never,* the number of respondents was outnumbered by the *very often* responses in each age category.

Figure 2: Frequency of Use for Cell Phones

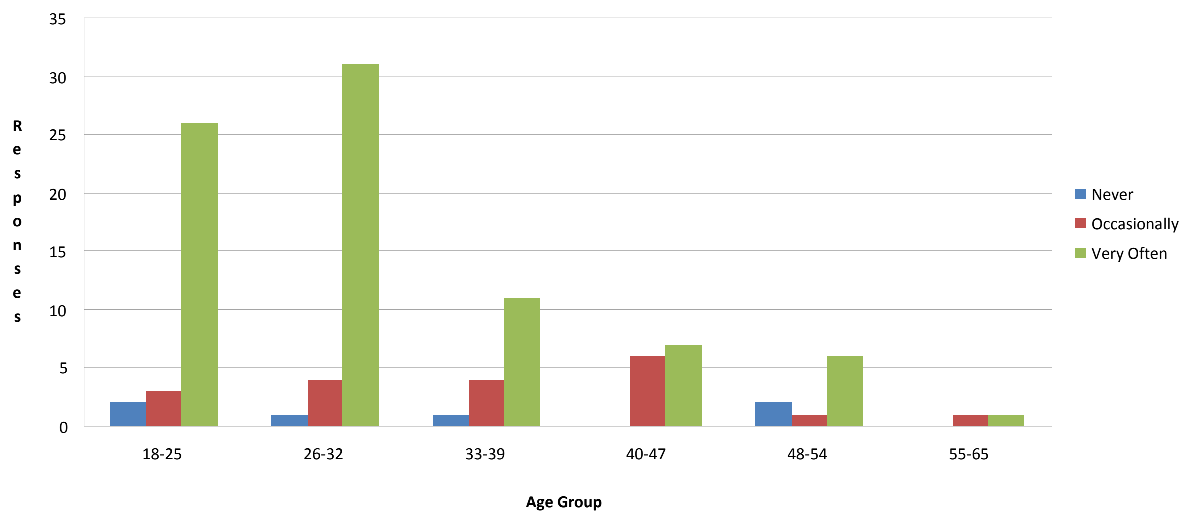
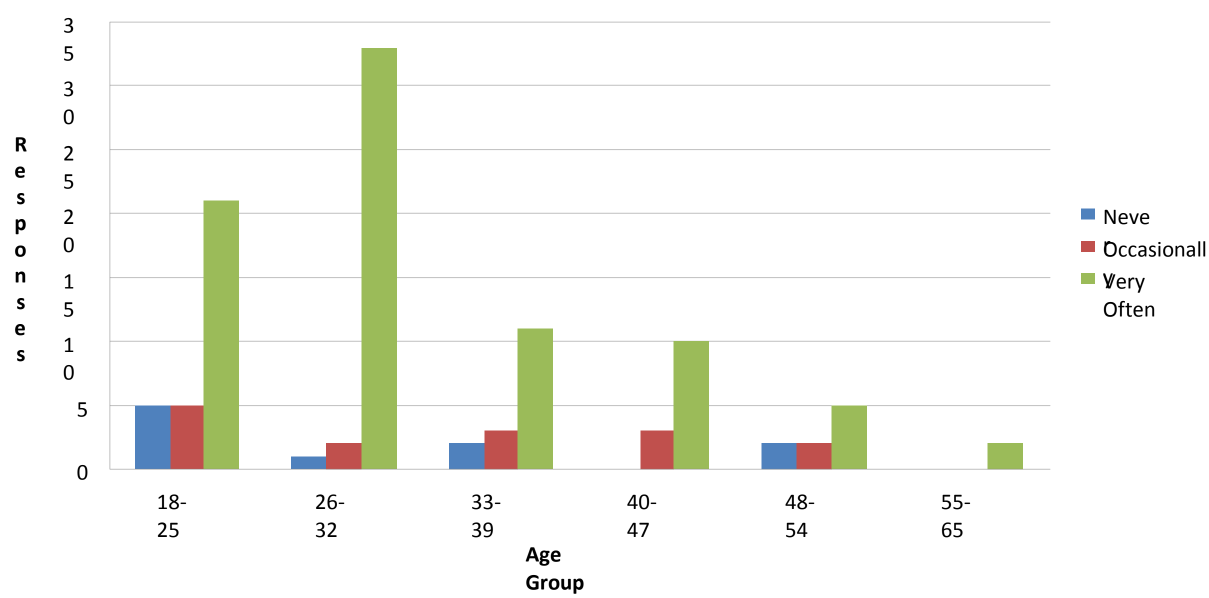
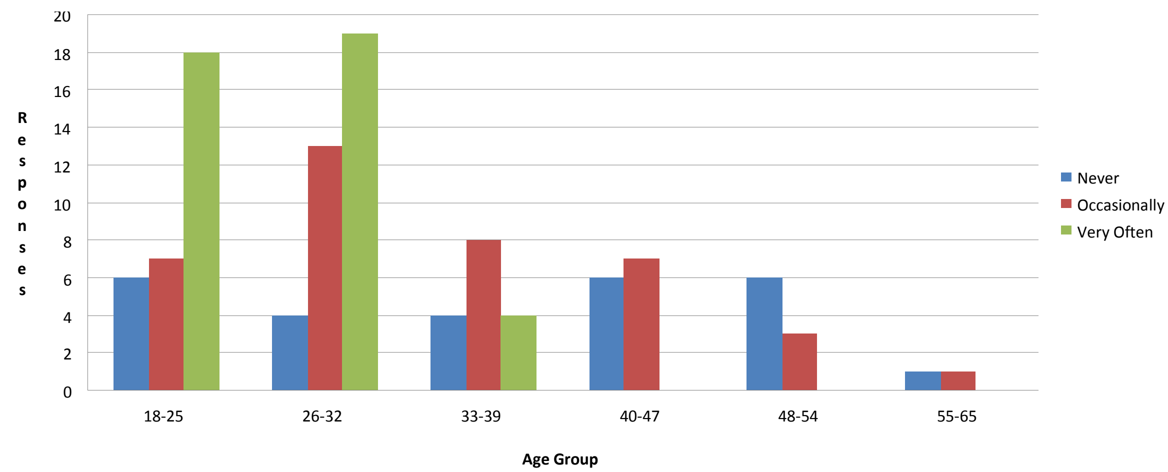


Figure 3: Frequency of Use for E-Mail



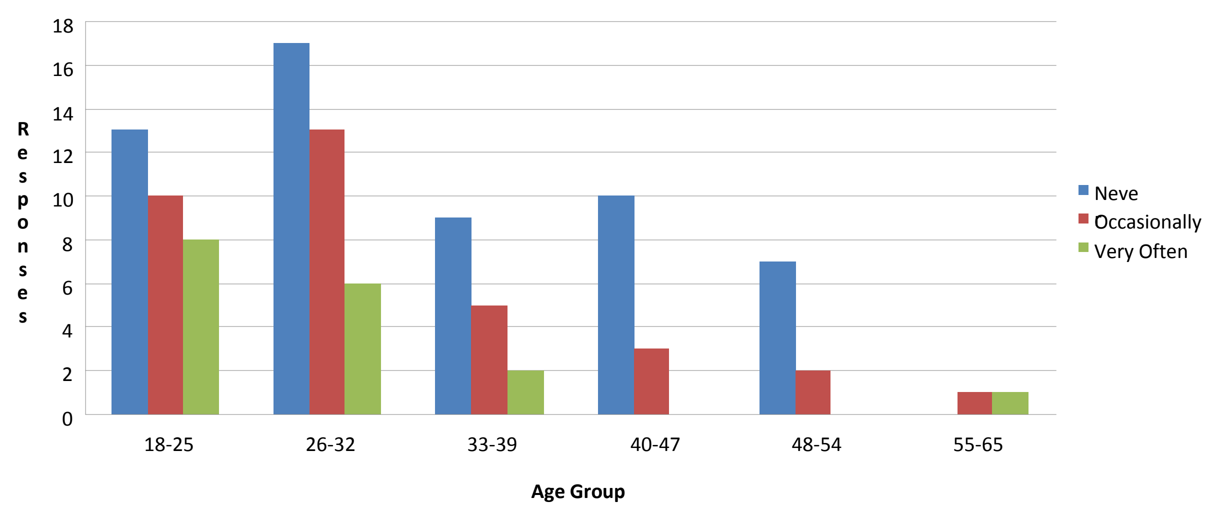
Text messaging was used more often by younger age groups than older populations. The majority of respondents in the youngest two age groups consistently reported that they used text messaging very often. Conversely, the majority of responses from the oldest three age groups showed that the technology was used *never* or *occasionally*, but none of these respondents listed themselves as using the technology *very often*.

Figure 4: Frequency of Use for Text Messaging



The majority of all age groups used instant messaging either *never* or *occasionally*. The youngest two age groups did have a fair number of *very often* responses, but not enough to show that the technology had an overwhelming use among those two groups of respondents.

Figure 5: Frequency of Use for Instant Messaging



Two-way pagers and smart phones were almost never used by any of the age groups. Of those respondents who did not respond as never using the technologies, the most common response was that they used the technologies *very often*. This implies that two-way pagers and smartphones are not as widely available as cell phones or text messaging devices, but instead are niche technologies that are used by a small but loyal group of people.

Figure 6: Frequency of Use for Two-Way Pagers

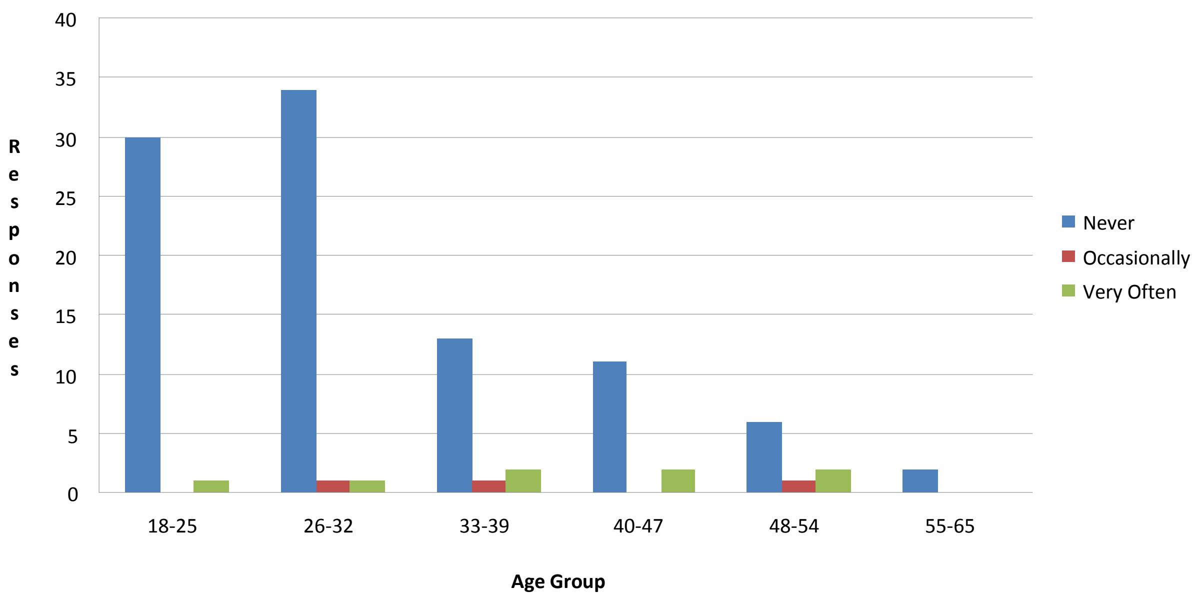
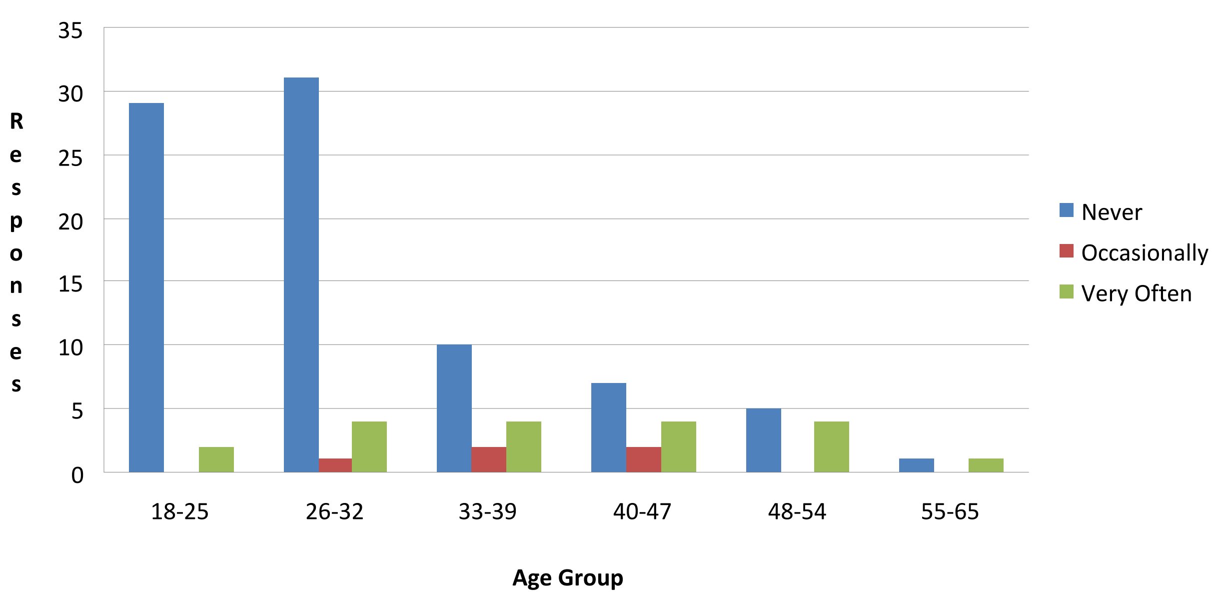
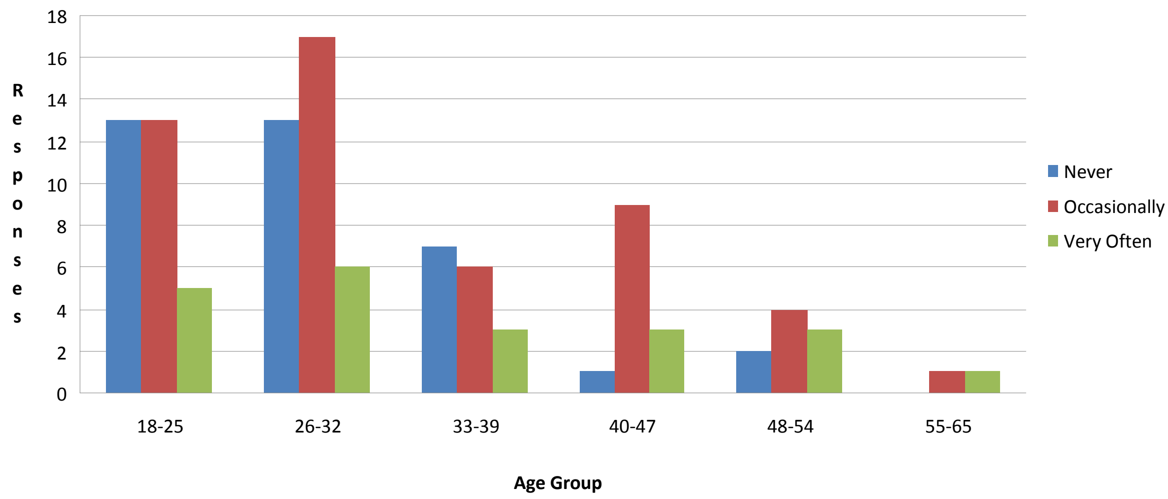


Figure 7: Frequency of Use for Smart Phones



The home phone was the most inconsistent technology studied with most groups reporting never or occasional usage. In the majority of age groups, respondents listed that the technology was used *occasionally* more than *never* or *often*. Unlike some of the other technologies studied, there was not a correlation between frequency of use and age.

Figure 8: Frequency of Use for Home Phones



Survey Results – Effectiveness of Various Technologies

All survey respondents were asked to rate seven different technologies based on how effective the technologies were at obtaining information. The ratings from all respondents were broken down by age group and then averaged together. Of the seven different technologies, cell phone and E-mail received high effectiveness ratings regardless of age group.

Figure 9: Effectiveness of Cellular Phones

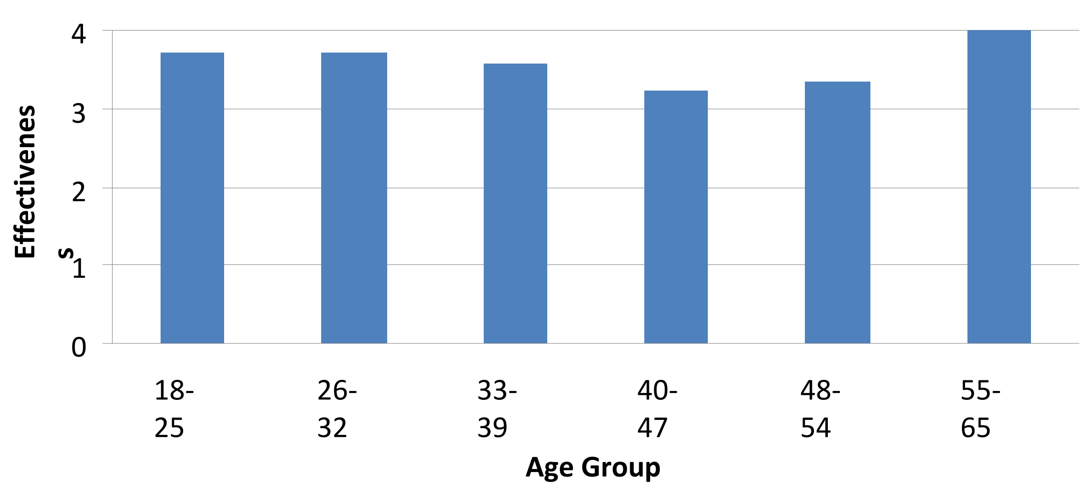
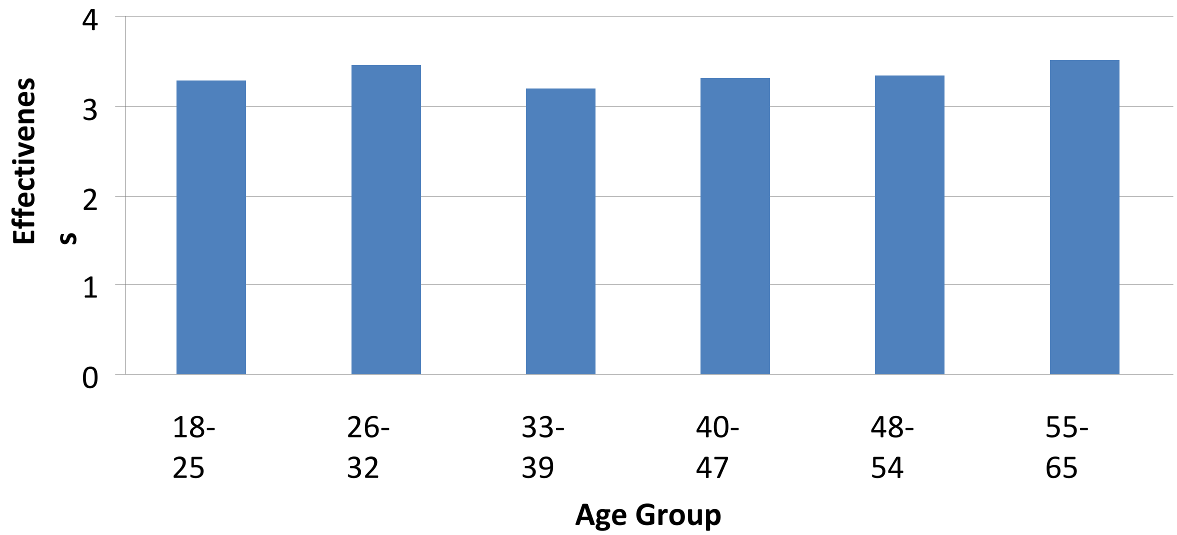


Figure 10: Effectiveness of E-Mail



Two of the technologies, Instant Messaging and Text Messaging, showed a direct link between perceived effectiveness and age of the respondent. For text messaging, the rated effectiveness was significantly above average for respondents in the 18-25 and 26-32 year old age groups while average for respondents in the 33-39 year old age group. The effectiveness continued to decline for the last three age groups. For instant messaging, the same declining trend occurred except that the perceived effectiveness was lower for all age groups.

Figure 11: Effectiveness of Text Messaging

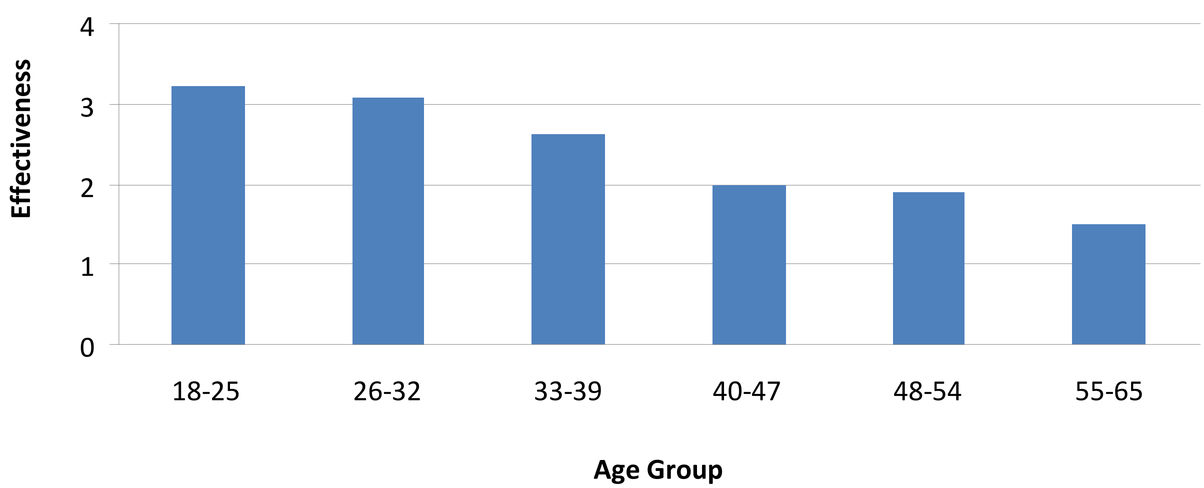
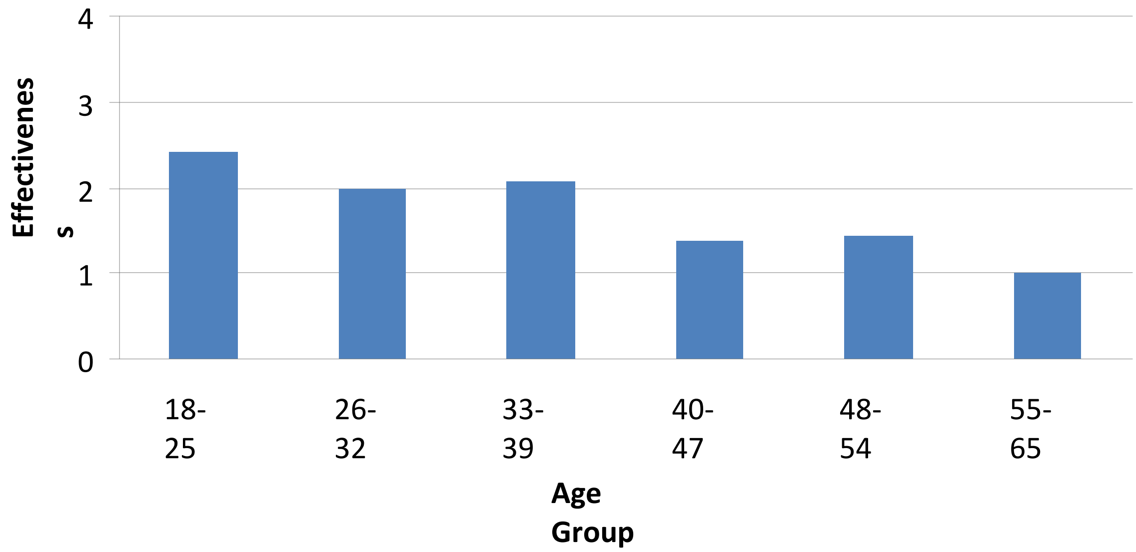
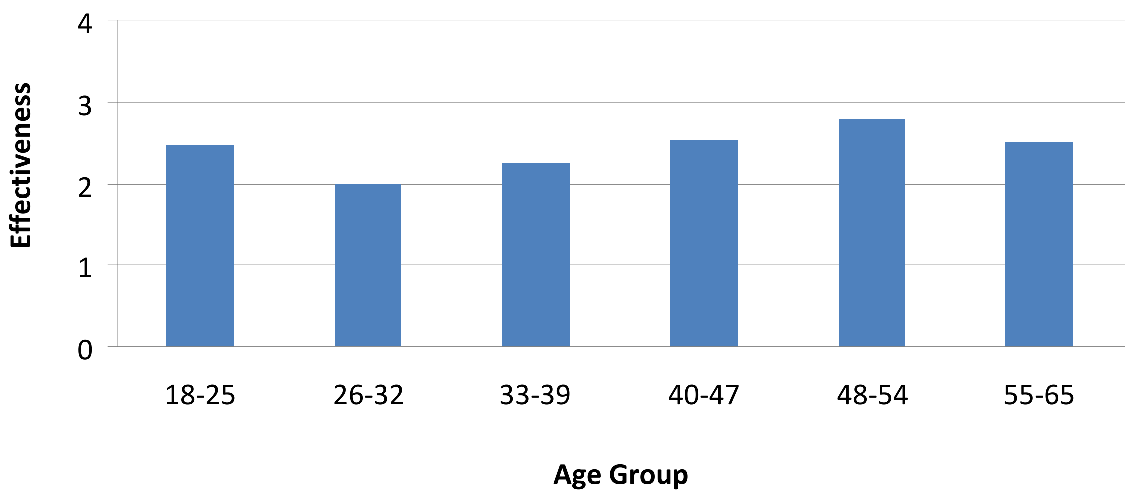


Figure 12: Effectiveness of Instant Messaging



One of the technologies, landlines, showed effectiveness ratings that increased almost in direct relation to the respondents' age groups. There was a significant exception in that the 18-25 year old age group rated the home phone's effectiveness higher than the next two age groups.

Figure 13: Effectiveness of Landlines



The remaining two technologies, Smartphones and Two-Way Pagers, were rated by respondents as being below average or average by almost every age group. There was not any noticeable correlation between effectiveness and age group for either of these technologies.

Summary

Technology has evolved tremendously over the last few years, especially in the field of telecommunication. The means of communicating 10-15 years ago are almost obsolete. The most drastic change in the methods of communication is the use of cell phones, instant messaging, text messaging, and E-mails.

Means of communication also varies from one age group to another. Text messaging and instant messaging are two of the most popular ways of communicating among the 18-25 age group. E-mail and cell phone usage was found to be almost equal regardless of the age group. Communication through landlines is also another method of communication where the usage was found to be quite evenly spread among the users with a slight preference among the older age groups. As far as the smartphones, the number of users is still very low, although their use is increasing in popularity at a very rapid rate. The survey results were divided between people who responded as never using smartphones at all to a small population who uses smartphones very often. Two-way pagers received a similar response when compared to that of smartphones. The age factor does not seem to affect the frequency of usage of smartphones and two-way pagers.

Further research conducted found that the use of the landline in the workplace was significantly higher, and the pattern is expected to remain due to reliability. The only disadvantage found with this form of communication was the phone-tag, an advanced technology to convert voicemail to text and deliver it via E-mail and/or text messages. Cell phones and E-mails are the most popular form of communication. Disadvantages found for the E-mail are the absence of face-to-face interaction and the response time. For cell phones the biggest disadvantage was the availability of the network. Instant messaging and text messaging are the popular choices of communication among the younger generation. Smartphones and two-way pagers are not as common because smartphones are expensive and a smaller portion of the population uses them.

Conclusion

Based on the survey findings regarding the *usage* and *effectiveness* of the technologies at obtaining information, the responses varied depending on the age of the respondents. Out of seven technologies, cell phones and E-mails received the highest rating in both *often used* and *effectiveness* by all age groups. Text Messaging and Instant Messaging were used more often by younger age groups. The same trend occurs in effectiveness ratings. However, Instant Messaging received a lower rating than Text Messaging in every age group. The landline technology was used occasionally in all age groups; whereas, the effectiveness rating was higher in the older age groups compared to younger age groups. Two-Way Pagers and Smartphones were rated *almost never used* and the *effectiveness* was rated average or below average by all age groups.

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The Dream Job Portfolio: An Experiment in Heightened Relevance

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Abstract

Undergraduate students are often unsure of their career goals and thus unable to tie their business writing assignments to jobs they might actually hold. They can profit from compiling a Dream Job Portfolio before writing. The portfolio consists of a career-oriented Myers Briggs-based self-assessment, several directed freewritings, three job descriptions from the Occupational Outlook Handbook, and three company profiles from the Web. While completing this project, students will learn more about their own career preferences as well as about possible jobs and employers. They can then tailor writing prompts accordingly, are better positioned to benefit from the Job Search Documents unit, and are more likely to launch a considered career.

Introduction

Judging from the sample texts on my shelf, nearly all BCOM textbooks offer end-of-chapter prompts for practice writing. Traditionally, these prompts have been based on random workplace scenarios and identities (Quible & Mott, 2008). More recently, some books have offered open-ended questions inviting students to plug in their own projected job specifics (Guffey, 2006; Lesikar & Flatley, 2005; Oliu, Brusaw, & Alred, 2007). Although these more open-ended prompts have the potential to make assignments more personally relevant, many students can't benefit from them because they are not far enough along in their career search process to know what they want to do.

A series of assignments called The Dream Job Portfolio requires students to think about and research career options before starting to write. This simple, research-based unit enhances students' experience in the course in several key ways: It makes them better able to match writing tasks to those of jobs they might actually hold, to benefit from the Job Search unit, and to think in terms of a having a "career" as opposed to merely a "series of jobs" (DeLattre, 1983). It also lets the instructor become a little better acquainted with them as people, and to that extent, to serve them better.

Methodology

Our junior- and senior-level course—BCOM 3113, Written Communication—opens with a five-week unit that includes an overview of writing for the workplace, a survey of new technology, the pre-write/write/rewrite process applied to business writing, and a style unit to help everyone transition from academic to workplace writing. It also reviews grammar and punctuation conventions. Judging from the arrangement of most BCOM textbooks, this is a fairly typical course design.

During this introductory five weeks, no one is writing documents. This freedom from outside written assignments easily accommodates the Dream Job Portfolio. (The word "portfolio" here does not mean a collection of student writings, but rather a collection of related materials.) The Dream Job Portfolio is a folder, assembled outside of class, comprising four elements:

A standard career-focused self-assessment tool. We use the Do What You Are Self-Discovery Assessment developed by Human E-Sources. This test is available on our university's career services website at no charge to students. It generates not only a Myers Briggs profile but also a list of jobs for which the student is well suited, in chosen areas of interest.

Three directed "freewritings." Freewriting is the practice of writing continuously in a relaxed frame of mind for a set amount of time, usually 5 or 10 minutes. This task, in which the writer is not to be concerned with grammar or form, can help the self-conscious writer loosen up and often leads to personal discovery. (As someone has said, "How can I know what I think till I see what I say?") Although freewrites may be directed (topic provided) or undirected (no topic provided), two of our three required writings focus on career-related questions like "How can I 'do what I am'?" or "What do I want out of my life's work?" These assignments, which students may hand in either openly for a comment or stapled shut to preserve their privacy, provide them "inside information" about their unique inner blueprint of values and desired career parameters.

Three job descriptions from the Occupational Outlook Handbook. From the list of jobs generated by the Do What You Are assessment, students choose the three most interesting and look them up in the OOH. This thorough and accessible government document details, for hundreds of jobs, the nature of the work, the training and education required, current employment figures, outlook for the future, and salary information.

Three company profiles. Students do a Google-based search for strong companies that hire for what they want to do, and that also meet as many as possible of their other personal criteria as discovered through freewrites (e.g., ideal geography, flex-time, job sharing, same-sex partner benefits, or what have you). For items 3 and 4, students print out the results of their research, then read or skim with highlighter in hand.

All four assignments are submitted in a two-pocket paper folder. Credit is given for all completed work, and the freewrites that aren't stapled shut are read and briefly commented upon. The folder is assigned enough credit to make the effort seem worthwhile, but not enough to inflate semester grades, generally 50 points out of a possible 900-1000 for the semester. It is marked quantitatively, most students earning the full points possible. I specify the organization of the folder, making it easy to mark. The whole project is not labor intensive for either students or teacher.

Findings

According to teacher evaluations over the last two years, students like the assignment, to varying degrees. It is one of very few features of the course they take the time to comment on, and so far, the comments, written in a confidential evaluation held until all grades are in, have been positive 100% of the time.

Some students report initially balking at one or another aspect of the project: they felt the personality assessment didn't accurately represent them, say, or that the list of jobs it generated didn't contain anything they wanted to do. But once they understood that the assignment could be "tweaked," and should be, to serve their needs best, they experienced increased interest and buy-in.

The most immediate benefit to students is extra-curricular: namely, the chance to think about their professional lives and to research actual jobs. Even among juniors and seniors, many report thinking carefully about their working future for the first time in their lives. Undergraduates are typically swamped, and yet during that harried 4- or 5-year period, they must all make serious and far-reaching decisions about their futures. Too often, little reading (or even thinking) goes on that isn't a credit-bearing part of their coursework.

A second benefit for both students and teacher, and the one most pedagogically significant for the course, is an improved quality and relevance of written work. Students devise their own realistic prompt for each assignment. Most students are by this time well able to imagine the details of such a writing scenario; if they need help, other students, themselves now more fully immersed in their own fields, have proved a surprisingly good resource for ideas. The level of authenticating detail in their documents goes up, which makes for more interesting writing for them and reading for me. More importantly, the level of student investment goes up. If a prospective marketing specialist is writing a letter to generate interest in, say, a community event—a task s/he might one day get paid, or promoted or fired, for doing—then mastery and competence become crucial, not just the grade. Each assignment is something like a highly abbreviated internship.

A final side benefit is that the Dream Job Portfolio project allows the instructor to get to know students a little better, which engenders improved classroom morale and better informed letters of reference.

Summary

A teacher might hesitate to incorporate this material into a business communication course, since it lies outside the strict parameters of the course description. I recently listened to an NPR interview with Stanley Fish, prominent literary theorist and public intellectual, discussing his latest book, *Save the World on Your Own Time*—in which he posits that altogether too much moralizing and character-building goes on in American classrooms (Fish, 2008). He rightly observes that a teacher is expert only in the field in which s/he is credentialed. Although there is no moral content to the Dream Job Portfolio assignment, one might still squirm a bit at the thought of incorporating even this morally neutral excursion into a business communication course. Most business communication teachers are not career counselors; I certainly am not. Typically, my degrees are in English, and I have some experience as a writing consultant to business, government, and industry.

However, I am not offering career advice. I am attempting to improve the relevance and impact of the course. As a professional consultant, I and my colleague always worked directly with the writing of the clients in our seminars. Participants consistently said that they learned more working with their own real workplace writing than they could have done in a pre-packaged course with generic prompts. I can't exactly replicate this element in a university BCOM course, but I attempt to come as close as possible.

Implications for Education and/or Business

As an educator, I also feel that I am in a different position than I was as a consultant. I share the interest of Edwin J. DeLattre, Dean Emeritus and professor of philosophy at Boston College, in the etymological difference between "training," from *trahere,* meaning "to draw behind," and "education," from *e-ducere,* meaning "to draw out" (DeLattre, 1983). A large part of what we do as BCOM teachers *is* training—drawing our students behind us, into text-based experiences we have had and they as yet have not. But as members of the academy, we are also expected—and entitled—to participate in their larger education, the drawing forth of the unique contributions that will reflect both upon them and upon the universities that prepared them. The Dream Job Portfolio is an entirely self-directed unit which allows students to discover some things no teacher can teach them. They can then bring this "inside information," in whatever ways and to whatever extent they choose, to the writings in their BCOM class. I can see no harm in it, and much potential for good. So to address the matter of larger implications, I believe there are two:

For education: The Dream Job Portfolio enhances *training* by allowing students, through research, to enter the worlds they will one day inhabit and become more familiar with their specific demands, issues, and language. It also enhances the course's value as *education* in that it encourages both fact-gathering and reflection about career options.

For business: In a way that is similar to (though less significant than) the job internship, veterans of the Dream Job Portfolio's research element may enjoy reduced frustration and costly trial and error in the hiring and training process.

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Cognition and Marketing Communication

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Abstract

Advertising is an applied form of business communication, which employs both verbal and non-verbal elements that are composed to fill specific space and time format determined by the sponsor is marketing communication. According to Starch, the five main functions of advertising are: to secure attention, arouse interest, bring about conviction, produce action, and, impress the memory. The better an advertising manager understands the buying behavior of his or her customers, the better he or she can bring its products into the collective consciousness of prospective customers.

Advertising is an applied form of business communication, which employs both verbal and non-verbal elements that are composed to fill specific space and time format determined by the sponsor is marketing communication. One of the most important issues that business communication deals with is that it is used to promote a product. In this paper we explore how Business Communication is related to all forms of communication. Topics like marketing, branding, customer relations, consumer behavior, advertising, interpersonal communication, etc. Cannot be overlooked in today's scenario where business communications form a vital part of the business. This paper explores how advertising is an "awareness creator", acting as a carrier of communication which provides appropriate information about a product or a service. This paper also aims at presenting a theoretical framework on the role of communication in business relationships of advertisers and consumers. The interpersonal communication processes occurring within business relationships which involves a consumer's mind and the responses based on which they make a buying decision and how the question of influencing consumer's buying decision is perceived as an important aspect of business communication. Marketing researchers realized that since promotion's main focus is to generate immediate purchasing behavior, communication can, therefore, be the most efficient method to promote, improve, and acquire this purchasing behavior faster. Also, promotion is used to communicate with customers with respect to product offerings. Communication is, therefore, a vital tool to promotion and, of course, to marketing.

Communication is directly related to Marketing Communication. Marketing Communication's primary goal is to reach a defined audience and to affect this audience's behavior by informing, persuading, and reminding them of their brand of production. Marketing communication acquires new customers for brands by building awareness and encouraging trial. The information that is conveyed is provided to marketing communication by product marketing and corporate marketing, and this information is designed to serve these disciplines' respective interests. The core and most crucial form of information provided to marketing communications is referred to as "messages", which are ideas about the company and its products that will be communicated later to the target market. So, before a marketer engages in any communication with his or her customers, he or she has to decide what he or she wants to say, who he or she wants to say it to, how to present his or her message, where to distribute this message, and when to send the message. The style and tone must equally be taken into consideration as well.

That notwithstanding, successful marketing communication relies on sound management decisions regarding the coordination of the various elements of the promotional mix. The coordination of these elements led to a new way of viewing marketing communication known as "Integrated Marketing Communication," which seeks to orchestrate the use of all forms of promotional mix to reach customers at different levels in new and better ways. Advertising, however, maintains a leading role in all these elements to date.
Before the 1990s, advertising was the dominant element in the promotional mix because; the mass media could effectively deliver sales message to a mass audience, it reaches large, geographically dispersed audiences often with high frequency and low cost per exposure; its advertised goods were perceived by consumers as more legitimate; it dramatized the company and its brand; it built brand's image, though expensive, it stimulates short-term sales; and, it is a one-way communication. But then, the mass market began to fragment because consumers became better educated and more skeptical about advertising. News reports, word-of-mouth, experts' opinions, and financial reports were just some of the "brand contacts" consumers began to use to learn about and form attitudes and opinions about a brand or company, or make purchase decisions. Advertising began to lose some of its luster in terms of its ability to deliver huge homogeneous messages to audiences. Companies began to seek new ways to coordinate the multiplicity of product and company messages issued and used by consumers and others.

Again, advertising remains unique from the other marketing communication elements because it is a special type of communication. McCann-Erickson (a Global Advertising Agency Network with offices in over 130 countries), the ad agency for Coca-Cola and MasterCard, says advertising is "a truth well told," which implies ethical advertisers, and the agencies they employ, work as a team to discover and use the best methods possible to tell their story truthfully and creatively to the marketplace. In order to succeed, they must understand the elements of the advertising communication process which is derived from the basic human communication process. Scholars look at advertising in different ways – as a business, creative communication process, a social phenomenon, and even, a fundamental ingredient of the free enterprise system. Albert Lasker, an American businessman, who today is often regarded as the founder of modern advertising agency because he had an inquiring mind about what advertising was and how it worked, (worked at Lord and Thomas advertising agency at Chicago and later purchased it in 1912). He saw advertising as: "Salesmanship in print, driven by a reason why."

This was long before the full-blown advent of radio, television, and Internet. Then, the nature and scope of the business world and advertising were quite limited. The rapid evolution of our planet has also forced nature and needs of business to change and so have the concept and practice of advertising. Advertising has existed as a specialized profession for only about a century, yet it has become a force, rivaling both business and education, not leaving out religion, in shaping public values and aspirations. Definitions of advertising abound today. Journalists will define it as communication, public relations, or a persuasion process; a businessman will see it as a marketing process; economists and sociologists will tend to focus on its economic, societal, and ethical significance, etc. Some consumers will even term it at times as a nuisance. Barbara Sterns, a literary critic (2001) at Rutgers University, sees it as a form of structured, literary text, rather different from the spontaneous, word-of-mouth communication of oral speech. She, however, proposes a very sophisticated communication model derived from a traditional oral communication but applied this model specifically to advertising as a composed commercial text rather than an informal speech. Sociologists extend from their societal and ethical views to analyze advertising by looking at the impact it has on institutions and individuals in the society. McQuarrie and Mick (1996), Pullum and Scholz (2001), and other linguists pay close attention to advertising use of language, the place of advertising language in the context of the readers' general knowledge of language in its speech community, for a wide range of communicative functions. Linguists actually insinuate that in advertising you will learn more about what creative possibilities your language allows, rather than how much advertising goes beyond the boundaries of “correct” or “normal” language. Though each of these perspectives has some merits and demerits, we will look at advertising throughout this project from the functional and cognitive points of view.

This applied form of communication employs both verbal and non-verbal elements that are composed to fill specific space and time format determined by the sponsor. It is usually well-structured and non-personal communication of information. According to Starch (1923), advertising plays an important role in the complete selling process. People generally make up their minds about purchasing a product before they go to the store to make that purchase, and they are often set on a particular brand they have seen or heard advertised. According to Starch, the five main functions of advertising are to: secure attention, arouse interest, bring about conviction, produce action, and, impress the memory. Therefore, the better an advertising manager understands the buying behavior of his or her customers, the better it can bring his or her products into the collective consciousness of prospective customers.
Moreover, since advertising is first and foremost communication, advertisers won’t afford to take the communication process for granted and the basic human communication process begins when one party (the source – advertiser) formulates/creates an idea, encodes it as a message, and sends it through some channel (television, posters, Internet, etc) to another party (the receiver - customer), and this receiver then decodes the message in order to understand it. This receiver/consumer in order to respond, formulates a new idea (make a purchase decision), encodes the concept, and sends a feedback (potential noise/purchasing the product) to the sender. The coding, decoding, and encoding (which are memory processes) of advertising messages can only be done cognitively. This is why a cognitive approach is an essential discipline in the study of advertising.

ADVERTISING FROM A COGNITIVE POINT OF VIEW

Consumer’s attitude involving his perceptual response to advertised goods and services and his beliefs (existing knowledge and assumptions to new information) about an advertised product will be some of our concerns. As we saw in declarative memory, it contains information that can be made conscious and subsequently, will enter into cognitive processing. Some past experience and the state of mind of an individual subjected to advertising may determine the impact that advertising has. The respective secondary processing of advertised messages can only be achieved by forming cognition and affect (emotions), which would then be combined to persuade a customer to purchase. Though emotions rely mostly on implicit memory, when it is activated by an ad, it influences the choice process directly and with more emotions, the feeling (feeling is a conscious emotional cognition) of remembering may be enhanced (Sharot, Delgado, & Phelps, 2004). Chaudhuri (1998) claims that the nature of the product advertised plays a key role in determining the amount of cognition required to process an advertising message. Stout and Leckenby (1986), Holbrook and O’Shaughnessy (1984) and Lazarus (1991) agree that consumers’ cognitive and emotional interpretations of advertising messages work hand-in-hand, with each influencing the other. Bettman (1979) and Preston (1982) on the other hand, hold an assertion that brand recognition is not a simple perceptual process but, rather, involves both long-term memory and emotional processes in the brain. The memory of events, times, places, associated emotions, and other conception-based knowledge in relation to an experience plays a very important role in the behavior of consumers in the marketing environment since this memory is capable of influencing the consumer to seek out the product when in the store or to simply recognize or identify when he or she sees it. Emotions and come from advertising and act as a catalyst to remembering and creation of an attitude towards a brand (Ehrenberg, Barnard, Kennedy, & Bloom, 2002). Our memory affects our attitudes towards products later in our lives. We always tend to perceive, comprehend, make decisions, and have sentimental feelings based on our memories of past occurrences. How does an advertising message does affect our emotional memory? Or does emotional response to advertising help us to retain the advertised message or motivate us towards a purchase-decision? No doubt, memory is possibly our most distinctive characteristic and defines who we are, acts as a guide to our present and future with the help of our past, but does advertising activate or stimulate our ability to remember past events that can subsequently persuade or motivate us to an eventual purchase?

ADVERTISING AS AN AGENT OF PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION

Persuasion is the key advertising goal most frequently pursued by advertisers and a host of advertisements are usually targeted at achieving persuasion. An ad can be persuasive when it succeeds to evoke emotional and personal past experiences, which in turn develops a positive attitude towards a brand that will result (if the necessary funds are available) in purchase. Whenever advertising information succeeds in investing its target customer personally, and emotionally, we can therefore expect persuasion to result. According to Meyers-Levy and Peracchio (1996), this concept goes through a number of consecutive phases – a cognitive phase (knowing about the brand and its characteristics), affective phase (building a positive feeling towards the brand, and as a consequence, the desire and attitude of purchase appear), and a behavioral phase, (whenever need or desire is translated into purchase). We will examine this concept by discussing how persuasive it is, why we think it persuades, and when it persuades. We will look at persuasive advertising from the points of view of how perceptions are formed, how people remember, how old information is recalled, and how all these arouse customers' positive attitudes toward a product or service.

It is known that when people recount their past experiences, they begin by visualizing perceptual details and embellish their memories based on those details. The feeling associated with remembering a past event, of "seeing" the event unfold in your mind's eyes, provides one with the belief that how the information is recollected is how it happened. Autobiographical advertising for instance will always allow consumers to become personally involved in the message and enjoy the trip back down memory lane, and the marketers will benefit from the positive affect brought forth by their message. In this case, marketers benefit directly by influencing the consumer attitude and purchase intention.
However, Ehrenberg, et al.(2002) argue that advertising that has penetrated through the filters and barriers of perception may not work in the way it has been intended or not work at all because the act of perception and behavioral act (i.e., purchase) are separated by a period of time. For instance, "the whole family is sitting before the television screen waiting for the next match in the world cup, and in the other context they are in the store pushing the cart." For perception to result in purchase, it has to "survive" until the time of purchase and, in the meantime, to have laid the foundations of some attitude with respect to the brand. Good enough, they conclude, "it needs the participation of long-term memory" and specifically, episodic memory. Memory thus, will survive and condition for shaping an initial attitude and an impulse to buy will be created.

Also, the understanding of the role of emotions in the process of remembering overstates the probability that memory will shape the decision to purchase. An advertised message, after being perceived and processed by conscience, reminds, triggers action, supports, and influences consumers' choices. Thus, emotions can come from an already advertised message and will act as a catalyst to remember and create an attitude towards a particular brand. Most advertising messages that succeed in triggering position emotions result in the consumer putting on a positive attitude towards the goods or service. Yet we consider some advertisements more persuasive than others.

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