

# Business communication trends



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Over the past 15 years communication technologies have made significant strides to make communication faster, easier, and more cost effective. Being on the frontlines of the computer industry I had the chance to witness how significantly the impact has been on my day-to-day business life, along with making companies more efficient at communicating to staff and customers. The biggest change to communication has been the Internet.

With the introduction of websites, blog, e-mail, and social media outlets nothing seems to be more than a click away. I work for a company that has spent a large amount time and money investing in communication technologies. With USANA operating in 14 countries leverage quick form of global communications is a must to save time and money. Over the past five years USANA has implemented video conferencing, corporate Wiki pages or intranets, blackberry's, formal document management systems, unified messaging, and voice over IP phone systems. Business Impact The biggest impact to our business has been video conferencing, voice over IP phone systems, and the e-commerce of the Internet. The video conferencing and IP phone systems have saved the company over \$100, 000 in the last two years and also increased productivity of the employees.

The video conferencing has taken away the need for our vice presidents to travel saving on average \$10, 000 a trip and also made it easier for them to schedule face-to-face meeting without the delay and wasted time for travel. Implementing the VOIP phone system has saved the company \$50, 000 a year in international long distance and also made it easier for employees to hold conference calls with people in different regions. The easiest trend to identify for my company is the effect of the Internet on how we do business.

Over the past seven years we have seen our North American business shift drastically to the Internet. Both our customer enrollment and purchasing have moved to the Internet at about a nine to 10 percent increase per year. This has allowed us to increase revenue and customer base without the need to increase our call center staff to handle the increased business.

USANA has not seen the same growth and Internet usage growth in our Asia Pacific market. Our customer in Asia Pacific market still want to have the human contact whether is face-to-face or over the phone with the staff in the area. The marketing department for USANA has done a research on this subject and has found the trend can be attributed to two factors. The first factor is availability and cost of broadband Internet in most Asian countries. Most Asia countries have a poor Internet infrastructure and where broadband Internet is available it has expensive. The other is the need for interpersonal contact with the company.

The second factor was the that Asian customers want to have the personal contact with the employees at the offices. It gives them the feeling that someone cares, and they are not just another number to the company. USANA also has begun to leverage social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate business news and deals quickly to customers. They are also using these sites to help with training the quickly expanding customer base. Personal Impact The two major communication trends that have affected my work and personal life over the past five years have been smartphone or mobile technology and remote access technologies. Working for the Information Technology department of an international company means that USANA is opened 24 hours and day six days a week leaving little

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down time for our staff members? The ability to work from home or on the road is necessary to support our internal customers.

This allows USANA as a company to be flexible with workers. This helps with the need to balance work and family life. With mobile and remote access technology it makes it so we can be on call without being at the office or change our schedules to cover graveyards. The negative side to this technology is that some management expects employees to be available 24 hours a day no matter what happens. I have heard many managers tell their employees, “ If the company pays for your phone, you are expected to answer it whenever we call.” I think this is an unreasonable expectation to have on employees because they are not always going to be someplace that is convenient.

My personal approach is that if an employee is on call and we attempt to contact an employee that he or she have one hour to return the call or contact another staff member to address the problem. This policy has seemed to work out well for my employees. Conclusion With the introduction of all these new communication technologies it is necessary for businesses and employees of try to figure out what is best for their business, customer, and employees. Businesses need to evaluate each technology and see if it fits their business model, customers need to learn how to leverage the technologies to make sure they are not missing opportunities, and employees need to figure out how to use them to balance work and life.