

The internet and contemporary business environments



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In business, it has become a particularly indispensable technology that affords enterprises many advantages, not the least of which is its elimination of proximity as an issue in collaboration. The mobile technologies that have arisen from the desire to harness the Internet's seemingly unlimited possibilities have enabled companies to facilitate cooperation, enhance productivity, and streamline operations. The common thread that holds these opportunities together is what may be the Internet's core advantage "enabling meaningful exchange in myriad ways."

Although enterprises and the professionals who run them have always maximized communication measures, no single technology has extended the span of interaction to the degree that the with drawbacks. This paper discusses business and communication issues" both positive and negative" that have emerged with the advent of the Internet. It maps the effects of this innovation, guided by a general-to-specific framework that highlights the following areas of interest: 0 The Internet and Mobile Technologies 0 Business Communication 0 Email I.

The Internet and Mobile Technologies: Advantages and Disadvantages As previously stated, the technological revolution made possible by the Internet and the ensuing technological changes has placed in our hands boundless opportunities. However, this limitlessness also presents difficulties in terms of reining in the exploitation of the technology. Although the ubiquity that comes with the Internet as afforded us unrestricted access that advances goal achievement, it also bears upon our ability to monitor and regulate usage that goes beyond the confines of acceptability or legality.

Telecommuting A radical change that the Internet ushered in is the manner by which employees accomplish their tasks, advancing a gradual shift from a traditional office-centered setup to one that allows for work at remote locations, most typically the home but also sometimes in alternative environments, such as cafés and outdoor areas. The most obvious advantage of telework is that it empowers employees to strike a work-life balance.

Workers who are allowed quality time with family and friends, as well as opportunities to pursue nonwork-related pursuits, have been argued as exhibiting stronger motivation to excel at work and higher productivity. Because employees work from home, they are less likely to take time off for minor illnesses. Ultimately, these individual improvements translate to benefits for the enterprise because fewer disturbances are imposed on workflow. Telecommuting also presents cost-related advantages to companies, reducing the need for office space, and accordingly, rent.

The downside of telework revolves around the loss of the emotional connection that is crucial to collaborative work. Face-to-face interaction among colleagues is an important element in project success because team members can motivate one another and communicate more accurately given the opportunity to convey both verbal and nonverbal cues. These emotion-oriented benefits are lost when employees telecommute, and if unmanaged may end up hampering business operations. Another drawback to telecommuting is that employers have no way of monitoring actual work rendered by employees.

Although not having supervisors constantly looking over employees' shoulders relieves pressure, it can also be one of the most challenging aspect of working from home, especially for people who have trouble building and applying self-discipline. Studies have shown that even in the office, employees spend considerable time browsing the Internet for personal consumption. The Internet contributes to company success in a number of ways: it helps companies reduce costs, improve market performance, collect information critical to research and development, and expand operations.

Enterprises can minimize their expenses on activities that can be automated via the Internet. Online retailers can minimize the need to keep inventory at a physical location, thereby reducing costs that would have been spent on rent and losses that would have been incurred from unsold goods. In a constantly changing market, competition has only intensified, compelling enterprises to formulate innovative ways to stay ahead of their rivals. The Internet is supportive of such efforts in that it facilitates monitoring of competitors and provides access to resources used for the design and manufacture of new products.

For companies looking to extend the markets that they serve, the Internet can function as platform from which to sell products and services, deploy personnel located in different regions, and establish a virtual workplace to eliminate costs related to establishing a physical office. The negative issues associated with Internet access include the need to keep track of personal use and potentially illegal activities, such as gambling and accessing pornographic sites.

Many enterprises would prefer restricting employee access in and outside the workplace, but comprehensive regulation without violating the boundaries of labor rights and privacy is difficult to achieve. The sustained growth and popularity of social media further complicate the aforementioned problems. Control over engagement in social media brings forth the potential violation of the freedom of expression, compelling enterprises to devote substantial time and resources to designing measures that are sensitive to workers' and companies' needs.

Mobile connectivity The Internet engendered the creation of a progressively mobile work culture, with smartphones as the primary devices for realizing on-demand connectivity. A phone is no longer merely a means of communication; state-of-the-art design and functionality has turned this initially single-function device into a practical all-in-one miniature office. Smartphones can be synced to workplace computers, and individuals can send and respond to email messages, connect to and surf the Internet, and participate in videoconferences" all on the go.

This anytime- anywhere availability substantially expands the flexibility with which people accomplish their work. Nonetheless, the always-on feature of mobile environments imposes undue stress on employees because it comes with the expectation of constant accountability. II. Business Communication Before the rise of the Internet, the communication channels commonly used in business were face-to-face interactions and communication by telephone. The by the Internet. Business interactions are characterized by internal and external communication.

A sizable part of internal communication is facilitated by the Internet and related technologies. The following communication tools function as means of internal exchange. 0 Company websites 0 Company databases External communication encompasses a company's interactions with its clients or customers, partners, and suppliers. The Internet has also enabled constant exchange between these parties through online platforms" a feature that is particularly beneficial to enterprises engaged in e-commerce. Websites have become popular avenues for partner collaboration, customer engagement, and retail sales.

The Internet endows companies the ability to reach their customers in various ways and to offer value-added benefits. Contributory to enterprise revenue are online advertising and additional services, such as online platforms for filling in information for application processing and record updating and forums for articulating consumer sentiment and feedback. Types of communication technologies Email and instant messaging Email and instant messaging are among the simplest and most easily accessible computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools among employees.

Aside from the immediacy of contact that these platforms provide, their ease of use makes them the tools of choice for many workers, especially those who are not wellversed in technical issues. The problem with these tools lies in their tendency to be impersonal media, prompting the meticulous composition of messages so as to prevent miscommunication and guarantee clarity. Writing a response may require effort that eats into time that may be allocated to equally important matters.

Furthermore, instant messaging may be an appropriate tool for interaction among colleagues, but may be unsuitable for communication with superiors. Another technology that has gained popularity as a communication tool because of the Internet is videoconferencing. This technology, to a certain extent, overcomes the emotion- and personality-related problems presented by email because it enables face-to-face conversation. It eliminates the need for complicated maneuvering of phrasing to arrive at sufficiently unambiguous and inoffensive expression.

The interactivity of videoconferencing, however, can be diminished by technical problems, including slow connection, incompatibility of software and hardware, and Communication issues in the contemporary workplace Communication problems and their effects Many types of communication-related problems are encountered in today's business environment.

Misunderstanding originates from a variety of sources, from the choice of communication tool to the manner by which messages are expressed. A critical component of effective communication is the ability to select the right medium for a particular message.

Instant messaging, for example, may be ideal for interactions that require quick responses, but it is not always the appropriate medium of communication. Its informal nature presents problems for when an employee needs to interact with his/her superiors. For complicated projects, this communication tool cannot replace the depth of discussion possible only under face-to-face interaction. Miscommunication also occurs when messages are ambiguously articulated or expressed in a way that may give

rise to negative impressions or interpretations. Language use over Internet tools considerably differs from that employed in personal interactions.

For one thing, the absence of nonverbal cues impedes understanding of what could otherwise be a simple message. The issue of immediacy of correction also figures in importantly” the receiver and sender of a message cannot immediately correct any misconceptions that arise from the exchange until after one or the other has responded. The delay in response may even be misinterpreted. Misunderstanding that stems from ineffective communication affects all areas of a business. Co-workers may develop animosity among one another, preventing them from effectively accomplishing their targets, especially in team-based projects.

Ambiguous messages can impede productivity because a clear understanding of roles and expectations is key to successful performance. The negative effects of declining productivity can, in turn, influence the management of relationships between subordinates and superiors, as well as those between a company and its customers. An emerging trend is the use of texting to communicate in the workplace, but such channels of communication are generally ineffective because these cannot replicate many of the features necessary to clear interaction. Similar to email, it suffers from the absence of opportunities to observe body language.

Hand gestures, posture, and facial expression aid conversation” aspects in which texting is severely limited. Another particularly negative effect of texting is the informality of exchange. Because of the limit to the length of messages that can be transmitted, people are encouraged to abbreviate

spelling and compress messages in ways that may influence grammaticality and clarity. Individuals become thoroughly accustomed to this means of communicating that the habits they form are sometimes carried over to other situations that require formal interaction.

The use of any communication medium should invariably be moderated by propriety and suitability. Text messaging is more appropriate for informal situations; the person one is conversing with should be a friend, relative, or colleague with whom one is sufficiently familiar for such exchange

Communicating in a team The success of group-based activities rests on the cohesion of a team and such unity is fostered by communicative effectiveness. Technologies used for communication can move progress along, whether team members report to an office or work emotely.

The Internet has enabled near-constant connectivity, which means that group members do not have to be physically present at a meeting place for discussions. Nevertheless, these technologies, no matter how advanced, are never a reason to neglect appropriate ways of expression and providing feedback. A good balance would be to use Internet communication tools as supplements rather than the primary tools of interaction. These can be used as channels for guaranteeing continuity of tasks, eliminating the need to confine team members to a single location.

Communicating in diverse environments Another increasingly prevalent characteristic of contemporary workplaces is diversity of cultures. These cultures revolve around not only the dominant work ethic and strategies adopted in an enterprise, but also employees of various descents.

Differences in ethnicities complicate the communication process in business environments because the problems presented by a medium of communication may be exacerbated by the nuances in language and verbal/nonverbal cues specific to a given culture.

Although the Internet has allowed for interaction among employees located in disparate regions, a significant issue to keep in mind is that in communication mediated by technology, extra care must be exercised to ensure messages are accurately expressed and understood. An environment characterized by mindful consideration and genuine acceptance of difference encourages exchange and improves the quality of work rendered by each member of an organization.

III. Email Advantages and disadvantages

The accessibility and ease of use provided by email have made it a staple in business communication strategies.

As a CMC tool, it offers several advantages. Messaging flexibility Email can be used to carry out a variety of communication-oriented tasks. It is a primary channel for the delivery of important information within an organization. Once this information is disseminated, email can be a platform for brainstorming on ideas, requesting for additional data, scheduling meetings, or soliciting feedback. Delivery is also decidedly versatile because there is practically no limit to the number and type of people to whom one can send information.

Email messages can be transmitted to point persons for a project, decision makers for funding, prospective and repeat customers, and potential hires. They can be sent to primary recipients, Email is also a good medium for

communicating time-oriented changes, such as those regarding project deadlines and meeting schedules. When appropriately phrased, such messages can convey the urgency of a situation or the need for a rapid response to an issue. The convenient response functionality facilitates exchange, while storage capability enables employees to keep records of their conversations.

Threads can be included or excluded from responses without deleting the original messages, which can still be conveniently forwarded in cases where a team acquires new member who needs to be kept up to speed on project developments. Even on accidental deletion, email messages can still be recovered because a server contains a copy of these messages. Additionally, the archive function of email improves record keeping, while search within email enables quick access to old records. Email can also be used to send memos or other more formal messages to upper management executives regarding company regulations and approvals.

Again, this CMC tool's record-keeping features are advantageous for situations wherein approvals or rejections require confirmation. The speed with which messages can be transmitted is one of the most touted benefits of email, but its asynchronous nature is also an advantage. For tasks that are not time sensitive, email offers the convenience of responding to messages at any period should an employee find himself/herself occupied at the time of receipt. Recipients can compose a more thorough response to an email, knowing that they can set aside a reply until such a period when they are not as pressed for time on another task.

Asynchrony also means that the progress of discussion does not depend on simultaneous presence. Senders and receivers do not have to send and read messages at the same time or set a schedule in advance for the email

Absence of emotion The absence of emotional cues in email messages has been highlighted as a disadvantage of this medium, but certain cases require the regulation of emotions. An emotionally charged situation would benefit from an impersonal medium, such as email, because the potential problems that emerge from person-to-person contact (e. g. sudden bursts of anger) will not worsen situations or impede a timely resolution of problems. Because a sender chooses at which point he/she sends an email, the message can be re-read and edited to make sure it does not contain sentiments that are irrelevant to the issue at hand. If the sender is feeling particularly strongly about an issue, writing an email message affords him/her the advantage of allowing feelings to abate before transmitting a message. These features are especially useful in employee- customer interactions, in which company personnel struggle to keep emotions in check while being berated by a disgruntled client.

Even as email is proving to be a versatile medium of communication, there remains a requirement for appropriate use. Unregulated use of email or ignorance of the limits **Miscommunication** Paradoxically, while email messaging facilitates exchange, it simultaneously results in misunderstanding. Many emotional nuances and gestures that are beneficial to interaction are missing from email exchanges, making this CMC tool conducive to misinterpretation. This disparity is particularly relevant to

feedback email given that such exchange often has a critical component to it.

The provider of feedback cannot use tone of voice, for example, to moderate the effect of criticism. Feedback that is perceived in a negative light can weaken employee morale, diminish motivation, and reduce productivity. Perhaps driven by these outcomes, the feedback provider, in turn, moderates future feedback to avoid hurting an employee's feelings. However, such an approach is ineffective in improving work quality because employees will mistakenly believe they are effectively carrying out their responsibilities.

In cases where sanctions are implemented to curb unfavorable employee habits, mixed messages can be a cause for complaint. Lack of professionalism Given that email messaging can be used for practically any purpose, employees tend to use informal language in composing messages. When communicating with colleagues and superiors, casual conversation may be misconstrued as a lack of respect for the receiver, an absence of careful thought in writing the message, or ignorance of the proprieties expected of an employee.

Email content With the accessibility and convenience of email, it is easy to believe that composing email messages would be an easy task. Although email is one of the most flexible CMC tools available, it also requires considerable restraint. As pointed out in the previous sections, many problems can arise even from unintended mistakes in the manner by which expressions are phrased in an email. Furthermore, you want to make sure

your email elicits the response that you are hoping for, that it is read and acted on. Effectively writing email does not entail sophisticated technical knowledge.

In most cases, all it takes is careful consideration in expressing one's thoughts. In what follows, some guidelines for writing email are discussed. Subject field A typical practice in writing email is to write a generic subject or a subject that summarizes the details discussed in an email, but the problem with this approach is that it does not provide a sufficient glimpse into what the message may contain, how important it is, or whether immediate response or action is required from the receiver. For your email to acquire the response that you are expecting, your subject line action.

These guidelines not only ensure that your email is read in a timely manner, but also prevents it from being disregarded, or worse, mistaken as spam and automatically forwarded to the spam folder. An EOM headline also effectively draws attention to your email. This headline places all significant information in the subject field. An example is as follows: Subject: 12/10 meeting, 1 pm, room 405, re New Hiring Policies EOM Note, however, that an EOM eadline works only if the details of the email lend themselves to summarization. Including excessive details is unfavorable because this approach will make the subject field look cramped.

Email body Content. There is a tendency to squeeze in all important information or action points in a single email, especially if these items are related. The danger of writing email in this manner is that not all action points necessitate the same amount of effort or are characterized by the

same urgency. Grouping all necessary actions/information in one message may also result in confusion because the receiver may inadvertently rioritize an item that is actually secondary in importance. Think of writing email messages as akin to writing paragraphs” there must only be one core idea per message.

This strategy guarantees that each action point receives the immediacy and breadth of response that it deserves. If your information is on a single project, consider sending email messages in series, with a clearly understandable code that will help the receiver determine which email to act on first. Because a substantial part of collaborative work may be devoted to email exchange, composing messages that are as clearly as possible is the best approach to communication. Facilitate comprehension by writing ideas as bulleted or numbered items.

Other formatting techniques, such as italicization or writing in bold typeface, draws attention to important points, especially in a long email. A good technique is to draft an outline for your email before composing it. An outline will ensure completeness, accuracy, and clarity because this is where you ascertain the email’s purpose, expected outcomes, and needs of your recipients (e. g. , whether attaching a document is necessary). Outlining also helps you organize your ideas. An additional tip for writing effective email is to put your most important messages at he beginning and end of the email message.