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Executive summary

Computer based communication has become popular in the recent past especially due to the advancement in Internet technology.

Email, wikis, blogs, instant messaging and video conferencing are some computer-based communications that have had a great impact on communication. Blogging and Instant Messaging (IM) are the most popular of these computer based communication. Computer based communication has transformed the way business is carried out. It has lead to introduction of new business channels and new ways for interacting with the customers. However computer based communication systems have some negative impacts such as the ease of spreading negative information.

Computer based communication is slowly replacing conventional communication. With advancement in internet technology, various computer based communication will continue to gain popularity. This research looked at the impact of computer based communication on business. It started by explaining the impact of the internet in general then the paper will concentrate on the use of Instant Messaging and blogs. The research looked at both the positive and the negative impacts of the internet in business. The main research method that was used will be literature review. Material containing information on computer communication was reviewed and used to build up the subject of this study. From the finding the researcher concluded that there are many advantages of the advancement in computer communication in business.

This is especially so with regard to public relations that has improved due to the use of the internet. This implies that a lot has to be done to ensure that businesses take advantage of the use of computer based communication for the wellbeing of their businesses.

Introduction

Advancement in computer technology has had a great impact on business communication. Computer based communication has almost replaced conventional means of communication. Internet technology has led to a revolution in communication with the advent of such applications as Email, wikis, blogs, instant messaging and video conferencing (Nicole, 2007, par 7). Not only has internet technology led to a reduction in cost of communication but has also provided an effective means of communication across long distances.

As a consequence of advancement in computer and internet technology, computer based communication is slowly replacing conventional communication

Effect of internet on communication

Impact of computer based communication, particularly those supported by the internet is evident. Computer technology has led to great impact on people's lives. Today, carrying a laptop or palmtop is becoming part of people's culture. Not only do people have access to the internet in their work places or at homes, but modern technology has allowed portable internet supporting devices (Freeman, 2003, p. 53).

As a result of internet portability, people can access the internet at any place from their home to right in their vehicles. This makes it possible for people to work away from offices. For example lawyers are able to work with their clients remotely and sort out legal issues. Internet technology has revolutionized communities around the world. It has transformed these communities from a tightly knit society into a loosely bounded and networked society. Wellman et al (2003, para 4) points out how governments and citizens interact through use of internet.

For instance they singled out Scottish government's use of email in accepting petitions from the Scottish citizens. Moran (2008) asserts that internet use will bring great impact on the way people carry out their daily business. Spaeth (2008, par 9) warns that organizations that not take advantage of social media are likely to get out of business. This is because other firms will use internet social media as a means of gaining competitive edge over rivals. To drive other competitors out of business, such firms will utilize internet in reducing competitive disadvantage and meeting other strategic organization objectives. Blogging, video sharing services, micro-blogging, and other social networking are impacting on people's lives, particularly in communication. Instant Messaging has completely changed the way communication is carried out.

Many Instant Messaging programs are in use today with about eighty percent of internet users using one or more of the programs to communicate. Low cost of using Instant Messaging and ability to use the service at virtually any place with internet access has motivated many users (Wilkins, 2007, par 5).

Instant Messaging

Instant Messaging is a recent introduction to communication and has had a great impact on communication. IM is an online communication whereby individuals key in messages through the keyboard of their computers. Unlike conventional message communication, IM is almost synchronous enabling real time message communication. Popularity of Instance Messaging can be traced in 1990 (Isaacs, Walendowki, Whittaker and Schiano, 2002, p. 121). Internet Relay Chat (IRC) and Multi User Dungeons (MUD) were the initial Instant Messaging supporting technologies.

IRC, still in use today, allows users to communicate with many servers that are dedicated to a particular topic. MUD on the other hand enables users to participate in real time chats in virtual communities. Unlike these older programs, Instant Messaging enables users to communicate through real time message with other people that they already know. Among the popular instant Messaging companies today include Yahoo! Messenger, MSN Messenger, AOL Instant Messenger and ICQ.

Impact of Instant Messages in business

Instant Messages is among the cheapest means of communication. While other internet communications such as email may cost an organization significant amount, Instant Messaging is provided virtually free of charge. IM has significant impact on communication in business and Media.

In business, IM is being used as an effective way of providing support to customers. Through live chats customer can raise their inquiries to an organization. An online live chat support can be able to respond to

customers addressing their issues interactively. Unlike call support, IM is cheap and fast. In addition, a customer support can be able to respond to many inquiries simultaneously.

Impact of Blog in business

Blogs provide a means for people from any part in the world to contribute to a particular subject or topic.

Some of the important impacts of blogs in business are on market research and public relation (Braffort, 1999, p. 57). Through blogs, organizations or businesses can be able to get customer/ public's opinions over their business, products or services.

Blogs provides an important source of information therefore helping in business research (Mangold and Faulds, 2007, p. 263). With regard to public relations, blogs enable people to raise issues over a company's products. Ability to express opinion over an organization, a product or a service is by itself a public relation act. In addition, through the blogs public relations officers in organization can be able to respond to the issues raised. Many organizations today run blogs to enable them to communicate with their customers (Kent, 2009, p. 33).

The blogs mainly act as gateways to communication with the outside world. Conventionally the mass media was the primary means for public relations. Before the internet become famous, people had limited sources of information and mainly relied on the mass media for information. In addition, people had limited means for expressing their grievance, suggestions or inquiry. Customers who were not happy with an organization had very

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limited means of raising their issues (Bryant and Oliver, 2009, p. 65).

Emergence of blogs provided new ways for connecting with an organization.

According to (Kent p.

1 2007) blogs are a recent addition to the use of technology by an organization and it is having a significant impact on public relations. Blogs have empowered the public significantly therefore making organizations to take them seriously. Through blogs, people discuss freely about various topics including products provided by organization. Failure of an organization to respond to blogs can therefore have significant negative impacts on its public relations.

To be able to respond to issues raised by customers, organizations have to use the same channels of communication as the public. Communications through blogs therefore become an effective way for public relation.

Contributions in blogs are usually personal in nature thus the use of this channel by organizations for Pr will enable organizations to retain customers by giving personalized customer services.

The personal nature and closeness provided by blog enable blogs to be a preferred means for expressing opinion (Macias, Freimuth & Hilyard, 2008, par. 7). Personal contribution of senior employees to a blog has very positive impact in public relation.

Negative Impact on Communication

Although computer based communications have brought significant positive impact on communication, they have some negative impacts. Blogging enables individuals to contribute freely to a topic.

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Therefore, there is likelihood for biased or false information in the contributions. In business, blogs can be used by competitors to raise negative issues about a company. Although an organization has an opportunity to correct some of the misinformation in communication, some of it may have long-term negative impact on the company. Instant Messages have wide usage in organizations. Addiction to IM leads to loss of a manpower and time in organizations (Perkins, 2008, par 8; Grinter and Palen, 2002, p. 73).

Conclusion

Computer based communication has had a great impact on communication.

Considering the positive and negative impacts of this type of communication on businesses advantages outweigh the negative impacts and businesses have to take advantage of this technology to advance their businesses.

Emails, blogs, wikis, IM and other computer based communication have changed communication at various levels of the society. As some of the most popular computer based communication, blogs and Instant Messages have had significant impacts on communication.

In business the internet is not only used for advertising but also for direct interaction with the customer. Through blogs organizations can understand their customers and be able to respond to their needs appropriately. Instant Messaging is among the cheapest computer based communication and organizations need to take advantage of this so as to reduce communication cost. With advancement in internet technology, various computer based

communication will continue to gain popularity and organizations need to keep themselves up to date with these developments.

Some issues that may need to be looked into include the ability of all organizations worldwide to keep themselves up to date with the advancements in technology which affects their competitiveness.

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