

Business Communication

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UNIT - V

Technology and Business Communication : Roll and effectiveness of technology in Business Communication – e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging – modern techniques like video conferencing, social networking , strategic importance of e – communication.

Technology and Business Communication

Introduction

Technology has altered modern life in many ways, especially in the workplace. The invention of computers, the miniaturization of electronics and the development of wireless communication have all altered the business world. Business communication, in particular, has seen some of the greatest advancements due to technological developments.

Technology Improvement

The Development of the Cellular Phone

One of the biggest advancements in communication has been the development of the cellular phone. In the past, your only chance of reaching employees was when they were at their desks, prompting endless games of “phone tag” as people tried to connect during busy workdays. Now, workers are reachable no matter where they are, and even during non-work hours. The development of smartphones has also greatly expanded the types of business activities you can transact when out of the office, increasing productivity and extending the workday.

Other Communication Devices

Phones are not the only high-tech communication devices, of course. Computers come in a wide variety of configurations these days, including tablets, small-but-powerful laptops, 2-in-1 devices that serve as either a laptop or tablet, and other

variations. These devices all have built-in wireless capabilities and can also be configured with mobile communications, making them, in essence, large cell phones. Whichever device a business person carries, it facilitates verbal, text and image communications.

Teleconferencing

High-speed data connections allow for the use of teleconferencing, virtual meetings held over audio and video links. Teleconferencing can save substantial amounts of money otherwise spent on travel by connecting important employees in far-flung branches together to share ideas and information. The use of virtual whiteboards, communal data-sharing platforms where remote users can interact as if around the same table, further increase the possibilities of the virtual workplace.

Image Scanning

Document and image scanners allow workers to convert paperwork, plans, diagrams and photos into electronic files quickly for storage and transmission. Instead of relying on hand delivery of important documents across town or across the country, employees can scan and send these files in a matter of seconds across the Internet. An architectural firm could, for instance, scan updates to a plan, transmit it to the client, receive changes and make alterations all before a messenger would have been able to make the first run across town.

Radio Frequency Identification Tags

The development of radio frequency identification (RFID) has substantially changed the field of business logistics and, paired with other business communication advancements, has the potential to increase a company's efficiency significantly. RFID tags are small chips that respond to radio waves with encoded information, allowing companies to tag and track items and materials. When an employee activates a scanning device, all RFID tags within range will respond with their coded information, allowing for quick updates of warehouse inventories and real-time tracking of shipments as they pass through the supply chain. Being able to access inventory on demand allows companies to take advantage of "just-in-time" shipping, providing products and material only when needed to reduce warehousing requirements and reduce the amount of excess stock stored at retail or office facilities.

How Can Technology Improve Communication Within Your Company?

Below are some common examples of the ways technology can help your company communicate more effectively:

•Video Conferences:

You can use a video conferencing tool to hold a weekly meeting with your employees, even if they cannot be physically present, which results in consistent workflows.

• Text Messaging:

You can also use technology such as SMS messaging to assign tasks to employees and monitor their progress, for effective workflows.

• Scheduling Systems:

You can better coordinate service calls or appointments through a common scheduling system, for efficient workflows.

• Web Portal:

You can utilize a communication management portal/system to hold all of your communication data, for optimized workflows.

The Impact of Technology on Business Communications

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Communication technology, such as mobile phones, email, text messaging, instant messaging and social networking have had a profound effect on nearly everyone's business and personal lives. While technology makes communications faster and easier, at times it can also be intrusive and misinterpreted.

Instant Communication

Sharing information with people inside and outside an organization is faster and easier than ever. The upside is you can get the answers you need almost instantly; the downside is business tends to infiltrate personal time. Gone are the days when you could go uninterrupted while you're on a flight, at the grocery store, or attending your child's soccer game.

To make matters worse, some platforms reveal your on-line status and others track the emails you open, sending the message that you're available anytime you look at your phone or computer.

The most popular apps— FB Messenger, WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, Yahoo, and Skype— have blurred the line between business and personal

communication even further; making it commonplace to be communicating with a client and get an instant message from a friend, or vice versa.

An IT Professional can help identify communications that are safe and effective for your business, and adjust settings to protect the time and space you need outside of normal business hours.

New Communication Platforms

Business apps have opened even more lines of communication. For example, Slack is easy to learn, the links and file uploads show up in order and all the conversations are searchable for later. Also, the ability to create a Google Hangout from inside a chat room is a cool and useful feature.

Base camp makes it easy to share files and stay in the loop on projects and with client information. It's easy to use and a go-to for getting team communication up and running.

Write is a task and project management tool, with the ability to easily “@” message team members through tasks and the activity stream, bringing context to the conversation.

Also, some of the apps/platforms mentioned previously, allow people to communicate easily regardless of time zone or language barriers.

Your IT Consultant is the best source for information about business programs and platforms that will be ideally suited for your company.

Deliberate Communication

Although technology has made communication instantaneous, it has also made planning communication with remote employees more important. Companies that take advantage of telecommuting and virtual offices need to consistently touch base with remote employees and groups to ensure they're all working toward the same goals. Even if you work in a common office, instantaneous communication cannot replace specific meetings where big decisions are discussed.

Communication is only 7 percent verbal and 93 percent non-verbal. The non-verbal component is made up of body language (55 percent) and tone of voice (38 percent)

As we all know from text messaging, the written word can sometimes be misinterpreted (sarcasm, for example doesn't translate well); without tone and inflection messages can lose their meaning. As you can see from the figures above, phone calls are not as effective as in-person meetings. In fact, more than half of the message is lost during a call. Skype isn't just popular because it's inexpensive, when you can see who you're talking to you the communication is more effective.

Your IT Representative will be able to help you safely install the equipment you need for the most effective business communication.

The Instant Distraction

It's quite common for employees to wear headphones in offices, but if you think most of them are listening to music, think again. Most are blocking out the office chatter, the ringing phones, and the incessant "dings" of instant messages. Communication tools that were designed for better productivity, can make it harder for employees to tend to one task at a time. When concentration is constantly being interrupted it's difficult to get anything done.

A study found that 82 percent of all interrupted work is resumed on the same day. But, it takes an average of 23 minutes and 15 seconds to get back to the task. In a study, people were assigned a typical office task: answer a set of emails. In one condition, they were not interrupted. In another condition, they were interrupted with phone calls and IM's. Using a NASA workload scale (which measures various dimensions of stress), the study found that people scored significantly higher when interrupted. They had higher levels of stress, frustration, mental effort, feeling of time pressure and mental workload.

Your IT Advisor can adjust settings, alerts and other distractions to reduce distractions, decrease stress, and increase productivity.

Technological Advancements in Communication

Notable technological advancements in communication since the late 1800s include the telephone and related technologies like the answering machine and fax machine, the internet and the cellular telephone. Mass communication also brought revolutionary changes, including movies, broadcast radio and television and tremendous advances in printing and photography.

The Landline Phone

While the invention of the wired telegraph enabled people to rapidly communicate over long distances, the telephone was the first instantaneous communications device to find its way into large numbers of homes and businesses.

Alexander Graham Bell patented the invention in the 1870s, and within a few decades millions of the devices were in use. Phones enabled people to connect with neighbors and, for a larger fee, friends and family around the country and around the world. The technology gradually improved to enable calls without operator assistance and, eventually, to allow direct-dial long-distance and international calls.

Landline phones gradually evolved from models that connected the user simply to an operator who would place a call to rotary phones, enabling automatic dialing, then to touch-tone phones, allowing for speedier calls. Answering machines were developed to record messages from callers when recipients were away or busy. And public pay phones popped up to let people make calls on the go. Fax machines also became common in offices, especially starting in the 1980s. These allowed use of telephone lines for sending document copies relatively quickly without having to mail them or send them by private messenger.

Computers and the Internet

As computing technology rapidly evolved after World War II, scientists and engineers quickly grasped the importance of connecting computers across long distances to share information. By the late '60s, researchers had begun to create the beginnings of today's internet through a government-backed network called Arpanet, named for the Defense Departments' Advanced Research Projects Agency. That network connected universities, government agencies and communications companies. By 1972, the first Arpanet email was sent.

Networking protocols, meaning the systems that computers use to talk to each other electronically, were developed in this period.

By the late '70s and '80s, as home computers became somewhat common, local bulletin board systems popped up, allowing computer users to connect to an often free-and-hobbyist-run system where they could exchange messages, play games and otherwise share information with other users. Email between BBSes was possible but slow, since the systems had to actually dial in to one another to pass messages from one bulletin board to another.

National commercial online services, such as CompuServe, Prodigy and America Online, also popped up during the '80s and grew during the '90s. The

services were slow, expensive and primitive-looking by today's standards, but they allowed users from around the U.S. to communicate, read news, get weather information and more from their home computers.

By the mid-'90s, many of these services and new dial-in internet service providers allowed users to connect to the rapidly growing internet, a descendant of Arpanet. Users could access websites, send emails and instant messages and access other online services, including some BBSes that had moved to the internet, usually using slow dial-up modems.

As telephone companies and cable companies began offering faster connections by the late '90s, the internet began to be more mainstream and more useful for things like shopping and business.

Cellular Phones

Early portable phones began to appear in the '70s, and car phones began to be popular by the '80s, but the devices were still large, clunky and expensive.

By the late '80s, portable handheld cellular phones became available, and by the late '90s, the devices were mainstream. Pagers, which allowed users to receive notifications — and simple messages — when they were called, also became popular during the '90s, though they required availability of a pay phone or other landline phone to return a call.

Pagers gave way to pocket-sized cell phones, which, for the first time, let users receive and make phone calls outside their homes or businesses. Early plans offered limited calling time and roaming ability outside a home network, but those features rapidly developed, and cellphones started to displace landline phones for some users.

Text messaging also boomed in popularity in the early 2000s, and some cell phones allowed limited access to the internet and email.

Smart Phones and Social Media

In 2007, Apple CEO Steve Jobs famously debuted the iPhone, the first modern smart phone. The device enabled full access to the World Wide Web and email, as well as traditional phone features like calling and texting. The iPhone, and Google's rival platform, Android, soon had support for third-party apps that would let users do anything from ordering food to checking bank balances.

At the same time, social media companies like Facebook and Twitter took off, allowing users to connect and share information online without requiring the IT skills

needed to build a traditional website. As smartphone popularity grew, they became natural hubs for social networking, and these two technological advancements in communication grew in tandem. New kinds of phone-first social media, including Instagram and Snapchat, appeared, as did smart phone-focused messaging tools like WhatsApp and Telegram. Many of these tools took advantage of increasingly powerful cameras built into modern smart phones.