



Thoughts and Strategies From Maryann Communication

We all make sounds in the delivery room when we come into this world. Our parents soothe us with their voices. We continue to hear sounds and soon imitate what our family is saying. After many times of trying to form words and sentences we learn how to express our thoughts and feelings. This is the beginning of how you and I communicate.



Webster's defines communication as, "a process whereby information is enclosed in a package and is channelled and imparted by a sender to a receiver via some medium. The receiver then decodes the message and gives the sender a feedback." This broad definition of communication highlights a very important fact; communication depends on the medium. Today the medium has drastically changed from face to face intimate conversations, to mechanical tools conveying our deepest thoughts and feelings. Is society prepared for these changes? How are these mediums affecting us? Is this good for our youths and families? What will the future look like?

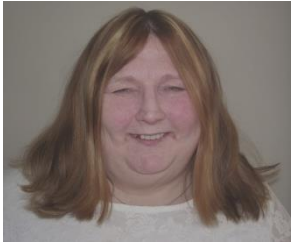
Today we are living in a time that communication is being revolutionized. We have changed how the information is being sent. The electronic age has allowed us to send the same message to so many people at once. At the same time we are still using our interpersonal skills by listening, observing, questioning, analyzing and evaluating, but is it truly the same as a face-to-face meeting? Let's take the simple example of texting. If I send you a text noting, "I'm angry" . . . how would you interpret this? A text offers very little. If I were standing in front of you, arms crossed and teeth clenched, screaming that "I'm angry", you can read my subtle communications, and you are aware of my emotional state.

The newest, fastest and quickest way of sending messages is texting. The latest toy for this method of communication is the iPhone, offering many things that the computer does such as email, internet, chat rooms, twitter, Facebook, calendars, pictures, the whole gambit. The package of information, the sender and receiver are still the same, but the medium has changed.



Is society ready for this change? From a business standpoint, I believe businesses enjoy being able to process digital information at a faster speed. It has allowed North American companies to put more pressure on our already fast paced life. This is creating numerous health problems, which I think will increase our spending of health dollars. The amount of stress related medical conditions are being traced back to the way we live. Cell phones have offered many freedoms, but at a price. We are now tethered to the office and always available which is not healthy! The brain and body needs to relax. The industry has in essence created a new psychological disorder, "disconnection from phone phobia."

I heard of a lady in the States having an operation on the ligament of her thumbs which was caused by too much texting. We use Facebook and Twitter now as a teenager, when in the past they would have written in their diaries. How long will this information be in cyber space? What if people use this tool as a way to say terrible messages about a person? This was just played out in an afternoon soap opera. It basically said there is another way to gossip to the masses, which can hurt the persons' reputation.



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The digital communication mediums are changing at a fast speed, the policies and laws are not able to change as quickly. Our government is starting to look at the communication privacy laws and other concerns in this area. It seems they get one thing done and two others are created, which needs their attention. The circle continues.

We all have a choice of being the receiver for communication. When I read what people have written in public areas, I am amazed what graffiti there is and how much. Graffiti is usually pictures, angry word, a strange or obscene message, but we have a choice to ignore these images. We have choice to listen to people like Howard Stern on the radio. What about the internet? People are able to write messages on the Internet and our choice is limited because it is mixed in with the games or other information that we want. The filters and boundaries we use in other written material is not being used to the same degree. We are even bombarded on our personal phones! Our government attempts to protect us from communication misuse, creating laws for graffiti but what about the internet and our cell phones?



The uses of personal communication tools have drastically changed our lives. I heard of a prominent doctor in the states texting while driving, and the poor man died. People are actually texting while they are sitting next to each other. Teenagers and college students text to each other while in class. Family members at family celebrations use their phones to text people. While I was growing up we were not allowed to use a phone during meals. Our families have little social time, as we do not sit at the table and now at big celebrations the outside world is invading our time and privacy. How would Emily Post perceive this situation? What would Mrs. Posts' say about the etiquette of cell phones? Is texting in a classroom the same thing as talking in a classroom? I'm sure that Emily would see them as being the same, which means cell phones do not have a place in the classroom.

The future may see smaller phones such as hearing aid phones. Will they be able to transfer our thoughts onto the other person? Does Star Trek and other science fiction shows of have the correct idea where the new generation can talk with a visor or mind communication? Will that be our next medium? I'm sure I cannot picture what it will be like in a hundred or so years.

Today we have laws to protect us privately and publicly from the land phone. The communication mediums we are using do not have such protection from the government. Our laws have to advance to give us better safety with the tools we use and how they are used. There are many discussions about family life past and present. Terms like latch door key kid, nuclear family, and loss of family values. These terms express how much we have moved away from the "proper way of doing things." The digital world has contributed to all of these changes. The society is full of changes it does not mean all are for the best of society. Let us be the people who decide.