



Jeff Geiger Counters

How We Communicate

By: Jeffrey Hamilton Geiger. *Friday, August 3rd, 2012*

In an **interesting article in the ABA Journal**, Debra Cassens Weiss investigates the societal change in human interaction brought about by technology. While she directs her attention to how law students work with others, the emphasis is on a perceived lessening of human interaction. I think many would surmise (not earth shattering) that our electronic (or cyber) means of communications have led to a corresponding lessening of direct interaction.

Here are some off-the-cuff remarks:

1. When was the last time you used a payphone? Shoot, how often do you send an e-mail or text instead of picking up the phone and calling the person?
2. While traditional communications may have declined, I would suspect that our wired society results in more interaction whether by e-mail, social networking, texting, etc. When you think about AT&T's 1979 "**Reach out and Touch Someone**" advertising campaign (this is worth a click for the clothes alone), it is now reality.
3. The generational difference leads to conflicts in how communications are made, received and perceived. Born in 1970, I played **PacMan**, never made long distance calls and had to write school reports by hand. My middle school daughter texts her friends, has access to the Internet and can view 300+ cable channels (assuming parental approval).
4. The codes and cues available in direct interaction are often missing, or at least different, in electronic media. While you can send an e-mail in "all caps," it is hard to always pick up on what the person is attempting to convey—yet this was true with letters.
5. The immediacy of the communication is both good and bad. You can respond to an e-mail while sitting at a restaurant with your friends, but in doing so the efficiency may give way to a lack of attention to the message.

Yes, yes, I recognize that my comments are not novel. But I do suggest is that there continues to be a technological divide in the workplace and beyond as to how people listen, learn and respond. Please don't ding me for stating the obvious but I welcome your comments.

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