



## What Does the Future Hold and What Does it Mean to Communication Strategy?

by Centre for Strategic Communication Excellence

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Strategic thinking means studying trends and applying communication know how to help organisations stay on the leading edge of productivity and business results. One of those fast-moving trends is adoption of technology in the workplace. The new IC ebook, *Disrupting the Function of IC, A Global Perspective*, features insights from four senior communication professionals about the impact of technology at work. How could you use this information to inform your strategy?

In her article published in *Disrupting the Function of IC, "Medium, Message and Technology,"* Catherine St. Onge, Manager of Global Employee Communication for Air Canada takes us back 60 years to the wisdom of the oft-quoted Marshall McLuhan:

"Over 60 years ago, in 1964, Canadian professor and philosopher Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase "the medium is the message," in his book *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*. The idea being that the medium, or what we, in internal communications often refer to as channels, inevitably embeds itself in any message it conveys. This theory, or concept, holds true today given the abundance of channels available to internal communication professionals, and how they directly influence both the content they carry, and the strategy and tactics employed."

While Professor McLuhan's famous phrase has been repeated in many different contexts over the last six decades proving one point or another, there has never been a time in recent history when this particular message has been so relevant.

Catherine and other authors writing for Chapter 3 about the "Impact of Technology on the Profession" unanimously conclude that mobile technology is everywhere and the use of mobile phones to stay connected is growing at

unprecedented speeds. There is no denying the use of mobile phones as a primary employee communication channel.

[Sia Papageorgiou's](#) insights in "Coping with the Digital Evolution" offers compelling statistics:

In 2015, the Ericsson Mobility Report estimated over 2 billion smartphones were in use worldwide. They estimate that's going to make an enormous jump to 6.1 billion, or 70% of the global population, by 2020 and that 90% of the populated globe will have high-speed mobile data coverage by then as well.

Yahoo Flurry estimates that around 90% of people's mobile time is spent in apps as opposed to mobile sites. They also estimate that app usage grows by about 11% year after year. As they put it: It's an app world. The web just lives in it. The workplace is no longer a physical space occupied by employees during office hours. The ability to work from anywhere, and at any time, has changed the way we do business, as well as the way we communicate in and outside the organisation. According to the International Data Corporation (IDC), the US mobile worker population is expected to account for nearly three-quarters of the total US workforce by 2020, and manufacturing, construction, retail and healthcare workers are inherently more mobile. The same industries are expected to see faster growth in their mobile worker population than other markets.

### **This means one thing: go mobile or go home**

Brad Whitworth's article, The Digital Revolution in Internal Communication notes that "Over the past decade, an employee's outside-of-work technology capabilities quickly matched and then surpassed what the IT department provided at his or her desk. You can credit Moore's Law, named after Intel co-founder Gordon Moore. He observed in 1965 that the number of transistors per square inch on integrated circuits doubled every year since their invention and predicted that the trend would continue. And he was right. Each year for the last 50 years, tech companies have been delivering twice the computing power at about the same price as the prior year. Today the newest iPhones come with up to 64 times the memory of the 2007 model and are offered for about the same average selling price."

Sean Williams, Vice President and Practice

Lead of True Digital Communications says "The impact of electronic communication on internal communication in general has been momentous, apart from the obvious tactical considerations. Whether organizations fully understand it or not, the advent of e-mail, intranets, text and instant messaging and enterprise social networks have changed the way that organizations and employees build relationships.

As Moore's Law implies, technology continues to advance. Many organizations get caught up in the bright, shiny object syndrome, adopting technology with little strategy for how to implement it. Technology definitely has changed internal communication. The pendulum swings, from print and face-to-face, to email to enterprise social networks and instant messaging. Each swing reveals externalities, as the law of unintended consequences alters the employee-organization relationship.

Internal communication strategic planning remains a critical first step, regardless of what technological advances present themselves. Just as with external constituencies, organizational strategy must lead communication strategy, let alone communication tactics and tools. Without a clear set of expectations, interim measures and definitions of success, communicators run the risk of succumbing to fads."

The Centre for Strategic Communication Excellence is a proud Platinum Level sponsor of Disrupting the Function of IC, a compilation of global insights on internal communication. This publication is a must read for business who want to create employee ambassadors that influence positive business results.

We invite you to get the whole story from Catherine St. Onge, Sia Papageorgiou, Brad Whitworth, Sean Williams and 26 other authors who believe as we do that great communication can change the world.

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