

Chapter 3

Understanding Social Communication

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ABSTRACT

George Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” That statement is the reason social communication is covered here with a historical view. This review of computer mediated communications (CMC) is important in understanding some of the key developments that created the social media environment we know today. A discussion of the portable nature of these communications is relevant as the foundation for a deep understanding of social communication. This is an important analysis in helping people understand the way we can use information technology to interact without the limitations of geographical distance and time.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers computer-mediated communication (CMC) history and development, but first we must look at full-range communication. History and development are important to understand in order to set the foundation for finding a deep understanding of social communication. For instance, James Arthur Baldwin, American novelist, essayist, playwright, poet, and social critic, said, “Know from whence you came. If you know whence you came, there are absolutely no limitations to where you can go.” Success in social networking relies on creating relationships and building strong ties.

This analysis of CMC is important because it is a popular way people use information technology to interact. CMC is portable and it removes the boundaries or limitations of geographical distance and time. Computer-mediated relating (CMR) is another term relevant for our learning journey because it addresses interpersonal dimensions of interactions, encompassing a broader spectrum of exchanges than CMC might, such as online friendships and romantic communications (Cooper and Sportolari 1997, Whitty and Gavin 2001).

This examination is important because it demonstrates all of the tools available to communicators and it suggests limitations that exist in strictly online communications. For instance, the feedback cycle is crucial in communication importance because we know that messages are rarely fully “one-way” activities. The sender needs clarification that the receiver or receivers decode the message in the way it was intended or that they received the value that the sender intended to provide in the communication. A mutual agreement between the communicating parties is vital to ensure effective interactions that are true to the original message and its meaning. This agreement sets the stage for the continuing, cyclic conversation that should follow the original engagement. A truly effective communication features all parties accepting responsibility to exhibit authenticity and accuracy. Human contact or interaction can be important to improving the engagement, but they are not normally available in digital communications.

CMC is so powerful today in making connections with people. Studies on Gen Y and Millennials demonstrate their constantly growing numbers in terms of participation. These groups are known to prefer the use of instant messaging or other social media over stopping by an office for a talk (Tardanico 2012). That preference makes it a real challenge to build and nurture a team and corporate culture unless you can create real relationships and strong ties. Social media allows us to communicate on very serious topics like contracts, purchases, and love. The feedback cycle is very important because the sender needs to know that the other party or

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