May 12th, 2:45 PM - 4:15 PM

Communicating with Technology in our Workplace

Amelia Hill
Portland State University

Running Head: Technology in the Workplace

Challenges of Technology in the Workplace

Amelia Hill

Portland State University

Communications 323U

Introduction

When modern technology took off in the 1990's it surpassed all previous forms. It's amazing how technology can be, it is used to keep families and friends in contact, and it has advanced medical research, and enables the growth of businesses. While technology can enhance communications within an organization, it can also cause misinformation, distraction, and there is always 'technology difficulties'. These present a few organizational risks and challenges of human interaction in a work place that will be described in this essay. It is important to look into these problems so the professional world is aware of them and is able to determine and establish coping mechanisms and policies for the future. Being aware of the challenges technology to communications helps to better understand these issues. Knowing these is key to overcoming them and have better training for the future. I investigated these issues through researching online journal articles and some business websites. I wanted to understand what the subcategories of the main challenges were, without the bias opinions specific people. To do this I needed quality information. The approach that is used to investigate this topic is that by looking into the different types of technological problems focusing on the misinformation it can present, how distracting it can be, and the difficulties of simply using technology. The intention of researching this topic is to enlighten the reader of how modern technology can hinder the development of originations. This is an exciting project to explore because of the effect technology has on the future.

Body

Misinformation is a huge challenge in technology communication from the smallest business to the biggest non-profit organization. There are many risks involved with this type of challenge. Misinterpretation is failure to interpret or explain communication (Definitions, 2013). This can happen in a few of ways such as, misreading an electronic message, failing to properly communicate a message, and or taking a message out of context. Misunderstanding is mistaking the meaning or intention in communication (Definitions, 2013). Although, the two are similar they do differ in one major way misinterpretation is intentional and more misleading, where as misunderstanding is unintentional and more confusion. Language use is another difficulty. It can be a big issue in any form of communication. When people can't speak the same language they either can't communicate or make up ways that can lead to misinterpretation. Slang and word choice are the two leading causes of this. Slang are messages, verbally or written, characterized by the use of the vernacular, jargon, or socially taboo, metaphorical, vocabulary (Definitions, 2013). Lack of training is another part of misinformation. If you don't have to adequate stills to perform certain technological tasks the consequences can be detrimental. This leads to a new wave of concerns. When a new project is started sometimes new ways of doing the project need to be created, this is technology transition (Erisman, 2002). Resistance to changing ones usual forms of technology is a barrier to being successful in these types of projects. Few organizations have policies in place related to changes in technology-based initiatives (Erisman, 2002). When there is a substantial process made in technology these establishments have no procedures in place to help them. Some companies may send their important employees to classes or seminars for training. Then they are expected to pass the information along to other co-workers, which can cause a whole lot of other problems. Lack of available technology is more isolated and case to case, but still causes problems. When there is insufficient accessible to technology it can slow down work progress and growth. There is also the most well-known kind of misinformation that of improper use and the inappropriate use. We have all heard of mayoral candidate, for New York City, who sent picture text messaged photos of his genitals to women in his city (Campanile, 2013). This is an example of inappropriate use. The difference between the two is that; inappropriate indicates a breach of simply social or professional convention, while improper

expresses a moral judgment. Today people can work from just about anywhere thanks to technology. They can work from home to be with their families more or working on the road. However, there are casualties like teamwork. These changes to the work place can be more productivity, without some type of face-to-face interaction the ability of teamwork can be compromised (Moufarriger, 2012). Technology has given us the ability to work from anywhere giving us virtual workplaces, this leads us to not really knowing the people we work with even though our professional contact list can be overfilling with names (Waldron, & Kassing, (2011). Teamwork is a group effort of cooperation and coordination to act together for a common cause (Definitions, 2013). While this can be done by technological means, like telecommunications, it takes away the human contact that all people need. Without this in-person interaction projects can develop all sorts of misinformation issues. These are the kind of misinformation problems that come about in the technological world of business and other organizations, there many others that fall under different categories.

Distracted from the main focus because using and abusing technology is an extensive problem facing many organizations today. Workers, who are "connected" (meaning tuned into the technological communication world, like Twitter, Facebook, and Text Messaging), are constantly being bombarded with status updates, the latest antics of adorable kittens, and being asked to bring home milk. Being connected can have its perks like knowing who the just landed the company the biggest deal, but can't that wait until it comes down through the proper channels. In meetings people can be distracted by their phones, at their desks they have a whole computer filled with distractions calling to them to put their work to the side and play the latest new time killing game, these are examples of the attending phase of the risk negotiation cycle (Waldron, & Kassing, 2011). Organizations can lose so much money to distracted employees unless they have strict policies in place. Some high schools have gotten so fed up with students texting they put signal blockers in their classrooms. This behavior not only hurts the organization or institution, but also the worker or student. These small users of distracting technology are very likely missing important information or not getting important work done. When one loses they both lose. One short meeting or conversation can eliminate multiple text messages. Interpersonal communications, which are critical to building professional relationships, are far more

complicated and require a certain amount of affability and listening skills not needed in social media. Too much dependency for electronic means of communication can decrease vital personal interaction (Nestor-Harper, 2013). There are many studies being, and have been, preformed on the sociological aspects of a world that is constantly connected to a device and not engaging in real life interactions. There are even smaller micro-studies on the personal psychiatrics of being wrapped up in the 'online world'. This is not what will be discussed in this essay, however it does make for a worrisome read if one were to look into it. Even if technology is being used appropriately and for work it can still be distracting. Take this example from the small business section of The Huston Chronicle's online site, Chron, the author Mary Nestor-Harpen describes a typical office where one employee is conducting a job interview via Skype, while another is walking around the office talking to a client on the phone, and a third worker is the second hour of an interactive webinar. "Add these distractions to the normal noise of ringing phones, constant emails, and a noisy fax machine, and it's no wonder that it's sometimes hard to get work done (Nestor-Harper, 2013)." Imagine all these regular office noises and still having to get work done in a timely manner. Unknowingly these people have created a stressful work place. Although, technology can bring continents together it can never replace human interaction.

Technical difficulties happen even to the best and richest companies. It can refer to a couple of different things. It can be a problem with the software, like a program isn't malfunctioning or running slowly (Satterfield, 2012). Hardware problems fall under this category too, like faulty connections or bad equipment (Common, 2013). As it refers to websites, it can mean that the site is currently down, or that they're adding stuff, and don't want users to see it before their done. A specific problem of in this classification is asynchrony, which is defined as not being of synchronized or lack coincidence in time (Definitions, 2013). As it refers to technology this is like a pause in technical communication. Power outages and electronic crashing fall under the broad term of technical failure. While, there is much research into specific difficulties with a system or electronic there is none as a communication challenge. This leaves lots of opportunities for study and examination.

Risk Negotiation Cycle

ATTENDING: Behaviors of the risk

- Misinformation
    - Misinterpretation
        - Not having the desires outcome
    - Misunderstand
        - Looks (facial expression) of confusion
        - Having many questions asked
        - Embarrassment, because the person didn't comprehend
        - Nervousness, over making a mistake
        - Flustered, because of embarrassment
    - Different language use
        - Not understanding what was communicated
        - Exclusion of member who don't speak or understand the spoken language or terms
        - Tension between those of the dominate language and those of minority language
    - Lack of technology training
        - Misuse of the technology
        - Unused of the technology
        - Technology difficulties
        - Breaking the technology
        - Becoming frustrated with the technology and project, because the person doesn't understand what they are doing
    - Lack of available technology
        - Organizations not being competitive
        - Organizations not being creative and designing new ideas or products
        - Organizations not being able to making advancements to make progress
- Distraction
    - From human interaction
        - Always being attached or on an electronic device connected to technology
        - Not listening to others around
        - Not being engaged to the real surrounding life
        - Leads to misunderstanding
    - From work/projects
        - Not paying attention in many group interactions
        - Leads to misunderstanding
        - Poor work performance
        - Substandard products/ concepts
    - Outside interference
        - Bringing personal life to workplace

- • Being overly emotional
        ▪ Talking too much about personal life
- Technical difficulties
    o Malfunction of electronic/program technology
    o Power outages
    o Organizations become embarrassed, because their technology is viewed as insufficient or deficient

SENSEMAKING: Contextualizing

- Having technology will open organizations up to problems because of:

    o Misinformation
        ▪ leads to miscommunications, hurts an organizations moral, makes them look unprofessional, and can cause loss of profits/progress
    o Distraction
        ▪ Causes outside interference, emotional distracted workers, and cause sociological issues
    o Technical difficulties
        ▪ Makes them look incompetent
- Many, if not all, organization have to use technology to do daily business and get ahead so these challenges will appear until they are dealt with
- Many people can be involved
    o Anyone within the organization, that uses technology, can contribute to these difficulties

TRANSFORMING: Problem Solving Stage

I do want to make it clear that I am not assuming any responsibility or making any determinations as to what every organization should do.

- Misinformation
    o Put precise rules and policies in place on how communication with technology is to be used
        ▪ Have a handbook for people involved with the organization to refer to
    o Have clear repercussion for when there is misconduct
        ▪ Have this listed in the handbook
    o Making/giving clear instructions to all projects
    o Allowing multiple questions to be asked, to avoid misunderstandings
    o Different language use
        ▪ Make clear what language is to be used in the workplace
            • Clear non-slang professional language
            • Have an qualified interpreter when needed

- Have this listed in the handbook
  - o Lack of technology training
    - Involve/hire people with ample technology skills
    - Have a team/department/subdivision that researches new technology
      - They can also be in charge of technology training, or finding programs to do it
    - Have a plan for how the training gets pasted along
    - Have incentive programs to encourage new technology ideas
  - o Lack of available technology
    - Increase funding
      - Grants
      - Subsidies
      - Saving
        - o Cut unnecessary costs
    - Create a program to investigate new available technology
- Distraction
  - o Have clear rules about when and where technical devices can be used
    - Have this listed in the handbook
  - o Have clear lines of what constitutes as work and personal time
  - o Create incentives for finishing work/projects on time/early
    - To decease time waste because of technology distractions
  - o Outside interference
    - Have programs to help employee's/workers with personal issues
      - Hotlines
      - Someone within the organization to talk with
        - o Have these listed in the handbook
    - Make allowances for personal emergencies
      - Be understanding, but don't allow patterns to develop
      - Have this listed in the handbook
- Technical difficulties
  - o Ensure all programs and electronics are up-to-date
    - Create a team/department to check all technology is updated
      - This is usually an IT (Information Technology) Department
  - o Create a team/department to fix any problems with programs and electronics
  - o Have a backup plan in case of any technical failures
    - Make sure all who are involved are aware of this plan
    - Have this listed in the handbook

MAINTAINING: Development of new norms

- Misinformation
  - o Up-date/review/revise reference handbook
  - o Have trainings for how instructions should be giving

- o Different language use
  - ▪ Maintain the clear professional language
    - o Ensuring management/upper administration is using the correct language
  - ▪ Letting people know that interprets are available
  - o Create policies for continuing technology training
    - ▪ Continuing training programs
  - o Have a the team/department/subdivision that researches new technology a permanent
    - ▪ Have a plan for how the training gets pasted along
    - ▪ Have incentive programs to encourage new technology ideas
  - o Lack of available technology
    - ▪ With savings buy new, more current, programs/equipment
    - ▪ Continue the program for searching new technologies
      - • Part of the IT Departments job
- Distraction
  - o Make sure all new employee's are trained to the organizations policies
    - ▪ Use the handbook as a guild
  - o Continue with incentives programs
  - o Outside interference
    - ▪ Continue with programs to help employee's/workers with personal issues
      - • Hotlines
      - • Someone within the organization to talk with
        - o Make sure this is known in the new employee training
- Technical difficulties
  - o Make sure the IT Department is included in all changes and up-to-date with all new policies- pertaining to technology
  - o Continue with the 'backup plan' procedures
    - ▪ Have regular, annual, practices of this plan

Conclusion

In summary, although there have been incredible advances made in modern technology, with all the benefits come challenges. Communication challenges with technology in an organization, cause misinformation, distraction, and technical difficulties. While, no assumptions can be made as to how to solve the problems list in this essay, it can be said that a general idea for better technology communication is better and more constant training. If the training was improved misinformation would happen far less, people could control their distractions, and technical difficulties would be handled faster and more productively. Organizations have many of communication, but technology is the most fluctuating.

References

Author not mentioned. (2013). *Definitions*. Retrieved from

http://dictionary.reference.com/

Author not mentioned. (2013). *Common Hardware Problems. University of Washington School*

of Learning and Technologies. Retrieved from

http://www.washington.edu/lst/help/computing_fundamentals/troubleshootingxp/commo
n_hardware

Campanile, C. (2013). *Weiner caught sending dirty messages and photos a year after his sexting
scandal.* New York Post, Nypost. Retrieved from

http://nypost.com/2013/07/24/weiner-caught-sending-dirty-messages-and-photos-a-year-
after-his-sexting-scandal/

Erisman, A. (2002). *TechWatch: Five Big Issues in Today's Technological Workplace*. Ethix.org.

Retrieved from

http://ethix.org/2002/04/01/five-big-issues-in-today%E2%80%99s-technological-
workplace

Moufarrige, M. (2012). *Managing the challenges technology creates in the workplace*.

Dynamicbusiness.com. Retrieved from

http://www.dynamicbusiness.com.au/business-tech-blogs/managing-the-challenges-
technology-creates-in-the-workplace-08062012.html

Nestor-Harper,M. (2013). *The Disadvantages of Technology in the Workplace*. Huston

Chronicle. Retrieved from

http://smallbusiness.chron.com/disadvantages-technology-workplace-20157.html

Satterfield, B. (2012*). Eleven Tips for Troubleshooting Software: Steps you can take before*

calling tech support. Techsoup.org. Retrieved from

http://www.techsoup.org/support/articles-and-how-tos/eleven-tips-for-troubleshooting-software

Veith, G. (2009). *Inappropriate vs. Improper*. Patheos.com. Retrieved from

http://www.patheos.com/blogs/geneveith/2009/11/inappropriate-vs-improper/

Waldron, V.R. & Kassing, J.W. (2011). *Managing Risk in Communion Encounters*. London,

UK: Sage Publication, Inc.