

Newcomers to the world of business take all the methods of communication at our disposal for granted. Yet it is only really in the past twenty years that there has been such an increase in the possibilities. You could be in the rainforest of Papua New Guinea, but someone could get you on a sat-phone. You could be lying on a beach in Rio between meetings when you get an urgent message on your Blackberry®. It's virtually impossible to be out of touch, yet anybody over the age of forty can remember what it was like in the 'olden days'. We talked to four people about how changes in communications technology have affected their lives.

Julia Donnelly has been recruiting staff for an educational NGO for thirty years.

When I first started everything was done by mail or phone. Then when the fax machine became available we had to employ someone just to feed forms into the machine. Although we deal with applications online, it has led to an enormous increase in the amount of work. To be honest, it is no more efficient now than thirty years ago.

Drusilla Havel works in an advertising agency with offices in London, New York, and Tokyo.

We have a teleconferencing system where we sit in front of a camera in our respective countries and speak to colleagues in different parts of the world. It can be a real headache

setting these up, particularly when you're dealing with so many time zones. I never feel very comfortable interacting with people this way, I feel like a dummy in a shop window. We also use conference calls. You know, you ring a central number, tap in your code, and you're connected to the speaker-phone. Personally, I think that is even less successful as you can't see who's speaking or tell what people are thinking when they are silent.

International business veteran Jens Holby believes there is no substitute for meeting people face to face.

After 9/11 we cut down on air travel by using videoconferencing, but it just didn't work. In the Middle East and South America they insist on knowing who they're dealing with. 'We need hi-touch as well as hi-tech, I like to be able to smell the other guy!' These days there's just such a communications overload. In the old days, when you were away, you were away. Now everybody expects you to take the office with you. Every hotel has its hot spot, so there's no excuse not to check your email. It's especially tough when you find yourself in a different time zone. Nowadays I feel as though I am on call 24/7. The only place I feel kind of 'safe' is on the plane.

Realtor Felicia Gomez, who works in Florida, complains about the mobile phone.

I remember getting my first one over twenty years ago. It was the size of a brick, but I felt like the coolest girl in town. But now I hate the thing, it's like a millstone round my neck. Some clients use the mobile phone as a kind of acid test to see how serious you are. They want a number where they think they can reach you night or day. They wouldn't even think twice about pestering you on a Sunday. The situation has gotten so ridiculous that I have three cell phones. One is for the office, another one is for clients, and

the last one is so private that only my mom and kids have the number. Now when clients ask for a mobile number, I hesitate a heartbeat and then wink at them before giving them the number of my client cell phone number, as though it is a big deal! It makes them feel special even if all they get is my voicemail.

Task 1. Match the types of communication with a person who mentioned it

Videoconferencing – used in international business meetings _____

Online applications – modern method for handling job applications _____

Conference calls – used for meetings with multiple participants _____

Teleconferencing – for meetings with colleagues in different countries _____

Email – used when traveling _____

Fax machine – used to process forms _____

Mobile phones – used for client communication, though it's become a burden _____

Task 2. Guess what type of communication is being described.

- a) _____ "You know, you ring a central number, tap in your code, and you're connected to the speaker-phone."
- b) _____ "It can be a real headache setting these up, particularly when you're dealing with so many time zones."–
- c) _____ "Some clients use it as a kind of acid test to see how serious you are. They want a number where they think they can reach you day and night."
- d) _____ "Then when it became available we had to employ someone just to feed forms into the machine."
- e) _____ "Every hotel has its hot spot, so there's no excuse not to check it."

Task 3. Choose the correct answer.

1. **What was the primary communication method Julia Donnelly used when she first started recruiting staff?**
 - A) Fax machine
 - B) Email
 - C) Phone and mail
 - D) Video calls

2. **What does Drusilla Havel feel about teleconferencing and conference calls?**

- A) She finds them very effective and efficient.
 - B) She feels uncomfortable and finds them less successful.
 - C) She enjoys interacting with people in this way.
 - D) She prefers teleconferencing to face-to-face meetings.
3. **What reason does Jens Holby give for preferring face-to-face meetings over videoconferencing?**
- A) He believes it is cheaper than air travel.
 - B) He finds videoconferencing time-consuming.
 - C) He feels it is more personal and necessary for business success.
 - D) He doesn't trust technology.
4. **How does Felicia Gomez feel about mobile phones?**
- A) She hates them because they create an overwhelming pressure to always be available.
 - B) She enjoys using them for business and personal matters.
 - C) She finds them useful for her job as a realtor.
 - D) She thinks they are necessary for clients to contact her.
5. **What is one of the biggest challenges Drusilla Havel faces when using teleconferencing?**
- A) Finding enough people to participate.
 - B) Dealing with multiple time zones.
 - C) Setting up the equipment for the calls.
 - D) Lack of internet connection.

Task 4 Match 1-6 to a-f to create collocations from the text.

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| 1 urgent | a zone |
| 2 virtually | b call |
| 3 communications | c message |
| 4 conference | d impossible |
| 5 time | e spot |
| 6 hot | f overload |

Task 5 Complete these definitions of the phrases in italics.

1 If you take something for granted,

2 If you don't think twice about something,

3 If something is a big deal,

4 If something is an acid test, it

5 If something is a millstone round your neck,

6 If you're on call 24/7,

7 If you are out of touch,

8 If you cut down on something, you

- a) it shows you immediately if someone or something is true.
- b) you reduce your consumption of something.
- c) you depend on it and think it will always be there.
- d) you do it as soon as the occasion presents itself.
- e) someone can reach you at any time of the day, seven days a week.
- f) it is a responsibility or problem you can't get rid of.
- g) it is important to that person.