

Communication

January 28, 2016

Corinthian Lodge No. 513

Brethren, in deciding upon what I might speak about today, I reflected back upon a recent car ride that I enjoyed with some fellow brethren on the way to Pickering. The conversation in the car centered on communications. Being the driver at the time, I just simply listened, as the brethren in the vehicle discussed the importance of using the phone over texting and other forms of communication.

The question of the best medium and mode of communication has certainly been discussed before that car ride; though it has never been more important that it is today. Indeed it has never been more important than it will be this year in 2016.

10 years ago a Communications professor would tell you that Communication is entirely about the medium and the message. The medium being the communication channel used to deliver the message. Today, almost equally important are timing and context of those same messages. Historically, people have always demanded increased personalization and speed in their communications.

Newspapers as we know quickly evolved at its prime with extras, traditional post mail became telegrams, express delivery, e-mail, and now instant messaging. Likewise, Telephone party lines became household phones, then individual cell phones, then headsets, bluetooth and smartwatches. All of these advances were heralded by the younger demographic while the older generation suggested that the old way worked just fine.

In recent years' Myspace, Facebook, and LinkedIn revolutionized the way people interconnect and communicate by allowing individuals to communicate to mass audiences and in turn for those audiences to forward the message. Reddit, Stumbleupon, Tumblr, Yelp and other channels also grew as sources for instant news and information. All of this was great but... for the first time... a very UNIQUE thing happened.. ..the younger demographic changed their sentiment. We as people were for the first time being bombarded with too much news, and too much information with no way to filter it.

It was at this time that Twitter joined the stage in 2006 as a strange technology that nobody really understood. What Twitter did was it limited all of the noise to just a few characters. For the first time users were required to think and carefully craft their messages before sending them. This quickly grew into a global platform which allowed you to follow those around you whom you trusted to provide quality information. Information, videos, and articles from all over the web were pulled in and spread through this new network as short messages that were received only if those you followed endorsed them.

Fast forward a few years, and now the world has become accustomed to this naturally filtered world that we all live in and as recently as just three years ago, we again began to ask for more. Twitpic, and Instagram quickly emerged to allow for easy sharing of photos, Pinterest gained in popularity as a visual solution for news and articles so that we no longer needed to read. Youtube allowed us to film video and share it around the globe, and more recently Periscope now allows anyone with a phone to record live anything going on around them and syndicate it across the internet at the click of a button. Snapchat, BBM, Skype, and Facetime emerged as solutions for not just sending but also retracting messages and communicating via live video.

I digress upon all of these technologies brethren, because this year, we are yet again, seeing a shift in communication.

Over the last couple of years artificially intelligent voice-activated assistants have been gaining adoption. Today SIRI, Google Now, Cortana, and others have now been refined to be able to communicate seamlessly with their human users.

While this has been going on, in February of last year, Google announced that they felt that they had amassed so much data that they could now determine with certainly whether or not something is “true” and by extension deliver search results with preference for what they deem as accurate information.

In 2016 voice activated assistants will be analyzing your communications via your electronic devices in order to gain an understanding of what information and contacts you find most important in order to give those priority as you go about your day. You are already seeing this trend in your facebook feeds, gmail, and google search result predictions. In tandem with this trend, we will also begin seeing these voice activated assistants providing us with information from these google validated sources of information. The global hope is that all of this technology will essentially filter the huge amount of data that we are being presented with every day, to a level which we can manage as humans.

I am speaking about this today brethren because I think that this significantly impacts our Lodges in the coming years. As we send out our summons to our membership and our emails from time to time we are increasingly seeing the younger demographic missing our message despite their interest and by extension not taking part in events.

George Shaw, who wrote Leadership Skills for Managers, is quoted as saying: “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

The question is brethren, are your members truly reading the summons? Or are they just attending on the stated night each month. Perhaps you should simply ask for a show of hands at your next meeting. I think that you will be quite surprised by the result.

What some of us call duplication of information, I would propose is an essential communication strategy in the world that we live in today. Your announcements and key messages should be posted in the Chronicle, on the District website, and in your summons at a bare minimum to ensure that you are reaching your audience no matter where they are and no matter how busy they are.

I recently watched a youtube video which struck a chord with me because I received it just as I had finished spending 4 hours crafting the perfect words for a simple 1 page advertisement for a client.

The video starts off with a blind homeless man sitting on a rug with a tin cup in front of him and a sign which read “I’m blind.. please help.” The odd passerby provided a coin here and there. Then as one woman walked by, she stopped and flipped over his sign and wrote a new message for him to display. Soon money was pouring into the man’s cup. Later, the woman’s message is revealed. It simply read: “It is a beautiful day... and I can’t see it.”

As I wrote this speech brethren, I noted that I myself have no spam and 36,000 emails in my inbox from just the last three years. This is before phone calls, instant messages, and social media. We must give great care to our communications to ensure that they cut through the noise, provide full and complete details, and that they do in fact reach their mark. Given the opportunity, we will all make time for those things that we love.

Thank you,

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