

Disconnected or Connected? That is the Question

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It seems like the closer technology intends to bring us together, the farther it actually drives us apart.

While I understand and appreciate the benefits and advantages that all the advancements in technology have provided us, I am annoyed with all the texting, poking, voxing, and foursquaring. Oh, there's an app for that? I don't care. Yes, I am guilty of it all, and as much as I want to disconnect from the grid, I find myself suffering from withdrawal every time I attempt to put my phone away. I'm helpless, and it's absolutely ridiculous.

With the overwhelming amount apps available for consumers to download on their mobile devices, it seems like the closer technology intends to bring us together, the farther it actually drives us apart.

For an example, a few weeks ago I attempted to play mediator for a couple of friends who have been dating for the last two years. The boyfriend was upset that the girlfriend was going out without him, again, so he posted his frustration on Facebook, opening the floor for all of his friends and family (especially the ones who don't like his girlfriend) to comment as politely or rudely as they wanted. The girlfriend, being a "friend", saw the post and defended herself against the negative commentary left under his original post. This led to further bickering.

Who cares, right? What makes the "days of our Facebook lives" so interesting is the fact that the couple live with each other, and they were both at home during the social networking charade. Instead of participating in a private face-to-face conversation to find a resolution to their argument, they opted for a public display of animosity, which only paved the way for additional criticism from onlookers, adding more fuel to the fire.

Another example is the absurd amount of texting between individuals. If you want to talk just pick up the phone - unless you're driving; then put the thing in the trunk. While I appreciate seeing photos of my family, and reading about embarrassing drunken moments from my friends, I do not appreciate two-hour conversations that would've taken ten minutes if someone would have just answered the phone. And trying to interpret all of the abbreviations; such as smh, lol, and yolo. Seriously, WTF?

This disconnect isn't just happening in personal lives. Work and professional environments are also falling victim to the social networking soap box. It's easier and less stressful to talk to people via digital text and video cameras than it is with conventional face-to-face conversations.

Recently, I've received more and more requests for email interviews instead of the

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preferred telephone ones. It's difficult at times, because I am trying to capture the story behind a product's design. Email doesn't provide the details behind the details like follow-up questions provide in one-on-one interactions. Skype and video conferencing are becoming popular alternatives, but that's like looking at a picture of the Grand Canyon and expecting your stomach to drop when the camera peeks over the edge.

We have forgotten how to communicate with each other because we are so wrapped up in our digital lives. I admit I'm guilty of over texting. It distracts me from conversations that my friends and family try to have with me. In public, if one second of silence lapses, I guarantee that someone is reaching for their phone to lessen the anxiety and to catch up on what everybody else is doing.

I agree that the advancements in mobile devices has made it easier for society to stay connected, but I also feel they have created a degree of separation between communities and individuals, because everyone has become so obsessed with what the rest of the world is doing and talking about.

Back in the day, we used to walk over to our new neighbor's house with a tray of cookies to welcome them into the community. Now we peek over the fence while downloading their personal information via our smartphones to make sure we aren't handing over perfectly baked goods to some sort of psychopath.

How long can you go without your mobile device? Do you suffer from the shakes if you go too long without looking at some sort of screen? Comment below, or send me your thoughts and/or stories to meaghan.ziemba@advantagemedia.com [1].

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