

Technology Should Be One Step Behind Personal Conversations



Source - "The Last Man on Earth," Produzioni La Regina

"I don't deny there's some strange evolutionary process going on, but mankind won't be destroyed. The fact that you and I are working here today is evidence of that." – **Dr. Mercer, "The Last Man on Earth," Produzioni La Regina, 1964**

After years of living in front of a keyboard, I've lost my ability to write in longhand. Well, not exactly lost the ability, just unable to decipher what I wrote an hour later.

It's a concern that a lot of countries' educators have where the alphabet is very intricate, very precise such as Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew, and Arabic.

If that isn't bad enough, there may be a time when we lose our ability to talk, carry on a "normal" conversation. Especially if Zuck's dream comes true and we perfect telepathy.

Of course that can lead to more problems if you're in a really boring meeting or bump into someone you're not real fond of.

Sure, we text, email, post, tweet, vent our feelings, shout, scream and berate--all without uttering a syllable.

We find it difficult to communicate at work and in our relationships with friends, spouses, significant others, relatives, parents and siblings.

That's not an epiphany.

Actually, I just finished watching another (really one leads to another so I spent an hour in front of the screen) **TED** talk. This one by Sherry Turkle entitled *Connected but Alone*.

It reminded me that years ago, a fellow agency writer would come into my cubicle, plop down in a chair and complain about all of the writing he had to do and how he was so overloaded. After 30 minutes or an hour, he'd go back to his cube and turn out his requisite copy.

Gawd, it was frustrating; and he'd do it two-three times a week.

I wanted to scream at him *“Jeezz, just go back to your desk and write! All of the time you spent here could have been productive; but now you’ve wasted both of our billable hours.”*

That wouldn’t have been nice or professional so I did what any normal person would do, I listened patiently and let him vent his frustration.

And what the heck, it gave me a break too.

I’ll bet the talks around the water cooler have also become a thing of ancient history.



That doesn’t happen today. We walk around past people with our water bottle in one hand and smartphone in the other barely communicating (if at all) with the person you pass in the hall.

As Ben Cortman said, *“You’re whistling past a graveyard.”*

Face it, conversations are only slightly organized and it’s so much easier to be anonymous even if the person is across the table, across the room, across the country, half way around the world.

As Ms Turkle pointed out, we expect more from our technology, less from each other.

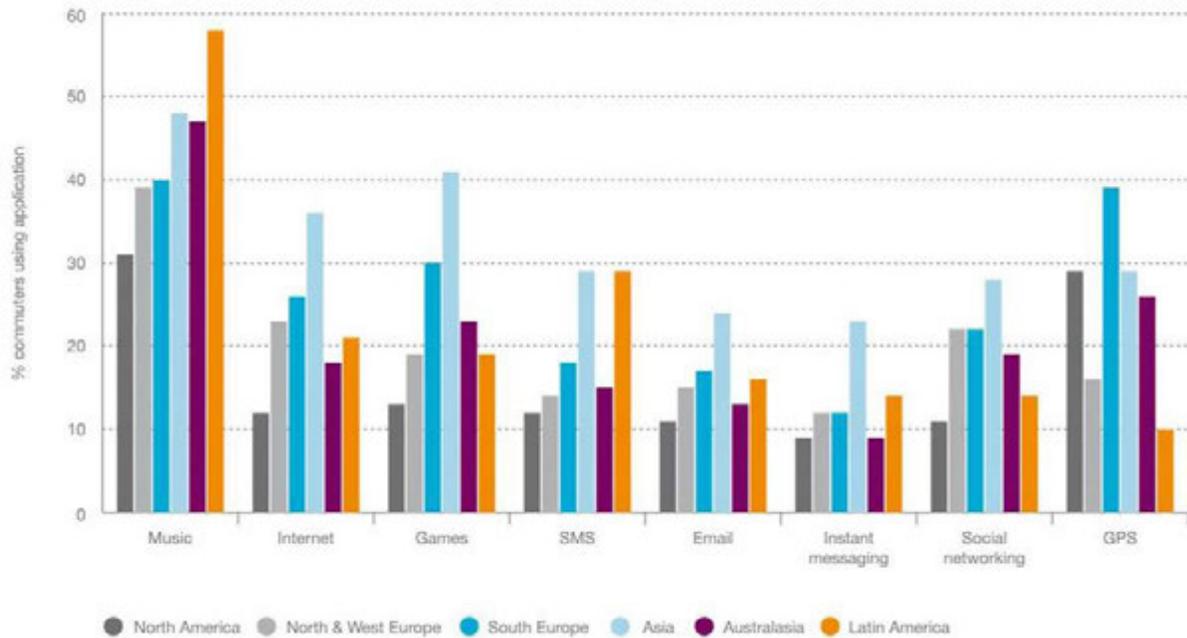
The weapon of choice is the mobile phone (smartphone, basic device) with more than 7B subscriptions (some two+ people) or almost 75 percent of the global population. By 2019, Ericsson estimates there will be 9.3B subscriptions and 5.6B of those will be for smartphones.

More than half of consumers in the Asia-Pacific region will have smartphones this year with South Korea leading in terms of smartphone penetration. Australia and Japan will be close behind followed by China, even though the market is significantly larger there.

Western Europe smartphones surpassed more than 200M.

The UK and US reached majority smartphone penetration last year and the US continues to be the second largest smartphone market worldwide, behind China. India will take the #2 honor next year.

And we use them for everything but talking.



Source – Ericson Consumer Lab

According to Intel, every minute we:

- Send 204M emails
- Load 600 new YouTube videos
- Post 6,600+ new Flickr photos
- Send 100K tweets
- Update 695,000+ Facebook accounts
- Produce 20,000+ Tumblr posts
- Watch 1.3M YouTube videos
- View 20M Flickr photos
- Download 62K hours of music

We also sent more than 3T texts last year, up 33 percent over last year.

We simply don't have any time left to talk.

Pity!

Our technology provides the illusion of companionship without the demands of relationship.

In today's business environment, we increasingly work from home or remote locations. We send reply-all emails. Performance reviews and even pink slips are electronic.

You can work on long projects and never actually meet/talk with team members.

It's a function of today's workplace culture; and increasingly, it's part of individual-to-individual relationships.

Robert Morgan observed, "*Another day to live through. Better get started.*"



Technology has increasingly allowed us to be “alone together” so we can be together with people yet also somewhere else.

Technology allows us to move in/out of things to customize our lives, making it possible for people become a tribe of one.

Long-term friends and family members can be unfriended over an angry post.

Out of the blue, people make snide, inappropriate comments about people’s tweets in realtime (I can destroy you in 140 characters), even if they’re not part of the conversation.

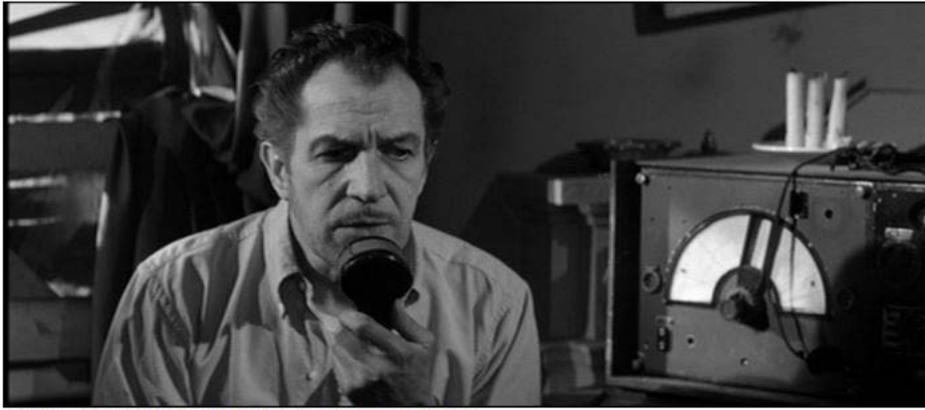


Face it, person-to-person, eye-to-eye discussions are disjointed because there are no opportunities to review/edit what is said, rephrase your thoughts. But both parties get to listen, ask questions, provide feedback and learn how the other person feels/thinks/works.

Carrying on a real conversation also helps us learn more about ourselves and our ability to listen, process and use information

Ms Turkle used an example in her *TED* talk of a conversation with 16-year-old boy who relies on texting for almost everything. He said, “*Someday, someday, but certainly not now, I’d like to learn how to have a conversation.*”

Real conversations can be awkward but they're a lot more rewarding than talking to Siri all of the time.



Source - "The Last Man on Earth," [Produzioni La Regina](#)

Maybe we'll be learning how to talk with each other and carry on meaningful conversations before Robert Morgan pleads, "*This is Robert Morgan. If somebody can hear me, answer me. For God's sake, ANSWER ME.*"

Or, you could just focus on regaining your writing skills and write notes to yourself.

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