

MEDIA RELEASE

BULKSMS.COM

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Social media can add up to communication overload

Communications induced stress is fast becoming a common problem as we add social media to our existing diet of electronic communication at work and home. Internet and mobile technologies have made it easy for people to keep in “touch” constantly. In many cases, these communications are perceived as requiring our immediate attention and response.

“This leaves one open to direct communications for business or personal reasons as long as you are connected to your preferred social media site. Maybe its time to step back and ask yourself: have you opened yourself up to more communications than you can actually handle?” says Dr Pieter Streicher, managing director of BulkSMS.com, a global messaging firm headquartered in Cape Town.

Social media functions differently to email and phones. The latter allow anyone to potentially communicate with you if you have publicised your contact details. On the other hand, most social networking services allow “friends” to communicate with “friends”. This social space limits communications to within that network.

The advent of social networking has seen a flurry of activity as people sign-in, locate and message friends and lost acquaintances, poke new friends, share images or video, and invite you to their interest group. The initial idea behind social networking sites was to provide meaningful interactions and reduce unwanted communications. In practice the opposite has happened leaving you with more “noise” collecting in your inbox.

According to Dr Streicher, “Access to communications is increasing as costs decrease. As a result, it is inevitable that unwanted communications will also increase. Just like disposable plastic and tin containers resulted in a world full of trash, so communications technology leaves us with communication overload.”

This situation is further accentuated as people find it difficult to reject new friend requests or expel existing friends on social media services such as Facebook.

“The psychological cost of offending someone else seems to weigh in above the need to reduce the amount of communications received,” continues Dr Streicher.

Take charge of your communications

Since it is unlikely that daily electronic communications will decrease and phones and email will be replaced by social networking sites, the most effective strategy to combat communication overload is to find more efficient ways of using these technologies.

“While all methods of communication are intrusive, some are more so than others. It is worth analysing the intrusiveness vs effectiveness of communications and attempt to use the communication medium that is the least intrusive, but still affords effective communication. For example, where emotions are involved, as in the firing of staff, communications such as a face-to-face meeting would be appropriate while an SMS in this context would not,” says Dr Streicher.

There is good reason in seeking the most effective and appropriate communications medium. Continued communication flows disrupt daily tasks and impact on one’s work productivity. While multi-tasking may

be lauded as a key skill in the digital age, the amount of time actually spent mentally context-shifting between tasks means that, overall, more time is spent on activities and productivity suffers.

Tips on reducing communication overload

There are some ways of reducing communication overload. In Dr Streicher's view the real trick is in creating more manageable work and personal spaces to deal with your incoming calls, SMS and email messages, as well as other forms of Internet-based communications such as those generated by social networking services.

"I suggest that you encourage people to communicate by using the most effective and emotionally appropriate yet least intrusive communications medium. This would go far in reducing communications overload at work and home," says Dr Streicher.

When dealing with incoming communications you could consider:

- 📞 Not answering all calls or SMS messages as and when they occur.
- 📞 Using the silent button on your cellphone so that call or message alerts do not disrupt your activities.
- 📞 Not reading all emails – instead use appropriate junk mail filters to sort out unwanted communications.
- 📞 Not setting your email programme to notify you of new incoming messages.
- 📞 Limiting the number of e-mail newsletters subscriptions or SMS information alerts services you receive.
- 📞 Turning off your social networking service's email alert function.

For sending communications you should consider the following factors in selecting the most appropriate communication medium:

- (a) Intrusiveness – how disruptive is the medium to another person's activities,
- (b) Effectiveness – how urgently do you need to communicate something, and
- (c) Emotional appropriateness – how sensitive is the information or the situation.

Bearing these points in mind, you could then:

- 📞 Replace phone calls or voicemails with an e-mail or SMS wherever possible. This forces you to send short and succinct communications.
- 📞 Use SMS for urgent notifications and when the recipient is mobile.
- 📞 Use e-mail for not so urgent communications or when the recipient is at his or her desk.
- 📞 Use a phone call or face-to-face meeting to communicate emotionally sensitive matters.

ENDS

[802 words]



About BulkSMS.com

[BulkSMS.com](http://www.bulkSMS.com), a division of Celerity Systems (Pty) Ltd, has been in operation since 2000 and is headquartered in Cape Town, South Africa. BulkSMS is a leading wireless application service provider offering bulk SMS messaging solutions to large and small businesses, public benefit organisations, and individuals. BulkSMS.com has a global market presence, including Europe, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. To further an organisation's SMS communication needs, BulkSMS offers two-way bulk SMS messaging, premium rate solutions and supports mobile marketing campaigns. BulkSMS flagship messaging solution is the BulkSMS Text Messenger, a desktop application. BulkSMS is a member of the Wireless Application Service Provider Association (WASPA).

For more information on BulkSMS's commercial messaging services visit www.bulkSMS.co.za and for details on BulkSMS's messaging service offering discounted bulk SMS message prices for public benefit organisations (such as schools, NGOs and faith-based organisations) visit <http://community.bulkSMS.com>. For direct enquiries email info@bulkSMS.com or contact BulkSMS telephonically on +27-21-552 6321.