

# Information Overload:

## Keeping Communication Professional in the Digital Age

In the Age of Information, media such as the telegraph, television, press, photo, radio and film are in themselves new natural resources increasing the wealth of the community. In the Age of Information, the moving of information is by many times the largest business in the world.

- Marshall McLuhan (*Counterblast*, 1969)

### Four Problems of Communication

1. The Quantity of Information
2. The Quality of Information
3. The Diversity of Information
4. The Cost of Information

### Solutions: People, Processes, and Policies

1. **People:** Do you have a person whose job includes being a champion, trainer, or mentor for issues of professional communication? (*i.e. Quality control*)
2. **Processes:** When do new employees receive information about quality assurance processes dealing with standard company communications? (*e.g. When is training provided?*)  
What are your processes for creating a professional communication culture? (*e.g. How often do you have meetings to review communication issues or assess communication costs as a group?*)
3. **Policies:** Do you have policies for employees on:
  - + How to use social media?
  - + The acceptable time for their use of social media at work? (*e.g. Facebook*)
  - + The company practice for employees' use of mobile phones in a face-to-face business meeting?
  - + Acceptable content for email conversations?
  - + Acceptable format of email conversations? (*e.g. Templates*)

### Process Example I: Social Media Checklist

1. What is your reason for contacting clients and customers via social media? Do they even use social media? Does another traditional medium offer a better means for connecting with your clientele and building your professional image? If so, you may choose not to use one social media platform versus another.
2. Where are your clients and customers online? Target only the social media that provide access to the clients (i) meeting for particular events, (ii) linking with like-minded individuals or community interests, and (iii) connecting with people with similar credentials.
3. Can you control your messaging and the feedback on social media? (*e.g. Turning the comments section off on blogs or having the time to monitor abusive feedback on Facebook*)

## **Process Example II:**

### **E-mail - A Sample Checklist of Simple Rules for Professional Messages**

1. Write in full grammatically correct sentences.
2. Write in a formal professional voice. Take into consideration the tone of your writing and the potential emotional connection of the recipient
3. Review the message at least three times before hitting send.
4. Assess if the message is important enough that someone else should edit it before it is sent (*e.g. How much money is riding on that communication?*)
5. Coordinate messages across media: Have one master print document and send the same message across all media (*i.e. Do not make micro messages for each different social media, unless you have some way of controlling the quality – make one message for all media*)

### **Policy Example: IBM's Social Computing Guidelines**

**Source:** IBM. 2018. <http://www.ibm.com/blogs/zz/en/guidelines.html>

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