COMMUNICATION OVERLOAD: Better and More Effective Ways to Communicate with Students

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Communication Overload

1. Just how much?
2. Your audience
3. NEW barriers to communication
4. The elephant in the room
5. Maximizing effective communication
Communication Overload

“The problem with communication is the illusion that it has occurred.”

George Bernard Shaw
Just how much?

**Q:** How many marketing messages is the average American exposed to each day?
Just how much?

Q: How many marketing messages is the average American exposed to each day?

A: Most estimates are between 600 – 3,000 per 24-hour period
Just how much?

Q: How many marketing messages does the average person retain daily?
Just how much?

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A: About 8
Communication Overload

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Just how much?

- Overexposure to messages of all kinds should be a primary concern for ALL communicators.
- What differentiates you and your message?
  - What you’re saying?
  - Where you’re saying it?
  - How you’re saying it?
  - Who’s delivering your message?
  - When your message is delivered?
Just how much?
Communication Overload

“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”

Anthony Robbins
Know Your Audience

According to a 2008 study by eROI:

- The mean number of e-mail addresses per student surveyed was 2.4
- Most students have had an e-mail address for about eight years
- Average student got first e-mail address at age 13
- Gmail is most popular provider (32%), only 17% use school e-mail address as their primary
Know Your Audience

- According to a 2008 study by eROI (cont.):
  - 61% of students read marketing e-mails on a “rarely to never” basis
  - 66% of students rarely or never take action on marketing e-mails
  - Only about 36% of students use e-mail alerts to keep up to date with their social networks
  - About 25% of students originally got an e-mail address for social networking purposes
Know Your Audience

- According to a 2008 study by eROI (cont.):
  - The preferred means of communication for college students are:
    - Text messaging (37%)
    - Email (26%)
    - Social networking IM (15%)
    - Instant messaging (11%)
    - Social networking e-mail (11%)
    - ...and 12% of students check e-mail on a mobile device
Communication Overload

“The more elaborate our means of communication, the less we communicate.”

Joseph Priestley
Admitted Student Questionnaire

- Information Sources, all admitted students
  - Website (71%)
  - College publications (67%)
  - Electronic communications (67%)
  - College videos/CD-ROMs (46%)
Push vs. Pull

- “Push” content out to audiences through channels like direct mail, phone calls, newsletters, and e-mails
- Audiences “pull” information as needed on their schedule, at their own pace
- In recent years, younger audiences more likely to “pull” information, e.g. “stealth” applicants
Old Barriers to Communication

- Physical presence
- Language
- Cultural and societal
- Availability of media
The New Barriers to Communication

- Time and energy
- Relevancy of message
- Distraction
- Differentiation
- Channels and media overload
The Elephant in the Room
The Elephant in the Room

- The opportunity of social media
  - It’s public
  - It’s instantaneous
  - It’s viral
  - It’s where your audience is
  - It can be an effective tool in your communications strategy
  - It’s not going away
Communication Overload

“Attention spans will only decrease as technology breeds laziness and the expectation of rapid solution delivery.”

James Gurd, E-commerce and Marketing Consultant
Communicating Effectively

- There are no silver bullets, but the BEST things you can do right now is…
- **Have a plan/strategy**
  - Articulate, as best as possible, a clear strategy for how you’re going to communicate with your audiences.
  - Remember: different audiences may require separate plans
Communicating Effectively

- Test, test, test ... and then test some more
- Less interruption and more value
- Research: Go ahead and ask
- Simplify: Ask yourself if you are trying to convey too much information at once
Communicating Effectively

- Utilize multiple channels to disseminate your information and messages
  - Remember: audiences are “pulling” content from a variety of media and channels – your message needs to be where they are
- Be relevant
- Be authentic
- Be transparent
Communicating Effectively

- E-mail
  - Is not dead, but is used differently by students
  - Keep is short, sweet, and to the point
  - Remember the two C’s: Clear and Concise
  - Subject lines are key and should be written with care
  - **DO NOT** inundate students with e-mail messages
Communicating Effectively

- A few words about print
  - Print can still be an effective medium to disseminate your message, especially as the utilization of technology becomes more prevalent
  - Students still see the value in print, if used correctly
Final Takeaways

- Know your audience. If you don’t know, ask them.
- Develop a clear communications strategy based around your objectives
- Think about your media mix. How are you getting the message out in multiple ways? How are you allowing your audience to find the information that you want them to find?
Final Takeaways

- Don’t be afraid to try new things. If something doesn’t work, don’t do it.
- Students **will** read, but you have to make it:
  - Accessible
  - Easily digestible
  - Relevant
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“Communication is about being effective, now always about being proper.”

Bo Bennett
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