

DON'T LOOK NOW, but your gap is showing!

by Sonja Bohlander



**Noooo ... it's not ANY of those other gaps you are thinking of!!
The 'gap' referred to is the one that might just be slowly developing
in your organisation without anyone noticing!**

We live in a world where everyone tries to do everything faster – but hopefully smarter too. Smartphones have taken over much of our time previously spent in conversation, or even reading a dog-eared classic!

The use of digital devices has enabled immediate information sharing and quick and easy non-verbal communication with others through emails, social media and instant messaging Apps. We are able to communicate with people all over the world – some of which we have never met. Which in itself is

Is it true of your workplace too?

an awesome thing – opening up networking opportunities we haven't had before. Time is saved with non-verbal communication because the 'chit-chat' / going off-point during a telephone conversation, is avoided.

However, in business today we find that the use of these digital 'tools' have caused a certain lack of face-to-face communication.

What does 'face-to-face' communication really mean?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary refers to it as 'within each other's sight or presence'. I believe that we are losing the importance of literally being in each other's presence.

Look around you, people are in each other's 'presence' but they are all busy on their smartphones!

In business, people tend to 'glance' over electronic communication because there is just so many emails to get through every day! Attention to detail is often lost.

When last did you pick up a dictionary?

The use of electronic media has a huge effect on our writing abilities – spelling is just not that important anymore as everyone, especially the younger generation, seem to understand the new 'texting' language.

There should be a healthy balance between using electronic / digital communication and verbal communication.

At least video conferencing facilities, Skype, iChat, etc. are available which do have a semblance of face-to-face communication taking place. We can communicate with people on the other side of the world 'in-person'.

Using electronic media to have crucial conversations and handling conflict situations is just a definite NO. In those type of conversations face-to-face communication is critical, including eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice and body language being essential to get the right message across.

It is imperative that companies must never lose sight of the importance of the softer skills such as conversation skills, conflict handling and general writing skills they need in their business. Our employees, and management alike, must be taught how to communicate properly and effectively – whether it be digital or face-to-face.

Do you feel that sometimes co-workers are hiding behind emails instead of direct conversation?

The true value of having the right communication skills, whether non-verbal or face-to-face needs to be reinforced – before the gap shows!



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**Sonja believes that:
Knowledge MUST be shared!**