introduces students to the functionality of this virtual world. For the second, she morphs a traditional assignment into a new media one, the job interview.

Using Second Life as well, Kendra Carmichael, with the assistance of her colleagues, developed the fictional company AxeCorp that could more closely simulate the exigencies of a “real-world” corporate office than the two-dimensional website they had used previously. Students were assigned various roles as employees and “real” executives were enlisted to fill supervisory positions.

In the final article of the column, authors Jennifer and Christophe Veltsos provide a cautionary note. Although technology-mediated communication certainly provides a wealth of options for teaching and learning, it can also infringe on a student’s right to privacy, violate the fair use of intellectual property, or breach the regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. They provide excellent advice and resources for instructors who plan to incorporate new media in their courses.

Reference

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presentations focusing on social networking, blogs, wikis, and various Web 2.0 technologies have captured our attention. We have oftentimes felt deep anxiety about staying up-to-date and responding effectively to the needs of our students. We sense that this anxiety, almost panic, is widespread among many of us business communication instructors.

In response, we have extensively researched the latest communication technologies and tried a variety of approaches to teaching with social networking and wikis. We welcome the wonderful, new communication tools that increasingly allow people to communicate and collaborate more effectively. However, we take what may be perceived as a contrarian view—we think the rush to and prioritization of Web 2.0 technologies in place of Web 1.0 technologies is premature for undergraduate business communication courses. We suggest that business communication instructors routinely answer three foundational questions before deciding to adopt communication technologies for classroom use, either as a means of instruction or as components of learning activities.

**Essential Questions for Adopting Communication Technologies for Classroom Use**

*Does our emphasis on various communication technologies in the classroom mirror the use of these technologies in the workplace?*

Undoubtedly, Web 2.0 technologies such as social networking, blogs, and wikis are growing in importance in the workplace. These technologies may someday overtake Web 1.0 technologies such as email and corporate intranet discussion forums in importance in the workplace. However, these technologies are used far less than email for the vast majority of written business messages and will be for the foreseeable future for most managers. Consider the following estimates about email use in comparison to Web 2.0 use:

- *Email dominates other digital communication channels in terms of use in the workplace.* Various studies show that the average corporate employee spends 10 to 15 hours per week on email-related tasks and sends 38 emails daily (Radicati & Khmartseva, 2009). In one study, business executives reported the frequency with which they used various communication tools in their most recent projects: face-to-face
communication accounted for 38% of communication time; Web 1.0 technologies such as email, 32%; phone (including teleconferencing), 30%; and Web 2.0 communication technologies, just 5% of the time (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008).

- **Millennials and nonmillennials alike use and depend on Web 1.0 communication tools far more than Web 2.0 communication tools in the workplace.** A recent survey of 8,751 corporate employees asked respondents which communication tools they used frequently in the workplace. Millennials and nonmillennials infrequently use social networks (millennials, 20%; nonmillennials, 13%) and blogs (millennials, 13%; nonmillennials, 8%) for work purposes. In the same survey, when asked what sources of information they used frequently to get work information, Web 1.0 technologies were identified most often: emails, 73%; intranet, 65%; company website, 46%; and text messages, 25%. By contrast, Web 2.0 tools were infrequently used: social networking, 13%; wikis, 8%; and blogs, 8% (AON Consulting, 2009).

- **Email is expected to be the primary business communication tool for at least the next 5 years.** Gartner, one of the leading IT consultancies, estimates that social networking will replace email and become the main tool for business communication by 2014 in about 20% of companies (Concentra, 2010). This implies that business communication instructors should be at the forefront of teaching emerging communication technologies, yet they should also assume that email will remain the primary business communication tool for written messages over at least the next 5 years for most business managers and most corporate employees.

 Much of the chatter at ABC conferences focuses on students not using email. This chatter is correct—research shows they do not. As described by Don Tapscott, one of the foremost authorities on evolving communication technologies and their impact on work collaboration and cultural change, “For Net Generals, e-mail is so yesterday” (Tapscott, 2008, p. 46). Yet since email is still the preferred communication channel for written business messages and students are least skilled in its use, instruction on email may serve business communication students better than instruction on newer social media. Of course, business communication instructors should constantly reassess which forms of electronic communication are most relevant to the contemporary workplace.

*Do the technologies we adopt in the classroom mirror those best classified as business communication and help the field retain a unique*
identity? Undoubtedly, Web 2.0 social media are being used extensively by businesses. Yet these newer social media are predominantly used in marketing and leadership communications. For example, Facebook and Twitter are mainstream marketing tools. Most successful wikis are consumer based and fall in the domain of marketing as well. Blogs and microblogs are also increasingly common in organizations. However, most of the successful use of blogs is primarily classified as leadership communication—from CEOs and other upper-level business executives. Certain business disciplines (human resources and information technology) do tend to adopt these tools, particularly blogs and wikis, at a higher rate than other disciplines, although there are notable exceptions of select corporations that have been early adopters of social media and have effectively introduced these social media into their corporate intranets as the primary communication tools (AON Consulting, 2009).

The issue of identity for the field is critical. If we are asking our students to use social networking built on the marketing model, then we may be inadvertently muddying the distinction with marketing courses. If we are asking undergraduate business communication students to write blogs built on the leadership communication model, then we may be inadvertently muddying the distinction with public relations, corporate communication, and graduate-level leadership communication courses. Fundamentally, we should ask ourselves if these communication technologies are the tools used daily for oral and written communication by the majority of business managers? If yes, then we are adopting a tool appropriate for business communication courses. If not, then we may be venturing into another field and diluting our identity.

Does the use of technology in the classroom complement and encourage rich, face-to-face communication? Ultimately, we should use communication technologies to augment and complement rich, face-to-face communication and the development of interpersonal communication skills. If we are using technologies in place of rather than in support of this richer communication, we are not sufficiently preparing our students for the workplace. The demand for interpersonal communication skills is as strong as ever. For many years, we have taught students not to use PowerPoint as a crutch in their presentations. In other words,
they should be the focus of their presentations and the PowerPoint slides should be but a supplement, not the other way around. The same could be said for social media and other new communication tools. In all we do, we should emphasize learning that places our students as the focus of communications, not the channel they choose to use.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Our purpose is not to discourage using new media; after all, we are currently adopting Web 2.0 tools in our courses for instruction and learning exercises (social networking and wikis). However, we should adopt these technologies in a measured way—asking the questions that help us determine to what degree we prioritize newer communication media and the degree to which classroom use of newer media supports a unique business communication identity.

**References**


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