

Small Group Breakout Exercise



Reducing Resistance to Advances in Information Technology [LO16-5]

Form groups of three or four people, and appoint one member as the spokesperson who will communicate your findings to the class when called on by the instructor. Then discuss the following scenario:

You are a team of managers in charge of information and communication in a large consumer products corporation. Your company has already implemented many advances in information technology. Managers and workers have access to e-mail, the Internet, your company's own intranet, groupware, and collaboration software.

Many employees use the technology, but the resistance of some is causing communication problems. A case in point is the use of groupware and collaboration software. Many teams in your organization have access to groupware and are encouraged to use it. While some teams welcome this communication tool and actually have made suggestions for improvements, others are highly resistant to sharing documents in their teams' online workspaces.

Although you do not want to force people to use the technology, you want them to at least try it and give it a chance. You are meeting today to develop strategies for reducing resistance to the new technologies.

1. One resistant group of employees is made up of top managers. Some of them seem computer-phobic and

are highly resistant to sharing information online, even with sophisticated security precautions in place. What steps will you take to get these managers to have more confidence in electronic communication?

2. A second group of resistant employees consists of middle managers. Some middle managers resist using your company's intranet. Although these managers do not resist the technology per se and do use electronic communication for multiple purposes, they seem to distrust the intranet as a viable way to communicate and get things done. What steps will you take to get these managers to take advantage of the intranet?
3. A third group of resistant employees is made up of members of groups and teams who do not want to use the groupware that has been provided to them. You think the groupware could improve their communication and performance, but they seem to think otherwise. What steps will you take to get these members of groups and teams to start using groupware?

Exploring the World Wide Web [LO16-5]



Atos Origin is a global information technology company that provides IT services to major corporations to improve, facilitate, integrate, and manage operations, information, and communication across multiple locations. Visit Atos Origin's website at <http://www.atos.net/en-us/> and read about this company and the services it provides to improve communication. How can companies like Atos

Origin help managers improve communication effectiveness in their organizations? What kinds of organizations and groups are most likely to benefit from services provided by Atos Origin? Why is it beneficial for some organizations to contract with firms like Atos Origin for their IT and communication needs rather than meet these needs internally with their own employees?

Be the Manager [LO16-1, 16-2, 16-3, 16-6]



You supervise support staff for an Internet merchandising organization that sells furniture over the Internet. You always thought that you needed to expand your staff, and just when you were about to approach your boss with such a request, business slowed. Thus your plan to try to add new employees to your staff is on hold.

However, you have noticed a troubling pattern of communication with your staff. Ordinarily, when you want a staff member to work on a task, you e-mail that subordinate the pertinent information. For the last few months, your e-mail requests have gone unheeded, and your subordinates seem to respond to your requests only after you visit them in person and give them a specific deadline. Each time they

apologize for not getting to the task sooner but say they are so overloaded with requests that they sometimes even stop answering their phones. Unless someone asks for something more than once, your staff seems to feel the request is not that urgent and can be put on hold. You think this state of affairs is dysfunctional and could lead to serious problems down the road. Also, you are starting to realize that your subordinates seem to have no way of prioritizing tasks—hence some very important projects you asked them to complete were put on hold until you followed up with them about the tasks. Knowing you cannot add employees to your staff in the short term, what are you going to do to improve communication with your overloaded staff?

The Wall Street Journal Case in the News



[LO16-1, 16-2, 16-3, 16-4, 16-6]

Doodling for Dollars

Put down that smartphone; pick up that crayon.

Employees at a range of businesses are being encouraged by their companies to doodle their ideas and draw diagrams to explain complicated concepts to colleagues.

While whiteboards long have been staples in conference rooms, companies such as Facebook Inc. are incorporating whiteboards, chalkboards and writable glass on all sorts of surfaces to spark creativity.

Firms are holding training sessions to teach employees the basics of what's known as visual note taking. Others, like vacation-rental company HomeAway Inc. and retailer Zappos, are hiring graphic recorders, consultants who sketch what is discussed at meetings and conferences, cartoon-style, to keep employees engaged.

Doodling proponents say it can help generate ideas, fuel collaboration and simplify communication. It can be especially helpful among global colleagues who don't share a common first language. Putting pen to paper also is seen as an antidote to the pervasiveness of digital culture, getting workers to look up from their devices. And studies show it can help workers retain more information.

Even with advanced gadgets such as smartphones and tablets, "the hand is the easiest way to get something down," says Everett Katigbak, a communication designer at Facebook. Most of the walls at the company's offices around the country have been coated with dry-erase or chalkboard paint or a treatment for glass to allow employees to sketch ideas whenever they arise. The company's offices are filled with jottings, from mathematical equations to doodles of cats and dollar signs.

IdeaPaint Inc., which makes a paint that turns a surface into a whiteboard, says its sales have doubled

annually since the product was introduced in 2008. The Ashland, Mass., company says more than half of its business is in the workplace.

Taking notes and drawing may help workers stay more focused, too.

A 2009 study published in the journal *Applied Cognitive Psychology* found that doodlers retained more than nondoodlers when remembering information that had been presented in a boring context, such as a meeting or conference call. The logic, according to Jackie Andrade, a psychology professor at the University of Plymouth in England, is that doodling takes up just enough cognitive energy to prevent the mind from daydreaming.

Last summer, software maker Citrix Systems Inc. opened a "design collaboration" workspace at its Santa Clara, Calif., headquarters. The facility was designed to encourage the company's gadget-obsessed engineers and other employees to let loose and sketch ideas, says Catherine Courage, the company's vice president of product design.

Whiteboards cover almost every wall and table. Markers, sticky notes and construction paper are readily available. There are also pipe cleaners and foam balls for 3-D models, and employees make props like hats and glasses to help them act out concepts.

To loosen up employees, meetings sometimes begin with participants sketching self-portraits. Although some engineers are skeptical and say they can't draw, "it gets them in the mood," Ms. Courage says.

Audra Kalfass, a Citrix software-development engineer, says when she meets with her team and there is a technical issue, "it's natural to start drawing stuff." Since nearly every surface in design meeting rooms can be written on—even the tables are made of

whiteboards—"you just grab a marker and you start drawing," she says.

Ms. Kalfass says she is a "horrible" artist. Nevertheless, "it doesn't take much artistic ability to communicate visually. You don't have to be amazing artists . . . It's mostly boxes and lines and stuff like that to get your point across."

At Spectrum Health System, a Grand Rapids, Mich., health-care provider and insurer, technology managers took a workshop with Dan Roam, a San Francisco "visual problem solving" consultant, on using images like stick figures and arrows to explain the complexities of the health-care industry to Spectrum employees.

After the workshop, Chief Information Officer Patrick O'Hare helped create a presentation featuring cartoonlike sketches for the chief executive. In one, the company's three business branches—health insurance, hospitals and physician clinics—were depicted as a body, representing the consumer, divided into three parts.

Mr. O'Hare says he isn't a good artist but the workshop taught him it was "OK to stand up in front of a group and draw stick figures. It doesn't have to be so pristine."

HomeAway, an Austin, Texas, vacation-rental company, hired a graphic facilitator to help train a dozen employees—including senior managers and training and human-resources staff—to use visual shorthand and sketching to help guide meetings, says Lori Knowlton, the company's vice president of human resources. The aim was to better "capture ideas using images," she says. Plus, it is more fun than "being surrounded by spreadsheets and e-mails."

The company also brought in graphic recorder Sunni Brown to help sketch, in real time, what was discussed at a large company meeting

on HomeAway's strategy. The resulting cartoonlike image, which serves as the meeting's minutes, hangs framed at the company's headquarters.

At Turner Broadcasting System Inc. in Atlanta, a strategy-development team recently drew tree branches and placed sticky notes on the branches to explore ways to extend the Turner Classic Movies brand, says Jennifer Dorian, a senior vice president.

The exercise yielded more than 200 promising ideas, some of which are in development, says Amy Zehfuss, vice president of network strategy for the Time Warner Inc. unit. "Seeing all the stickies on the tree is a really powerful visual," she says.

Even PowerPoint software developers do their share of doodling.

Jeffrey Murray, principal test manager for the Microsoft Corp. unit, says his team often starts with whiteboard sketches and cartoonlike storyboards when considering new product features.

Sketches help "get everyone on the same page and can convey the emotion and experience of the user," he says. Eventually, the images are transferred to PowerPoint decks, he says. Inevitably, developers sketch and scribble over the deck's whiteboard projections.

Questions for Discussion

1. Under what conditions might sketching and/or doodling

contribute to effective communication in organizations?

2. When may sketching and/or doodling detract from effective communication in organizations?
3. Why might some people need training in the use of sketching and doodling to facilitate effective communication?
4. Why might people differ in terms of the extent to which they want to use sketching and/or doodling to communicate in the workplace?

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