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Insight into Multimedia Communications Management

The notion of communication is hot new. Actually, it dates back to the origin of humanity as it is the most powerful tool our ancestors have been using to survive by building a huge knowledge base and passing it on to the next generation, generation after generation.

Consequently, it is not so much the notion of communication as the way we communicate that has been chancjiny drastically since the end of the past century.

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The advent of modern communication

Firstly, for the revolution to take place, a new reliable and powerful medium was necessary. And, everything came with the computer age. Computer is *the* thing, It has changed not only the way we work hut also the way we fuel relationships. It has broken distance barriers. Actually, one may spend more iime having a chat with a so-called friend 8,000 kilometres away from one's home than talking to one's siblings or parents. Therefore, the spectrum of communication is no longer connected with mobility capabilities. And the result is amazing.

Secondly, based on the synergy resulting from people's competence and achievements, the world in which we are living has become increasingly fast

changing. For better of for worse, there is nothing we can do about it. The engine has been running at full power for centuries with a major acceleration abou! 300 years ago – the century of enlightenment – then about 50 years ago after World War II and, last but not least, the advent of personal computer age about 20 years ago. Unless unexpected and insuperable events make the whole system stall, which may happen indeed, we can hardly imagine dealing with a reverse of the trend under the present circumstances. So, people have to keep up with fast pace and that is definitely not child's play. Rather, it boosts the need for co-operation and information and know-how sharing. Besides, it influences the way we consider and disclose information. Nowadays, by the time we release a technical handbook, the contents are already partly or wholiy outdated. It means time and money spent for very little satisfaction. And, satisfaction is business fuel. Corisumers no longer want to wait and especially when the product they purchased is defective

Toward ICT

Therefore, as a first step. such pressure resulted in replacing paper documentation with multimedia --that is CD materials. The latter proved cheaper and more flexible Then came the Internet and its huge capacity to speak to the whole world and update in·ormation and data upon request in real time. As a consequence, except for promotion and public relations events where CD materials are still widely used, the notion of multimedia has become largely synonymous with the notion of Internet in first instance or in last resort. Arid, as far as the Internet is concerned, the material constraints are substantial. The very first challenge consists of keeping up with never-ending technological advance. It is not a question of timeiiness in data reiease but a question of how and in what format to release the daia considering the fast-changing technical requirements.

Conversely, the more demanding about functionalities one is, the more critical the technical requirements are. Where a poor HTML-powered web site complies with any server specifications or nearly, the most advanced features, such as SQL database, login/password access and real-time news board require delicate handling.

Organisational changes

Reactivity and swift adjustment are the keys to the Issues. Problem is that staff and structure at large hardly manage to adjust to the changes. Management tries to bridge the huge gap that results from the situation and the way we address it retroactively. And the biygerthe structure is, the more challenging the issue because of inherent inertia.

To some extent. we may suggest that complex company structure itself proves more damaging than helpful. It tends to narrow down staffs scope of action and shackle initiative. It seems that people are not assigned relevant tasks More, falling to use and support talents available is also a matter of concern. The lack of encouragement in personal development smothers commitment and involvement.

A major threat of paralysis has come to light in large-sized companies over the past decade. In order to tackle this problem, business entities have engaged in spin-off process People tend to work in smaller and more autonomous srructures within larger entities. It aims to rekindle the dynamics and reactivity required for addressing today's business issues. Livelihood is at stake. After believing deeply in super size for economies of scale arid critical mass purposes, top management now understands that there is also a critical mass the working environment cannot exceed for productivity purpose.

Talking Internet. monolithic structures undermine processes and development because it definitely doesn't suit the craftsmanship-like approach web development features in nature. Experience proves that mass production processes are inappropriate. They undermine creativity and reduce time required for preliminary reflection. The drawback also applies to marketing and communications at large as well as engineering and research & development. Ever-shorter product and return on investment cycles have resulted in reducing time granted for creativity, forward thinking and control. More, developers spend most of their time trying to comply with complex production processes and administrative formalities. Where it takes three or four clays to make basic graphic changes, for instance updating a gif picture, there is matter for concern.

Environmental impact

Creative workforce needs a favourable environment to innovate. An Internet communications department must be viewed not only as guarantor of processes and forwarder of top management decisions but also as expert and advisory body.

Besides, substance is also a critical issue. It lies in the fact that the medium is global while substance and the form in which substance is proposed have to account for local market features. Mass media communications managed the way it was in the 70s or 80s is dead and buried. Now, companies cannot expect to consider world business based on the techniques and policies on which they rely to manage the business they do in their backyard – understand "locally".

Culture, values, regulations and language are such elements that have an impact on things and the technical requirements of systems. A large-sized resort and hotel multinational enterprise launched an online booking service. The idea was great at the beginning. It consisted of using a unique database to manage online booking for each and every hotel around the globe for user-friendliness and cost-efficiency purposes. But, they ericountered huge language incompatibility with Eastern Asiari languages such as Korean and Japanese. The problem was dual. On the one hand, data typed in such languages read as computer code in database so that hotels didn't register the reservation. On the other hand, although they were required to fill out online form in English, a great nurnher of customers didn't follow the instructions and would type in their own languages. No need to mention that however comfortable and reliable online booking process was meant to be, dissatisfaction was at its utmost when customers found their credit card had been debited while there was no trace of the operation on hotel hooking lists. The business impact was much greater than that of the technical error.

Likewise, one has to account for culture, values and regulations as well. What with local requirements and the way receivers perceive messages, one can't expect to standardise communication. Problem is developers have great difficulty in considering local requirements when using Internet tools, the sacrosanct mass communications medium that suggests standardised contents and processes above all. Managing different versions of the same site is always an ordeal.

Looking to the future

No doubt we have been experiencing only the very beginning of the connection between the users of high technology and the producers of contents since the Internet really started ten years ago. We presume there is a lot yet to come up and

explore. The perspectives are huge based on the latest paths of innovation and inherent outcomes such as the diffusion of fragrance by way of the Internet, live video via cellular telephone sets and ever! the use of robotics and artificial intelligence, which applications are still unknown.

However. the question is riot so much about technological advance as about whether. or no structures and staff will be able to keep up with the continuous changes in organisation and requirements. Likewise, whether or no the market will respond positively on a large scale to such products ana features is unknown.