

Review of Electronic Communications...

At the last Shipley’s breakfast meeting we talked about how we use Electronic Communication to support our regular face-to-face business interactions.

For those who were at the breakfast, we marked each technology (starting with the Telephone, and coming as up-to-date as Google Wave) as to whether we’d heard of it, use it, have won business from using it, or given up using it as it’s ‘out of date’).

We also gave you the chance to list any other forms of Electronic Communications that were missed from the original list. Thankfully, there were many other technologies that people fed into the argument – 28 in total!

This document gives a summary of the findings from that breakfast, along with some brief comment based on my own personal experiences. I hope it proves useful...

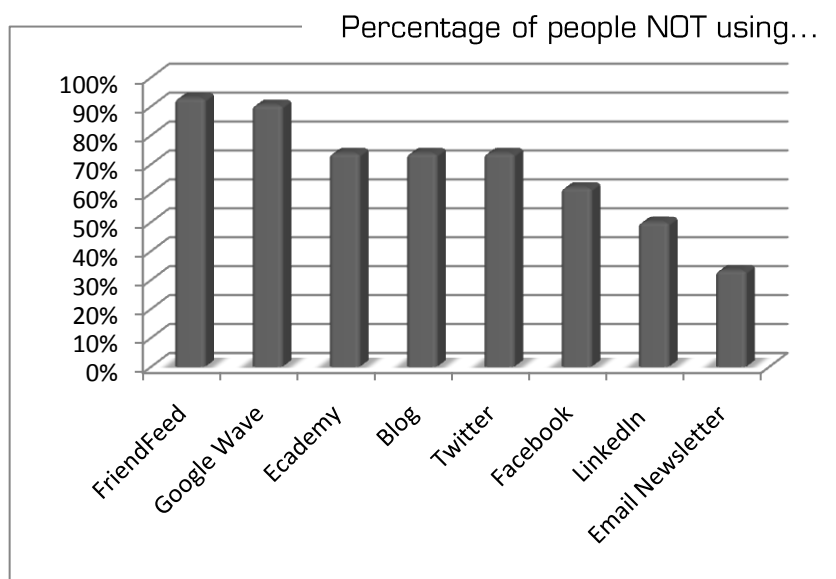
Steve Coburn.

Results...

Without surprise, it was the **Telephone** and **Email** that are the most popular forms of Electronic Communication – with them being used regularly by 64% and 55% respectively. The only surprise was that one respondent hadn’t heard of either – I guess they were either messing with the results, or didn’t understand the question!

Of the newer technologies, 24% of people hadn’t heard of an **RSS feed**, 38% hadn’t heard of **Ecademy**, and 43% of people hadn’t heard of **Google Wave**. Conversely, everyone, without exception, has heard of **Twitter**, **Friends Re-United**, and **Facebook**.

One of the highest results of the survey was that 71% of people ‘had heard of, but done nothing about’ a **Blog**.



Meanwhile, 17% of people used one occasionally, and 7% of people had won new business because they used a **Blog**.

**Twitter** was another interesting one – 69% had heard of it, but not used it, 10% used it occasionally, 14% used it regularly, and only one person had won any new business through using **Twitter**. (Because my results were also included in the survey, then that would’ve been me!).

**LinkedIn** had an even spread of results – with 31% having heard of, but not used it; 17% have signed up, but got no further; 19% use occasionally; 26% use regularly; and 5% having won new business from using **LinkedIn**. For the professional, LinkedIn remains the most popular form of modern Social Media – an ‘Online CV’ to market your capabilities and build up a network of people with whom you can meet face-to-face too.

One of my personal surprises is that nearly three quarters of people had never heard of, or never used, a feature such as the ‘Send to a Friend’ when reading a news story on a site like BBC News.

**Email Newsletters** were used ‘occasionally’ and ‘regularly’ by 36% of people with a further 31% reporting that they have won business through communicating with an Email Newsletter. As it appears to be one of the more successful forms of Electronic Communications for business, it highlights the importance for businesses to get it right – and not just send an email bcc’d to a couple of hundred recipients!

#### Past its Sell-By date?

The technologies that people used to use, but have left alone more recently include **Friends Re-United** (12%), **RSS Feeds** (2%) and **Facebook** (2%). Maybe, if Fax was included in the original list, that would have been a technology that’s on its way out too?

### Added by you...

These were the means of Electronic Communication that you identified were missing from the original list:

- Book Reviews
- Collaboration Software / SharePoint
- Conference Calls
- DX
- Fax
- Flickr
- Heads Up Display Cars + Glasses
- Instant Messaging / IRC
- Letter / Post
- Meeting People / Face to Face
- Mobile Bluetooth Ads
- Mobile Phone
- MSN
- MySpace
- Online Forums
- Plaxo
- Podcast
- Skype
- Telepathy
- Telex
- Texting / SMS
- Video Conference
- VoIP
- Webcast
- WebEX
- Webinars
- Website
- YouTube

Don’t shoot the messenger – I know some of these aren’t Electronic!

Conclusion

Electronic Communication is an important means of staying in touch. Maybe how we define ‘Electronic Communication’ is changing with people seeing the **Telephone**, **Fax** and **Email** as too much of an everyday activity for them to call it ‘Electronic’ anymore – but once upon a time these were new technologies that people said would never catch on.

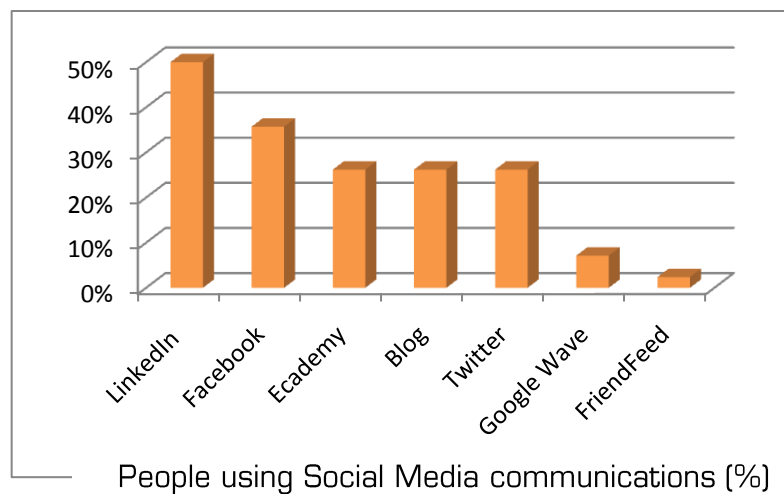
Whilst Electronic Communication will never replace face-to-face interaction completely (I hope!) – it’s still an essential way of following-up with people you’ve met and keeping in touch with them on a more regular basis.

When looking at the latest Social Media tools, many people are confused as to how to get the best from them. And with so many on the market, it’s only the big names that are really generating any interest (60% of people hadn’t heard of **Friend Feed**, with a further 38% not having done anything about joining – there will be many ‘Betamax-style’ casualties along the way!).

However, whilst the number of local business people using Social Media, in some form or another, may not yet be in the majority, they are nonetheless significant.

48% are using **LnkedIn**, 45% are using **Ecademy**, 36% are using **Facebook**, 26% are using **Twitter**, and 26% write a **Blog**.

Yet, inevitably, it’s the slightly older technologies that have the stronger hold on the local business community with 63% adding regular **news** stories to their websites, and 67% sending **Email Newsletters**.



67% of the room sending an **Email Newsletter**? How do you make yours stand out? Perhaps, being an ‘early adopter’ and getting a head-start on everyone else is a good strategy? Are those businesses who are adopting Social Media in their communications strategies stealing a march towards beating their competitors?

In my opinion, the rules are changing and they are not yet clearly defined, but you can’t afford to remain ignorant of the affect they may have on your business.

Remember when **Mobile Phones** were new and people were using them inappropriately? These days people are aware of how to use them better – and those that were initially against their use have changed their initial feelings and use Mobiles to their advantage (maybe not in the same way that the early-adopters did – but no business can really survive today without them).