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| Digital Employees and their Analog Bosses. |
| Strategies to help the past welcome the future for the benefit of the corporation. |
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**Abstract**

This paper will look at how new technology inspires younger employees while creating some problems regarding the senior staff. I will evaluate how some corporations are dealing with the generational gap regarding technology and moving their companies into the twenty-first century. Technology changes at a rapid pace, but there is a global aspect to the corporate world too. “Traditional corporate practices” worked in the past, but in today’s market, companies must be on the cutting edge or they can become yesterday’s news. Corporate society has to develop a constantly changing system to deal with multiple changes, and learn to listen to the employees that have been hired, to focus on these concerns. How does new employees resist following the herd and becoming assimilated into an antiquated system? Questions arise about who to listen too, and how many young ideas can mesh with senior experience while running a company in a shrinking global market. How does the executive staff transform the rhetorical message to the workforce without sounding antiquated?

**Introduction**

Twenty years ago, an interoffice communication was done through memorandums (memos), letters, and meticulously typed presentations. Even the word memo was considered unprofessional at some corporate entities. A typical presentation was done through handouts that were printed off from Office Depot or Kinkos. A fancy presentation used large boards with some graphics and oversized boards, or a slide projector on a pull down screen. Memos were regurgitated from an old file cabinet so everything looked consistent and followed a specific format.

Employees went to work and conformed to the company ways. Mission statements were about controlling employees and maximizing profits as long as it was done the boss’ way. If the boss wanted something done a certain way that was how it was done because employees did not want to be classified as insubordinate.

Employees become part of a herd with a corporate name (Sun, 2013). They conform to corporate wishes and do not attempt to bring fresh ideas and new thoughts to the corporation. The boss is assumed to know what is best for the company; the employee is expected follow orders.

Today, companies are trying to reach a global market. Competitive edges can be won or lost in a matter of seconds, not years. Older bosses struggle to keep up with the newest programs and apps. Employees want the newest and greatest technologies for many different reasons. Bosses decide which technologies will benefit the company and which are the latest playthings for the employees. Some bosses are detached from the employees and others are trying to be part of the company. Will employees even speak up and try to help their company enter the digital age?

**Strengths and Weaknesses of a Boss**

Bosses have many strengths and weaknesses. Just because a boss knows something is a weakness does not mean they will work to improve it. A boss may try to conceal the fact that he/she has weak areas. The avoidance of these areas can be a real problem. Reality, a boss cannot be expected to learn all of the roles because there is not enough time to learn multiple roles. “Management has gotten smarter about how to run lean, profitable organizations but dumber about the needs of employees who live inside them” (Lundin, 1998). Management has the authority to cut employees and increase production, but when it comes to making the job easier or more efficient the boss may lack specific skills. Spending money does not equate to cutting cost and being efficient.

Companies must work together, management and employee, to create a cost effective smart company making the right decisions.

“An equilibrium between smart and dumb is not desirable because blunders, follies, and perversities are always lurking. In a globalized world, the dumb reaction, which once might have been contained, can turn into a huge disaster... It is almost impossible to neutralize previously localized episodes of dumbness.” (Lundin, 1998)

One problem is if the employee’s voice is not recognized or heard. Management may state they want to know about situations within the company and encourage employees to come to them. The open door policy is frequently used with management; but how many companies practice this truth policy? If everything appears good, then, there cannot be any problems, right?

Corporate understands the equilibrium and wants everything to appear under control at all times. This effect will trickle all the way down to the lower management system. And, when senior executives show up at the office, everyone is to appear to look busy. Unfortunately, this strategy has created many other problems consisting of employees not speaking up when they see dumb decisions being made consistently. Instead of saying something, everyone keeps their head down and looks busy to make their immediate boss happy, even if things are falling apart.

Speaking up or standing up for simple things in a job is not something many employees will do. They do not want to appear needy or want to risk their jobs. *The boss will eventually see there is a problem and take care of things,* does not work. The problem with this thought process is the boss may not be aware of the problem. Middle management is pulled in two different directions and may not be able to see the problem in one specific area. Multiple bosses compound the situation.

Technology, such as email, helps inform bosses about problems for employees who do not want face-to-face contact. Knowing how well management responds to email will let the employee know if his/her email will even be seen. Some companies inundate management with every type of corporate email until their inbox is overrun with meaningless dribble, droning on about mission statements and how to control every situation. The worst thing for the employee to do is nothing. Somehow, he/she must find a way to communicate with the management team to inform them of the situation if they ever want it resolved. Doing nothing gets nothing in return.

The second problem with getting employees to speak up is who do they tell there is a problem. If his/her immediate boss rules with an iron fist, complaining will not be in the employees best interest for long-term employment. Other companies have created a boss for every situation, so which one is the one to turn to with actual authority? Trying to understand the corporate hierarchy can be a job itself. Some bosses are so detached from his/her employees they cannot place names with faces. Many times this type of boss is so detached from his/her employees they cannot place names with faces. Everybody is a number on a computer with statistics next to the name. The employee will hear from his/her real boss when the numbers next to their name become red. At that point, it is too late.

One study shows the implementation of new technology deals with the potential buyer’s ability to absorb knowledge. This is determined by the supplier’s ability to transfer that knowledge effectively.

It is argued that the supplier’s capability to transfer knowledge to a target industry is critical to offset the cost of integrating the external technology within the potential buyers’ value chain. Consistent with this argument, our findings show those potential buyers in an industry are more likely to adopt and license technology from a supplier that has higher knowledge transfer capabilities. Second, we argue that the cost of integrating the technology into an industry’s applications is lowered by the potential buyers’ absorptive capacity. In support of this, we found that for industries in which potential buyers typically have a higher absorptive capacity, licensing is less likely to depend on the supplier’s knowledge transfer capability. This result parallels the markets for technology literature’s finding that international technology transfers benefit from bundling patent licensing with the transfer of know-how, especially when the buyer is located in a less developed country(presumably) (Ceccagnoli, 2012).

Knowledge is the key on both sides to implement new technology into a company. One party has to be able to explain the software and benefits and the other party has to be able to understand what has been explained. If these two things do not happen, then the software will not be implemented and nothing will change.

A boss wants to feel superior to the employees he/she has hired. He/she is the leader of the company and needs to have a sense of understanding within the company. If he/she does not understand then it is believed that the person explaining the technology does not have a good understanding of the product. In this instance, why buy from someone who does not understand what they are trying to sell. When a person goes to buy a car from a salesperson, if that person cannot explain the benefits of the car to justify the cost factor and a five or longer year loan, then, the customer will leave. Only when the salesperson explains all the benefits and shows a belief and full understanding of the vehicle is it when the customer feels safe and believes what they are being told. A salesperson cannot sell a car on the grounds of “it has four doors, and a motor.” All cars are similar, so the customer must see the benefits in buying a specific car.

Knowledge can be the key in explaining and implementing policies in a company. Going to a boss and asking for a new iPad because it has cool features will not get anything accomplished. Having a logical argument about particular benefits on how the iPad can help with productivity and acquiring a new client has merit, and it may be considered.

When an employee requests new hardware or software for the corporate entity they work for, he/she must consider the bosses personal feelings.

“It was observed that sometimes the older interviewees answered by randomly choosing some of the alternatives given by the researcher, even if it seemed clear to the researcher that the users had not understood the questions...Some researchers had observed that group situations did not encourage participants to express and discuss their personal age-related limitations...The group activities seemed to make one person more conscious of her loneliness” (Harjumaa, 2012).

Personal feelings of inadequacies may affect the decisions a corporate manager will decide on. Deflection is an easy tactic that will delay or distract the employee while hiding their lack of knowledge on the topic.

The generational gap may show how out of touch the senior staff is with the new technology. Age leads to the staff realizing their own mortality and resist the new technology because of this. The improvements for the company become personal to the boss and not about the benefits of the company. Tactics when presenting new technology to an older staff will be met with opposition, but if explained right with persuasive writing, the herd leader can be influenced to new ideas. This is something college cannot prepare a young writer for except through persuasive writing.

**Herding**

Companies are grateful for the employees they have. Without employees, the company would not be able to do what they claim they can do. Each group of employees are divided into their area of specialty and expected to work just that one area. The different groups of employees communicate with other areas of the company when necessary, and they are kept segregated. This is a form of corporate herding (Sun, 2013).

Each manager is in charge of a specific herd of employees. “It’s not your imagination when you feel pulled against your will into the vortex of corporate policy. It’s management’s way of telling you who has the power” (Lundin, 1998). Out of fear of losing a job, most employees will fall in line and follow.

Herding by power exists in today’s society, but it takes very little power to actual deal with people. According to Eric Hoffer, when people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other. In other words, employees will conform to the group once they are acclimated to the company. He/she wants to fit in and get along with the group. Most will automatically fall in line and follow the herd.

People have been programmed since the Industrial Revolution in America to fall in line and follow one another. School bells were implemented so when children graduated school they accepted corporate whistles that told them when to take breaks, go to lunch, and get off work. The programming started in elementary school and continued through adulthood. Everyone lined up and followed the sounds of corporate America. If someone managed to go to college, there were bells there too. After graduation, the employee was part of a more elite herd. Each group had their specific rolls and nothing was questioned.

Today, times have changed and the bells are gone. Computers help micromanage the herd, but most people accept the reality of working for the corporation. People are grateful to have a job and just want to fit in with the rest of the employees. This concept has not changed from school to the corporate world. Once accepted into the company fold, most employees do not want to disrupt that harmony, so they conform to corporate ways and support that company. Most employees will even defend the company they work for, even if conditions are not as pleasant as promised.

Herding is not always the best thing. “People tend to imitate others through herding and can sometimes make incorrect decisions (E.g. adoption of inferior technology)” (Sun, 2013). Even though the employee knows the best course of action, or can bring his/her personal expertise to the situation, they will choose to follow bad decisions. People are loyal to management and no one is willing to step out on a limb and say what most people may be thinking.

Once companies begin to implement bad decisions problems will arise. “Employees in truly dumb companies become partially immobilized, as if infected with a virus that acts relentlessly inside their bodies” (Lundin, 1998). It is a form of mad cow disease and the company grows weaker as each person is infected. To cure the disease someone must go to “ground zero,” or the host of the disease, and neutralize it. In some companies, this may not be possible, because the problem is at the senior level of the corporation. Other times, it is middle management, and employees can cure the dumbness with logic and reasoning. If the disease is cured in time the rest of the employees will recover, but some may be lost in the process.

Sex may not be permitted on corporate property but it happens every day and spreads like an infectious Sexually Transmitted Disease. What I mean is employees will utilize old documents to build new ones. The format may have changed from the original document but that is about it. An employee will regurgitate an old memo into an email to correspond with clients. The boss approves because he/she may recognize the original format. These documents need to be destroyed once they have served their original purpose, because their life expectancy has expired with the end of that project. Instead, they are saved and keep reproducing with ill effects (Johns, 1989).

Perspective socialization is when the companies the employees work for use rhetorical models (Lutz, 1989). Formats, layouts, and photos are placed in templates that the employees have to make work to obtain new clients. During the introduction period of new employees, they must decide what to do with the information they find in the file cabinet. Templates are expected to be used in a corporate world even if there is a better solution or way to phrase an article to obtain a new client is warranted. In order to create a new form and have it implemented into the file cabinet, the form must be approved by committees before being used to benefit a client. Corporations demand the use of the file cabinet system, and so the herding begins and the file cabinet reproduces one more time.

Employees not following a prescriptive socialization process would have to seek out information before writing. The writers would have to find out who held the appropriate information to help them accomplish his/her tasks before attempting to write anything. Some companies are realizing the file cabinet has an odor and needs to be removed. The digital era speeds up the process and shows a company’s weakness of training employees to follow existing templates. The writers had to be trained how to find the correct information to create a new template with the company’s image for each process, which they were, assigned to write for.

As a new employee begins working for a company, they have some advantages.

“Being on the periphery as a writer allows you to gain knowledge about the organizational structure of the company. The newcomer needs to pay close attention to the rhetorical lore, company practices, rituals, and dynamics along with many other things. The lessons learned early on will become more beneficial as the employee moves deeper into the company” (Sullivan, Martin, & Anderson, 2003).

A writer cannot learn about a company and the writing policies without immersing into their culture and activities. When he/she immerses into the culture herding may begin as part of assimilation. The employee has to be careful not to become victim to overutilization of the file cabinet during these early times. These stories teach the writer about the company and what to, and not to, do with their writing.

As the writer immerses more into the culture of the company, he/she can begin to move toward the center of the company through more intensive participation. Collaboration is a great way to avoid falling victim to the file cabinet and its infectious ways. Each employee must make a conscious decision about the temptations the file cabinet has when looming deadlines present themselves. Each employee wants to impress the boss and fit in at the same time. The file cabinet presents the gateway to fitting in with the corporation.

Many times a new employee may be uncertain of what their role should be within the company. “Uncertainty avoidance is when individuals are insecure about their ability to influence decisions” (Idoura, 2010). The person may not speak up about what they feel is a better idea for winning the customer. He/she may not even mention errors in the drafts that need to be fixed afraid of causing problems. He/she wants to belong to the herd and not disrupt the flow of the corporate ways. Instead, the employee will allow the group to continue down the wrong path. Leaving their fears behind, an employee can highlight their skills and help the company or become another lamb.

If the employee is going to speak up about better solutions, he/she needs to remember collaboration and tactics. He/she has to remain humble and explain their ideas with the expectation of opposition. Attempting to collaborate with the other employees will be beneficial in expressing concerns while bringing new information to the corporation.

Each employee must decide how to act in any of these situations. Most people will say that they do not want to make the decision. What people do not realize is that *no decision is a decision*. Action will get some sort of an action in return. Standing around the water cooler with the rest of the herd bleating will not solve anything. “An essential characteristic of a herd is an information cascade. In an information cascade, people defer completely to the herd, no matter what their own information suggests” (Sun, 2013). So even at the water cooler, these employees will still agree with the herd.

Some of the employees will behave in the subjective norm. This is defined as “a person’s perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behavior in question. This form of social influence explains how a person believes those important to him/her will view him/her as a result of adopting a policy” (Sun, 2013). The herd expects certain behaviors from the individuals and the employees know this so he/she will self-regulate when being presented with a decision that may cause him/her to be in a leadership role.

Remembering collaboration tactics from college can be very beneficial when dealing with the corporate world. Writing assignments involve more than one person today. Also, by collaborating with different areas inside the company prevents following a single herd. It also helps avoid the use of a single file cabinet when writing from multiple areas.

**How did the boss get here?**

Most bosses did not inherit the job or the company. Over time, a person gains experience. As long as he/she works diligently, the person will gain experience and could be promoted. After he/she proves himself/herself and handles the tasks, at hand more promotions will ensue. The person will eventually become the boss. The boss equals time, experience, age, and promotions. Age does not always equal wisdom. Wisdom comes from listening to the experts and knowing how to follow good advice. Wisdom means the person knows they do not know everything, but he/she knows where to find the information.

Once a person steps into an upper management position, new responsibilities take over. He/she must now answer to senior management and relay those details to people under him/her. Time has passed and so has technology. When senior management started out typewriters were advanced technology. Ultimately, they are still in charge of the company. But, have they updated their personal software to keep the company up to date?

Upper management was trained on desktop computers and the new invention of Microsoft Word. Some things have become easier to create and adapt. Computers and software are used; digitally the company has grown. The desktop was great ten years ago, but today there are multitudes of different media for a company to grow with. How does the new employee convince middle management to purchase iPads, whose boss used a typewriter when they started out?

Senior staff has a belief that if things are not broke; they do not need to be fixed. A boss may not realize antiquated software is the same as being broke. Older software will not communicate with today’s software. There are glitches, things run slower, even time to load, are all lost revenue because employees are waiting in line. Just because an employee is sitting in front of a computer, does not mean any work is being done. It is harder to spot the lack of productivity old software creates.

Just like with the employee, the boss has to make a decision on what is best for the company. And, no decision is a decision. I hope that someone will speak up for the benefit of the company. The boss must rely on the expertise of his/her employees and make an executive decision to implement new technology.

Bosses need to realize that training employees on new technology may not be necessary. Many times, employees are already using advanced technology at home and with their children. Companies forget that when the herd goes home, they fall in line with a second herd, social media. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Skype are used every day in most households. These formats allow people to communicate with each other from everywhere in the world.

“Society has paid considerable attention to the advances in information technology. Newspapers have been keen to keep their readers updated on the latest developments in information technology. (E.g. *The New York Times* has a section focusing exclusively on information technologies)” (Sun, 2013).

Corporations need to understand and become aware of the technologies so he/she can keep the company current. The herd is following technology outside the office, so the boss must follow the herd in order to lead them. Chances are his family belongs to this herd as well.

If the company is in love with committees and hiring consultants, then management admits that they do not trust their own employees for advice. Consultants cost a lot of money and take time to make a decision based on information management provides. In today’s market, by the time all the data is compiled, the decision may be irrelevant.

IT departments can be a huge help. Usually, they have a manager working for the herd. An IT manager can act as a consultant and help inform other managers about cost and implementation. The company has a team of specialists that can help inform senior staff through logic and reasoning. “The more understand the CEO has the better the chance for new software to be licensed by the company” (Arora, 1996). If an employee needs help trying to keep the company current, this may be the place to turn to. They are the experts and can help direct and lead the charge for changes to be initiated.

Many new programs offer free trial periods. Software companies understand executives do not want to shell out thousands of dollars for something the company may not be able to use. The software companies provide up to ninety-day trial versions of software so the company can see if it is beneficial. This can be a great selling point to senior staff for trying to get new media into the company. The company does not have to spend money up front for a maybe. The risk is minimalized and the benefits can be great. A little research may be in order before recommending software, and do not recommend every new thing as the latest and greatest.

Today, cost can be minimalized through subscriptions that are month to month. Therefore, if the software worked and was found beneficial then, this can help with initial cost. A monthly subscription fee would reduce the upfront cost and provide updates to keep the software current. Many times, the subscription comes with technical support for the employees too. The reduction in IT staff hours saves everyone in the company time and money. In addition, most subscription services can be implemented on a month-to-month basis not locking the company into using the software long after it is no longer needed. A simple spreadsheet can help to explain to executives the benefits and low cost of implementation to get this approved.

Today, there is a global economy push and a shrinking world. Companies are connecting with everyone all over the globe. The internet has created this revolution. Instead of going through third parties to make some parts of a product, companies can go directly to the source and save on cost. They can market their products to other countries as well. Internet and technology have allowed this to happen and now it is becoming mainstream with corporations.

If someone wants to do business with Japan then the company must utilize technology. “The supplier must be able to absorb this knowledge. This information must transfer from the IT department all the way to the CEO for him/her to agree to purchase” (Ceccagnoli, 2012). If the CEO does not understand, they may resist and not give a reason for the new updates to happen. This is usually because he/she does not understand and does not want to admit that he/she is confused. Just as people are afraid of stepping out of the herd, bosses are afraid of admitting they do not understand something. It can be seen as a weakness and they may feel it will be exploited. Instead, the boss will attempt to rule at that moment with an iron fist. If this happens, returning with more information may be beneficial to convince the boss to change.

Even though companies herd their employees, corporations do not herd together. Each company must showcase their talents to prove they are worthy of new business from other companies. It is a constant power struggle. All corporations want to know what are other companies doing? Are we behind, or leading? Is our decision good or bad? Each boss is trying to keep his/her company in the spotlight while increasing profits.

**Students**

All writing is done for specific audiences. In college, students prepare their writing for the instructor. The professor is usually an expert in the area and can give reasonable feedback. The student may be allowed to revise and get feedback on how to improve the document. Even the final due date may be flexible to allow the student to highlight their best work.

Lutz talks about Prescriptive socialization of students having to use work formats in jobs that depend on their ability to gain outside clients, but they cannot improve their existing formats that would benefit getting new clients (Lutz, 1989). The old formats have issues and cannot conform to the new situation. Corporate is not catering to the audience needs but only to a corporate image. As a new employee, fresh from college, the herding begins almost immediately. The student follows suit, walks over to the file cabinet to pull out an existing file, and begins to duplicate old results.

Hopefully, the young employee took some writing courses in college that help with persuasive and argumentative styles. Many young employees just open the file cabinet and do not understand why they cannot influence change in the corporate world. A simple email asking for something will not be effective in the workplace. If the student has not been taught strategies to get things accomplished, then they have not been prepared to work in the corporate world. Instead, they will be cast out of the herd and left to fend for themselves once he/she has been classified as a troublemaker within the herd.

College writing does not prepare many students for the corporate world. One example was given by a Physics professor. At the beginning of the semester, he posed a question about dropping a ball from the top of a 100-foot building and was asked to configure the velocity of the ball. During the final he posed a similar question regarding dropping a ball into a 100 foot hole. The students complained and did not understand how to figure a “hole” problem (Brent, 2011). If students have difficulty transferring the knowledge ascertained from a Physics class with a structured set of rules based on science, how can instructors expect them to be able to transfer what they have learned in writing courses to other rhetorical contexts? There are no fixed standards with writing and each instance creates a varying set of rules. Some of these rules are based on the knowledge of the audience.

Immediate deadlines, audience changes, multi-million dollar deals are at stake. Colleges may teach the latest and greatest technology, but the job the student receives may be far less technical. Learning one technology at school and then reverting to another may cause the student to feel as if they are not going down a corporate ladder instead of going up the ladder. “There is a disconnect between the academic preparation of engineers and the world of work that they enter on graduation” (Brent, 2011).

The question that begs to be asked is, “How much should we in the academic world target our teaching to prepare students for the world of work?” Referring back to the Industrial Revolution with bells and herding students, colleges must train the new employees not to be just docile bodies working for the sheepherder. Training employees only for corporate work only encourages the students to be assimilated as part of the herd. How do students keep what they have learned in college and not be discouraged by some of the companies they find within the workforce?

**Conclusion**

New employees must remember their training, but most of all, they must learn how to deal with different people. Collaboration can be very beneficial working in today’s corporate society. Things change fast in the corporate world and a new employee must be a team player while helping bring new ideas to the table. Each new set of skills a company can possess will make them better prepared for the future.

The second, but most important thing, any employee must remember is to speak up. Asking questions prevents problems from arising. Bosses cannot read minds and know what is going on all the time. Learning how to communicate within the corporate environment will take employees further than hiding in the middle of the herd hoping no one notices them.

Leave the file cabinet alone. No one knows where it has been. The audience must be adjusted for each writing assignment and the answers are not inside the metal box. Not all old files will help future events. And, doing nothing is still a decision.

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