Etiquette in technology

Etiquette in technology governs what conduct is socially acceptable in an online or digital situation. While etiquette is ingrained into culture, etiquette in technology is a fairly recent concept. The rules of etiquette that apply when communicating over the Internet or social networks or devices are different from those applying when communicating in person or by audio (such as telephone) or videophone (such as Skype video). It is a social code of network communication.

Communicating with others via the Internet without misunderstandings in the heat of the moment can be challenging, mainly because facial expressions and body languagecannot be interpreted on cyberspace. Therefore, several recommendations to attempt to safeguard against these misunderstandings have been proposed.

Netiquette

Netiquette, a colloquial portmanteau of *network etiquette* or *Internet etiquette*, is a set of social conventions that facilitate interaction over networks, ranging from Usenet andmailing lists to blogs and forums.

Like the network itself, these developing norms remain in a state of flux and vary from community to community. The points most strongly emphasized about Usenet netiquette often include using simple electronic signatures, and avoiding multiposting, cross-posting, off-topic posting, hijacking a discussion thread, and other techniques used to minimize the effort required to read a post or a thread. Similarly, some Usenet guidelines call for use of unabbreviated English while users of instant messaging protocols like SMSoccasionally encourage just the opposite, bolstering use of SMS language. However, many online communities frown upon this practice.

Common rules for e-mail and Usenet such as avoiding flamewars and spam are constant across most mediums and communities. Another rule is to avoid typing in all caps or grossly enlarging script for emphasis, which is considered to be the equivalent of shouting or yelling. Other commonly shared points, such as remembering that one's posts are (or can easily be made) public, are generally intuitively understood by publishers of Web pages and posters to Usenet, although this rule is somewhat flexible depending on the environment. On more private protocols, however, such as e-mail and SMS, some users take the privacy of their posts for granted. One-on-one communications, such as private messages on chat forums and direct SMSs, may be considered more private than other such protocols, but infamous breaches surround even these relatively private media. For example, Paris Hilton's Sidekick PDA was cracked in 2005, resulting in the publication of her private photos, SMS history, address book, etc.

More substantially, a group e-mail sent by Cerner CEO Neal Patterson to managers of a facility in Kansas City concerning "Cerner's declining work ethic" read, in part, "The parking lot is sparsely used at 8 A.M.; likewise at 5 P.M. As managers—you either do not know what your EMPLOYEES are doing; or YOU do not CARE ... In either case, you have a problem and you will fix it or I will replace you." After the e-mail was forwarded to hundreds of other employees, it quickly leaked to the public. On the day that the e-mail was posted to Yahoo!, Cerner's stock price fell by over 22%from a high market capitalization of US$1.5 billion.

Beyond matters of basic courtesy and privacy, e-mail syntax (defined by RFC 2822) allows for different types of recipients. The primary recipient, defined by the To: line, can reasonably be expected to respond, but recipients of carbon copies cannot be, although they still might. Likewise, misuse of the CC: functions in lieu of traditional mailing listscan result in serious technical issues. In late 2007, employees of the United States Department of Homeland Security used large CC: lists in place of a mailing list to broadcast messages to several hundred users. Misuse of the "reply to all" caused the number of responses to that message to quickly expand to some two million messages, bringing down their mail server. In cases like this, rules of netiquette have more to do with efficient sharing of resources—ensuring that the associated technology continues to function—rather than more basic etiquette. On Usenet, cross-posting, in which a single copy of a message is posted to multiple groups is intended to prevent this from

happening, but many newsgroups frown on the practice, as it means users must sometimes read many copies of a message in multiple groups.

"When someone makes a mistake – whether it's a spelling error or a spelling flame, a stupid question or an unnecessarily long answer – be kind about it. If it's a minor error, you may not need to say anything. Even if you feel strongly about it, think twice before reacting. Having good manners yourself doesn't give you license to correct everyone else. If you do decide to inform someone of a mistake, point it out politely, and preferably by private email rather than in public. Give people the benefit of the doubt; assume they just don't know any better. And never be arrogant or self-righteous about it. Just as it's a law of nature that spelling flames always contain spelling errors, notes pointing out Netiquette violations are often examples of poor Netiquette."

Due to the large variation between what is considered acceptable behavior in various professional environments and between professional and social networks, codified internalmanuals of style can help clarify acceptable limits and boundaries for user behavior. For instance, failure to publish such a guide for e-mail style was cited among the reasons for a NZ$17,000 wrongful dismissal finding against a firm that fired a woman for misuse of all caps in company-wide e-mail traffic.

Online etiquette

Digital citizenship is a term that describes how a person should act while using digital technology online and has also been defined as "the ability to participate in society online". The term is often mentioned in relation to Internet safety and netiquette.

The term has been used as early as 1998 and has gone through several changes in description as newer technological advances have changed the method and frequency of how people interact with one another online. Classes on digital citizenship have been taught in some public education systems and some argue that the term can be "measured in terms of economic and political activities online".

Cell phone etiquette

A headrest cover in the "quiet carriage" of a British intercity train, reminding passengers that mobile phones must not be used in this carriage

The issue of mobile communication and etiquette has also become an issue of academic interest. The rapid adoption of the device has resulted in the intrusion of telephony into situations where it was previously not used. This has exposed the implicit rules of courtesy and opened them to reevaluation.

Cell phone etiquette in the education system

Most schools in the United States and Europe and Canada have prohibited mobile phones in the classroom, citing class disruptions and the potential for cheating via text messaging. In the UK, possession of a mobile phone in an examination can result in immediate disqualification from that subject or from all that student's subjects. This still applies even if the mobile phone was not turned on at the time. In New York City, students are banned from taking cell phones to school. This has been a debate for several years, but finally passed legislature in 2008.

"Most schools allow students to have cell phones for safety purposes"—a reaction to the Littleton, Colorado, high school shooting incident of 1999 (Lipscomb 2007: 50). Apart from emergency situations, most schools don't officially allow students to use cell phones during class time.

Cell phone etiquette in the public sphere

Talking or texting on a cell phone in public may seem a distraction for many individuals. When in public there are two times when one uses a phone. The first is when someone is alone and the other is when he/she is in a group. The main issue for most people is when they are in a group, and the cell phone becomes a distraction or a barrier for successful socialization among family and friends. In the past few years, society has become less tolerant of cell phone use in public areas for example, public transportation, restaurants and much more. This is exemplified by the widespread recognition of campaigns such as Stop Phubbing, which prompted global discussion as to how mobile phones should be used in the presence of others. "Some have suggested that mobile phones 'affect every aspect of our personal and professional lives either directly or indirectly'" (Humphrey). Every culture's tolerance of cell phone usage varies, for instance in Western society cell phones are permissible during free time at schools, whereas in the eastern countries, cell phones are strictly prohibited on school property.

Mobile phone use can be an important matter of social discourtesy: phones ringing during funerals or weddings; in toilets, cinemas and theatres. Some book shops, libraries, bathrooms, cinemas, doctors' offices and places of worship prohibit their use, so that other patrons will not be disturbed by conversations. Some facilities install signal-jamming equipment to prevent their use, although in many countries, including the US, such equipment is illegal. Some new auditoriums have installed wire mesh in the walls to make a Faraday cage, which prevents signal penetration without violating signal jamming laws.

A working group made up of Finnish telephone companies, public transport operators and communications authorities has launched a campaign to remind mobile phone users of courtesy, especially when using mass transit—what to talk about on the phone, and how to. In particular, the campaign wants to impact loud mobile phone usage as well as calls regarding sensitive matters .

Trains, particularly those involving long-distance services, often offer a "quiet carriage" where phone use is prohibited, much like the designated non-smoking carriage of the past. In the UK however many users tend to ignore this as it is rarely enforced, especially if the other carriages are crowded and they have no choice but to go in the "quiet carriage". In Japan, it is generally considered impolite to talk using a phone on any train—e-mailing is generally the mode of mobile communication. Mobile phone usage on local public transport is also increasingly seen as a nuisance; the city of Graz, for instance, has mandated a total ban of mobile phones on its tram and bus network in 2008 (though texting and emailing is still allowed).

Nancy J. Friedman has spoken widely about landline and cell phone etiquette. Emily Post has also written on her essential rules for using a cell phone.

Cell phone etiquette within social relationships

When critically assessing the family structure, it is important to examine the parent/child negotiations which occur in the household, in relation to the increased use of cell phones. Teenagers use their cell phones as a way to negotiate spatial boundaries with their parents (Williams 2005:316). This includes extending curfews in the public space and allowing more freedom for the teenagers when they are outside of the home (Williams 2005:318). More importantly, cell phone etiquette relates to kinship groups and the family as an institution. This is because cell phones act as a threat due to the rapid disconnect within families. Children are often so closely affiliated with their technological gadgets, and they tend to interact with their friends constantly and this has a negative impact on their relationship with their parents (Williams 2005:326). Teenagers see themselves as gaining a sense of empowerment from the mobile phone. Cell phone etiquette in the household from an anthropological perspective has shown an evolution in the institution of family. The mobile phone has now been integrated into family practices and perpetuated a wider concern which is the fracture between parent and child

relationships. We are able to see the traditional values disappearing however, reflexive monitoring is occurring (Williams 2005:320). Through this, parents are becoming friendlier with their children and critics emphasize that this change is problematic because children should be subjected to social control. One way of social control is limiting the time spent interacting with friends, which is difficult to do in today's society because of the rapid use of cell phones.

Netiquette vs. cell phone etiquette

Cell phone etiquette is largely dependent on the cultural context and what is deemed to be socially acceptable. For instance, in certain cultures using your hand held devices while interacting in a group environment is considered bad manners, whereas, in other cultures around the world it may be viewed differently. In addition, cell phone etiquette also encompasses the various types of activities which are occurring and the nature of the messages which are being sent. More importantly, messages of an inappropriate nature can be sent to an individual and this could potentially orchestrate problems such as verbal/ cyber abuse.

New technology and behaviors

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to communication in online settings is the lack of emotional cues. Facial cues dictate the mood and corresponding diction of two people in a conversation. During phone conversations, tone of voice communicates the emotions of the person on the other line. But with chat rooms, instant messaging apps and texting, any signals that would indicate the tone of a person's words or their state of emotion are absent. Because of this, there have been some interesting accommodations. Perhaps the two most prevalent compensating behaviors are the use of emoticons and abbreviations. Emoticons use punctuation marks to illustrate common symbols that pertain to facial cues. For example, one would combine a colon and parenthesis to recreate the symbol of the smiley face indicating the happiness or satisfaction of the other person. To symbolize laughter, the abbreviation "LOL" standing for "laughing out loud" developed. Along with these, countless other symbols and abbreviations have developed including, "BRB" ("be right back"), "TTYL" (talk to you later) and specific designs incorporated by apps of a laughing face, sad face, crying face, angry face etc. The newest in the line of these symbols include Facebook's stickers, which are illustrations that one can send over Facebook's messaging app and described by Facebook as "a great way to share how you're feeling and add personality to your chats."

Now, as newer modes of communication are becoming more common, the rules of communication must adapt as fast as the technology. For example, one of the most popular new apps, Snapchat, is growing to have its own rules and etiquette. This app lets users send pictures or videos to friends that disappear after a couple seconds of viewing it. Initially, the thought that occurs to people when confronted by this app is its implications for sexting. Although it's entirely possible to make use of Snapchat for that purpose, what the app has developed into is a form of communication that shares funny or interesting moments. Originally compared to Instagram [33] by way of the app's ability to broadcast pictures to many people, it has now become standard to communicate through Snapchat by sending pictures back and forth and using the caption bar for messages. The reply option on Snapchat specifically promotes this behavior, but Snapchat etiquette is not set in stone. It is becoming clear that Snaps personalized for the receiver expect a reply, but where ends this obligation? Some people use Snapchat specifically for the purpose of communication, while some use it to simply provide a visual update of their day. The newest update of Snapchat, an instant messaging add-on, seems to be catered to those who use the app to send messages back and forth. This new messaging add-on, along with the video chat feature will warrant new forms of social construct and expectations of behavior in accordance with this application.