

Blog Messages on Social Networks (Written by [Martin de Waziers](#) on www.bootzone.fr)

Four Golden Globe awards for the Social Network: does 1968 mean a change of paradigm? (110123)

Tells you something about the success of Facebook, and beyond that, the incredible foray that social networks have made in the world today... In fact, it is amazing that these **68th Golden Globe** awards coincided with the first ever major social revolution of the recent past, that in Tunisia; **68th you said, 68 I say, 1968 I mean**, a strong memory of my teenage years when Paris students joined workers on the streets for what was to become a substantial change of paradigm in the world! Will Tunisia have the same fate? In any case, it wins the **1st Globe Award for Social Network unrest!** Whether you look at it from a political, economic or social viewpoint, you have **the first major riot that erupted from the power of the web 2.0.**

It all started with **information**, where did it come from? A number of telexes from **Wikileaks** that asserted the political regime was truly corrupted! Then, came a **formation** phase that used the collective intelligence of **Facebook**; it then extended into **mobilization** coming from collective management. If one could not use **YouTube** or **Dailymotion** as they were scrutinized and censored by local intelligence, **Facebook** managed that phase as well as the next one: **action** with a coordinated plan. The only part is the follow-up phase, should we call it **Creative Commons**, with the history being collected, some fun despite the sorrow for all the dead, and, soon enough, **Wikipedia** or **any other wiki** shall have the whole story galore!

Every human group can use the **web 2.0 as a means to communicate, collaborate and cooperate**; Belgium is doing it with the recent outrage of a Flemish journalist, Kris Janssens, who talks on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RaJJCriQLw>) about the ludicrous situation after 200 days without a government: let's go on the street and hold hands, Flemish and Walloons, to call it a fluke! Can a crown, 180 years of age, hold a country that hosts the European Parliament, at least partly. I certainly hope so, if not, **I am using the web to call for unity**, well beyond the specific case of Belgium. Even though the number of countries trebled since I was born (from 70 to 210), I have a dream that Europe can unite altogether!

1968 was also the year that an icon of justice and equality was killed, one of my heroes! Not that he holds the same first name, neither that he was the youngest Nobel Peace Prize Winner in 1964, nor that he spent his life defending his own personal creed reminding us of human rights! **I have a dream** that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed; "We hold these truths to be self-evident : that all men are created equal." This is what **Martin Luther King Jr.** said on August 28, 1963; his birth date (a holiday in the US) was **January 15th, the one day where Tunisia exploded...** Hoping this not mean that we have to die, like 500 Tunisians, and write, like the epitaph MLK has on his tomb: "Free, at last!"

De-friend or make a friend... That is the question? (101216)

Wow! If I knew that one could un-friend or de-friend when I scrambled to make some, way back, I would have made much more attempts to add people to my list. I must be old-fashioned because I always decided to be careful about that very step, just because I did not want to be bothered with tons of contacts that meant little to me... Then, I entered the business world and had to fake some form of friendly posture to sell my technologies; can you imagine a lonely European lost out in the boons, in Red Neck countryside, spending his late hours on Sunday learning all baseball results to be able to chat around with his clients?

Making friends is about being social, right in the wake of sustainable development. We have learned that this is not just about the environment; it is not just about growth, it is foremost about human networking and equity... Funny that, despite all of this education, our Gini (*) coefficients have all increased in the developed world over the

past thirty years. Aren't we obnoxious to spend hours socializing amongst ourselves rather than "being social" and wondering about the state of the world? Aren't we ludicrous spending huge amounts of cash, discussing in the dark of Cancun (or Copenhagen) abodes about the environment?

In fact, let's face it; social networking is about economic wealth: aren't we focusing most of our time making sure that it grows our marketing stamina, our recruiting capacities, our revenue targets, etc.? We just got sidetracked for a while and need to wake up to reality... No, social networks are not just a matter of making money, right? In fact, I know a friend who must have been a precursor of social networking back in the 90's when he initiated a series of events to gather people; he knew that e-mails could help him disseminate information and claimed having 3,456 "true friends" who were all close "connections"!

Let's go back one more step, when I was a kid (I promise that I shall not mention my age). If you wanted to make a friend, you had to go face-to-face and discover, step-by-step, if the person was truthful, although it may not have been the most important point then, as people were more transparent! If you were fed up with a relationship, you had to make the effort to again face the person (unless you were considered a coward) and tell him or her that it was over. There was a real need for effort and, of course, trials and errors. But, that was life in the big city, you could not just hide behind your little finger (pardon my French!)

Now, you are bombarded, no problem... Want to be a friend, want to join my network, just click: opt in, opt out! Junk mail easy, spam galore, so much time wasted to withstand the pressure of being included or thrown out, not to mention the affectionate words if you decide to break the spell! Then, you join for fear of hurting, then nothing happens: no response! It is your job to be active and fetch information on the network, what a fluke! So, what do you do? You can become oblivious or you have to de-friend. Ouch, how am I going to do it? No problem, it is virtual anyway, a big game invented by man in search of communication.

Let's face it! We have invented a new virtual way of making friends, thus, we had to invent a new word for kicking people out and it is called "un-friend or de-friend"; at least, the first one means something; he/she was unfriendly thus he/she is out... But the second word: coward!

* From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia: the Gini coefficient is a measure of statistical dispersion developed by the Italian statistician Corrado and published in his 1912 paper "Variability and Mutability". It is a measure of the inequality of a distribution, a value of 0 expressing total equality and a value of 1 maximal inequality.

Soon enough we could all become zombies... (101108)

Generation after generation, we have all considered kids as being much worse than we are, I am talking "we" older ones, of course! The last IFOP (a well-known French agency) survey shows that it is clearly **the younger ones that have picked up easy** on all social networks as "awareness rates" decline significantly from the "18-25 years of age" to the retirees (I mean the French retirees, that is 60, oh no! 62 and above). One could say that, on the opposite, the same survey shows that "participation rates" are not that significant as some "major social networks" get a severe decline from "awareness" to "participation"; therefore, there is still some significant reluctance to being an active member of the virtual society.

But, are social networks used for the proper purposes? The same survey shows the concern that the same younger generations are starting to develop for privacy, thanks to the ample warnings they have gotten from multiple sources ("one day, someone can pick up some nasty details on your former private life and refuse to offer you a job just because some stupid youthful mistake"). Therefore, it is starting to show the **limit of opening up through the web when this is supposed to be the start of cross-**

communication and better collaboration, especially if you talk about the use in companies; all of this feeds into the IT head warning the Board with the risks of confidentiality being breached through the web..

So, are people really participating? Are people really opening up? Take the recent French demonstrations against modifying retirement age from 60 to 62; as the physical participants were declining, the virtual ones were increasing: the two populations passed the 500K number in opposite directions about the same time last week... but one population was against the law, the other was against the demonstrations! Needless to say, if social networks are just used to increase the battle between people, they have reached their level of incompetence, the **Peter's syndrome**. I hope not! Yet, another example is striking, that is the misuse of the web on the criticism of people like professors, bosses, or even companies... all types of authority!

It turns out that a recent conference (les entretiens de Valpré, an annual meeting of French decision makers and executive directors) highlighted a major issue that faces current society: authority, obeying, how far? And, guess what? The survey prior showed that it sounds quite OK to challenge authority, especially at work (56%)! The fact that this comes primarily from the younger generations will surprise no one: they often arrive late and give no excuses (but is there a clear message to counteract this misbehaviour?) And there were many comments as to the fact that authority should be won from competence, enthusiasm, confidence... and a clear **dialogue; dialogue, you said, but were do people find the time to establish it?**

On one hand, the social network gives many opportunities to **explain and share information** together, including rules and regulations, that is assuming people will take the time to read them all, understand their intricacies, accept their innuendos and partake in their application. On the other hand, the social network gives people an additional chance to dismiss the plain authority behind it, when, in fact, authority is the act of imposing the fact of obeying. We are glad that there is no web available when a battalion is going at war; imagine if anyone could start asking questions as to whether this is right or wrong to move when authority decides (I am not talking here about some wrong doings like torture or other deviances of authority.)

Therefore, let's look at the positive side of all of this; **we do not need to become zombies stuck to our computers**. We need to use them proactively to partake in the open dialogue, without fearing dismissal, therefore avoiding unnecessary upheaval and choosing face-to-face challenge when the need is obvious, rather than hiding behind our screens as a protection.

What are social networks supposed to add? (110925)

When you find yourself busy responding to so many contacts you cannot even cope with on a daily basis, what is your typical reaction? Why did I log myself onto that other social network? What am I getting back from the load it has added onto my shoulders? Hard to decipher... and yet, you continue babbling onto the system, hoping there is an echo from the outside world... Please answer me or else, I may look like a nerd or a geek! But, what is all of that for?

Information overload... That is the name of the current game and guess what? We gobble anything that comes through as truth; in French, there is an expression “vu à la télé, lu sur le net” which means that anything I saw on TV or read on the web must be true. The problem comes from the necessary time to understand what you have just seen, integrate what it means, decide whether you agree then make it yours! But, instantaneity does not allow for that time.

Information overload comes from the media at first but your “friends” as well, you know the 3458 people that “know” you on FaceBook, which means that they have an auto-reminder of your birth date and a great picture of you, drinking down that bottle of gin at Joe Blow’s party... All these friends, wow! What about my privacy, what about the time necessary to take a step back, what about the needed reflexion on what I receive through mails and “walls”?

Why do you think companies loathe social networks so far? We talked earlier about security issues but reality comes from time spent on the web; look at the statistics... even TV time is coming down to the benefit of PC exposure! But that means companies have not yet understood all the benefit of intranet & internet, mostly from mismanagement of the delivery system; give some basic training on how to use your intranet and companies can realize the benefit.

Social networks are a means to facilitate expression; we have all read stories of geeks making friends thanks to the web, whom they even meet in person for a drink or other! It helps people put down what they think, what they believe in, what they loathe, what they love, with no restraint at first until they start getting feedback and that is where it adds value: one can express and get feedback with no shyness at the outset, no need to appear anything just thoughts.

They therefore help creativity, as you can let your mind wonder around with no restraint, including that stupid idea you had in your bath (remember Archimedes shouting “Eureka”, I found it!) So, one can be hopeful that companies can get benefit from that flow of ideas... The only hint that they have to understand is for productivity’s sake: you need to train the people to use the system in a proper way, which means creating rules and regulations for sharing.

I can see readers saying this contradicts the whole purpose of free expression; in fact, not at all! It helps employees in giving them some guidelines that shall encourage going onto the intranet & internet, whilst providing safekeepers to avoid any waste of time. It starts with proper technology, organized data centers, proper mapping (exactly like any road infrastructure that gives you freedom to drive but left and right boundaries to avoid getting sidetracked).

This requires companies thinking through the process, having the adequate resources to support the system, spending the time necessary to decipher through the flow of expression and having an incentive program to make sure all participate, raise their critical faculty, judge if necessary and keep their autonomy. Then companies can be proud of having set productive means of creativity whilst preserving freedom of expression, a must!

How do I manage to get through the social media maze? (100730)

Some people ponder as to why they have not yet joined the craze; you know what I mean, the maze or the labyrinth of social media! But it goes so fast that unless I play the plain follower, I am quickly **lost in space... where should I go**, which circle should I join, how do I make friends, and, before all, why do I need to go through the hassle of joining and becoming a slave to my machine? There are so many beautiful things around the world...

The answer is simple: the world is virtual and the third largest country is on the web: it is called **FaceBook and it has 500,000,000 people logged onto it**. Picture that, one out of 14 people have given up their freedom and joined the club; only one difference with a country, there are neither presidents nor kings, neither laws nor justice, neither rules nor policies, just a plain get-together, or, in fact, aiming for it with organizations like gigantic happy hours.

Just remains the typical question that we all have with regards to social media: **WHY** join?

1. Just a fad: if I do not join, I may soon be considered a laggard.

2. A useful connexion tool: if I join, I get invitations galore to parties.
3. Some sharing opportunity: do I really everyone to see my stupid pictures?
4. Public Relations for free: then, I should better be careful to what goes in!
5. For people to know where I am: geo-localisation is getting better by the day.

It is not as simple as the only answer to good real estate: location, location, location!

As for organisations, they have not yet understood the full benefit of social media: **plain collaboration encouraged throughout the company network from inside to outside**. They have tended to bear the brunt of negative marketing (I hate to think what has gone onto social media regarding British Petroleum, way beyond the negative press they got worldwide!) Is their answer going to be the setting-up of one's own tool in order to keep control?

In the end, nobody has the choice today of logging onto the net; even the financial capacity to do so has no bearing anymore: it is cheaper than a smoke and gives you potentially more pleasure! The Vatican, the very "first" country in the world with no borders, has realized it needed to give some dynamic spirit to its presence on the web, especially in answer to their recent problems, but also because it is a way to bring people together throughout: **SHARE!**

And now, what do I do to join? I follow my buddies on the same system, or I make a concerted effort to understand the intricacies of existing systems. If there are a few key social media today (FaceBook, Twitter, MySpace, Viadeo, YouTube, etc.), there are more than 500 of them, each vying for knowledge, as we all know size is best for marketing reasons. Big or small, open or closed, viable or hard-to-use, **books are coming out to explain the maze**.

I have found one that just came out, from an expert in social networking: **Louis-Serge Real del Sarte**. This gentleman has one of the widest circles of connexions that I have ever seen, and he is a master of keeping in touch with all of the people that got inside! And what he has done is publish an extensive worldwide guide of social media, identifying 500 of them and giving information in a dictionary-like form on each of them.

If the book, **Les Réseaux Sociaux sur Internet (Alphée, La Passion d'Editer)** is only in French, the glossary gives the full repertory of sites that can give a lead to anyone interested in going further than the basic follower of crowds. Check it out, it is worth having a look!

Social Networks are no news to the world... (100523)

Who said we had invented anything? Just go back in history and you shall realize that the world comes in true contradiction of the **NIH syndrome (Not Invented Here)** means a refusal to use products that have not been developed internally) both in time but also in fact. First, we have just come back full circle in time cycles to obvious transversal needs; second, we have all decided to use the newly-developed social networks, independent of the place they were invented. On the whole, even though we have given in, one more time, to the US culture, we have come back to **a necessary worldwide cohesion and hope for the best!**

Today is Pentecost; this tradition starts with the Jews celebrating Moses receiving the Table of Laws in the Desert, fifty days after they crossed the Red Sea (celebrated by Passover); on this same day, Christians celebrate the Holy Spirit, the same fifty days after their "Easter" (the day following Christ's death, which starts a "three day" celebration). Two **networking examples**:

1. Crossing the Red Sea, as this shows enslaved Jews must have had good networking tools for gathering together and walking away from the Egyptians;

2. Receiving the Holy Spirit, as He enabled Apostles to speak in different tongues "*and each one heard them speaking in his own language*", networking galore!

But is also reminds me of the story of the Church which can easily be interpreted in the same vein. Constantine, one of the "then four" roman emperors, *crosses the bridge* in Vilnius, has a vision of the best network available at the time which *crosses borders* of the Empire's Four Corners: the Christian Church! He joins (converts), assembles (First Council of Nicaea) and finds a way to unite the whole Empire in a pinch... Not bad as it has the same penetration rate as FaceBook has today. So, the only thing we have done is make social networks more effective; **we cannot claim to have invented them, but just to have made tools more efficient.**

Was it that hard to create the tools? If FaceBook is the most efficient today, it was created by a young student just thinking about his own networking needs and putting them into formulas. I certainly do not mean to downsize the **incredible forte that he has shown** but just want to say that it was primarily a matter of believing in networking, not more! And who believes most in it but our American friends, thus the incredible dominance of US technology today, not to mention the US language. Yet, you could have thought that with the number of countries having tripled in the past 50 years (from 70 in the 50's to more than 220 today), local networks would have taken over; no, human beings need to breach borders and to network globally. No concern about the NIH syndrome, we all decide to join the most efficient for our use, whether FaceBook, LinkedIn or any other, but **mostly all US, the last symbol of their cultural dominance.**

We came back **full circle in time and in fact**, but why cannot we use these networks to truly unite like Constantine did with the Roman Empire? Because our underlying culture does not yet call for true Unity! Look at the network of hedge funds betting against the Euro, just for the sake of financial power; look at the network of terror fighting against civil groups in order to maintain fear; look at the network of media flushing down good news in order to focus on the sensations created by bad ones... And the first historical global network in the world is being hit hard by remnants, yes hard to forgive, of bad behaviour, just because **some people cannot bear the positive dimension churches can represent.**

Networking, symbol (gr. συμβάλλω, unite) of Unity, is hard hit by current winds of wrath and power; **I just make the wish** that these diabolic (gr. διάβολος, separation) forces shall disappear in time and **networking fully play its role.** May companies, applying relevant tools, make only **good cohesion sense out of them!**

Pros and cons of networking in organisations: where is the balance? (100403)

Everyone talks about networking; you get invitations galore to be on some new website, then spend more time juggling from one to the other than really getting interested in what comes through, whether these are professional or personal driven. Has the world gone topsy-turvy with all this rigmarole? No, will tell you those that keep their eyes stuck to their I-Phone, Blackberry or equivalent; yes, will answer those who relish on glorious sights in beautiful countryside. But what can be pros and cons for a company: **from top to bottom.**

Starting with **top management**, it may find the use of networking an impediment because of time spent by employees; one of my clients just said that he now imposes neither PC nor I-Phone, BBY, etc." during staff meetings and he has found out how difficult it is to do! Yet, I also know that CEO's finds networking to raise productivity as people develop transversal work solutions. On top of all, the company brand has to be monitored and buzz can be created to enhance the image, virus marketing can be extremely effective, etc. More pros, then!

Intermediate management uses networking to create cohesion and cooperation but, recently, it has found that it also raises innovation and creativity through idea sharing, from rooting to branching out. On the other side, there are uses that can be perceived as an impediment: employees have an effective "counter-power" tool to put across management, an opportunity to discuss issues without meeting in crowds, also reinforcing trade unions and negotiating power. So IT will raise security issues to slow growth or even close streams (Google/China?)

Employees are the greatest beneficiaries as we all know the opening it has created for people to connect, chat and meet, even virtually; social cohesiveness has been enhanced as this new means of expression has emerged, helping each of them to open up and feel included. Yet, this means that time management has become a complex issue; if we saw, just above, top management's acute reaction in meetings, it is well-known that people use IT tools too much at the office even though everyone has to recognise its "professional need at the base."

More productivity through sharing and cohesion, no doubt, for everyone, thus more cash in the till for top management; yet, at the opposite, less productivity as too much use of IT tools can become hazardous to time management. **Where is the right balance?** Networking participates with the desire of management to fight against individualism and develop team spirit, thus a simple team building approach... as long as it is properly managed internally. No need to resist, there is nothing one can do against the spread of technology.

Giving access shows the desire of management to be pro-active; then, training people in a couple targeted sessions can save hours of muddling through for the employee as well as giving management an opportunity to orient usage properly. This therefore means modifying company values at the base around **more human contact**, enhancing a code of conduct that will improve **respect for the other** but controlling improvements like productivity through KPI (Key Performance Indicators) that need not be just **quantitative but also qualitative**.

Networking is **belonging**, a value that I heard so many times in what top management wants to instil; and, belonging, in and of itself, is sharing company values altogether. Networking is a great tool for management to enhance **participation**, another value that companies love to put forward in our day and age. Finally, networking is **branding** for the company as well as employees, so what? You get the return from a good employee that is well-known on the web! Just have to be consistent all the way around, or else, it can be the pitfall!

Social networks do offer the best networking possible; but, where is the catch? (100213)

Networking is the **one key to the knowledge economy**. If it all started with the web 1.0 of information posting, the web 2.0 of interconnections has leveraged the sharing opportunities to no limit, just a question of organizing your work so that you do not get overwhelmed. On top of that, it has broken barriers to entry into socializing, as the founder of FaceBook shows so clearly himself; it gives opportunity to enter circles that you would never have dreamed you could break in, and for all people, socialites as well as social reclusive kinds, to organize easily your networking. Remember times where you had to rely on the "doubling strategy" (each contact gives two) to move forward, you suddenly get the full web society in a pinch!

The world is not enough; go beyond friends, colleagues and clients to competition! Social networks allows not only to address search that were impossible before: finding someone you lost touch with, getting information on a person you are going to meet that day, completing some work on any topic (as long as you keep your critical mind aligned...), finding financial support from venture capitalists and shareholder associations; further, you can now openly share innovation and creativity through

"coopetition", an acronym created with the web and associating competition and cooperation. Yes, you can deploy all of your knowledge through the web and manage to take a quantum leap, thanks to that little piece of information you were missing and you got easy. No need to keep cloistered into your own abode when the world is out there to open you up; from social to business, **it is a world of opportunity!**

But too much information kills information... unless you are focused...

Time is of the essence, be short and sweet.

Clarity of messages is paramount, ensure immediate reading.

Organisation of search and answers has to prevail, stay within reachable limits.

On the recipient side, clean up your spasms; it is worth than junk mail!

Mail chains are the worst; at least paper chains were expensive...

All these can be counter-examples of web productivity; the labyrinth can easily haunt you as you progress through the web; a spider is there to eat you alive as you get entangled in the far reaches of its own creation. Thus you always have to **think about the strategy to deploy** before you throw yourself in it; companies know how destructive it is to have employees spend 30% on the web as they go from app to app and never manage to extricate themselves!

Beware of the IT paranoia... If George Orwell depicted Big Brother masterfully in his novel "1984", it is funny that the plot was set in the one country where, twenty-five years later than the title indicates, you are being watched most in World Capitals; someone wrote that you get filmed 400 times in any one day... better smile if you wish to leave a good image of yourself! Anyway, no one can escape the constant overlook of "Big Brother", call it "security systems" of all sorts. Our physical steps are overly scanned, our words are decrypted in huge search engines, our exchanges are seen all over the globe but go back to the second paragraph and think about staying simple. If I can understand the IT paranoia of the past, I loath the IT impediment of the present and call for the IT openness of the future! IT departments are often themselves overwhelmed with the web 2.0 technology and **need proper forward thinking** to help executives at the helm make the right decisions and enter the future without fear.

No question that we are lucky to have such a powerful tool at our disposal; it is all a matter of moderation. This is why a new **technology born out of speed** of information could benefit from **proper training** at the base: what, where, when, what, why, how and with what means? That is the old Latin rhetoric (Quintilian's) method to any good analysis; apply it to web 2.0.

Crises and innovation (100101)

Terrible to say but a crisis has a positive side to it; you must have heard about the Chinese word for crisis: written with two separate kanji that mean risk and opportunity. Thus, the crisis is here to tell us that we need to take risks and opportunities shall arise as a result!

From stalling to moving ahead:

1. our economic environment is rethinking its paradigm... surprisingly human-centred,
2. the companies are rethinking their strategy... through network-centric management,
3. we are all rethinking our social ties... through family and neighbourhood solidarity.

None can deny that we have moved forward in a big way in the past few years, despite the terrible financial demise we are facing; if, on one hand, we seem to have gone individually, the reality is something else: we have garnered our systems with networking tools galore... So, what do we do with these, exchange titbits of information or vacation pictures? Much more conducive to humanity's progress (from the Latin *progressus* which means: moving forward), let's plan innovation through idea generation, shared knowledge, and team work. Yes, innovation is not the private foray of State-run programs or Enterprise R&D's!

The other day, as I was planning to design my new abode, someone, at a distance, asked that I describe the space so that he could get a feel; I could have taken pictures, assembled them in a way that made sense to my correspondent. Yet, as a matter of innovation, I thought of an architect software to try out mapping the place; to my biggest surprise, I searched on the net and, within seconds, was scrambling with the floor planner; hours later, I came out with what turned out to be a magical 3D design of my place with mezzanine floors appearing as in reality. I promise that I did not take any architect lessons in the past; it was just intuitive!

Intuition plays a big role in the current technology world and this is what allows anyone to quickly master any advance. Have you seen how simple it is to use the most recent digital camera; if you remember the complexity of old photographic equipment, you can be amazed at how elaborate your pictures are today, whilst mastering complex technology functions. It is the same with anything that you do today: see how simple your world has become if you accept the unconventional of going at things; kids, age 7, are better at most tools than us!

Imagination has developed tremendously as it is the power of bringing images and vision together; with the net as a base, it is so simple to go and get these sources of inspiration that shall lead to the next innovation. Ok, you may not be the greatest inventor in the world, like Archimedes shouting *Eureka* when he discovered the water push on the body... in his bath! But, no reason to feel guilty if you have used all information available to get where you want to go; that is what the net is all about. More than that, it is also networking!

Networking when you hear what happened with this competition to curing AIDS, the fights between the American and French teams, come on! How about cooperation rather than competition: is this world just about honours and money? Granted, it feels good to be recognized but networking can save us time and is not time "money", in a way? Advantage, fast assembly through modular design in innovation; share a document on any data base and each can add to the idea. When will companies realize the power of shared innovation?

Let intuition guide you, let imagination feed you, let networking kindle you: that is innovation in and of itself; if you give yourself, and your network, credit for progress, we will altogether go far ahead in our new paradigm. Happy New Year to all and let's innovate together in 2010.

Communication... so much of it! (091122)

How many times did you feel frustrated with a simple text message when you wished you had had lengthy news? The times of the long letter, handwritten with care, sent with that special feeling (pleasure or chore, as the case may be) are long gone. Now, we get this sense of accomplishment when we have sent that simple "Happy New Year" to our whole contact list on our cell phone! Have you thought about the recipient? Not even, I guess, because, if he or she is part of a huge group, they are no "one in particular"... But, are these short and impromptu messages so bad in the end?

The current risk is communication overload: number of systems and size of messages. Too many notes, said Salieri to Mozart, when everyone knows the beauty of his music; our first reaction is "who is he to talk about the musical giant Mozart was?" but, he may have had a point, and we can take a step back. Why do we often take three sentences to say one simple thing? Could be that we feel compelled to dwell and make sure we are understood, thus going round and round, giving the other one the sense he needs "knocking things in his head". There is a time for length, there is strength to simplicity. Too many words, was I told recently, I am trying to learn and be more concise.

The good side is what Mark Granovetter called "The Strength of Weak Ties" in a 1973 book. In the way we have developed our work environment, there is true value to these occasional ties: a simple contact to touch base, an announcement to inform of a fact, a mail to give details to a colleague, and obviously much more for the intimate relationships. The "weak ties" keep our groups together; as communication speed has increased, the number of possible contacts as well, yet reduced to the simplest form. This is called networking, the new civilisation paradigm. Hence, the development of Twitter, flash text messages, but the other tools, including FaceBook that gives an opportunity to "feel the other".

There is a compromise and that is in the "**true thought**" you are going to put in that message, particularly important in company communication. A few key rules:

1. Stay in touch; that means "**touching the other**", not just zipping by!
2. **Think of the content**; as a kid, I had to "turn the tongue 7 times in my mouth before talking", and I am sure there is an equivalent saying in every culture around the world!
3. If it is **short and sweet**, I can use a text message; if not, it is a mail that (I) I **re-read** before sending and (II) carefully **title** in the object box, thus helping the recipient.
4. If I "really" need to **respond**, I give myself **time to think** through it and apply #3-I above; if I am one of numerous recipients, I have **checked if some responses** have already happened and the title (#3-II) will help to do so; if I respond, I do **not necessarily copy everybody** (think of an invitation to a meeting, respond only to the organiser). By the way, do I "really" **need to respond** or am I not showing off?
5. And I never forget that a **short telephone call** can be best with a "**voicemail**" if need be; that means being short and "to the point" on the message. I, for one, still need to learn!

Yes, the current communication craze is great, as it allows us to "stay in touch", with our business and social networks. But try to "really touch the other". A simple message is great for the recipient, as long as there is the sense that you have really thought of him or her in communicating; the word comes from the latin *communare*, which means *being together, sharing something*. And, business or social, around Christmas time, you can send a thousand text messages and help your operator make loads of money, but you can select a few special recipients that will get a thought-through message from you, it shall touch someone!

Réseau et organisation: n'oubliez jamais la valeur du contact en face-à-face (091018)

Trois mouvements se sont récemment précipités:

- de l'agriculture à l'industrie et au savoir,
- du vertical au transversal et au matriciel, et
- de l'information à la communication et au partage.

On n'a rien inventé mais seulement généraliser la pratique du réseau...

- Sans les outils pour faciliter cette transition, on resterait à l'âge tribale, réseau par excellence! Il suffit de se souvenir du premier outil de "bip social" qui permettait d'invoquer sa "tribu".

- Sans les enfants pour nous montrer l'exemple avec MSN puis maintenant FaceBook, on ne serait peut-être pas aussi poussés à prendre au sérieux cette évolution, et la convoitise attise son utilisation.
- Sans le besoin que nous avons de conserver le lien social, mis à mal par des vies trépidantes qui nous laissent de moins en moins de temps, on se passerait peut-être de tout cela...

Mais, un premier écueil vient de la nature humaine et de ses fondements ancestraux qui, s'ils appellent à la survie individuelle, renforcent éventuellement le lien strictement tribal qui unit les forces. L'individu est de nature individualiste et sédentaire à la base; il va tout faire pour survivre dans son état premier. Il est aussi de nature "grégaire", celui qui aime suivre un troupeau, ce que l'on retrouve dans les comportements d'imitation typique de nos civilisations. Il peut finalement être sectaire et se limiter à son entourage immédiat, évitant alors toute forme de contact avec les cercles externes. Or, ce que demande le monde moderne, c'est cette ouverture vers l'autre...

Ensuite, il y a l'inhibition initiale à se jeter dans l'eau, ouvrir les outils, se familiariser avec leur utilisation, trouver son réseau, s'organiser pour en être un actif contributeur, etc... Tout d'abord, je fais face à la paresse naturelle que je ressens quand je dois me mettre devant mon PC, si impersonnel! Puis, il y a l'apprentissage qu'il me faut faire, alors que je serais tellement mieux à regarder les oiseaux. Finalement, il me faut engager une utilisation régulière, invoquée par le mouvement incessant des retours d'information, et qui peut me fatiguer avec le temps. L'ergonomie du software comme du hardware a grandement facilité son usage, fort heureusement.

Finalement, il y a la culture et les valeurs du groupe (famille, entreprise, pays) qui ont un impact certain sur la façon dont l'individu appréhende l'outil, son utilisation et son impact. Les fondements éducatifs (famille, école, religion) sont la base de cette culture qui nous imprègne dès notre premier âge et qui va nous marquer du fer rouge; arrive le temps du travail et, ce que l'on retrouve dans son entreprise contribue au renforcement des usages précédents ou vient les compléter; mais, au delà de ces deux dimensions, encore faut-il que les structures institutionnelles s'accordent pour le favoriser! La globalisation a pu effacer certaines des différences mais "chasser le naturel, il revient au galop!".

Nous vivons une période de transition fondamentale en ce début de millénaire; on attribue à Malraux cette parole bien connue: "le 21^{ème} siècle sera spirituel ou ne sera pas"; parfois on trouve "religieux" à la place de "spirituel" mais, qu'il ait utilisé l'un comme l'autre, il voulait faire passer ce message du rapprochement des hommes. Si la globalisation y a contribué, elle était essentiellement économique et politique; c'est l'informatique qui a pris le relais sur le plan social, à la surprise de tout le monde.

Pour ne citer que le plus "successful", FaceBook a désormais 300mln d'adeptes, pas seulement des enfants en mal de contact social; grâce à ce genre d'outil, on atteint cinq fois plus d'amis qu'auparavant! Certes ils sont "virtuels" mais assurent la "connexion" avec nos prochains, offrant l'avantage de passer outre l'inhibition du premier contact en allant directement aux "common grounds", créant des ponts naturels vers d'autres contacts et, complétant avantageusement son réseau, au risque de se noyer rapidement dans un grand magma.

Et c'est là où il ne faudra jamais perdre de vue l'importance du contact "face-à-face"... On le vit tous les jours en entreprise où l'e-mail qu'on envoie à son voisin de bureau risque de casser le lien social naturel de l'homme. Si l'on ne perd pas de vue ce retour nécessaire sur l'image réelle, l'informatique aura cependant grandement sublimé son rôle initial d'information pour faciliter la communication, qui est échange mutuel et constructif. Cette tendance à l'unification des peuples par le partage est inhérente à notre époque; reste à l'encourager!