

An Over-communicated World

We already live in an over-communicated world that will only become more so in the next tech era. We've developed technology that gets us so much information, we've got cell phones ringing every second, we've got computers and laptops, we've got personal organizers and we're just being bombarded with communication and every advance in technology seems to create more and more communications at us. We are sort of overwhelmed by the information flow.

Research suggests that all the multi-tasking may actually make our brains work better and faster, producing a world-wide increase in IQ up to 20 points and more in recent decades. Is there any real benefit in all these mental gymnastics we now have to go through?

We're not becoming a race of global idiots, but many do think certain skills are enhanced and certain are not. You know the ability to make fast decisions, to answer a dozen e-mails in five minutes, or to fill out maybe big SAT tests. That's enhanced. But when someone is out there with his kids playing in his little league or something like that, he's got his cell phone in his pocket. He's always wondering, "Gee, did I get a voicemail?" This might have negative effects on our own brain patterns.

Creativity is something that happens slowly. It happens when your brain is just noodling around, just playing, when it puts together ideas which you hadn't thought of, or maybe you have time to read a book. You are a businessperson but you have time to read a book about history, or about philosopher and something that happened long ago or something or some idea somebody thought of long ago. Actually, it might occur to you that you can think of your own business in that way, and so it's this mixture of unrelated ideas that feeds your productivity, feeds your creativity. And if your mind is disciplined to answer every e-mail, then you don't have time for that playful noodling. You don't have time for those unexpected conjunctions. So I think maybe we're getting smarter in some senses, but over-communication is a threat to our creativity to our reflection.

Questions:

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