

Name Here

Professor

Course Title

Date

Dead-end Communication

Although littered with positive aspects, e-mail may have certain drawbacks. In his essay, "Going Postal," Tony Schwartz shows the dangers of "fiercely addictive" e-mail, and its relationship involving its user's solitary world-connected lives. Throughout his essay, Schwartz lists and explains multiple negative aspects of using e-mail, starting with personal experiences and knowledge of the subject, and then he quickly flows into how e-mail has and can affect, influence, and control its user's life.

Schwartz begins by defining his own experience with e-mail and how it now "seems to have invaded [his] life," (235). Schwartz then moves into how e-mail has affected the lives of people who use it. The chairman of ABC, Robert Iger, after being introduced to e-mail is quoted, "It's just completely changed the rhythms of my workday," (235).

Schwartz explains two main factors in the successful attractiveness of e-mail. First, it satisfies people's desire to be (or seem) productive. Second, e-mail makes people feel accepted. Because of the user's desire to have these feelings, they choose to constantly check their electronic mail throughout the day, which occupies much of the user's valuable time. The user compensates for this lack by employing another task while checking their mail, such as talking on the phone. This attempt to double

productivity by increasing the amount of work done in an amount of time is called multi-tasking.

Schwartz begins to show examples of how e-mail has taken away from certain peoples lives. "It's a refuge," the president of CBS News, Andrew Heyward admits, "When you don't want to grapple with something else, but it also works the other way. Whenever I have a free moment now, I turn to e-mail," (237). Schwartz goes on to explain, that some users still find time to give in to their electronic addiction during weekends, business trips, and even vacations.

According to Schwartz, e-mail is not only addictive, but it may also be the most informal way to communicate. Messages are written quickly, without the use of body language, or voice context. This makes any e-mail easily misunderstood. At the same time, this "also promotes a certain openness and intimacy not encouraged by other forms of communication," (237). This openness is what allows a writer to concentrate on what message they are trying to convey to the receiver, but it also allows for a "certain rashness" (238) when writing and sending a creation. This "rashness" is due to the ready ability to send messages that the writer may regret in the future in just one click.

Finally, even though logging on gives a person the feeling that they are connected to the entire planet, in reality, they are drifting farther away from being connected to others than they ever have been. Although a user may e-mail a contact on the opposite side of the world, they are at the same time communicating less with those people that are more important in their lives. One of the professors of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley, Arlie Hochschild, states this perfectly: "I end up in

communication with more people who are peripheral to my life while not making enough time for the people who are primary,” (238)

Tony Schwartz concludes his article by creating a paragraph that possibly explains his main reason for writing this essay. Just before ending a phone conversation with one of his sources, she told Schwartz that, although resisting to answer any e-mails during the conversation, she watched twelve incoming messages flow onto her computer. Schwartz promptly hung up.