



The Psychology of Technology

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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I'm glad we don't have "party lines" in the telephone system anymore. Some of you might remember the protocol of waiting until your rural neighbour had talked for 30 minutes before you interrupted to ask if you could make a call. We would keep lifting the receiver over and over again waiting for our chance!

Next came an improved dialing system - and then telephone numbers that had been four digits suddenly were extended by area codes into ten number sequences. How frustrating to get to the seventh turn around the dial only to have your finger slip and have to start over again.

At first, we thought that touch-tone dialing was a miracle but soon it was over-shadowed by speed dial features. Now all we had to do was push one button and wait for a few seconds until our friends in another country answered!

Today, technology has taken over most aspects of our lives. The other evening a co-worker stated that a large percentage of individuals between the ages of 25- and 35-years date through the Internet. No more Saturday-night country dances?

I can easily lose what was once a large stereo system, expensive camera and day timer in minutes merely by misplacing my cell phone which is physically smaller than a pack of cards!

We can now not only talk with relatives by computer but also see them and perhaps enjoy a game of chess - even if they are in another country.

Technology can be wonderful but there is a downside. Physicians are beginning to treat individuals who suffer from thumb problems because of their diligent text-messaging activities. Employees who work for international companies no longer have an eight-hour workday because the sun never sets across their organization. They can lose all perspective of time while receiving emails and telephone calls around the clock. This situation can lead to burnout, depression, sleep problems and anxiety.

Psychology focuses on people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours. It might be wise to consider how technology has been affecting you and your life. What have you gained? And lost?

I really don't know anyone who gets satisfaction from hugging a Blackberry! Remember to take a break from the technology this week and enjoy some personal time with someone you care about. (Pretend you're waiting for a phone call on a party line).