

**HOW MILLENNIAL MANAGERS COMMUNICATE:
A RE-EXAMINATION OF COMMUNICATION MEDIA CHOICE
BY TODAY'S MANAGERS**

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ABSTRACT

Media richness theory (MRT: Daft & Lengal, 1986) proposes that users select more rich media when there is equivocality in the communications in which they must engage. Managers engage in various communications tasks with differing levels of equivocality. Thus, managers would be expected to use different tools for different types of communications, matching the media to the task. Yet, El-Shinnaway and Marcus (1997) found that email, a leaner media, was often employed even in high-ambiguity situations and is even perceived by some as a rich media. Since that study, the advent of text messaging, social media, and other lean media have been developed and become commonly used for everyday social interactions. While managers often have been constrained in their choice of communication media by organizational norms (Schmitz & Fulk, 1991) and resource restrictions (Trevino, Webster, & Stein, 2000), the more recent adoption of BYOD policies has allowed employees more scope in choosing communication media. Generational and cultural differences in media choice can lead to less effective communication in the workplace. Thus, it is important to re-examine the way in which managers choose to communicate given the multitude of options available with varying degrees of richness, synchronicity (Carlson & George, 2004), and social presence (Rice, 1993).

This study examines whether users who are experienced and prolific users of these newer lean media differ in their choice of communications media for high-equivocality communications from users who do not frequently use such media. We use a scenario-based method to elicit the beliefs of frequent users and non-users of text messaging services to determine their perceptions of the appropriateness of lean media for various communication tasks in different contexts (i.e., work vs. social situations). The findings have implications for managers in their own communications and for organizational communication policy setting.

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