

Workplace Communication & Social Networking

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the communication relationships between coworkers within a sales organization are conducted via social media. Ten employees were asked to explain how they use social media in their lives both during work and outside of work. Grounded in systems theory, this research utilized a qualitative thematic analysis to identify how these individuals use social media to connect with others. Results from interviews established three main areas of commonality among employees. With the given demographic of individuals that participated in this study, results showed that social media were not very widely used and what little use was being conducted was purely for recreational means and not between coworkers. The purpose of this study was to determine if social media had a dominant role in the communication conducted between these workers already, if not, then how social media might be utilized to enhance communication. Conclusions from this study identify suggestions for managers interested in integrating social media into the workplace, as well as suggestions for future analysis on social media usage in the work setting.

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Chapter 1: Literature Review

Communication in any environment is a key component to successful operations. This is especially true in the workplace. Communication comes in many different forms. It can be vertical, horizontal, one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-one. All of these can be found in virtually all work environments. Some organizations may be lacking in efficient communication which, in turn, may be hindering operations. Perfect communication practice is a utopian expectation that will never be achieved, but there are ways of improving and enhancing forms and networks of communication.

Social networking media have found their way into many workplaces. Countless individuals use social networking sites as a means to build relationships with people they currently know and to meet and start relationships with people they do not know. The reason they have made their way into many workplaces is because they can be easily accessed via the Internet either on a desktop or laptop, which are common in just about any work setting, or even via a mobile device. The reason many businesses do not utilize these sites is because privacy can become an issue and they can detract from work related tasks. Businesses fear workers will be too distracted.

The purpose of this study is to see how many individuals within a given organization participate on social networking sites and whether or not these same individuals network with coworkers. This study will not only look at who uses social media at work, but also the types of communication that is occurring via that channel. This could be work-related discussions or social conversations that are non-work related. The reasoning behind this is to try and uncover how social networking sites could become part of the workplace in an attempt to enhance lines of communication.

This study will observe members of a sales industry corporation. The company that the interviewees in this study work for have a number of different geographically spread locations that are required to communicate with each other in order to transfer products and meet customer demands. This industry has some similarities, as well as some differences to the organizations that have been most analyzed with relation to social media in the workplace. These two organizations include the medical field and manufacturing. They are similar because they all have departments that can isolate themselves from the organization whole and they are different because the business that is to be analyzed has businesses that function within the same set of operations, but they are placed in different geographical locations. This obstacle creates unique challenges to communication.

There will be a number of theories utilized in this study in an attempt to better analyze and interpret data from an organization. They include systems theory, enhanced by the cybernetic tradition, networking theory, and the spiral of silence theory. Systems theory and the cybernetic tradition help explain social networking in the workplace because organizations function and accomplish tasks through channels of communication. By viewing a corporation as a system, one can identify effective and ineffective lines of communication. Networking theory helps to explain why groups communicate better to members of their own group and it also explains how messages are relayed throughout the members of the organization. Networking theory can also help explain why certain avenues of communication operate more effectively than others. The spiral of silence theory helps to understand why individuals in an organization may lack utilization of communication avenues, even though the means present themselves. Individuals inherently have a fear of consequences that may present themselves if they present areas of concern in the workplace to superiors. This inherent fear deters workers and prevents

communication. All of these theories combined will best help to analyze and interpret social networking data of an organization.

This research was based on social media's current utilization in an organization and potential further integration of social media in the workplace. The following chapters will describe how research was conducted. Previous studies were analyzed with regards to this topic. This area will be covered in the chapter titled literature review. Three main themes were distinguished in the literature review and they focus on the key points of this research. After determining previous research, questions were asked as to what was missing from prior research. These questions helped the researcher stay focused as to what the main objective was. Standard interview methods were then conducted by asking employees from one organization a given set of questions. All of these techniques will be explained in the chapter titled methodology. After interviews were conducted, answers to questions were explained in more detail. Finally, in the chapter on analysis, research will be interpreted and social media usage in the organization that interviewees are members of will be established. The researcher can then determine what role, if any, social media play in the organization and how social media may play a future role to enhance communication.

Tradition/Theories to be Utilized

The tradition that this thesis will be based off of is the cybernetic tradition which falls within the academic study of communication. The cybernetic traditions analysis of conversations between individual persons, as well as the relationship between the individuals that are participating in the conversation, are additional aspects that will need to be strongly considered throughout analysis of organizational communication. Certain conversations amongst individuals require specific guidelines that must be abided in order to communicate

effectively with one another. If rules are not followed, then meanings will be lost and communication will fail. Relationships establish which rules and guidelines need to be followed and which rules can be overlooked. Relationships also establish unique languages or word usages that only individuals participating in the conversation may understand (Mattelart & Mattelart, 1998). These two aspects are well connected because further and more intense conversations between individuals can create strong bonding relationships. The rules of a conversation are greatly influenced by the culture that has been established and culture within an organization is unique in its own. Networks are often established in an organization and can impact how well communication flows.

Connecting with other people is the primary objective of social networking sites. Thus, the main theory that will be utilized in this analysis will be the network theory and context will be taken through the lens of the cybernetic tradition. This theory states that all organizations have lines of communication that connect each other. Essentially, a diagram can be drawn of all the varying communication avenues within a corporation. Groups are formed with this line connection which illustrates how communication flow is established throughout the organization. Through the theory of networking, each individual plays a role in the successes or failures of the organizational operations. Weick's concept of enactment helps illustrate this point. Via enactment, individuals shape the world they are a part of and they control the operational tendencies of that same organization (Morgan, 2006) (Weick & Quinn, 1999). By taking into account every integral piece (person) within the organization, one can better comprehend the network that has been shaped. Ultimately, one can reveal where strengths and weaknesses of communication are occurring.

The other theory that this analysis will utilize is the spiral of silence theory developed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. This theory is based on the notion that people only feel comfortable commenting on a subject or expressing their opinion on a topic that they feel they will not be ridiculed for. People do not like to feel isolated, thus, if they have an opinion on something they feel is not accepted or equally expressed by the masses, then they silence their expression (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). This especially applies to the workforce. An individual does not want to express concern on a task that he/she feels is not a concern by everyone else because he/she is afraid that everyone else will dismiss his/her notion. This, in turn, creates a lack of ability by individuals to speak up on subjects or tasks that are negatively affecting the overall efficiency of the workplace.

Depending on the level of strictness or establishment of rules and guidelines in an organization, people can feel more restricted to express their opinions which can contribute to the spiral of silence theory. If organizations inhibit the use of social networking devices, then free expression by those individuals may be hindered. Thus, people are less willing to voice opinions and concerns (Dalisay, 2012). Perhaps allowance and even utilization of a social media networking site like Facebook may enhance workplace communication because individuals feel protected.

Karl Weick has become one of the most profound figures on the topic of organizational communication. He has also had a tremendous impact on organizational theory. Weick's model of organizing explains how organizational figures and members solve problems and adapt to change. Essentially, members develop their own set of guidelines to aid in the process. This is developed through learning experience and is directly influenced by the culture of the organization (Miller, 2009). Change in an organization is an obstacle that every system will

encounter and have to overcome. How well the community can adapt to change will determine how successful functionality will be. Adequate communication is essential to overcoming obstacles that present themselves because teamwork helps to enhance the success of an organization (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Once a structure is established for this theory, an understanding of how and why communication within an organization works the way it does can be better evaluated. Then, issues that were found can be more easily addressed. Many different factors can be considered lines of communication. With advancements in technology, the varying avenues that one can use to communicate with someone else are endless. The most recent technology that has started to enter the workplace is the use of social networking devices. These programs have rapidly grown in popularity for recreational use. Some institutions see benefits of this utilization while others see negatives that outweigh any upsides.

This research was based off of three main categorical uncovering of prior data with relation to the general communication in the workplace. One main theme that will be established and reviewed is networking in the workplace. This theme was established to try and uncover how individuals communicate with each other in the workplace on a day to day basis. By revealing these avenues and how these avenues form, one can determine if there is a relationship between social media and if it could be further utilized in the work setting. Another main theme to be established is workplace communication. General workplace communication includes all forms in which employees communicate with each other, whether it is some form of direct or indirect communication and whether it is with the use of technology or without the use of technology. By establishing the primary method of communication in a given work setting, one can determine if social media could play a part in enhancing workplace communication. The

final theme established will be communication barriers. Certain barriers in the workplace inhibit and constrict or even prevent communication. By determining the prominent areas of communication barriers, one will be able to discern if social media could dissolve these barriers.

The majority of individuals in society today are involved in some form of social networking and these numbers are continuing to grow. One might assume that with this growing popularity, social networking would make its way in to the work setting. That is something this research seeks to uncover. Appendix C was taken from an article written by Joanna Brenner and Aaron Smith, published on the Pew Internet research website. This chart indicates increased usage of social media, from eight percent in 2005 to seventy-two percent in 2013. It would not be surprising that with its increase in popularity that it would be presently used in the work setting. One might also wonder if social media are being utilized by workers to communicate with each other. With this large portion of the population being involved with some form of social networking, it is not difficult to make the connection of social networking making an appearance in a work setting (Brenner & Smith, 2013).

One might also assume that certain demographic indicators may affect who uses social networking. Brenner & Smith also recorded demographic information and made a table indicating social networking usage. That table is shown in Appendix D. Demographically, the only factor that separates social networking usages appears to be age (Age 18-29: 89%; Age 30-49: 78%; Age 50-64: 60%; Age 65+: 43%) (Brenner & Smith, 2013). All of the factors listed do not seem to distinguish any substantial differences with regards to social networking usage. Age is the only category that has obvious differences with a general trend of younger populations using some form of social networking. Through later research one might assume that if the

employees that are to be interviewed fall within a younger age demographic, then they are more likely to use and accept social media utilization in the work setting.

The next question becomes, which social networking avenues do individuals use, and which do they use most frequently? This is an important question to ask because one form of social networking may have an integral part in the work setting; whereas, another may not even exist. Establishing what forms of social media are most highly utilized, will help organizations to determine how they can benefit from this utilization. Duggan and Brenner, observed social networking usage, especially, which social networking websites are used most frequently. Also, it discusses which social media most are appealing to specific demographics. The information they found is shown in Appendix E (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). This chart indicates that Facebook is the most heavily used social medium by far. Sixty-seven percent of people use Facebook. The next mostly used form of social media is Twitter at sixteen percent which is quite a gap from Facebook. The individuals that were interviewed in this study do not tend to use Twitter, but they do heavily use Facebook. Even more so, a large number of interviewees use Facebook in the workplace.

Organizations are systems where all of the individuals within the society play integral roles of interaction with each other and with the environment they are participating in. Systems theory helps to gain a better understanding of the interdependency of the members within an organization and how important interdependency is to the successes of the association. Through this idea of interdependence, no one role can function without the other components in the system (Miller, 2009).

Other key components of an effective system of operation are having a hierarchical ordering classification and organizational permeability. A classification system helps to

establish rules and guidelines of communication for members to follow. This eases the communication process because individuals know who to speak with and when to speak in almost any situation. Permeability of an association is having the ability to allow information and materials to flow freely from one component to the next (Miller, 2009). Members must feel at ease with each other and system operations, so tasks can be accomplished in an efficient and timely manner. In order to do this, communication must be practiced frequently and at its highest level.

Networking in the Workplace

The Internet has become one of the most prominent forms of servicing avenues of communication in work settings. Via the Internet, multiple messaging techniques can be utilized. Email is one of the forms of communication and it is becoming even more accessible now that individuals have mobile devices. Networking helps organizations connect with prospective employees, and vice versa, as well as connecting with educational facilities. A more recent, and somewhat controversial, form of communication and interconnectivity is the social network of Facebook.

The Internet has become and is becoming the most used form of communication in a number of settings. This is especially true in the medical realm. Doctors can access a number of useful materials via the Internet and they can communicate with other physicians as well. This avenue of networking allows individuals to communicate almost instantaneously, even though their physical locations may be miles apart. This helps eliminate segregation and should help reduce error because if there is uncertainty, one can access multiple networks in search of an answer. Unfortunately, the Internet may provide too many resources and may hinder processes and increase time. With multiple avenues to utilize, indecision may occur and lack of

uncertainty may follow. The Internet can be a tremendous resource that will only continue to grow in popularity, but it may also be detrimental to its user if it is not properly utilized (Vanderhoff & Thomas, 2008).

Networking has become a useful tool for employers and job seekers. Race, ethnicity, and culture can create communication barriers that can be tough to overcome. What some companies have started doing is creating networking recruiting avenues for those that fit into a specific cultural identity. This can be useful in creating ease in the new employee assimilation processes of an organization. The problem or risk with using this technique exclusively is that organizations may become too segregated hindering outside perspective (Stainback, 2008). To a certain degree networking in recruiting can be a magnificent tool. With technological enhancements, employers can analyze a large quantity of prospects within a short period of time and they can find the best individuals to fit their organization. This aspect of networking is also tremendously useful for job seekers. Individuals can find what specific job he or she is most qualified for and weed out the jobs that are not of interest, in a short period of time. Employers and job seekers have made full use of the technological advances made in the realm of employment seeking.

A link that has been almost overlooked in the job realm is that between employers and educational facilities. While experience can be a useful tool to those individuals seeking employment in a particular field, connections to a particular business are always a good aspect to have as well. The education realm has always been on the front lines of technological advances, thus, students are always in tune with the most recent forms of social media. Employers can now network with universities more easily in an attempt to better educate scholars as to what skills they expect potential prospects to have (Asunda, 2010). This aspect of networking creates more

direct avenues for students who are seeking potential employment opportunities. Also, employers can learn from universities as to what aspects of social media are most influencing students. By knowing this, employers can adequately present themselves to prospective employees.

Social media are also becoming a popular selection for networking in business. Workers rely on their cell phones not merely as devices to communicate with others via phone calls, but also as a communication surplus allowing them to email, check message boards, and have face-to-face conversations with an individual. These mobile devices allow people to have everything he or she needs in order to complete a work related task, all at his or her fingertips (Hearing & Ussery, 2012). If businesses were to not allow employees to have cell phones, workers would not be able to multitask as much as they currently do and this may negatively impact production.

Probably the most popular form of networking, mostly non-work related, has to be the social network of Facebook. Facebook allows users to add each other as friends and to post information updates about themselves on this social medium. Some employers view this system as detrimental and it can actually hurt employment opportunities for some individuals. These individuals are usually the ones that post intimate information about themselves on this site, without regards for what rules or laws he/she may be breaking. Other companies may view this linkage as a way to increase morale and increase socialization in the workforce (King, 2011). Facebook can be a tremendous tool to mass communicate to individuals. Groups can be formed where only members that are invited may view posted data. Whether or not Facebook will become an integral part of the workforce is yet to be seen, but what is known is that many individuals use Facebook, a lot of times while at work even, for non-work related social and non-social activities.

Social networking has also allowed workers to become more personal with each other outside of the workplace. With prominent social media like Facebook, individuals can post intimate details about his or her life for virtually anyone to see. This type of networking allows people to know more about each other without actually talking to one another and revealing personal information about themselves that may be private. This can create a better personal relationship and can help ease the flow of communication in the work setting. On the other hand, it can also bring drama to the workplace that may have nothing to do with the job at hand (Baughman, 2010).

Some organizations feel that the negative aspects of social networking usage in the workplace vastly outweigh the positive potentials of social media. A number of organizations have banned the use of social media in the workplace because they feel it detracts from job performance. Organizations may feel that too much personal information can be revealed about someone, personal information that has nothing to do with the work environment. Many CEO's and managers may feel that certain technologies have an essential use in the workplace such as telephones, fax machines, and the Internet, but they do not feel social networking is part of this list (Devaux, 2009).

On what may seem like an extreme level, some individuals may risk being denied employment or even terminated from positions for how he or she presents him or herself on certain social media sites. Employers view social media profiles as part of the interview process. These organizations feel that these forms of social media portray how individuals present themselves outside the workplace. No organization wants to be presented in a bad form, thus it seems fair to use this as a tool of evaluation. Others have been fired from their current position for both using forms of social media in the workplace that were not allowed and for presenting

his or her self in an unfavorable manner that reflects badly on the organization he or she is a part of. Author Tom Breslin published an article in the Massachusetts Nurse Advocate in 2009 listing helpful guidelines to consider when actively participating in forms of social media. He basically sums up his article by saying that the best rule of advice is to act like everything presented on Facebook, MySpace, or any similar form of social media is publicly viewable by anyone (Breslin, 2009). By doing this, one will understand the full scope of how an individual will be perceived in a public light.

Organizations in Germany have banned social media in the workplace for another reason. These organizations feel individuals, both intentionally and unintentionally, reveal competitive, intimate information about the organization he or she is working for. Certain aspects of a business environment can be proprietary and if someone were to post data about their organization on a form of social media, then it could be used by another association or against the institute that is currently employing the technique or product (German Workplaces Ban Social Media, 2011). Overall, it seems as if businesses feel the downsides to allowing or utilizing social media in the workplace are greater than any benefit the corporation may gain from using or allowing them.

Some individuals feel social networking in the workplace is inevitable, thus if organizations ban its use from the workplace, employees will only find a way around the ban (Wilson, 2009). This holds merit because with technological advances an individual can access just about anything, including social networks, from his or her handheld mobile device. Wilson describes his own take on this particular topic in article titled *Social Networking: The Business Case*.

“Blocking staff access to sites has been a primary knee-jerk response to managing the issue, but this creates additional management overhead for the IT administrators, and keeping abreast of the scale of the phenomenon is another ongoing challenge.” (Wilson, 2009)

By banning or prohibiting use of social networks, organizations can actually create more issues for themselves. This does not mean that every business should allow or implement the use of social networking, but it does give establishments something to consider when the topic presents itself.

Workplace Communication

Forms, types, and styles of communication are unique to any organization. All of these exclusivities present unique challenges that organizations must face. A number of common workplace encounters will be covered in this section. By establishing these multitudes of messaging techniques, one can understand why organizations may feel the impact of social networking may not be very substantial.

Stress is another high influencer of how effective an organization’s communication practices are being conducted and it can present itself in many different forms. Emergency positions can create daily stressors. Job aside, workers can create stress on each other by how they are handling their daily tasks. Organizations may have the fear to allow use of social networking sites in high stress settings because it merely will become a way to lash out in an attempt to relieve the stress.

Emergency services such as police and medical officials require finite and direct forms of communication. Often times stress plays a high factor in a task that is being conducted, thus proper and effective communication is essential to perform the job at one’s highest abilities

(Evans-Pughe, 2011). Communication within both of these realms also relays to individuals that are not part of the organization, including those that may be victims or patients. Officials need to be able to communicate with whoever they are dealing with while still remaining calm, completing the task at hand, in a safe and efficient manner. The communication obstacles that these individuals face are endless, due to the number of different cultural factors that are present in society.

Stress in the workplace and strain of communication can sometimes stem from unethical practices. Individuals may steer off the path of ethics in order to increase production or meet certain demands, thus increasing profitability. This can include unsafe work conditions. While many times it may be easy to take shortcuts to speed production, it may increase the risks that employees are taking. This is especially true in the manufacturing environment where employees are working with heavy operating equipment and machinery. If a superior overlooks safe work conditions to meet certain demands, subordinates may have a difficult time speaking up due to his or her rank. This creates stress in communication and causes mutiny with workers (Bisel et al, 2011). Individuals must not be afraid to speak up and communicate unsafe or unethical work habits. By remaining silent, one is harming all parties involved and it creates a very unsatisfactory workplace.

Speaking up or voicing one's opinion can also be very beneficial to the cliental that are not a part of the organization. This is especially true in the medical realm with regards to patients. Social networking sites would give individuals the courage to voice concerns because it would give them an opportunity to network with others that may have similar concerns. If any physician is uncertain of an effect a certain procedure or medication might have, willingness by those that recognize this uncertainty is essential to the health and overall wellbeing of the patient

(Reid & Bromiley, 2012). Everyone, even outside of the medical realm, must constantly be challenged by one's peers in order to be the best at whatever he or she is doing. This competitiveness benefits every party involved because it helps weed out complacency. This also helps increase trust because if one is not challenged on a frequent basis, when a critical moment occurs where someone should speak up; the superior ranking official will not take words of advice too kindly.

Terminology and customer relations are two cultural aspects of an organization that must be accepted and understood. Terminology plays an important factor in how communication is conducted within the workplace. The culture of an organization can develop certain terms or phrases designed to simplify tasks or objects. This can be true for almost any organization. It creates cliques within an organization because only those that understand the phrases being used will be able to contribute and provide useful feedback. As a result, expedited operation and ease of production can take place (Tourangeau et al, 2010). Effective communication in the workplace does not only pertain to coworkers. It also can pertain to customers as well. Consumers are the driving force behind any business. If consumer demand is high, then business is good (Ferguson, 2011). Effective and efficient communication with customers can affect the success of a business.

Good relationships in business must be established to create repeat commerce and so that consumers tell their friends and family in order to create new business avenues. This technique can be difficult to master because sometimes customer demands may be outside of the business norm, thus higher expectations are created for employees. Effective business owners must appease consumers while still maintaining good standing with their employees. Often times the consumer receives the benefit of the doubt because without the consumer there would be no

business for anyone to be a part of and jobs would be lost. Thus, employee satisfaction may be lost.

The idea of team formation has been long looked at as the go to method for accomplishing large tasks. By using this method, gaps can be filled in for those members that miss time due to injury, illness, or any other factor. Many organizations feel that jobs can be accomplished best in teams, but often times they do not consider what the best implementation processes are for creating teams and conducting effective communication. An article published in the Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions titled *Developing and Implementing an Effective Framework for Collaboration: The Experience of the CS2day Collaborative* sought to uncover what techniques best influence the successes of group activities and what procedures seem to hinder effective communication and production (Ales et al, 2011). The opening two sentences of the abstract of this publication best illustrate what the authors were trying to uncover.

“Organizations from varied sectors have pursued collaboration to better fulfill their missions, facilitate decision making, solve more complex problems, and respond more rapidly to a changing environment. While these benefits are evident through the products and services provided, few organizations evaluate the factors that contribute to the success or failure of the collaboration itself” (Ales et al, 2011).

Realistically, it is difficult to have one ideal group forming methodology that can be used by any and all groups. Each organization is unique in how they conduct their activities, thus, culture alone plays a tremendous factor in how procedures are conducted. The other major influence is the individuals involved in the activity. Each individual is unique and will respond differently under varying circumstances. By utilizing networking sites, members of an organization may

interact more freely and frequently, easing the transition process to group activities and tasks. Ultimately, it is good to see what techniques produced the most positive outcomes.

Illness or injury can create obstacles in the workplace that hinder production. Individuals that miss work due to illness or injury sometimes find themselves in a mini-assimilation process when he or she returns to work (Yarker et al, 2010). Said individual must take time to re-acclimate themselves to their original position and this includes developing trust and reestablishing avenues of communication with coworkers. Some resentment may present itself because, due to whatever form of ailment the individual may be suffering from, he or she may not be able to perform all the tasks that a job requires. Contrary to this, coworkers may give the ailing individual special treatment when it has not been requested. While this obstacle may not be a significant hindrance on flow of communication, it still is very prominent in a number of work settings.

Workplace communication always has a number of obstacles it must try to overcome. Obstacles can present themselves in a number of different forms. Education and experience play an important part in advancement within an association and they can also create obstacles for its members. Gender can play a part in this as well, especially in positions that have traditional gender roles. Gender aside, hierarchy alone can create communication barriers because bottom up opinions and concerns may be overlooked.

Education versus experience has long been debated as to which carries superiority in the workplace and which is more beneficial to the individual. Often times when a higher educated individual succeeds in being presented a position of power over another individual that may have more experience, tension and lack of respect for the individual with higher education may occur (McCallister et al, 2011). Both types of knowledge carry significant weight and individuals with

either skill can accomplish many things. With most societies, elders are to be respected and given the benefit of the doubt, therefore when a younger individual that has a higher level of education is presented a position of power in a work setting, tension surmounts and lack of respect can occur.

People need to look past what is on paper and judge individuals by their performance on the tasks at hand. Someone should not be given a position of power just because he or she has been associated with the organization for a longer period of time, but neither should tenure be overlooked because longer tenure indicates an understanding of business processes. Businesses should recognize performance and award individuals that have the largest array of credentials and appear to be most fitting for the position. Workers need to recognize this and need to respect decisions made by establishments so communication and ultimately job performance is not hindered.

Certain positions or titles that individuals hold within an organization also seem to demand a sense of superiority. Also, some positions seem to warrant a lack of respect or inferiority. For example, this can be true for nurses within the medical profession. Doctors may feel they have higher knowledge of a given task or situation, thus he/she may overlook suggestions or useful information given by nurses. It has often been mentioned that doctors feel communication within hospitals between themselves and nurses is sufficient, whereas, their counterparts feel effective communication is lacking (Suhonen & Paasivaara, 2011). Lack of respect for one's co-workers can create a communication barrier in itself, thus jobs are not being completed at a high level. This is true for any position within any organization, not just within the medical field.

Communication Barriers

This section will analyze what obstacles present themselves in any given work setting. By understanding what hurdles are present in some of the most common professions, one can better attribute social networking to the work setting in an attempt to enhance lines of communication.

A barrier that has recently being attempted to be overcome by the use of technology is the loss of face-to-face interaction. As businesses expand becoming more widespread and global, face-to-face interaction is becoming a lost art and this can negatively impact relationships of organizational members. It is difficult to travel and interact with everyone in person, thus technology becomes a necessity ('Communication without barriers,' 2007). Telephones used to be the go to method and this form of technology can provide a personal touch. More recently, email has become the dominant mode of communication because it can address many audiences at a single time. This, unfortunately, is one of the main communication barriers that organizations are encountering. While it can address multiple spectators, it is not a form of direct communication, meaning, readers will not always immediately receive the message, nor will they immediately respond.

Video conferencing is a technique that is being used by some organizations. This system provides a more personal face-to-face interaction, while still being a large distance apart. Video conferencing can also be used to address multiple audience members at a single time. The responses of individuals participating in a video conference are more immediate as well, thus, decisions can be made in a timely fashion. This can allow expedited production and efficient operation. A drawback of video conferencing is that all individuals need to coordinate time in their schedule to meet at a specific time of day ('Communication without barriers,' 2007).

Sometimes, this can be difficult because in a busy organization, each individual is going to have a busy schedule with limited availability. Overall, video conferencing can be a good way to overcome communication barriers, but just like any other communication technique, it still has its drawbacks.

Social media can also be used to enhance other forms of business communication. These include new employee hiring, cultural barriers, and confidentiality. One of the most difficult times for an employee is when he or she first starts as a new worker. Enhanced communication would be both beneficial for the worker, as well as the organization. Essentially, it would ease the training process. Cultural barriers can be overcome through enhanced communication and social media can alleviate this. People can connect with those within their organization that have similar values and beliefs. Confidentiality is essential to enhancing communication because it gives people the courage to speak. All of these work related factors can be enhanced by social media in some form.

A number of studies with regards to communication barriers have been done in the medical field. Nurses seem to be the primary focus and more so, doctor-nurse communication. Results may vary depending on the longevity that the individual being analyzed has been with the organization. Also an individual's relationship history affected analysis. While the medical realm tends to be the primary focus for analysis of communication barriers, it is not the only one.

A construction site is a prime example of where communication effectiveness and efficiency is important. There are a number of health and safety hazards on a construction site, thus, proper communication must be utilized in order to protect the individuals working on site and those that may just be a bystander, because more often than not, construction is happening where citizens may be nearby. Social networking may enhance coworker communication,

making it easier to conduct on the job communication. One study analyzed team environment on a construction site. The authors found that a construction site can impose stress on a number of different levels (Tennant et al, 2011). The job itself causes stress because, often, it is backbreaking manual labor and there are deadlines that need to be met, so workers are pushed to the limit. Communication in a construction environment is mostly one way and from the top down. Meaning, the foreman of the construction site designates and commands orders throughout tasks during the job. This is a barrier that is difficult to overcome because too much allowance of debate on the task at hand can hinder the job outcome, but at the same time, it can enhance worker satisfaction. The authors of this article did not have an objective to seek an outcome with regards to communication barriers, but it is something that is prominent within their findings.

A study conducted in 2008 analyzed communication barriers between nurses within a particular facility. This study found that workers who performed tasks more frequently with each other and in groups, had better communication habits than those individuals that did not work together very often. This aspect was also true for interdepartmental communication. Various sub-organizations within the hospital community work together more frequently than others. Communication was found to be much more fluid between the administrations that interacted frequently. This study also proposed improvement techniques that could be utilized to enhance workplace communication. These include something as simple as just refining worker relationship by creating more group activities for employees, such as meetings (Doyle, 2008). The more frequently that people interact with each other, the better they will understand one another and this will ease workplace communication, increase efficiency, and decrease worker discrepancy.

Team communication presents a number of barriers in itself, but team analysis has shown it has strengths and weaknesses. Minter published an article discussing environmental practices with regards to team formation. He states that many organizations feel individuals can be grouped together and then they are automatically labeled as a team. This can be a false notion. People that have never worked together need time to recognize how each person operates most efficiently. By placing characters into a setting without any prior history of working together, they are being set up for failure (Minter, 2012). Basically, teams need adequate time and practice to learn each other's tendencies and become an efficient operating group. Organizations need to recognize this time barrier as one of the key hindrances to efficient production because once they do, they can compensate for this and increase group efficiency and effectiveness.

On the other hand, an article published in the Journal of Healthcare Management indicates contrary beliefs with regards to teams and their importance (Preston, 2005). "You communicate to gather people together, to explain the purpose or goal for the gathering, to answer and ask questions, to gain buy-in, to ward off resistance, and ultimately to achieve the institution's and department's goals" (Preston, 2005). Basically, this indicates that teams are the backbone to the success of a corporation. This is true, as long as teams are successfully implemented and function at a high level through efficient communication, then teams are the central support and driving force within the community. If teams are not successfully put together and do not function properly, that's when obstacles start to present themselves.

A communication barrier that appears to be prominent for not only businesses seeking to hire new employees, but also for individuals in the education sector falls within the realm of actual hands on work experience. One of the biggest obstacles that new hires face during the assimilation process is learning the functionality of the particular position they have attained.

Without prior work experience, this makes the learning curve tremendously larger and more difficult to overcome. Professors also find this to be difficult in the education sector. If a student wants to acquire a particular degree, but has no prior work history or experience in that particular field, it takes a larger amount of time for that individual to learn and grasp concepts of the profession (Harmer, 2009). This poses a communication barrier because prior knowledge or experience provides insight to terms that are associated with the occupation and if the individual does not have some sort of history then communication can be more difficult and may even be frustrating.

This cultural barrier is not just found with foreign individuals entering the United States work setting. One must also consider doctors and nurses aiding foreign countries because they too must learn proper etiquette with native cultural practices where they are trying to help. Otherwise, individuals from other countries may not understand their misconception. One study analyzed nurses from Australia, Canada, Iceland, and the United Kingdom. The authors found certain traits and techniques were best utilized to overcome communication barriers (Kawi & Xu, 2009). “Findings indicated that positive work ethic, persistence, psychosocial and logistical support, learning to be assertive and continuous learning facilitated the adjustment of INs to their new workplace environments” (Kawi & Xu, 2009). While these techniques are true for almost any setting, the countries that were analyzed have similar practices and even the same language for the most part as members of the United States. Thus, overcoming barriers is not as difficult in these countries as it may be for members aiding in other countries.

One of the greatest barriers to effective communication in the workplace is having confidentiality. Within large organizations, confidentiality is essential to having adequate flow of communication because if someone voices a concern or challenges an ideology of the

organization, he or she does not want to be put on the chopping block by his or her superiors and peers. This often falls onto the shoulders of the human resource department of organizations. They must always be available for employees and must also practice confidentiality (Morath & Leary, 2004). Workers should not fear exclusion just because they do not agree with the way something is happening or the way someone is behaving. In order to not have this barrier of communication, proper guidelines and procedures must be implemented so communication avenues will always be open.

Social media are widely used by individuals to communicate with one another and this should be no different in the workplace. Whether individuals discuss work related topics or not, communication should still take place. Social media can include Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, and the list continues as social media increases in popularity. Linked In tends to be more of a professional tool used by individuals, whereas, social media like Facebook tend to have more of a recreational use. With heavy use of Facebook, as indicated by Appendix E, people almost always seem to have access to some form of social medium. In fact, social media might possibly be used in greater excess for individuals to communicate with one another than other forms of communication like email. This is what this study is trying to uncover.

The majority of individuals in society today are involved in some form of social networking and these numbers are continuing to grow. One might assume that with this growing popularity, social networking would make its way into the work setting. With this large portion of the population being involved with some form of social networking, it is not difficult to make the connection of social networking making an appearance in a work setting. One might also assume that certain demographic indicators may affect who uses social networking.

Establishing what forms of social media are most highly utilized, will help organizations to determine how they can benefit from this utilization. Networking in the workplace takes many forms and can be referenced to multiple avenues. The Internet has become one of the most prominent forms of servicing avenues of communication in work settings. Via the Internet, multiple messaging techniques can be utilized. Email is one of the forms of communication and it is becoming even more accessible now that individuals have mobile devices. Networking helps organizations connect with prospective employees, and vice versa, as well as connecting with educational facilities. A more recent, and somewhat controversial, form of communication and interconnectivity is the social network of Facebook.

Forms, types, and styles of communication are unique to any organization. All of these exclusivities present unique challenges that organizations must face. A number of common workplace encounters will be covered in this section. By establishing these multitudes of messaging techniques, one can understand why organizations may feel the impact of social networking may not be very substantial.

Stress is another high influencer of how effective an organization's communication practices are being conducted and it can present itself in many different forms. Job aside, workers can create stress on each other by how they are handling their daily tasks. Organizations may have the fear to allow use of social networking sites in high stress settings because it merely will become a way to lash out in an attempt to relieve the stress. By understanding what hurdles are present in some of the most common professions, one can better attribute social networking to the work setting in an attempt to enhance lines of communication.

Status of Current Research on Social Media in Organizations

When looking at a particular business association, one can deduce a number of things. Certain theories in the context of organizational communication, like networking theory, tell people that each individual is connected to other members that are both a part of and not a part of the society being analyzed. Also, Karl Weick's contributions to the field of organizational communication tell researchers that every individual shapes an organization and contributes to its functionality just by being present in the institution. One also knows that other factors can also play a part in the silencing of these same individuals, factors that can be avoided if guidelines are put in place. The theoretical concept best associated with this aspect is the spiral of silence theory.

What is not known is how new forms of popular technology, such as social media, affect the communication of information within the work setting. By researching relevant literature on workplace communication in general, it is realized that the most popular realms of analysis fall within the medical field and manufacturing environments. This is also true by searching for literature related to the topic of communication barriers. Focusing on the topic at hand of networking in the workplace, material found on social media and a lot of the social media analysis indicates that it is not a popular tool utilized by workplace organizations.

There are a few resources that specifically pertain to this analysis. In an article written by Treem and Leonardi they explain how they uncovered four main areas to how social media can enhance workplace processes. These areas include visibility, persistence, edit ability, and association (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Social media enhances visibility because individuals that access social media do on a more frequent basis. Thus, if social media was prominent in work processes, then individuals could relate to their fellow coworkers more easily via a social

medium. Persistence is enhanced by social media because accessing social media allows individuals to be reminded of what tasks need to be accomplished. By being reminded on a regular basis, individuals should be more motivated to finish their responsibilities in the workplace. This will then enhance the overall productivity of the organization. Edit ability gives individuals not only ability to comment on an experience they had, but allow others to also comment on a similar experience. This creates connection in the workplace by individuals that may not interact with each other on a normal basis. All three of these go hand-in-hand with the final area, association.

The idea behind social media is that it creates an avenue of interaction for those that may not have normally communicated with each other in the work setting. Association speaks to an organization's unification. If the business is more unified then tasks that present themselves can be more easily accomplished because each and every individual knows processes that need to take place in order to accomplish workplace goals. The research by Treem and Leonardi provide a stepping stone for what this study is seeking to uncover.

Another article that relates to this research topic discusses how social media effects employee productivity in the workplace. Ferreira and Plessis analyze how frequent individuals access social media in a given work day both inside and outside of work. They scratch the surface as to how the activity conducted by these individuals effects their daily production (Ferreira & Plessis, 2009). This particular research allows one to discern if an individual may lose focus in the workplace by what activities they are conducting via social media. It is difficult to interpret whether or not a true detraction from work is actually taking place because each situation is subject to the individual. One person may accomplish daily tasks and goals better if they have some time were they can escape the workplace via social media, but another individual

may lose focus and not accomplish tasks as easily. One thing that is definitely obvious and can be taken away from both this article and the article discussed in the previous paragraph is that individuals access social media on a frequent basis at any place and from any device. Individuals do not need to rely on desktop computers to access social media either. They can now do so from the palm of their hand via a cell phone. This only enhances an individual's need to access and check social media.

Smartphones themselves have had an underlying effect in the work setting. Pitichat discusses how smartphones have integrated themselves into people's lives in the workplace. Organizations have inherently allowed the use of such devices because of how practical they have become. The question that Pitichat raises is whether or not this is a good thing for the workplace. For example, is having this ease of accessibility a good thing that organizations want to have for its employees (Pitichat, 2013)? Perhaps too much access to information decreases privacy or maybe it even overwhelms individuals with information that they really do not need to know for their given profession. However, ease of access allows workers to accomplish tasks in a more efficient manner. Rather than needing permission to get certain information an individual can just bring said information up on his or her smartphone. The struggle that arises is where an organization draws the line and that is what Pitichat tries to address. Smartphones create ease of access to social media and that accessibility is what raises the interest as how an organization can use social media to its advantage. With social media's popularity, it is not difficult to see why a corporation would want to tap this technology.

Justification for this research is based on the ideology of technology becoming an integral and important part of people's lives. Technology is something that is present everywhere and we as humans are becoming more and more dependent on technology to make our lives easier. This

analysis will better determine if social networking is the next proponent to making work life not only easier, but more productive. Through analysis of previous research, one will discern that specific genres such as networking, workplace communication, and communication barriers are ever so present.

Research Questions

The questions established for this research were mostly based off of the literature review of this analysis. Through the various themes the researcher detected aspects, with regards to social media, that were lacking in the overall field of workplace communication. The researcher has an inclination that social media may already play a minority role in workplace communication and that it could even be further integrated into the workplace. By determining what current members of an organization use social media for, one can discern how these could potentially play a future role in an organization's communication.

Research Question 1: To what extent do people use social media in the workplace?

Research Question 2: What influence do social media have on communication in the workplace?

Chapter 2: Methods

Social networking in the workplace might possibly be the next form of communication in this setting. Effective communication in the workplace is essential to any successful operations. Employees must communicate with management, human resources, and, especially, each other. Many individuals participate in social networking sites. This analysis took individuals from one organization and found out if they participate in social networking and, more importantly, if they interact with fellow coworkers via social networking sites. This was done by interviewing members of the established organization. The individual was asked a series of questions that allowed him or her to elaborate on whether or not he or she uses social networking sites and where he or she uses the site most frequently. Follow up questions then determined if the individual discusses work related topics with coworkers and/or non-coworkers. By uncovering an individual's usage of social media, the researcher can determine what networks are established within the organization and whether or not social networking can enhance the relationships of other coworkers.

An overall grounded theory approach is the best for this study because uncovering the impact of social networking devices in the workplace setting has only been previously analyzed on a surface level. This approach allowed the researcher to probe new levels as to how workers currently use social networking devices to express and communicate work-related material (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). By interviewing the participants, the researcher got an initial idea of how individuals participate in social networking with regards to work-related topics. Grounded theory encouraged the researcher to further investigate these initial findings by taking detailed notes and analyzing these notes at a later date. These notes were compared to data collected from other participants and themes were established. Grounded theory is best utilized for

establishing a framework for a topic that has very little groundwork. Essentially, the data will provide an applicable direction for the research.

Interviews were the method utilized for data collection because focus groups would be nearly impossible to coordinate due to geographical dispersion of participants. By conducting interviews, substantial data for grounded theory was collected and analyzed. Coding is an effective aid that helped the researcher identify themes and sub-themes of this data because answers to interview questions had similar results to some, but not to all. Coding allowed the researcher to coordinate these related answers and determine the most popular answers given. Overall, grounded theory was the best research method for analysis of social networking in the workplace because it allowed flexibility which is needed due to variability that was encountered.

Qualitative methods gave participants freedom of expression and a grounded theory provided a way of thinking that emerged from utilization of participant analysis through something like interviews. The theories stated earlier will provide a framework for the analysis process of this review. Networking theory helped to establish lines of communication and recognize connections that coworkers have with each other. This theory also claims that groups form between members that have similar working positions and tendencies in general that allow them to connect with others of similar interest. These groups may use social networking devices to enhance their relationships at work. The spiral of silence theory made the researcher aware of worker restrictions to enhance communication, either directly or indirectly. Social networking may be a way that workers express their thoughts, ideas, and concern with work-related activity. By utilizing these theories, the researcher knew what areas to focus on and had solid theories for the findings.

Qualitative methods of analysis allowed participants to elaborate and express answers that the researcher may not have initially asked during the interview process. Collected data was not limited to yes or no questions and participants were able to provide insight into research that was being conducted. Qualitative analysis also allowed the researcher to go beneath the surface and use probing questions to uncover possible hidden data. It allowed detection of emotion which is a critical part to an answer a participant may give to a question ("What is grounded," 2013). Qualitative analysis gave a more personal touch that allowed participants to feel more comfortable during the interview process which allowed these same individuals to give more truthful answers.

Participants

The individuals that were interviewed stem from an organization that is a part of the sales realm. This particular business had approximately 120 employees at the time interviews were conducted. This business was a franchise of a corporation that is located in the United States. The corporation itself has been a company since 1986. The franchise store locations have been in business since 2010. These employees worked at many different store and warehouse locations, all of which are affiliated with one main corporate office. Essentially, the main corporate office is the top of the communication ladder. Store locations are geographically separated into markets and the members of this study are all a part of the same market. Thus, they communicate with each other the most frequently. There were ten individuals that participated in the interview process. These individuals were all considered full-time employees and had some form of management title (store manager, assistant store manager, or manager on duty). All ten participants that were interviewed are male. This was not intentional to interview only male workers, but all of the individuals in the market that was analyzed are male. The ages

of these individuals range from 23 to 44 and length of employment ranged from 6 months to 3 years. Confidentiality was established to protect the identities of those that participated, as well as the name of the organization was kept confidential.

All participants must be either full-time or part-time members of the organization being analyzed. It is vital to this research that participants held a position with this company in order to analyze the connectivity of this corporation's members through the use of social networking websites.

Instruments

This area of study is substantial because social networking is becoming increasingly used both inside the workplace and outside the workplace. By understanding the usage of this technology, organizations can better utilize them to increase productivity in the workplace and possibly even increase worker satisfaction. By analyzing this area of interest, it will benefit both organizations and members of the organization because establishing use of this technology will be beneficial to both parties.

The primary method that was used for this analysis was interviews. Through utilization of this technique, the researcher uncovered whether or not social networking could play an important part in the examined association. Interviews were utilized as a means of data collection. Phone interviews were the primary analysis method, as participants were spread apart geographically. The interviewing process allowed participants to provide open-ended answers to questions that were presented to them. Phone interviews also allowed the interviewer to contact a larger number of participants in a shorter period of time than if face-to-face interviewing was to be utilized.

The initial procedural process was to select and contact individuals from the organization. Once this had been done, then the primary process took place, which was to interview the participants. Questions were used as a guide to keeping the interview more informal and the use of probing questions (provided by Appendix A) kept the interview centered on the interviewee and not the interview questions. Questions were loosely structured as to allow participants to elaborate and speak freely on the topic they were asked about. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on answers to questions and the interviewer was careful not to limit responses. The interviewer was also careful as to not lead participants or bait them into answers they did not truly intend to convey. After all of the interviews had been conducted, then data was compiled and analyzed. Data was analyzed by categorizing similarities in answers to questions provided by the interviewer. Upon categorizing data, results were then established.

Procedure

Members of the organization were first contacted via telephone in order to ask for their participation in the interview process. Individuals were told about the purpose of the interview and how their input would be appreciated and valuable for this research topic. It was also conveyed to the participant that he or she will be kept confidential and participation in this interview would not harm their employment status with the organization that is in question. Once individuals had agreed to be interviewed, a date and time was set up to conduct the interview.

The interview process itself was conducted as follows. Initially, a consent form (Appendix B) was read to participants and interview questions were not asked until the individual agreed to the terms. Then, background and demographic questions were asked in order to make participants comfortable with the interviewer, as well as, uncover demographic

information that may relate to and have an underlying effect on the social networking data. After these questions had been asked, then questions pertaining to usage of social media were asked. These questions are listed in Appendix A. Questions were detailed and directly tailored to the research questions. Participants were allowed to express their answers in an open manner. Data was recorded via a tape recorder by consent from participants.

Questions were open-ended and in a semi-structured format. This allowed participants to express themselves as freely as possible and it allowed the researcher to build on answers given by participants that were not pre-determined. These questions carried from one interview to the next as to have consistency in research, develop multiple perspectives on an unforeseen topic, and uncover data that the researcher did not have initially think to uncover. Thus, the researcher was conscious of not straying from the topic/direction in question. Only questions that were pertinent to theories established and research questions asked were added to the list of interview questions that were predetermined and then were asked to future interviewees.

Active listening was established by the interviewer as to record detailed notes and uncover true meaning to answers given. The researcher also kept in mind not to lead/bait interviewees into answers that he/she may not have been trying to give. Nonverbal actions were not focused upon as the verbal responses were given by participants. The main reason nonverbal actions were not monitored is because all of these interviews were conducted via the telephone, making it impossible to record nonverbal actions by participants.

The interviewer made the participants feel as relaxed and comfortable as possible during the entirety of the interview process. It was important to save sensitive questions to the end of the interview as not to deter the individual from participation in the interview process. It was the interviewer's responsibility to keep the questions on topic and on track, but also be flexible to the

participant's possible need to elaborate on answers to questions. Once all questions had been asked, the participants were asked to add any additional information he or she felt was topic related and was not asked during the interview. All data was recorded and saved on a tape recording device.

Data was analyzed by searching through and finding common themes in interview notes. Participants had common answers to questions asked (Appendix A) and these answers were linked to one another. These themes were established through multiple readings of collected data. Upon the first initial reading, major similarities to answers were compiled. After the first reading, a more detailed second reading was conducted and relation to previous literature on social networking was established and set aside. Through these multiple readings, usage of social networking was portrayed and an understanding of its handling in this work setting was more implicit. Themes were linked to demographic data questions (Bryman & Burgess, 1993). Analysis will better determine if social networking has a place in this particular setting, and what place it serves, whether it is a positive influence, or a negative.

Coding was then conducted. Initially, the mass of data collected was all quantified. Meaning, data needed to be scrutinized in a manner that related information together and could be categorized by the researcher. Essentially, qualitative data became quantifiable. For the first reading of collected interview data, the established theories and research questions were constantly referenced. This allowed the researcher to focus on the topic at hand and made it easier categorize information that is applicable to questions that were asked.

Once information had been separated by major themes, a second reading was then conducted. Throughout this follow up analysis, more focus was applied and more memos were made of frequenting of words or phrases. By doing this, the researcher further categorized data

and uncovered more truthful meaning. The third reading mainly pertained to the notes/memos taken during the first two readings. Data was still referenced, but the third reading was to relate themes between major categories. Common themes were then uncovered.

To help eliminate bias by the researcher, after themes were established, interviewees were re-contacted to see if the themes that were established truly reflected upon their answers. Only six of the ten interviewees responded to post follow up, but the individuals that did respond felt that themes were accurate of what messages they wanted to portray.

Chapter 3: Results

In order to obtain an understanding of social networking usage in a particular work setting interviews were conducted. Ten phone interviews were done with employees that were a part of one organization. There was no selection process that needed to be done of whom to interview in this particular organization. Simply, all individuals that were members of the organization were interviewed. As a result of these interviews, three major themes became relevant to the topic of social networking in the workplace. These three major themes include how and why social media are currently be used by employees in the work setting, how social media are and can be utilized by the organization, and the fears employees have of integrating social media further into the work setting. This research utilizes these themes in order to develop an understanding of how social media are currently being used in the work setting and what their future role may be in the workplace. The first major theme to be discussed is how and why social media are currently being used by employees in the work setting.

One of the individuals interviewed does not use social media and most of the individuals interviewed do not interact with fellow coworkers. One person had this to say, “Mostly outside of work, I’ll just call coworkers usually and we have email so I don’t really interact a lot with coworkers on Facebook or social media (2).” Social media’s roles in the work setting have a controversial place. After interviewing ten individuals, each person has his or her own outlook as to the benefits and drawbacks of the role social media plays in the work setting. There are mixed feelings as to whether the positives of social media in the work setting outweigh the negatives. People value the sense of individualism and they also appreciate the interactivity of social media. Although, many do not utilize these interactivity features with fellow coworkers, rather they interact with friends and family outside of work. The general consensus appears to

be that many feel social media borders the line between interactivity and invasion of privacy. This is why most individuals do not interact with coworkers. Something said in what was thought to be confidentiality can be repeated in the workplace. In all reality, this can happen whether social media are a part of the workplace or not. The fear is that if social media became more prominent in the workplace, then these revelations will happen more frequently.

What this analysis seemed to uncover is that lack of utilization of social media in the work setting appears to be more on the end of the employees than it does on the end of the employer. The particular organization that was analyzed in this study uses social media for advertising and connectivity with customers. This creates a haven for people to provide useful feedback on performance and execution. The majority of employees interviewed know that such a social media site exists, but this same majority has never even accessed this social media website. Of the individuals interviewed a few regard social media as a place to escape from the realities of the world. If work becomes a more prominent role in social media, then the escape loses its allure.

Employee Utilization of Social Media in the Work Setting

When asked the questions, do you use social media in your place of work and how often do you use social media in your place of work, an answer by one of the interviewees seemed to sum everyone else's responses well.

“I always just have it running. I don't constantly look at it but it's always just kind of up and when I don't have anything going on and there's not an important training activity going on I'll check on it (3).”

About half of the individuals that were interviewed agreed that social media usage in the workplace provides an activity for them to do during free time and provides them with an avenue

of interactivity. The other half of the individuals interviewed felt that social media almost plays too dominant of a role in the work setting. The people that were interviewed all established that their particular daily routine consists of a lot of freedom where they are not under any particular surveillance. One individual claimed, “There are some restrictions on our secondary computer. There are restrictions as far as blogs that are not accessible and a couple social media sites like Twitter are not accessible (9).” With regards to the same matter another individual had this to say,

“I would definitely agree with that. I think a lot of people use social media to kill time and just cruise through and go around stalking people on Facebook, seeing what they’re up to, umm, and I know in past jobs where I’ve had tendency to do that but not, I don’t know, I think it’s an easy cycle to fall into to waste time, but once you start doing it it does become sort of a time suck, then it becomes part of their routine and then people don’t get their duties done, they just play on Facebook all day. I think it can be beneficial from a marketing standpoint as well, but in my experience that’s not been the reality of my interaction on Facebook (8).”

Another area that has apparently been uncovered with relation to using social media in the workplace is that social media are not creating interaction between individuals. Rather, people claim they are observing others and finding out information about them, but they rarely, if ever, actually have conversations with other individuals. Thus, the utilization of social media in the workplace is just used for observing others.

Usage of social media in the workplace includes a number of different avenues. Of these avenues, only a few seem to lead to work related discussion topics. In fact, only a couple of individuals claim they have some sort of connection to fellow coworkers on social media sites,

let alone carry on conversations with fellow coworkers. Even less likely, carry on work related conversations with fellow coworkers. One individual elaborated as to what his/her typical social media conversations involve.

“It's usually like, oh, so and so had her baby or so and so something happened with them and I haven't talked to them in a while. I look at our work page every now and then because we have that refer a friend thing going on or that rate your experience thing. So, I mean, it'd be a balance between work pages and just looking at my wall, I don't really do a whole lot when I'm at work but check on functions that are posted, that's about it (3).”

One of the few individuals that would discuss work related topics did not seem to be willing to go into detail with regards as to the work related discussion topics. One, because he/she could not really recall topics that were discussed and two, he/she did not really feel comfortable repeating what was discussed even if he/she could remember the exact conversation. Instead, he/she just made a broad sweeping statement, “At work it's usually work related. When I'm not at work it's typically not work related (10).” This is another barrier that has been uncovered. An individual's willingness to discuss a work related topic with a fellow coworkers. Most forms of social media are not private, thus, people can observe conversations others may be having. From conducting these interviews, many of the individuals are conscious as to the openness of social media and are very aware of the communication they conduct on social media sites. In fact, some individuals have even claimed to sensor themselves from others as to not convey a statement that may upset another person.

Some feel that without access to social media, boredom would set in and create the same problem. Some of the interviewees felt that boredom could create a lack of motivation in their

work environment. This is almost an internal controversy that these employees encounter. They must determine if it is better to have access to something that lifts spirits and can possibly enhance motivation, versus, the same thing that can deter workers from performing work related activity. On this topic, one interviewee had this to say,

“earlier stores have more access to more sites so I don’t really get blocked from anything I really want to go on, umm, and I think it’s important to have because I mean yea id go crazy without something to do at times when it’s slow. It’s a good to tool have (2).”

There are other things these employees can do in their place of work during their free time. They can simply read a book or magazine, or watch a movie, rather than access a social media site. Thus, if social media were to be prohibited in the workplace, they would still have non work related activities they could participate in during their free time.

Another individual that was interviewed felt that social media are a big part of his/her work environment. This individual had no quarrel with social media being utilized in the workplace by him/her or by any other employees and claimed, “I think it’s excellent. It boosts up morale (6).” This person was actually in the minority of individuals interviewed. Most of the other interviewees had mixed feelings as to the usage of social media in the workplace. The majority of the interviewees agreed that there needs to be a balance of usage by employees in the work setting. This statement establishes that, “Yea, its good when you’re kind of using it in your downtime, but I mean, yea, I agree that it can soak up time and kill boredom (10).” The idea that social media are a tool used to ‘kill boredom’ was not an area that was disagreed upon., the area of social media usage in the workplace that employees have mixed feelings with is how much a particular individual accesses social media in the workplace and what exactly the individual is accessing.

A strong finding that was uncovered from conducting these interviews was that most employees do not interact with each other via social media. Even the few that do interact with each other, do not discuss work-related topics. One individual had additional thoughts on the topic,

“in my experience I’m not applicable, just because I don’t interact with coworkers currently. In the past I’ve worked for organizations that have had stuff like the positive message of the day that they would blast out on Facebook and there I would encounter work-related things (8).”

Worker interaction could be something any organization could actually use social media for to enhance communication in the workplace. One would think if workers have better relationships with each other, then they would have better communication and flow in the workplace. Thus, productivity would ideally increase. This is where social media could actually enhance employee motivation.

None of the individuals interviewed felt that their performance had suffered due to the usage of social media during work hours, it’s more so the fear that some might not be able to multitask. Thus, said individual’s performance would suffer. It is intriguing to understand what these individuals are actually trying to convey. All of the individuals interviewed that commented on this aspect claimed they do not feel their own individual performance suffers due to the usage of social media in the workplace. However, they claimed that they fear certain individuals that may use social media in the workplace will or would not be able to separate themselves from recreational Web activity, versus work related productivity. Another interviewee had this to say,

“I would say it’s [social media usage] more of a positive given the nature of the work and the amount of down time we may have if it’s a slower day compared to a busier day as far as foot traffic within the store location (9).”

Interviewees feel that the organization must trust its employees to allow freedom to access social media sites while at work. It was also agreed that the organization must feel that the restriction of social media would be more detrimental than beneficial. Overall, interviewees conveyed little to no restriction on any Web browsing material.

As in any situation individuals vary from one another and how social media usage affects individuals differently. As mentioned earlier, interviewees all felt social media usage in the workplace is situational and dependent on the respective persons that would be utilizing social media. One person said, “It depends on the individual. You know, if, while you’re eating lunch, and, you want to take 5, 10 minutes to go over some things yea that’s great for boredom, but, again, it depends on the individual (4).” Through discussion, it was agreed that many individuals have mobile devices that can access social media, whereas, work email cannot be accessed on such a mobile device. Even accessing work email from home cannot be accomplished as it is restricted by the organization. Essentially, social media would be more accessible to employees.

The majority of individuals interviewed do not directly communicate with other people when they are accessing social media sites. Their activity mostly involves observing other individuals. These individuals under observation can include fellow coworkers. Observation is mostly done on the social networking website of Facebook as all individuals interviewed either currently use the social media site known as Facebook, or had used Facebook in the past. Only one of the individuals interviewed openly claimed to use another social media website (Twitter). Thus, Facebook was the most popular form of social media utilized by these persons. One

individual summed up what observational techniques he/she conducts when accessing other peoples' Facebook pages, "I don't really interact with people; I just kind of look at all their stuff (3)." Not all of the interviewees claim to just observe others like this particular individual claimed to do. Some use the chat feature on Facebook to actually have instant conversations with other persons. Some individuals also use the message feature to connect with those non-instantaneously.

None of the interviewees had claimed to have had messaging conversations with fellow coworkers. This includes both instantaneous and non-instantaneous. Of the few that had claimed to have had conversations with other individuals via Facebook, topics discussed were personal matters with family and friends. This being said, conversations do occur on work computers during work hours. One individual established this social media usage, "Well I never really do it at work and basically the only time I ever do it at work is when I talk to my son in Afghanistan (11)." Even the couple that would occasionally interact with their fellow coworkers claimed they could not recall any discussions that were pertaining to work-related activity. Coworker discussions included topics such as, "typically sports, politics, and random stuff (9)." This might possibly be where fear may present itself. With access to others' personal information, people fear that their own personal information can be accessed. Thus, he or she is not as willing to interact with fellow coworkers.

"It's a great way to kill time at work when you're really bored...between social media and sports, its usage in the workplace is outrageous, like making comments about one team to another, but I guess if one company would make fun of another company because they suck then that could be viewed as a negative too (6)."

The dilemma of using social media during free time versus distracting from work presents itself again. This continues to be a common theme amongst those that were interviewed and surely it is something that most employees agree upon.

Of the individuals interviewed, none openly claimed they fear their own usage of social media in the work setting. Meaning, none of the persons felt that if they currently use or continue to use social media in the workplace, their work performance is suffering or will suffer. Each individual was confident in their own abilities to overcome the distractions that social media may incur.

Organization's Utilization of Social Media

The organization, that the individuals interviewed are members of, utilizes social media. As mentioned earlier, the utilization of social media by this organization is directed more towards the customers of that business. While employees can also access this social media avenue, it is not required by the organization for employees to interact via social media. As mentioned in the previous segment, depending on which location each individual is working at, some computers have restrictions on certain websites, although, these restrictions are very limited. "I know there are certain websites you can't go to and it blocks from going there other than that, I don't think so, it's pretty loose (3)." Some individuals are very conscious of who they communicate with on social networking avenues. These individuals take into consideration the impact contact with fellow coworkers can have on organizational functionality.

The findings of the earlier section with regards to employee usage in the workplace did well to uncover that the majority of employees do not interact with fellow coworkers. Some individuals did have interesting insights into their own terms of usage of social media. One individual was very descriptive on his/her response to the questions; do you interact with fellow

coworkers via social networking, is your activity on social networking mostly positive or negative, and does your activity reflect a positive or negative outlook on the organization you are a member of?

“I don’t really involve my work on my Facebook page....I have coworkers as friends on Facebook but I never interact with them for the most part....usually, I pretty much have the rule I don’t really put people that I work with on Facebook because friends I have understand my personality and know me really well....I don’t want work-related stuff on Facebook. I’ll even block certain people from certain things because I don’t want them to see what I’m posting. I don’t like having people like that on Facebook because I don’t like censoring myself. If I accept you on my page, you should be okay with everything about me and should be okay with everything I’m saying and I should be able to write whatever I want in the moment and you be okay with that. So to answer your question entirely, it wouldn’t really reflect bad or good because most wouldn’t even know where I work by looking at what I say (3).”

This sort of censoring shows the fear of interaction with other people of how the other person might interpret a message that is posted or sent to another individual’s social networking website. This might be why some organizations may not use social networking in the workplace and why some organizations might fear using social networking because it can create controversy.

Some interviewees felt that social networking would not be revolutionary or would not become an integral part of the organization because of its redundancies and similarities to other modes of communication. This work setting uses email for the majority of its contact methods. This is simplest means of communication that this organization utilizes. An email can be sent to

employees in a wide spread of locations. Not all employees are working every single day of the week, thus if an email is sent to a certain employee at a certain location, this employee will not receive the message until their next day of work at that location. That location in the previous sentence should be highlighted because employees in this work environment don't necessarily work at one location all they time. They may work at several different locations in a given week. This can create problems in lines of communication via email.

The telephone can be a more direct form of communication between two people when compared to social media. In this business' situation, one person can call another person either at the store location said individual should be working at and have an instant conversation with the individual he/she is trying to relay his/her message to. The issue with this stems from one of the same issues with email, the fact that individuals bounce around from location to location and possibly might not even be working on a given day. Phone communication can also be conducted via an individual's personal cell phone. Accessibility is almost always attainable, if that individual has a cellular device. One interviewee felt that one particular social networking avenue would be the best fit for his/her organization, whereas, any other social networking site would not have an impact.

“for our business we have the forum and we have phone and emails. For our business I don't think Facebook would be fast enough. I could see where Twitter might have a place because it's more real time and more instant, so that might have a place. Even then I'm not sure how secure it would be. We don't want to be broadcasting our business to our competitors during a busy weekend. Personally, I think it's a good tool for a business to utilize for marketing and advertising. I don't really feel it's acceptable to be used by employees a whole lot because....anything we would have to use something like

Facebook for, could be easily done by email or over the phone. I don't think it would be more convenient to use Facebook in our setting amongst ourselves. However, the workplace could use it as free advertising and free marketing for promotions and contests for customers. So, us, no, company, yea (3).”

Twitter was a form of social media that was not highly utilized by the interviewees. In fact, only this individual had any remarks with regards to Twitter usage in the workplace out of all of the interviewees. Overall, skepticism seemed to present itself with regards to enhancing utilization of social media in the work setting. Another interviewee had a simple and direct comment on the topic, “probably not....again, you can use email instead of Facebook or any other social media (11).” What can again be uncovered by these statements is the fear or caution that must take place if an organization were to utilize or does utilize social media. Essentially, what this person's message is conveying is that social media can enhance communication in certain aspects, but it depends on the communication that is taking place, or rather, which individuals are doing the communication.

The main consensus that was taken away by the majority of the individuals interviewed was that marketing and advertising would be the best way an organization could utilize social networking. Currently, the organization that the interviewees are members of has its own Facebook page in which marketing takes place and people can make comments about his or her experience with the company or about the business in general. None of the people interviewed felt that advertising and marketing could be negatively impactful for the organization. When asked if social media would reflect positively for the organization if it were further integrated, one person had this to say.

“Yes and no. Yes, for advertising reasons. In sales you sell products, so if you were to post something out to the public that’s a huge avenue to relay your information and you could potentially draw people into the business and make money off of it, but it can also be negative when you’re not using it for the right reasons at work (5).”

This individual is proclaiming that the business can promote itself by using social media to allow people to express themselves.

Customer reviews can be found in numerous avenues and with social media’s gaining popularity, why should it be any different. Positive reviews of an organization can enhance business because some individuals more than likely take into account what another person has to say about the company he or she may be entering into business with. The main message this interviewee is trying to convey is that customer reviews can be a tremendous tool that organizations can utilize in the social media realm. This particular interviewee seemed to have great insight on this topic. After further questioning, this same individual went on to say,

“In the workplace, I don’t think it would be a bad idea for people to use Facebook to our advantage especially during a big sale or to build off of a big sale. Obviously, as a company, we use and have our own personal Facebook, so for something like that, absolutely, I agree on, but for the personal not quite as much if it’s not directed towards work (5).”

Essentially, social media would also be a good way that employees could interact with customers. Social media can create an additional indirect mode of communication. Indirect in the sense that many people can provide valuable input on a given conversational topic, thus, if there is a particular issue that one person does not have the answer to, another can provide knowledge on the topic.

Another promotional avenue organizations could use social media for would simply be advertisement or incentives to draw people to their organization. A few of the individuals interviewed presented an idea that may help enhance this aspect. An organization could use social media to advertise them and provide some sort of discount for a particular person that chooses to conduct business with the organization. One of the interviewees summed this aspect up as such:

“We got that promotion or whatever where if you post your story about our business and talk about your experience that you can get entered for a drawing and its good that way. Everybody out there pretty much is using Facebook not at work, so we can get our work out to those people who don’t come into our work through the media, social media (7).”

Free advertising is one of the main benefits that social media can provide a business. With the number of people that are using social media, many will come across business advertisements intentionally and unintentionally.

Marketing and advertising do not really seem to present any issues in the eyes of these individuals because only the promotion of the business is present in their eyes. In this particular case, customers can actually comment on his or her experience which could provide negative feedback. This was never uncovered by any of the members interviewed. This was probably because controversy in this instance is between an outside consumer and the organization itself, not members who are a part of and represent the organization. On this topic, one individual had this to say:

“our organization, several months ago, ran a promotion where if people commented on our Facebook page if they had a good experience or had a good encounter with a specific employee they were entered into a drawing to win a \$100 gift card through American

Express and it was a great promotion we got a lot of feedback and I think it was very beneficial, not only from the company standpoint, but also to boost the morale of those sales associates that were associated with any of those customer reviews (9).”

This individual is proclaiming that positive reviews from people that purchased an item not only impact potential future customers, but it also impacts the attitude of employees. Just about every person enjoys hearing he/she is doing a good job and who better to tell that person he/she is doing a good job than someone that they directly assisted. This particular insight was a good catch by this interviewee and as it was mentioned to other interviewees, they all agreed that this can be very beneficial.

Ideas for how the organization could enhance its social media utilization were in great abundance. The individuals interviewed all thought the organization could have a number of uses for social media; however, none were directly sure how employees could use social media in a directly positive manner. Again, employees do not see a negative to the organization promoting itself to the public, which might possibly be a good thing or could also be an oversight.

“I see a lot of positive, as far as the notifications a lot will be like fundraisers or benefits, you know, I think it’s a good way people can contact me to let me know there’s some kind of fundraising going on, but I mean I think there are, I guess, I think I have a negative outlook because most of my interactions regard information that is irrelevant to me and there’s a lot of self-loathing stuff that it seems like you come across (8).”

This interviewee’s skepticism is with regards to employees providing information on social media. There are always those individuals that cannot decipher what is appropriate to say and what is inappropriate to say. Those people are why the interviewees have skepticism with

employees utilizing social media in the work setting. That is something that will always be a concern though and not only can be a factor in the potential use of social media, but by any form of organizational promotion. One interview had this comment,

“I think by doing some sort of helpful hint of the day or something interesting....or deals you could do some sort of promotion, or deal of the day. I think I’ve seen some business’ do that if people would subscribe to it I think it would be beneficial in the right hands as far as generating more traffic (8).”

The main fear that was uncovered with regards to the organization utilizing social media in the workplace and allowing workers to freely use social media in the workplace was that some individuals might not be able to control his or her emotions. Without emotional control by individuals, social media could become an avenue that enhances workplace controversy for these people. One person said,

“If you access social media in the workplace and it interferes, or if you are upset about a fellow coworker it can be a terrible thing, like if you use social media as the company stuff, like the company promotional page and start bashing stuff, it can be very negative (6).”

The main takeaway from conducting these interviews was mixed feelings. Mixed feelings in the sense that most individuals felt that social media does not really have a place in the work setting, but at the same time, almost all of the individuals interviewed have used or currently use social media in the work setting. Familiarity is a benefit for the organization because it can be easily integrated into the organization. Familiarity in the sense that since so many employees use social media, they will know what social media is capable of doing. Thus, individuals could also develop their own means of promotion and communication for the

organization. Simply stated, one interviewee said, “I think it can be good stuff and bad stuff, you just have to balance it out (7).” Obviously, workplace utilization can be situational just like anything else. Meaning, it depends on what type of work environment is in question because some workplaces might not even have access to social media. In the case of this study, the organization’s members have almost free access to social media and with the amount of downtime some employees have they claim it’s difficult not to access social media. One individual said,

“I guess it’s really not the place for it if you take work for what it is, you know, it’s not the place to be doing stuff other than work, but with the time that we have at work you got to do something (7).”

Organizational utilization of social media is known by employees and these same individuals feel it could be further enhanced as long as it is directed more towards the customers of that business. As far as members of the organization utilizing social media, mixed feelings, leaning more towards the absence of its usage in the work setting is favored by the majority. Advertising and business promotion was the overwhelming agreed upon benefit that social media can provide an organization. Like anything else, social media in the work setting are situational to what type of work is being conducted.

Employee Fears of Further Social Media Integration

Relating back to some findings uncovered in the previous section, some individuals have a fear of what might surmount by further integrating social media into their place of work. Workers fear that if used for the wrong purposes, they can actually enhance controversy and become a communication avenue where workers may complain about their place of work or other coworkers. A couple of the individuals interviewed felt that social media really have no

obvious direct or indirect place in the work setting and just detract from the duties, goals, and objectives of work itself. One person's thoughts were,

“Overall, probably more negative just because of the nature of people's jobs. Time should not be used for things like that, in my case, I kind of feel indifferent about it because I have a lot of down time (10).”

The uncertainty in this statement stems from the dilemma that all of the individuals in this particular organization must face. That being, what to do when there is free time at work. Thus, it is difficult not to access social media. Although it may not be for work purposes or to discuss work topics, it provides a connection for someone who may be at a work location by his/her self.

Many of the individuals interviewed explained how their interactions with other people, that are not their coworkers, are generally done in a positive manner. While social media can become a haven for people to express themselves, it seems that self-expression is typically done in a manner that is positively reflecting upon them and is not intended to offend other individuals, even if it may do so indirectly. One person proclaimed that social media are a good way to catch up with those that he/she has not seen or even spoken with in an extended period of time.

“It's usually like catching up stuff, I mean, I can't imagine being friends with somebody on Facebook if I don't normally see them a lot and I don't argue with them on Facebook about stuff if we've don't see each other so it's always going to be positive because it can't be negative if I haven't seen you in ten years (3).”

Even in this instance this person is expressing how social media could provide a potential avenue for controversy, but is stating that he/she does not use it in that manner. From an outside perspective, one might argue that any mode of communication has the potential to be an avenue

for controversy. Basically, any form of communication between two people has the potential for controversy.

This same interviewee believes that if someone wants to be his/her friend via a social media website, then that person should accept whatever he/she has to say via this same avenue. Social media connects those individuals that have similar interests and more than likely similar interests deter any form of controversy, but that does not mean controversy is entirely absent, rather it is minimalized. An interviewee said,

“If the people that I do have on Facebook that I do interact with in a normal capacity, and I do have an issue with I would confront the in person or over the cell phone. I wouldn't bring it up on Facebook I guess (3).”

This statement reiterates what was mentioned earlier about controversy having potential to stem from any mode of communication. This interviewee understands how controversy can present itself and also how someone can avoid controversy by not provoking something that may create controversy.

Relating back to the first section of these findings, with regards to social media usage by employees in the workplace, a question that was asked stating, does social media have a place in the work setting, one person had an interesting insight as to why employees may fear enhanced social media usage in the workplace. An individual answered,

“the correct answer to this question would be, no its not acceptable at all because it's not something we are getting paid for and that should never be done under any circumstances, but, however, if we have a promotion where they say rate your friend and blah blah blah and rate your experience and blah blah blah in which place it kind of puts a gray line into the whole well should we be on that or not and it opens a door that we

shouldn't be technically wasting time and not doing work-related stuff even if you don't have time you could be watching a training video or going over whatever. Technically speaking unless it's mandated by the store no it shouldn't really be done in the work environment (3).”

The key segment of this quote to observe is where the individual states, “...it opens a door that we shouldn't be technically wasting time and not doing work-related stuff...” The fear is that social media might discourage worker productivity. There was an earlier quote that one individual had proclaimed people have routines and can easily fall into bad routines. By enhancing social media usage in the workplace, people may develop bad routines where they unknowingly spend an abundant amount of time on a social media site and this can be detrimental to productivity in the workplace.

In this particular environment, social media usage would not necessarily detract from work as long as workers still completed necessary tasks at hand and did not use social media in overwhelming excess. However, after being questioned one interviewee summed this aspect up in the following words, “It'd be more negative...it takes time away from work (11).”

Obviously, social media usage in the work setting will allow escapism for workers, but as long as it is done after all other tasks are completed, then it may in fact enhance the worker's involvement in the company because they would be conducting work-related activities via a social media site. Another individual had the same outlook as to enhancing social media usage in the workplace,

“I think it can be a good and a bad thing, personally....main thing is that when people are on those networks checking them every 5 or 10 minutes or hour, umm, they're spending

time on that when they could be doing something productive in their workplace...the good side of it is networking can be used to find other jobs and stuff (5).”

This would be considered excess usage of social media. Frequent involvement on social media would detract from work and that is certainly why some sort of rules or regulations would need to be established.

So most persons interviewed have this negative outlook about social media, but they all proclaim their activity while using social media is generally done in a positive manner. The main issue in this particular work setting is a gray area that has been mentioned a number of times. Employees have an a typical amount of free time when compared to other work settings, so the question becomes, why not allow social media enhancement because employees can accomplish necessary tasks and still have free time to access social media? One individual had this to say,

“like I said, I mean my opinion is such that it can be used in a positive way, you know, it’s just like most things, it can be used for positive or it can be used for negative it just depends on the hands of whoever’s using it (8).”

Yet again, another interviewee establishes how usage of social media is situational. This can be especially true from person to person interaction, not only situational in the sense of the context of the workplace.

Perhaps another fear that employees may have is the fear of change, or is it just that employees fear the negative possibilities may outweigh the positive ones. Another term that was agreed upon by most of the individuals interviewed was that the organization needs to have some form of control on the social media usage in the workplace and this has be generally discussed as comments from interviewees have been analyzed. Employees should not be allowed to freely

use social media in whatever means they deem necessary because this is where it is felt most problems may arise. One individual's perspective on this topic seemed to fit right in line with his/her peers,

“I generally view it as favorable. It's all dependent I guess, depending on what the organization does and what their purpose is, but in the example I provided I thought that was a great example of how it can be used in a positive manner to benefit the organization (9).”

The example this individual provided was mentioned earlier about how an organization could use social media for advertising. Positive versus negative communication or as this individual state, the 'favorable' aspect of social media in the work setting will be dependent upon the organization's intentions for using social media.

What all of these findings ultimately come down to is that social media in the workplace can be utilized if it is done by control by the organization. It also depends on the work setting that is contemplating using social media in the workplace. This can be self-explanatory for the most case, but an outside perspective must be taken into account and consideration for the employees and how much time they have in the workplace would be one of the main factors. One person felt,

“it all depends on what you're doing as far as your day to day job. Social networking can either be a positive or negative thing. I wouldn't say ultimately social networking isn't bad or good, it all depends on the person (10).”

Thus, if the organization wants to enhance social media usage in the workplace, even though it may already utilize it, they need to take all factors into consideration and be able to control what

type of communication is taking place. Then, proper administration or management can keep activities in check.

Throughout the literature review it was established that individuals communicate and form relationships in the work setting. Through these relationships, networks are created. These networks determine which messages are relayed from one individual to the next and how they are communicated as well. Workplace communication is an essential part of the accomplishment of tasks. Without communication through various means of technology, tasks would nearly be impossible to overcome. Ultimately, technology eases the process of a work setting. Technology also helps to overcome communication barriers. Multiple forms of communication create multiple channels to connect individuals.

Chapter 4: Analysis

The literature review of this research established focal areas that have been heavily researched with regards to communication in the work setting. Networking was to be uncovered in this research via the means of social networking. The results indicated there was little to no networking taking place via this avenue. All of the individuals interviewed either currently use or have used social media in the past. None expressed any form of deep communication with coworkers, whether it be work-related or non-work-related. Communication was another area pressed in the literature review to which little evidence was found that social media was a means of communication in the workplace. While it is being used in the workplace, it is being used for recreational means on a limited basis. It serves very little work function (organizational advertising). The final theme established was communication barriers in the work setting. This was to determine if social media were currently being used to enhance lines of communication or if it could be used to do so. What were unveiled were quite surprising and not a result that was expected.

Systems theory helps to give an understanding as to why it was expected that individuals within a work environment of this nature would embrace social media as a form of communication. Through systems theory, components of an operation depend on one another and it is vital for people to keep in constant communication so they can adapt to obstacles and overcome them. Social media creates an additional avenue of communication and it also creates a network where individuals can form relationships and bonds. These relationships enhance worker productivity as they understand their coworkers better and can then accomplish tasks easier. Throughout the literature review portion of this study, themes were established with relation to communication in the workplace. These themes were established to determine how

individuals network in the workplace and overcome obstacles in the workplace. What was to be expected was that workers would already be using technology like social media to overcome problems. What was actually found was quite the contrary.

Based off of the research questions that were established earlier, results that were found from interviewing participants were not anticipated. People were reluctant to use social media in the workplace. One might have assumed that with the given demographic information of the individuals studied, they would embrace social media in the workplace. In actuality, this was quite the contrary. It was surprising to find how cautious individuals were when asked as to how an organization could embrace social media to enhance communication in the workplace. Individuals were so cautious that they even hesitated on the answers that they conveyed to the questions. There was this overwhelming fear that if social media were to fall into the wrong hands, it could be detrimental to workplace chemistry.

Probably the most popular form of networking, mostly non-work related, has to be the social network of Facebook. Facebook allows users to add each other as friends and to post information updates about themselves on this social medium. Some employers view this system as detrimental and it can actually hurt employment opportunities for some individuals. These individuals are usually the ones that post intimate information about themselves on this site without regards for what rules or laws he/she may be breaking. Other companies may view this linkage as a way to increase morale and increase socialization in the workforce (King, 2011). Facebook can be a tremendous tool to mass communicate to individuals. Groups can be formed where only members that are invited may view posted data.

All of the members of this organization admitted to either currently using Facebook or using Facebook in the past. Many even admitted that they access Facebook in the workplace.

This area of social media in the work setting is obviously present. Employees access Facebook in the workplace to connect with those people that are prominent in their personal lives.

However, they do not use social media to connect with fellow coworkers. Facebook serves as escapism for workers to forget that they may be at work. This also seems to be the root of the fear that most of the employees had when asked how social media could enhance workplace production. They are afraid that if social media like Facebook become a part of their work routine then it will no longer be an avenue for them to forget about work and connect with people in their personal lives.

It is interesting that the organization has no restrictions on employees accessing Facebook in the workplace when they must obviously know that it is not something workers access to accomplish work-related tasks. It is almost as if the organization understands the amount of free time employees have in a given work day and they empathize with the need stimulate their senses. Whatever the actual reason may be, the organization does not view social media as something that could be detrimental to accomplishing work tasks because if they did, one would assume that they would restrict access to Facebook and other social media.

Social networking has also allowed workers to become more personal with each other outside of the workplace. With prominent social media sites like Facebook, individuals can post intimate details about his or her life for virtually anyone to see. This type of networking allows people to know more about each other without actually talking to one another and revealing personal information about themselves that may be private. This can create a better personal relationship and can help ease the flow of communication in the work setting. On the other hand, it can also bring drama to the workplace that may have nothing to do with the job at hand (Baughman, 2010).

It is interesting to speculate on these notions with the given organization in question. While members admit to conversing via Facebook with non-work-related individuals, they undoubtedly convey personal information to would another to build their relationships. The notion that has been established explains that if fellow coworkers were to do this, they would have healthier work relationships and they would accomplish tasks with more fluidity. The barrier that the organization must overcome is the self-imposed restrictions that employees have put upon themselves. They must instil confidence in the employees that none of their personal information will be revealed without their consent. Once these individuals accept these notions, then perhaps they can embrace social media as becoming an integral part of their work-related activities.

A barrier that was mentioned in the literature review of this study that has recently been attempted to overcome by the use of technology is the loss of face-to-face interaction. As businesses expand becoming more widespread and global, face-to-face interaction is becoming a lost art and this can negatively impact relationships of organizational members. It is difficult to travel to every location as businesses become more widespread, thus, technology must be utilized in order to achieve adequate information exchange. Throughout the interviews of this study, never was any form of face-to-face interaction via the utilization of technology mentioned. It was assumed that if social media were being used in the workplace that it could be further integrated to enhance face-to-face communication. Since individuals interviewed conveyed that they lack using social media for work-related activity, it is difficult to assume that social media could be used to enhance communication. Rather, social media needs to be initially introduced as a work tool before they could even be considered as a method of enhancing face-to-face interaction.

Video conferencing is a technique that is being used by some organizations. This system provides a more personal face-to-face interaction, while still being a large distance apart. Video conferencing can also be used to address multiple audience members at a single time. The responses of individuals participating in a video conference are more immediate as well, thus, decisions can be made in a timely fashion. This can allow expedited production and efficient operation. Never were video conferences mentioned by any of the interviewees. One must take into consideration that none of the interview questions pertained to video conferencing, so it was not expected to come up as part of the questioning. What is interesting though is that one might think an organization of this magnitude, with employees so widespread, some form of face-to-face interaction via technology may be utilized. Rather, telephone and email are the primary methods of communication. Social media does not seem to fit this organization's personality, because it is almost too personal for its members. Individuals do not feel the need to visually interact with who they are corresponding with. It seems that personal touch is not a necessity for members to accomplish their goals and tasks.

As part of the research it was expected that social media could be used to enhance other forms of business communication besides vertical and horizontal communication in the workplace. These included new employee hiring, cultural barriers, and confidentiality. One of the most difficult times for an employee is when he or she first starts as a new worker. Enhanced communication would be both beneficial for the worker, as well as the organization. Essentially, it would ease the training process. Cultural barriers can be overcome through enhanced communication and social media was expected to play a part in alleviating this. People could connect with those within their organization that have similar values and beliefs.

As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to make a connection to utilizing social media in this form when none of the individuals interviewed even expressed work-related activity usage via social media. This is a barrier in itself. Before the advantages of using social media in the workplace can be established, it must first be accepted in the workplace by both the organization and the employees. The individuals in this organization have this overwhelming fear that social media will cause more harm to the workplace than it will enhance any communication in the workplace. It is difficult for them to see what advantages could actually surmount from use of this popular technology.

One of the greatest barriers to effective communication in the workplace is having confidentiality. Within large organizations, confidentiality is essential to having adequate flow of communication because if someone voices a concern or challenges an ideology of the organization, he or she does not want to be put on the chopping block by his or her superiors and peers. This often falls onto the shoulders of the human resource department of organizations. They must always be available for employees and must also practice confidentiality (Morath & Leary, 2004). Workers should not fear exclusion just because they do not agree with the way something is happening or the way someone is behaving. In order to not have this barrier of communication, proper guidelines and procedures must be implemented so communication avenues will always be open.

Currently, this organization relies on telephone and email to voice concerns in the workplace. Employees rely on this mode of communication because they feel it is the most reliable method to get answers quickly. Never the less, a concern expressed by a number of employees with regards to email is that email can be overused. Meaning, mass emails that may not be pertinent to workplace production are often sent and received creating mass quantities of

messages. This is perhaps why the telephone is the number one source of communication in this work setting. Employees probably feel if they send an email it may be lost in the mass communication of other emails and then their message may be ignored, either purposely or by accident. It truly is astonishing how much this organization relies on the telephone when there are so many other methods of communication.

Confidentiality is essential to enhancing communication because it gives individuals the courage to speak up when they have concerns about the workplace. One of the theories that were established at the beginning of this research was the spiral of silence theory. This theory is based on the notion that people only feel comfortable commenting on a subject or expressing their opinion on a topic that they feel they will not be ridiculed for talking about. People do not like to feel isolated, thus, if they have an opinion on something they feel is not accepted or equally expressed by the masses, then they silence their expression (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). This especially applies to the workforce. An individual does not want to express concern on a task that he/she feels is not a concern by everyone else because he/she is afraid that everyone else will dismiss his/her notion. This, in turn, creates a lack of ability by individuals to speak up on subjects or tasks that are negatively affecting the overall efficiency of the workplace.

The reason this theory was established was to set up the notion that social media could be used to fight this spiral of silence. The thought was that social media would be an avenue that people felt comfortable expressing them on. Thus, if social media was a part of the work environment, then it could become a means for employees to voice their work-related concerns. Contrary to this notion, spiral of silence is almost extremely prominent in this organization, so much so that individuals fear even trying to using social media in the workplace. The individuals interviewed expressed concern that it may become a means for gossip and people

would abuse the privilege of social media integration. This would then create controversy that might not be an area of concern. Indeed what this research uncovered was a minor presence of worker silence, not so much from the organization, but from the workers themselves. If these employees cannot embrace a means to give themselves more power in voice, then it is difficult to conceive a notion of adaptability by another means. This notion is best supported by Karl Weick.

Karl Weick has become one of the most profound figures on the topic of organizational communication. He has also had a tremendous impact on organizational theory. Weick's model of organizing explains how organizational figures and members solve problems and adapt to change. Essentially, members develop their own set of guidelines to aid in the process. This is developed through learning experience and is directly influenced by the culture of the organization (Miller, 2009). Change in an organization is an obstacle that every system will encounter and have to overcome. How well the community can adapt to change will determine how successful functionality will be. Adequate communication is essential to overcoming obstacles that present themselves because teamwork helps to enhance the success of an organization (Weick & Quinn, 1999). By Weick's definition, this organization has created its own boundaries with regards to change. They have established means of communication that they are comfortable with and they fear how changes may affect operations. The organization itself needs to consider what it may be losing by not embracing technology, not only in the sense of social media, but technology in general as a means for workers to ease their processes. The last thing the organization would want to do is being left behind in a rapid moving world. The organization must be looked at as a team and the team needs the most adequate and up to date methods at its disposal in order to be effective.

Team communication presents a number of barriers in itself, but team analysis has shown it has strengths and weaknesses. Author Steve Minter published an article discussing environmental practices with regards to team formation. Minter states that many organizations feel individuals can be grouped together and then they are automatically labeled as a team. This can be a false notion. People that have never worked together need time to recognize how each person operates most efficiently. By placing characters into a setting without any prior history of working together, they are being set up for failure (Minter, 2012). Basically, teams need adequate time and practice to learn each other's tendencies and become an efficient operating group. Organizations need to recognize this time barrier as one of the key hindrances to efficient production because once they do, they can compensate for this and increase group efficiency and effectiveness.

This team identity has been well established within this organization. Purely by geographic location, teams are inherently taken to adapt to the work setting and situation. These teams of individuals do not feel a need to interact with others because they are not viewed as prominent members of their team. This may be why video conferencing is not viewed as a necessity to the organization. However, it was anticipated that social media would still play a role within these teams. Social media could enhance teams and possibly create connectivity to other teams that have been established within the organization. It was difficult for research to uncover if this notion was a distinct possibility because individuals that participated in the interviews viewed concerns with social media at such a surface level. Meaning, it seemed as if members felt social media had an unappealing aura to it that could not be overlooked. As interviewees continued to be questioned about a role that social media could play in the work environment, it was only observed as being beneficial to organization itself as a means of self-

promotion. Since they could not consider social media as becoming a tool for their own means, they could not even grasp the concept of social media being used to enhance the goals of their teams.

An idea for social media utilization of the organization that still seems to be a distinct possibility is with regards to newly hire employees. A communication barrier that appears to be prominent for not only businesses seeking to hire new employees, but also for individuals in the education sector falls within the realm of actual hands on work experience. One of the biggest obstacles that new hires face during the assimilation process is learning the functionality of the particular position they have attained. Without prior work experience, this makes the learning curve tremendously larger and more difficult to overcome. Professors also find this to be difficult in the education sector. If a student wants to acquire a particular degree, but has no prior work history or experience in that particular field, it takes a larger amount of time for the individual to learn and grasp concepts of the profession (Harmer, 2009). This poses as a communication barrier because prior knowledge or experience provides insight to terms that are associated with the occupation and if the individual does not have some sort of history, then communication can be more difficult and may even be frustrating.

This research has determined that employees feel promotion of the organization itself has been effective with regards to how they have utilized social media already and that it can even be further established. If the organization continues to do this, it not only creates marketing towards potential customers, but also towards potential future employees. This sort of advertising gives individuals recognition of the organization at an early point in their educational careers. One might assume that individuals in the educational realm have an embrace towards technology in general, thus they may utilize one of the multiple avenues of social media. Social media then

creates a bridge for future employer-employee contact. This may be the one silver lining that was revealed by this research. None of the individuals had a concern with organization promotion, so by some stretch, one can discern a possibility for an organization to enhance its own methods of recruitment.

The most ironic uncovering of this study was that the majority of individuals interviewed felt that communication via the telephone was the most efficient way to reach out to another individual. The irony stems in the fact that the telephone is the earliest form of technology that is present in this work environment. Email was a close second in methods of communication, but it was well agreed upon that if someone wanted a direct and immediate answer they would have to call the individual that they were reaching out to. Again, one might assume that this generation of individuals would embrace technology and find more modern means of communication sufficient. In fact, it is quite the opposite of this.

Perhaps one of the main reasons the telephone and even email are more accepted as a means of communication is because they project a more private atmosphere than social media do. Privacy was an important aspect uncovered from this research. The fear that individuals had with regards to privacy and social media does not necessarily project an image of this nature. The majority of the time, when two people are communicating with each other it is a message that they do not want others to see. This is perhaps another irony that stems from stereotype. One might assume that individuals want to connect with many people and share information publicly. In fact, people want to keep information private. Even more so, individuals want to keep their work relationships separate from their private relationships. This is where another fear presents itself, the fear being that individuals do not want their work to overlap into their

private lives, thus they want to keep their work friends separate from their recreational friends and family members.

With very little restrictions in their place of work, one wonders if the organization indirectly encourages the use of social media. Lack of restriction gives employees freedom to access non-work-related material, thus, deterring from work-related activities. Most of the individuals felt that restrictions on Web material would create difficulties on employees because they would have an abundance of free time and not be able to access non-work-related Web material to soak up time. This is where employees have the dilemma as to whether or not social media should be allowed in the workplace.

Many use part of their free time to access social media. Others utilize social media in moderation. None of the individuals interviewed use social media for work related activities. This is where the problem arises. By escaping the workplace via social media, disconnect presents itself and motivation is lost, this is part of the inherent fear. Motivation is a key factor in the performance of employees in this work setting. Essentially, some feel that by delegating time to social media, people are losing sight of what is truly trying to be accomplished.

The question then becomes, should social media be allowed in the workplace or should it even be utilized in the workplace for interconnectivity. Of the individuals interviewed, a few had mentioned that the addition of social media would, more than likely, create redundancy. Email is already heavily utilized and the telephone is an obvious, more direct, approach. However, too many avenues of communication can create problems as well. Individuals would have to access multiple channels to find out the latest information. Some interviewees contemplated the notion of perhaps replacing contact, such as email, with a social networking website.

All individuals that were interviewed felt that his or her use of social media is done in a positive manner and actions conducted on social media sites would reflect a positive outlook on the organization they are members of. This raises an interesting point. If individuals feel their actions are projecting a positive demeanor, then why is there this underlying fear that information could be used against them? Also, why is there a concern for those individuals that may not use social media in a manner that is best suited for their work environment?

Perhaps if there were a way for the organization to monitor employee usage of social media then people may be more open to enhancing it in the workplace. Although, employees may feel like they are being too closely monitored then as well and may feel their privacy is in jeopardy. If some sort of balance between employee usage and company monitoring was put in place then social media usage by employees may be more accepted by these same individuals and they may not worry about what their fellow coworkers are saying about the business or each other.

The most common agreement among all of the individuals interviewed for this study was that social media currently are best utilized by the organization for advertising. Agreement was also established as to enhancing advertising via social media. The other common thread that stemmed from interviewees was caution with regards to employees having access to social media and using social media for work-related activities. Caution stems from fear that certain employees may abuse the social media avenue of communication. If used by the organization for employee communication, it may become an opportunity for employees to gossip rather than to congratulate each other and create a means for problem solving. One could criticize that any avenue of communication in the workplace is a means to gossip. However, this was one of the main fears expressed by interviewees.

Some results were expected, but most results were not. The level of caution expressed by employees with regards to employee utilization of social media was not expected. It was anticipated by the researcher that individuals would embrace technology like social media and be more than willing to use social media in the workplace. Results portrayed the contrary. Employees all expressed some level of fear that social media may fall into the wrong hands and become detrimental to the work force. Another result that was not expected was that even though the majority of the employees within this organization fell within the younger age category, they seemed to embrace communication techniques of the work culture. These communication avenues mainly consist of phone and email. Some interviewees even expressed that social media would not be as prompt as phone or email. This lack of promptness further contributed to the caution that individuals expressed.

A result that was expected was that employees would not take caution or have a fear of organizational self-promotion via social media avenues. This was partly expected because the business that is under observation already uses social media for advertising. Another reason this result was expected was because there is little risk to the employees for the organization to promote it. Business promotion benefits employees tremendously by creating exposure and drawing customers into the business.

One of the most surprising uncovering of this research was the reliance that employees have on old technology. As mentioned earlier, the main forms of communication embraced by the organization and engrained in the culture of the organization is the use of telephone and email. This was surprising because the majority of the employees within this organization are less than thirty years of age. One might feel that this particular generation would embrace more modern technologies like social media. What was found was that these employees do use social

media, especially Facebook, but they use it mainly in a recreational sense. Social media utilization in the workplace was something created great hesitancy by individuals that were interviewed. Employees feel that the telephone is a more direct means of communication and one can get a more instant answer. The same goes for email. Although it may not be as direct as the telephone, it is a means of communication that is engrained into the culture. It was felt by the majority that social media would not provide the instantaneous answer that individuals were seeking.

Mainly, interviewees did not feel social media usage in the workplace would fill any incompetency in communication. Telephone and email seem to be a sufficient means of communication. Some even expressed that if another avenue of communication, like social media, was established in the work environment, communication may be hindered. This would be contributing to the idea that many forms of communication create over abundance. Employees would be overwhelmed and have to check and access multiple avenues which would be cumbersome. Overall, it seemed that acceptance of social media in the workplace would only be established if it could replace another means of communication and enhance communication in a way that current technologies do not.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research was based off of three main categorical uncovering of prior data with relation the general communication in the workplace. One main theme that was established and reviewed was networking in the workplace. This theme was established to try and uncover how individuals communicate with each other in the workplace on a day to day basis. By revealing these avenues and how these avenues form, one could determine if there was a relationship between social media and if it could be further utilized in the work setting. Another main theme that was established was workplace communication. General workplace communication includes all ways employees communicate with each other, whether it is some form of direct communication or indirect communication and whether it is with the use of technology or without the use of technology. By establishing the primary method of communication in a given work setting, one could determine if social media played a part in enhancing workplace communication. The final theme established was communication barriers. Certain barriers in the workplace inhibit and constrict or even prevent communication. By determining the prominent areas of communication barriers, one could discern if social media could dissolve these barriers.

The majority of individuals in American society today are involved in some form of social networking and these numbers are continuing to grow. One might assume that with this growing popularity, social networking would make its way in to the work setting. One might also wonder if social media are being utilized by workers to communicate with each other. With this large portion of the population being involved with some form of social networking, it was not difficult for the researcher to make the connection of social networking making an appearance in a work setting.

Another assumption was that certain demographic indicators may affect who uses social networking. From charts mentioned (Appendix D) (Age 18-29: 89%; Age 30-49: 78%; Age 50-64: 60%; Age 65+: 43%), age was the only category that has obvious differences with a general trend of younger populations using some form of social networking.

Establishing what forms of social media are most highly utilized, will help organizations to determine how they can benefit from this utilization. Facebook is the most heavily used social medium by far. The next mostly used form of social media is Twitter. The individuals that were interviewed in this study do not tend to use Twitter, but they do heavily use Facebook. Even more so, a large number of interviewees use Facebook in the workplace.

Organizations are systems where all of the individuals within the society play integral roles of interaction with each other and with the environment they are participating in. Systems theory helped the researcher to gain a better understanding of the interdependency of the members within an organization and how important interdependency is to the successes of the association. Through this idea of interdependence, no one role can function without the other components in the system (Miller, 2009).

Other key components of an effective system of operation are having a hierarchical ordering of classification and organizational permeability. A classification system helped the researcher to establish rules and guidelines of communication for members to follow. This eases the communication process because individuals know who to speak with and when to speak in almost any situation. Permeability of an association is having the ability to allow information and materials to flow freely from one component to the next (Miller, 2009). Members must feel at ease with each other and system operations, so tasks can be accomplished in an efficient and

timely manner. In order to do this, communication must be practiced frequently and at its highest level.

Implications for Future Research

The importance of this topic of organizational communication and the questions that will be presented are prominent in both the academic and applied sense. Academically, this topic is important because communication covers many areas and disciplines beyond the work setting. Researchers can utilize the findings of this exploration and crossover into other areas of study. Communication is constantly evolving and expanding and the study of communication is becoming ever more important and essential in a number of settings. Any organization can take this information and utilize it within their own environment in an attempt to enhance communication and, ultimately, enhance production and satisfaction of those associated with the organizational society.

Future research on this topic may further delve into how individuals use social media in the work setting and what they use social media for in the work setting. One of the goals of this research was to discern how social media may be further integrated into a work environment to enhance workplace communication. This research only seemed to scratch the surface on that aspect. Individuals did not give any solid implications as to how they would be comfortable using social media in the work place. The cautious attitude that many individuals expressed made it difficult for the researcher to determine what aspects how social media could be utilized for communication.

Another area future researchers may be curious to delve into would be the irony that individuals express caution when using social media in the workplace. One might assume that with increased use of technology in all aspects of life, people, especially of a younger generation,

would embrace social media in the work setting; especially, since they may heavily use it for their own personal. The researcher of this study had prior implications as to how individuals would react to the notion of social media in the workplace. Those implications were that individuals, especially those individuals of a younger age category, would widely embrace social media and would be happy to use it in their work environment. What was found was quite the contrary.

Limitations and Key Assumptions

While trying to assess and observe as many angles as possible, there are some recognized limitations to this research. When interviewing an individual, regardless of the topic, the accuracy of the information being presented is entirely up to the individual being interviewed. Basically, the interviewee can give any answer he or she wishes, whether it is true or not and the interviewer is none the wiser. Also, the group of individuals that was assessed was not a part of a very large sample size and was all men. This is due to the fact that the organization itself is not overly large and individuals are dispersed geographically.

Self-reported data is a key limitation to this research as with any other research conducted by interviews. Individuals under observation can express their opinions differently under varying circumstances. Setting determines how individuals feel and thus how they answer questions. While this researcher conducted all interviews over the telephone, one cannot determine what setting interviewees were influenced by. Meaning, participants may have been distracted during the interview process causing them to not answer questions in a truthful manner. These distractions may also have caused them to lose sight of the direction and answers that the researcher was trying to uncover. Self-report data is something that is almost

unavoidable when conducting interview research, but it is definitely something that researchers need to be aware of.

Sample size was a key limitation to this research. Ten individuals were interviewed due to the lack of employees available within the organization. A larger sample size would have been well utilized to enhance this researcher. This would have given a larger scope as to how different individuals feel social media in the workplace could be utilized. The participants that were interviewed all seemed to have similar implications as to how they felt about social media. While this may be the same even with a larger sample size, it still would have enhanced research with more interviewees.

To go along with a small sample size, another limitation of this research was that all participants were male. Again, this was not by selection of the researcher, but rather because only males worked in the given market that was studied. Lack of gender diversity might also affect how individuals feel about social media integration in the workplace. While a common thread was developed from interviewing male participants, one might infer that female participants could have had their own common thread. Future researchers will definitely want to consider diversifying their sample population as it may uncover varying results that may even be contrary to this research.

Without direct avenues addressing social media usage in the work setting it was difficult for the researcher to develop a solid foundation to build a direction for study. While the researcher established themes for an overall implication of general communication in the work setting, none of these themes directly addressed social media. The researcher had to infer work setting communication norms and restrictions and then transfer them over to the realm of social

media. This lack of foundation made a direction of research difficult to establish and also made credibility challenging to institute.

Recording interviews via a tape recorder and then interpreting data into research also poses a limitation. Interviewees were post assessed as to how themes established reflected upon their answers to help eliminate bias by the researcher. Even so, purely interpreting the answer an interviewee gives to a question is not enough to establish true meaning as to how the participant may truly feel on a topic. As explained earlier, self-report data is a key limitation to research and individuals can say one thing and actually mean another. Also, having one researcher interpret this self-report data creates a limitation. Interpretation may be different from one individual to the next, but only true meaning can be established by the person answering the question.

The method of study, interviews, was another limitation of this research. The reason interviews were a limitation was that questions were pre-determined by the researcher. This indirectly creates tunnel vision. As part of the research, the researcher knew to not try and stay too constricted and wanted to allow participants to elaborate upon their answers. At the same time, the researcher wanted to make sure that answers to questions did not stray off the topic at hand. This mind set can be difficult to balance. The researcher merely makes a gut decision as to what may be pertinent and what may not be pertinent to research. The pre-determined questions also infer a direction as to where answers should lead. While this is good to keep focus and context, it can also be constricting to participants. This limitation is one that many run in to when conducting interviews.

Summary

This study observed members of a sales industry corporation. The company that the interviewees in this study worked for had a number of different geographically spread locations

that were required to communicate with each other in order to transfer products and meet customer demands. The members in this study all worked in one market and occasionally these individuals would work at a variety of different store locations within their given market. This traveling makes it essential that workers communicate with each other frequently to make sure tasks get accomplished.

Social networking media have found their way into many workplaces. Countless individuals use social networking sites as a means to build relationships with people they currently know and to meet and start relationships with people they do not know. The reason it has made its way into many workplaces is because it can be easily accessed via the Internet either on a desktop or laptop, which are common in just about any work setting, or even via a mobile device. A possible reason businesses may not utilize these sites is because privacy can become an issue and it can detract from work-related tasks. Tasks that is essential to every day operation.

Research on this topic explains how and why social networking is not being utilized very much. The purpose of this study is to see how many individuals within a given organization not only participate on a social networking site, but, also, whether or not these same individuals network with coworkers. This study will not only look at who uses social media at work, but also the types of communication that is occurring via that channel. This could be work-related discussions or social conversations that are non work-related. The reasoning behind this is to try and uncover how social networking sites could become part of the workplace in an attempt to enhance lines of communication.

Networking theory and spiral of silence theory provided a framework for this research. This analysis was done by interviewing members of the established organization through

techniques of qualitative methods and grounded theory. By uncovering individual's usage of social media, the researcher determined what networks are established within the organization and whether or not social networking enhanced the relationships of other coworkers. Social networking in the workplace might be the next form of communication in the business setting, so by understanding what role it played in this workplace one determined what impact it can have on the future of business.

After conducting this research, the role social media could play in the future of this business is uncertain and bleak at best. Research uncovered skepticism by employees as far as using social media as a means to communicate with one another. The majority of individuals interviewed expressed fear that if social media were to fall into the wrong employees hands, it could be detrimental to the demeanor of the organization. None of the individuals interviewed felt that social media could enhance communication in the work place. The majority felt that current methods of communication were sufficient and that further integrations of communication avenues which actually inhibit operations.

Suggestions for future managers are best relayed from unexpected data that was uncovered throughout this research. Managers should always keep an open mind when determining best practices in the work place. In the case of this research, it was assumed that individuals of a certain generation would be open and accepting of technology utilization, like social media, in the work place. This was not the case. Social media can still play a role in the work setting and can still be utilized by managers. The main area of utilization that was strongly supported by interviewees was with regards to advertising by the organization. On the subject of using social media for worker-to-worker communication, there needs to be guidelines established. Employees fear free reign of social media. If a manager and an organization use

social media in a select manner and with restrictions as to how much people can interact, then social media could still play a part in work place communication.

Suggestions for managers and employees with regards to overall technology use in the work setting is to understand the human nature to resist change and not be afraid to implement new practices even though fear may be present. What was prominently uncovered from this research was the fear that employees had to integrate social media into the work setting. With further digging in the analysis section, it was uncovered that employees have a self-imposed spiral of silence going on in this particular organization. It would not be much of a stretch to assume that other organizations may have the same problem.

Workers integrate themselves into an environment and if a nature is in place with certain practices it is difficult to change habits that have already been developed. Managers need to understand that technology is constantly evolving and its workplace utilization may not be obvious. Managers should not fear what technological implementations may contribute to a work environment. Employees need to overlook this self-imposed fear and also embrace technology in the work environment. Workers need to understand that further methods of communication only give themselves a more prominent voice in the work environment. This enhances their ability not only conduct horizontal communication with fellow coworkers, but vertical communication with management. Social media create a message trail that can be observed by any individual if necessary. This accessibility allows management to understand its employees better.

The purpose of this study was to see how many individuals within a given organization participate on social networking sites and whether or not these same individuals network with coworkers. This research uncovered that the majority of individuals within the organization did

not communicate with other coworkers. While many individuals use social media, they do not use social media for work related communication or activities. The closest any had come to this aspect was visiting the company's Facebook page. However, none had expressed that they had provided any input or made any commentary on the web page. The overwhelming response to the initial question asked, could social media be used as a mode of communication in the workplace was no. These answers were followed by explanations of fear and lack of ability to fill in gaps in communication.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Background/Demographic Questions

1.1. Which of these age categories do you fall within?

1.1.1. 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55 and up

1.2. Do you work in a sales location, warehouse, or other?

1.2.1. Can you elaborate upon the duties of your position?

1.3. When did you start working with this company?

1.4. What position did you start as?

1.5. How many different occupations have you held within this company?

1.6. Do you have access to the internet at work?

1.6.1. If so, are there any restrictions on viewable material?

1.7. How many breaks do you get at work?

1.7.1. How long are these breaks?

1.7.2. Do you have access to the internet during breaks? (Including mobile devices)

1.7.3. If so, what websites do you typically access?

2. Social Networking Questions

2.1. Have you ever used a Social Networking website like Facebook, MySpace, or LinkedIn?

2.2. Do you currently use a Social Networking website?

2.3. What Social Networking websites do you use?

2.4. How often do you use a Social Networking website?

2.5. Where do you access this/these websites most frequently?

2.6. Have you ever accessed this/these websites at or during work?

- 2.6.1. If so, how often do you access these sites at work?
- 2.6.2. Do you interact with fellow coworkers or non-coworkers?
- 2.6.3. What topics do you generally discuss?
- 2.6.4. Are they work-related or non-work-related?
- 2.7. Which website features do you find yourself using most frequently?
 - 2.7.1. Does activity with this particular feature pertain to work in any manner?
 - 2.7.2. Is it usually being discussed with a fellow co-worker?
- 2.8. When accessing social media sites, does your activity seem to be more positive or negative?
 - 2.8.1. Would you say your participation in social media reflects a positive or negative outlook on the organization you work for?
 - 2.8.2. Would you say your participation in social media reflects a positive or negative outlook on the coworkers of the organization you work for?
- 2.9. Does your organization currently utilize social networking websites for work related activities?
 - 2.9.1. If so, how are they utilized?
 - 2.9.1.1. Is worker participation required by the organization?
 - 2.9.2. If not, do you feel it could provide a role in the workplace?
 - 2.9.2.1. In your opinion, if social networks were established in the work setting, do you feel these sites would have a positive, negative, or about the same impact on organizational efficiency and worker satisfaction?

Appendix B

-Informed Consent to Participate in Human Subject Research-

I, Justin Hansen, am a student at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and would appreciate your participation in a research study designed to understand the current utilization of social media in a work setting. As your participation, you will be asked interview questions in a semi-structured manner. You will be free to answer questions in as much or as little detail as you would prefer. The entire interview process will take 15-20 minutes of your time.

I do not anticipate the study will present any medical or social risk to you other than the inconvenience of the extra time required for you to participate in the interview.

By participating in this study, you will benefit by learning more about yourself and your organization. You will develop an understanding of how you currently use social networking in your place of work and comprehend how well or not so well your organization utilizes social networking. Your participation will also be contributing to the future usage of social networking in your own and other work places.

Neither you, nor the organization that you are a member of will be named throughout the documentation. This will be done to ensure confidentiality. All data will be kept on a flash drive and when not in use, this flash drive will be kept in a safe that is only accessible by the sole researcher of this project. After research has been completed, data will stay on this flash drive locked in the same safe.

This data will be used for analysis of an organizations utilization or non-utilization of social media. Data from interviews will be presented in the form of documentation that others will be able to read, but individuals participating will be kept confidential as to not reveal their identities.

If you want to withdraw from the study at any time you may do so without penalty. The information on you up to that point would be destroyed.

Once the study is completed, we would be glad to give you the results. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please ask me or contact:

Dr. Chris Sadler
Department of Communication
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Stevens Point, WI 54481 (715) 346-3898

If you have any complaints about your treatment as participant in this study, please call or write:

Dr. Jason R. Davis, Chair
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
School of Business and Economics
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Stevens Point, WI 54481
(715) 346-4598

Although Dr. Davis will ask your name, all complaints are kept in confidence.

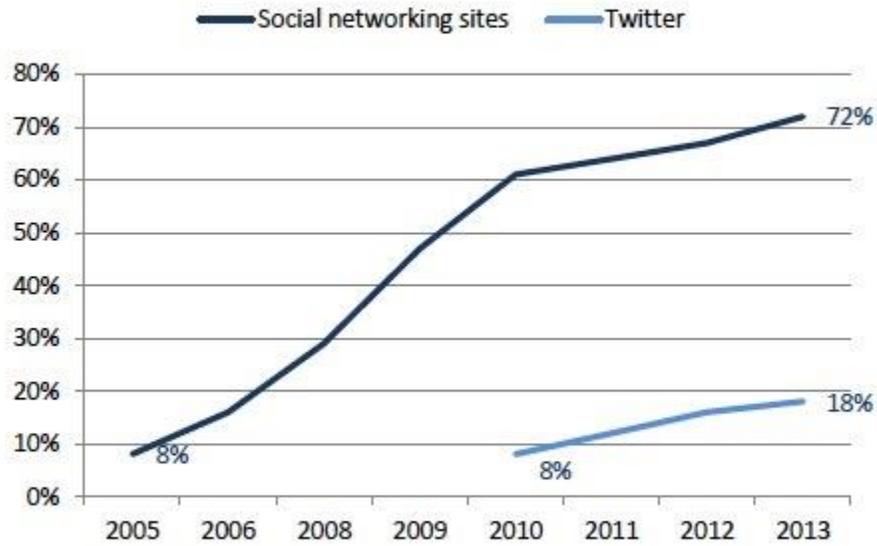
Do you understand everything that I have just read to you and give me authorization to continue with this interview?

This research project has been approved by the UWSP Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

Appendix C

Adult use of social networking sites and Twitter—change over time

% of adult internet users who use social networking sites or Twitter, over time



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project tracking surveys 2005-2013. Spring Tracking Survey, April 17 – May 19, 2013. N=1,895 adult internet users ages 18+. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. The margin of error for results based on all internet users is +/- 2.5 percentage points.

Appendix D

Who uses social networking sites

% of internet users within each group who use social networking sites

	All internet users (n=1,895)	72%
a	Men (n=874)	70
b	Women (n=1,021)	74
Race/ethnicity		
a	White, Non-Hispanic (n=1,331)	70
b	Black, Non-Hispanic (n=207)	75
c	Hispanic (n=196)	80 ^a
Age		
a	18-29 (n=395)	89 ^{bcd}
b	30-49 (n=542)	78 ^{cd}
c	50-64 (n=553)	60 ^d
d	65+ (n=356)	43
Education level		
a	No high school diploma (n=99)	67
b	High school grad (n=473)	72
c	Some College (n=517)	73
d	College + (n=790)	72
Annual household income		
a	Less than \$30,000/yr (n=417)	75
b	\$30,000-\$49,999 (n=320)	72
c	\$50,000-\$74,999 (n=279)	74
d	\$75,000+ (n=559)	71
Urbanity		
a	Urban (n=649)	74
b	Suburban (n=893)	71
c	Rural (n=351)	69

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Spring Tracking Survey, April 17 – May 19, 2013. N=1,895 adult internet users ages 18+. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. The margin of error for results based on all internet users is +/- 2.5 percentage points.

Note: Percentages marked with a superscript letter (e.g., ^a) indicate a statistically significant difference between that row and the row designated by that superscript letter, among categories of each demographic characteristic (e.g. age).

Appendix E

The Landscape of Social Media Users

	% of internet users who....	The service is especially appealing to ...
Use Any Social Networking Site	67%	Adults ages 18-29, women
Use Facebook	67	Women, adults ages 18-29
Use Twitter	16	Adults ages 18-29, African-Americans, urban residents
Use Pinterest	15	Women, adults under 50, whites, those with some college education
Use Instagram	13	Adults ages 18-29, African-Americans, Latinos, women, urban residents
Use Tumblr	6	Adults ages 18-29

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Post-Election Survey, November 14 – December 09, 2012. N=1,802 internet users. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. Margin of error is +/- 2.6 percentage points for results based on internet users. Facebook figures are based on Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Omnibus Survey, December 13-16, 2012. Margin of error for Facebook data is +/- 2.9 percentage points for results based on internet users (n=860).