Collaborative Support Systems

Dr. Sasan Rahmatian

Facts:

- Business-related work is done not individually, but in groups.

- Business has gone global.

- Global groups are separated by distance and time zones.

- There has been an explosion of communication technologies over the past few decades.

- We have been trained in <u>how to</u> use this technology, but not <u>when to</u>, and <u>why to</u>, use it.

When and Why Do I Use Which Communication Medium?!

Situations crying out for help:

- Business-To-Customer: Customer-Support

- Business-To-Job-Applicant: Hiring process

- Business-To-Employee: Retention/Promotion/Performance Appraisal

- Colleague-to-Colleague: Group decision making

- Education: Distance learning, Online education

The Communication Space

COMMUNICATION MEDIUM: the *channel* through which the message is delivered.

A typology of communication media:
- Auditory (telephone, v-mail)
- Visual
  - ➢ temporary/soft (e-mail, instant messaging, video)
  - ➢ permanent/hard (fax, mail)
- Multimedia (videoconferencing)
- None (F2F)

**COMMUNICATION MESSAGE:** the *content* of what is being communicated.

A typology of messages:
- Data (transaction details, numbers)
- Text (words)
- Image (drawing, photograph)
- Audio (voice, music, sound)
- Video (animation, real-life)

COMMUNICATION STYLE: the extent of real-time interactivity.

A typology of communication styles:
- Synchronous/Live/Conference/Real time
- Asynchronous/Store-Forward/Mail/Delayed time

Medium

data   text   image   audio   video   **Message**

synchronous

asynchronous

Style

Medium = *f* (Message , Style)
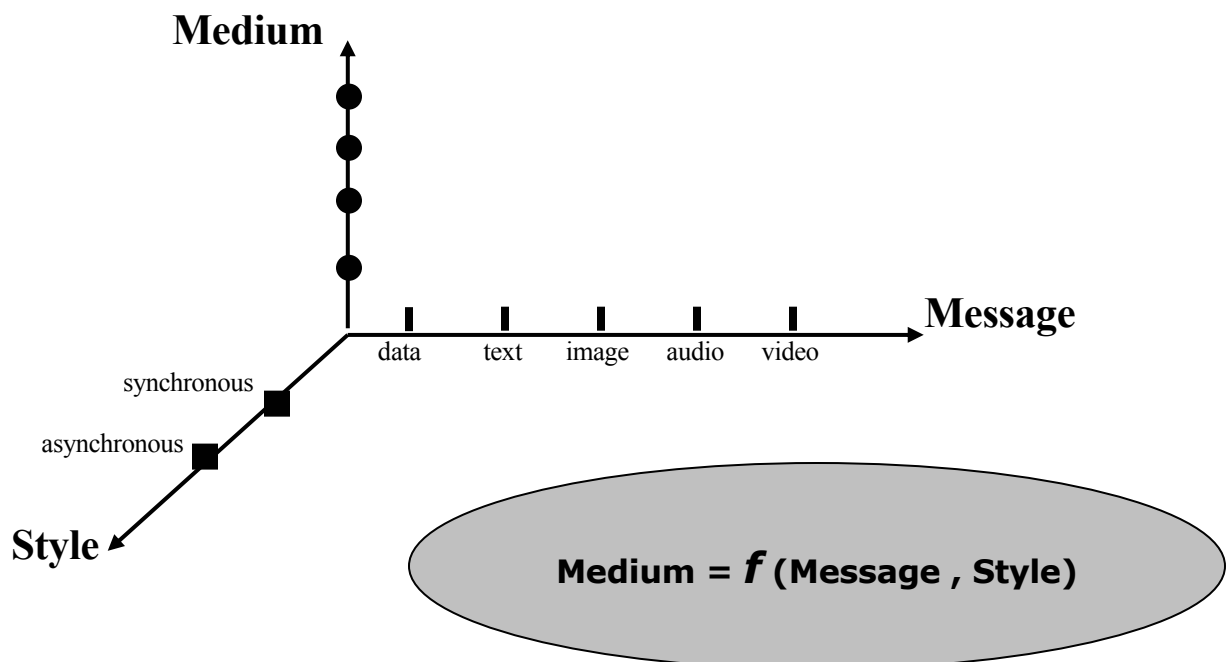
Also:
command !

Medium = *f* (Message)

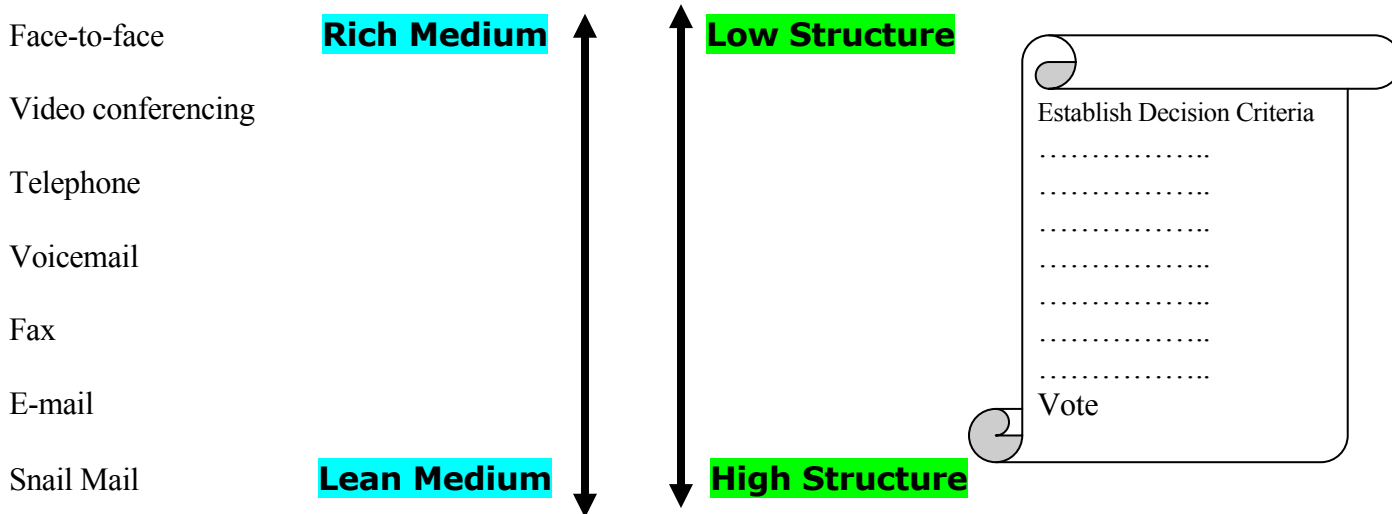| Style:	Synchronous	Asynchronous
Message		
Data		email attachment web page
Text	text message/chat	email web page
Image	whiteboard	email attachment web page fax
Audio	telephone	voice mail email attachment web page
Video	videoconference webcam webinar	video file email attachment web page

Style = f (Multiple Factors)

Need For	Synchronous	Asynchronous
Assurance of Receipt/attention	√	
Quick Response not being ignored	√	
Affective Content (1)	√	
Confidentiality easy to forward email/vmail	√	
Resolution of complex issues (2)	√	
Documentation self-documenting; keeps copy		√
Deliberation Opportunity complex decision-making		√
Wide Reach easy to forward email/vmail		√
Factual Content avoiding "he said, she said"		√
Multi time-zone collaboration		√

(1)

- Trust
- Enthusiasm
- Respect
- Commitment

(2). Medium Richness = f (Structure)

The less structured an interaction, the richer the required communication medium.

Face-to-face	**Rich Medium**	**Low Structure**
Video conferencing		
Telephone		
Voicemail		
Fax		
E-mail		
Snail Mail	**Lean Medium**	**High Structure**

Establish Decision Criteria
……………..
……………..
……………..
……………..
……………..
……………..
……………..
Vote

Measure of Medium Richness: extent of non-verbal, interactive content allowed (70% of communication)

- voice inflection/tone,
- silence
- gesture
- posture
- distance
- touch, handshake (firm/limp)
- gaze
- facial expression
- dress
- self-decoration

Measure of Structure: agreement on issues and ways of resolving them

Agreement on issues?
- No ·······························➤ Unstructured
- Yes
  Agreement on ways of resolving them?
  - No ···················➤ Semistructured
  - Yes ···················➤ Structured

Message = f (Medium) !!!

A technology that extends/enhances our body, senses, mind.
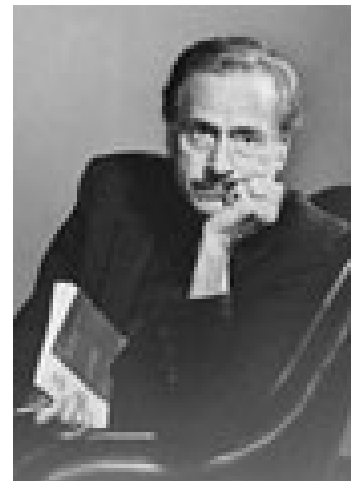Enables us to do more than we could do on our own.

The change of scale/pace/pattern introduced into human affairs.

The Medium is the Message

Marshall McLuhan, 1967

Communication technologies that extend our abilities tend to have far-reaching behavioral impacts

Medium: Cell Phone

Message:

o Abolishing of privacy
o Abolishing of late arrivals
o Reduced desire/ability to plan ahead