

Chris's Corner: Effective Communications

In today's high tech, go go, world; we have an unbelievable means to communicate with each other. Its mind blowing.

We have face to face conversations. Telephone, both land line and cellular. Digital texting. Instant messaging. Email. Video conferencing. Faxing. Old fashion paper via the postal service. These are all off the top of my head. I am sure I am leaving some out.

Last Friday, our internet service was out the entire day. It was an area-wide outage, not limited to just us. We had no internet. Therefore we had no email. Many of our service calls we receive are via email. We had no access to many of the programs we use off the cloud, such as our parts locator and ordering program.

Fortunately, I have a "smart" phone, so although Comcast's pipeline to us was offline, I did have access to email. The calls came through and I relayed them to our staff. We were able to use iPad's to access the systems we needed and had to resort to good old faxing or phone calls to place orders.

The outage continued over the weekend. So no emails were being received on the Outlook program on our PC's and were not being auto forwarded based upon our pre-established rules. Every time my phone chimed over the weekend, I had to check my email and then if it was a call or something, I had to text or call someone.

Then we were so paranoid about missing something that we checked are rechecked everything said to make sure our work around method was getting us by. I would send a text, "did you get that email I sent

you?” You lose faith in technology pretty quickly when it lets you down.

Of course we have bundled service here, which means that our phones are through the cable package as well. Fortunately our phone service was not affected by this internet outage. However we have had situations where our phones are down. So we have a work around for that too. When our phones are out, we call the cable company and they forward phone calls to our cell phones.

I thought all this technology was going to simplify everything. It seems because of the variety, it's actually more difficult to manage. If one piece of the puzzle gets lost or misplaced, you have to have a solid back up plan in place. I am thinking now, that you actually have drill and practice on the back up or when it comes to use it, your lack of familiarity can cause further confusion and the greater of likelihood of something slipping through the cracks.

What will corporate America do if there is a huge regional or national internet outage? What happens to the data in the cloud if you can't get to it? Information is only as good as your ability to access it.

Email, cloud computing, smart phones, everyone is totally dependent on them now. What if?

Computers were supposed to reduce paper use. Did you ever wonder why you use more paper now than ever? Because, even now, in the back of our minds there lingers some doubt as to the safety of our records. This concern seems justifiable if you ever go through the loss of internet service or even a hard drive.

So my advice to us all is to have back up plans in place and know how to execute them. It's not a matter of if you will ever need them; it's a matter of when.