

# MEETING EXPECTATIONS? AUSTRALIA'S BUSINESS COMMUNICATION BEHIND THE GLOBAL CURVE

An increasingly dispersed workforce still clinging to face-to-face communication. Reluctance to embrace new technologies underpinned by trust and control issues. With Australian adaptation behind other Western economies, employers urged to drive change.

SYDNEY, Australia November 10, 2010 Australian workers are wedded to a seeing is believing approach to business communication, still using physical meetings as a primary way to collaborate, according to international research launched today.

The research, called The International Language of Business, commissioned by Citrix Online, a division of Citrix Systems, Inc, showed that almost half (45%) of local employees insist on organising face-to-face meetings with their teams every day, even though an increasing number of Australians now work out of the office – either at home or on the road. One quarter (24%) work from home during a typical week, and 15% leave headquarters to go client-side. Only Americans meet more often (51%).

The survey, conducted by Forrester Consulting, explains why more than a third (38%) of the Australian respondents felt overloaded with day-to-day meetings, but finds it nearly impossible to break the habit of catching up face-to-face.

An overwhelming majority

83% say they prefer to meet in person to build trust, but the findings imply their focus is just as much about monitoring the responses of others:

77% of Australians believe seeing each other is

crucial to encouraging participation compared to just 29% of Germans. 67% of Australians need to eyeball each other to reassure themselves that people are paying attention.

Australians are also the

most likely to insist on the pre-eminence of body language. 90% say reading each other's reactions is the reason they see each other. This compares to only two thirds (67%) of that characteristically more expressive race, the French.

Reviewing the findings,

psychologist Jacqueline Saad commented:

Despite having greater access to rapidly

improving technologies, people are clinging to the tradition of face-to-face meetings. This comes as no surprise as Australians love a bit of a chat among colleagues – a reflection of our laid back, friendly nature. It seems Australians betray a lack of confidence in their own abilities and they need to meet in person to ensure people are paying attention. From a psychological perspective, it allows an opportunity to establish rapport, to assert our personal feelings and opinions and feel connected to both internal and external colleagues. It is a significant forum for communication exchange within an organisation.

Moving away from

traditional belief systems is not always an easy thing to do. The majority of employees have become accustomed to this way of doing business and will not embrace new technologies if there is no perceived adequate replacement to meet their psychological needs. Technologies where you can physically see someone however, such as video conferencing, can provide an equally rewarding alternative by allowing individuals to gauge expressions and style of the meeting attendees, fulfilling the need for face to face interaction, while providing a more time and cost effective option to both employees and their organisation.

Ms Saad also said that

Australia's focus on face-to-face meetings was likely to have a real impact on productivity, with the nation's workers slow to embrace the collaborative technologies used as everyday tools in other countries.

Audio-conferencing: only a quarter (26%) of

Australians use shared phone lines to work, collaborate and share

information, versus almost half of Brits (49%)

Web-conferencing: only 10% of locals turn to

web-conferencing, against 28% in the US

Video conferencing: despite the enhanced

personal interaction offered by video-conferencing, only 13% of our workers use video-conferencing,

compared to 28% in France

Social networking tools: even though we're the most dominant users of personal social networks like Facebook\*, only 5% of Aussies use social networking as part of their role, versus 18% in Germany

Although the Australian workforce is more dispersed and mobile than ever, we're still using the same tried and tested ways to collaborate with colleagues, customers and suppliers, said H.R. Shiever, Managing Director, Citrix Online Asia Pacific.

Realistically,

face-to-face interaction is always going to have a place in the business world:

direct communication has a fundamental effect on how we do business. However, it's no longer the default option. We're helping employers to

embrace collaboration technologies like web conferencing to slowly wean teams

from physical to virtual contact, saving time, money - and a good deal of frustration in the process. After all, if we can only deal

when we're upfront and personal our business results are going to fall behind

the rest of the world - a high cost to pay for the comfort blanket of a

face-to-face yarn.

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\*According to Nielsen

research: Australia

Getting More Social Online as Facebook Leads and Twitter Grows, March 2010

#### About the research

Forrester Consulting conducted an online survey in September 2010 of 797 information workers evenly split between the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany and Australia. Information worker is defined as anyone who uses a computer for work. Respondents were of all ages and from various industries.

#### About Citrix Systems, Inc.

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