

## Texting is the new communication

By Brian Lockhart It seems more and more people are getting rid of their land line telephones at record numbers. With the advent of relatively inexpensive cell phones, the land line is becoming a thing of the past. I still have a regular telephone at my house ? mostly for practical reasons. When doing an interview, a land line still has better sound and there's no risk of words being cut out or the line dropping because a person is in an area with bad cell reception. Ever since Alexander Graham Bell uttered the phrase ?Mr. Watson, come here, I want to see you,? back in 1876, the telephone changed the world by becoming a means of instant communication. You could call your friend across town rather than walk or ride your horse to tell him that new shipment of whiskey had finally arrived at the tavern. It also provided teenage girls with hours of entertainment talking to their friends about who knows what? Although it took several decades before the telephone manufactures realized you didn't need a bell loud enough to compete with a fire alarm to let people know someone was calling. There was a time when a phone call was a big deal. ?The phone is ringing!?! - and it was all hands on deck to make sure the call was answered promptly. After all, a bell was ringing. That was enough to make people drop whatever they were doing and fly to the kitchen to get the situation under control. If you got a call after 9:00 p.m., that was a little unusual. If that bell rang after 11:00 p.m., there was no doubt at all, you wouldn't be getting good news. If you didn't really want to hear from someone, and you had an inkling of who was calling, you could simply ignore the ringing bell and not answer. This infuriated some people ? especially people from collection agencies calling to ask for the money you still owe on that shipment of widgets you ordered several months earlier. This was solved with the invention of the answering machine. You couldn't get away from the bill collections guy when you obviously received the call and the message. Of course you had the option of not calling back. What I have noticed over the past several years is people are far more likely to screen calls than they used to. I think for a lot of people, answering the phone means work of some sort, so it's a lot easier to let the voicemail take a message so you can decide whether to be bothered returning a call. The worst people for this are the ?communications' people at businesses, organizations, government offices, or any corporation where a person has ?communications' in their title. For people who are supposed to communicate as part of their job, they are never available. If you have a job that requires calling these departments, you know what I mean. I once had to make call to a communications person at an office. I mentioned to a co-worker as I was dialing, that I was calling communications and said, without a doubt, no one would answer. Sure enough, I call the communications department and got the ?I'm unable to take your call,? or ?I'm away from my desk,? message. It was a sure bet. However, there's a way of getting around this ? texting. Texting is the new Bat Signal that people just can't ignore. How many times have you see someone's phone do a little ?buzz' and the person ignores it? Probably never. For some reason, that buzzing phone elicits a reaction no matter where the person is or what they are doing. I guess a person could ignore your text, but I guarantee they saw it and know what you need from them. At least they know you are trying to get a hold of them. The old ?I didn't get your message, my answering machine has been acting funny lately? excuse really doesn't work with texting. I've had a couple of websites I belong to send me a message that they need to confirm my ?sign-in' information by texting me a code to enter. Once I enter my telephone number, I'll get that text in about two seconds. Alexander Graham Bell's invention sure changed the world, now texting is taking it to a whole new level.