This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Fri Oct 30 4:40:30 2026 / +0000 GMT

It?s a 24 hour world

by BRIAN LOCKHART

If you're old enough to remember when a telephone was mounted on a wall and had actual bells that clanged like a fire alarm, you probably remember it was somewhat of an event when the telephone rang.

If you were in a typical family dwelling, the call would go out, ?Harry, it's for you!?

There was also an unwritten rule regarding acceptable times to call someone.

If you knew your friend started work at the local factory at 6:00 a.m., you probably wouldn't call them after nine o'clock. The same went for people with small children who were already asleep.

Those telephone bells were loud.

For some reason the people who made telephones at that time figured most of the population was hard of hearing and they had to make the bells loud enough that you could hear them half a-mile away if it was summer and your windows were open.

There was also the dreaded late-night call.

If your telephone sprang to life after 11:00 p.m., there would be an instant feeling of dread. No one called you at that hour unless it was to deliver news of the worst kind.

The digital world has changed all that.

It seems the majority of households don't even have a telephone any more. The so called ?land-lines' are quickly disappearing as everyone just carries their cell phone with them at all times.

When was the last time you used a public telephone ? or even have seen one for that matter?

The transformation to the digital world has also altered the way we do business.

E-mail has especially eliminated personal boundaries that used to be in place regarding the separation of home and work life.

If your boss called you on a weekend, they had better have a pretty good reason why they were calling on 3:00 p.m on a Saturday and interrupting your barbecue. The same went for clients or business associates.

Your time off, was your time off.

The only real exception to that was if you had an ?emergency' of some sort like your pipes burst and you needed a plumber ASAP who advertised he was available for emergency calls.

The thing with e-mail is people can't dodge you if they don't want to speak to you.

If you call someone and they don't answer the phone, your message won't get through. With an e-mail you know they are going to get the message so if you e-mail someone about that $50 they owe you, there's no excuse for them to say ?oh yeah, I forgot about that.?

The ?business hours' thing seems to have disappeared in a lot of ways.

I routinely get e-mails at odd hours and on weekends that are business related. I don't mind, it has just become the normal way of doing things.

Conversely, I have sent people a message at 11 o'clock on a Sunday night requesting a meeting for later in the week.

I don't expect them to answer right away, I expect them to reply when they get back to their normal operating hours. However at least half the time, I'll get a reply within five minutes.

Yup, people are really in tune to their mobile devices and e-mail.

Those expanded hours have certainly changed the way the retail world does business.

If you remember the days before Sunday shopping, well Sundays were just, what's the word? Oh yeah, horrible.

Nothing was open. You could fire a cannon down the main street of any town and not hit a thing unless a stray cat or a seagull happened to cross your path.

While Sunday shopping may be a boon for retail businesses, the only people who probably don't like are those that are scheduled to work on the weekend.

Even with Sunday shopping, thanks to the digital world you can shop any time of day via online purchasing. The only drawback is you might have to wait a little long to get that exciting new toy you ordered at three in the morning.

It seems we have become a 24/7 kind of world, which is fine, because you don't have to take part if you really don't want to.

I'm just glad that telephone makers finally realized you don't have to have a fire alarm bell ringing in your home to get someone's attention.