

## Common courtesy

By Lee Meadows

While pundits regale and curriculums abound with the integration of "social media" as a tool and life force in our increasingly complex lives, the question left unanswered is, at what cost?

I am a technological lunkhead and laggard when it comes to the full integrative usefulness of the evolving social media, and I do have to consult with my son when discovering other uses for my iPhone besides dialing (fooled you! I know there's no dial. Although my extension cord keeps getting tangled).

I do understand the importance of technological progress and the obsession with "new" and "improved" technology. The airlines did put the stagecoach business out of business, thus putting a lot of employment seeking horses out to pasture. Streaming videos is far more convenient than running to the mini-mall to rent a video and the advances of technology roll on with every iteration brining us closer to technological nirvana. However, at what cost?

No too long ago, I observed a young man, standing outside of a local retail outlet, locked into a heated argument with his girlfriend, by way of his cell phone! His thumbs moved across and around his keyboard with all the precision and focus of an orchestra leader trying to squeeze "The Two Minute Waltz" into 10 seconds. From what I could observe, she was matching him comment for com-

ment and keystroke for keystroke. He'd receive a text from her, grunt and yell an obscenity and fire off a text.

This modern day version of "Dueling Banjos" went on for several minutes before he decided to end all texting and close the cover of his cell phone, undoubtedly believing he'd won the argument, but how would he know? My curiosity would not let me walk away, so I had to ask him about what had just transpired. He gave me all the sordid details of the events that led up to the "textament" and assured me that he would send her a text later on, "after she has cooled down." Being an old-school baby boomer, I suggested that maybe he should talk to her. His reply was, "Why would I want to do that?"

"Oh, I don't know. Common courtesy," I replied.

I have the good fortune of being a professor at Walsh College. The opportunity to teach working adults is a lot of fun and presents its own set of challenges. Our night classes allow for lecture, discussion, group work and the application of real world solutions to real world issues, in real time.

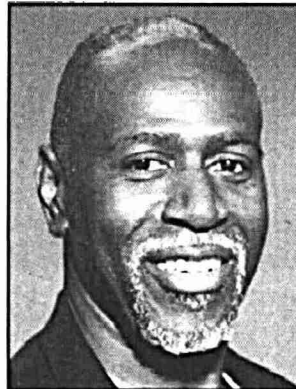
However, in the last couple of years, I've noticed that among the younger crowd of our graduate students, the open laptop during lecture/discussion time is quite a common practice. I've sat in the back of classes during student presentations to see that my "laptops" are engaged in things other than paying

attention. I am left wondering when "common courtesy" became something you did after you finish surfing the Net.

It's even more fascinating when I have observed the same behavior at team meetings in a couple of places where I do consulting. I always thought that a team meeting is a place where you are to give your undivided attention, lest you miss some important detail that could cost an organization millions of dollars.

I have had to hit the brakes a number of times because someone was so focused on sending a text or talking on the phone that they would step into traffic only to be alerted by the screeching tires of the car that came to a halt two feet from where they were standing. The irony is the look I receive that suggests that I was wrong for driving on the street.

I am the first to acknowledge that technology has its place, but I do become concerned when that place is in front of our socially prescribed common courtesies.



Lee Meadows

