

The Future of Communication

In a recent appearance on channel 7's Morning Show we were discussing the future of communication. Just over 50 years ago, there were still 20,000 telegrams being sent by Australians on an annual basis, and it was less than 60 years ago that the very first television programme was broadcast in Australia. When you compare that to the situation that exists today, with 31 million mobile devices floating around in 2014 (8 million more than the number of people who live in this country), you really get a feel for the pace of change in the world of communications technology.

What Does the Future Hold?

I don't want to talk about the past though, I want to talk about the future and how the way in which we communicate with each other and the outside world will change over the next 10-20 years. Many people are focusing on the devices that we already have available to us – notebooks, tablets and in particular mobile phones – and how they might change over the next few years. Will the phablet trend continue, with phones growing ever larger and if so, where will it all end? These are the kinds of questions that many technology observers are currently asking. I think the real question is not how much will existing devices change but how quickly will they disappear?

Wearing Your Emotions on Your Sleeve

The thought of the mobile phone disappearing from our lives completely may seem a little far-fetched right now but I strongly believe it will start to happen within the next few years. Eventually, we will no longer have discrete communications devices. Rather, we will communicate by using devices that are incorporated into our everyday clothing. This trend has already started, albeit in a very small way, with the introduction of the Apple Watch and the Samsung Gear range. Google glass is probably the most notable development so far but it has yet to progress past the prototype stage. The next logical step, after watches and glasses, is to integrate the necessary electronic circuitry for communicating with the outside world into the very fabric of our clothing.

Getting Under Your Skin

If you find the idea of clothing that doubles up as a mobile phone a little hard to process right now, try this on for size: tiny wireless communication chips embedded under your skin. This is not science fiction but science fact. Many people have already had near field communication chips injected under their skin, such as Martijn Wismeijer, the founder of Mr Bitcoin, who had two wireless chips implanted in his hands. These chips were only intended to hold bitcoin balances but they can also be read by smartphones and used to operate keyless door systems. It is only a matter of time before similar devices, with the ability to access the internet and cellular networks, become available to the general public.

Following Your Thoughts

Of course, the logical conclusion of all this progress is the introduction of microchips into our bodies that will help us to control electronic devices simply by thinking what we want them to do. Imagine an alarm clock that you can turn off by wishing the noise would stop (perhaps not such a great idea!) or a telephone that you can use to make calls just by thinking about the person with whom you would like to speak. The possibilities are endless and I'm very excited about the development of these types of devices. However, there are some concerns that will need to be addressed before their widespread adoption becomes likely.

I didn't mean to send that!

Imagine you are alone in your apartment on a Saturday morning, when you receive an urgent message from your boss. You wish that you could tell him what you think about being disturbed at the weekend and suddenly, thanks to your implanted communication chip, that's exactly what you do! If embedded communication devices that work by reading our thoughts are ever going to take off, there will need to be some sort of electronic safety catch to prevent random thoughts from being fired off as text messages to our work colleagues, friends and relatives. The move from devices that work on passive rather than active user engagement needs to be carefully managed if it is to be a success.

If you want to know more about what the future has in store for us in terms of technological advances, don't forget you can catch me on the Morning Show, on Channel 7, every other Wednesday – next appearance on 22nd July. In the meantime, check out [my YouTube channel](#) when you have a moment to spare.