The Art of Communication: Messages That Matter

The art of conversation is thriving globally

MESSENGER, 2017
Hello!

We’re so glad you’re here. We’re also excited to share with you our findings about what people all around the world think about new ways of communicating. **Messenger has over 1.3B people communicating with the people and the businesses they love every month.** Messaging is more important than ever. To better understand this 21st century phenomenon – quantify the scale of it and figure out its trajectory – we conducted a survey with people around the world and asked them what they think.

We are often told that there are hard trade offs to be made in the digital age. With more and more technology in our hands, we have the power to connect and share with more people - in different time zones or even just down the street. It’s more than any generation before has experienced. Some scholars argue that whilst we seem to be in ever more frequent contact with each other, we’ve never been more isolated or out of sync with our true human nature. So, we explored five common myths about messaging – not just about Messenger, but to all messaging. Some of our findings surprised even us, and we think they may challenge your assumptions, as well.

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<tr>
<th>MYTH #1</th>
<th>REALITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The more we retreat to our phones, the less we connect with others.</td>
<td>The more varied our communication options, the more frequent our conversations become.</td>
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<tr>
<th>MYTH #2</th>
<th>REALITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We should feel guilty about “sidebars,” messages between two or more people about others in the room.</td>
<td>Sidebars actually improve camaraderie and serve a positive purpose.</td>
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<th>MYTH #3</th>
<th>REALITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Emojis cheapen our messages, and make it harder for older generations to relate.</td>
<td>Even people over 55 say they express themselves better through images than words.</td>
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<th>MYTH #4</th>
<th>REALITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The more we communicate with messages, the less we meet in person.</td>
<td>Around the globe, those who message one another more actually interact more in-person.</td>
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<th>MYTH #5</th>
<th>REALITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Messaging is less meaningful or expressive than face-to-face chats, allowing people to hide behind their screens.</td>
<td>People say that messaging helps them be bolder, offering a truer reflection of who they are.</td>
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We discovered that this huge shift in communication is not a wedge, but a bridge, bringing us closer together.
Devices Decisively Lead to More Communication

People think that communication and relationships are declining due to the rise of mobile phones, tablets and computers. Our study actually demonstrates that, while people perceive a definite shift in their own connection habits, on the whole they feel communication has changed their lives for the better.

Interpersonal expression takes on many forms, each one an individual language of connected experience. Having a varied toolkit for expressing ideas and emotions complements our unique voice and style of communicating. Utilizing increased modes of digital communication enriches our social lives.

People don’t communicate less, or less effectively; they communicate more using a new set of tools that complement their lifestyle and personality. A trucker living on the road, an elderly couple far from family, an investment banker, a mom with young children – all have a common need to keep in touch with those close to them, but they can now adopt different ways of doing so. Their schedules and relationships all quantify the language they use to connect. As a result, people are finding that this more varied communication toolbox has allowed them to establish richer, more satisfying social lives.

Technology has opened up multiple pathways of dialogue, bridging divides of age, culture, and profession. People can connect in ways that suit their situation or lifestyle, despite challenges of time or geography. The digital age has elevated text and image to feed new linguistic possibilities in a world hungry for social interchange.

What We Found

There is widespread, global agreement that communication has changed as people embrace more varied methods. However instead of distancing friends and family members from each other, our diversifying toolkit is associated with a rise in the vibrancy and fulfillment of our social lives.

Increase in Types of Communication in the Past Two Years

Percentage of people who increased their use of each communication channel.

- **67%** MESSAGING
- **48%** SOCIAL MEDIA
- **47%** EMAIL
- **47%** VIDEO CHAT
- **38%** FACE-TO-FACE
- **37%** PHONE CALL
- **16%** TYPE A LETTER
- **14%** WRITE A LETTER

More Modes of Communication = Greater Social Satisfaction

- **HAVE GREAT CONVERSATIONS DAILY**
- **COMMUNICATE WITH MORE PEOPLE**
- **HAVE MORE AUTHENTIC CONVERSATIONS**
- **HAVE MORE AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

My ability to contact people immediately in real time has increased in the past two years. This has improved the number of conversations that I would qualify as great conversations.

FEMALE, ONTARIO, CANADA

I much prefer to text, message or email instead of staying in touch on the phone. I wouldn’t be in touch with people nearly as much if I didn’t have text, email or messaging options.

FEMALE, CHARLESTON, SC, USA
Sidebar conversations now take place across the world and in every age bracket. These are serious, hilarious, and happen in multiple ways. From big group dinners, to destination TV moments – whether people are next to one another or in different locations – does the ‘sidebar’ bring people together and facilitate relationships, promote intimacy, and bring friends closer?

As we make our way through life, we create new relationships, an extended family to whom we draw closer to inspire, support, defend, or entertain us. As the number of people in our world expands, we have a natural tendency to develop closer bonds with the people that share common goals and help even out the roller coaster of daily life. These are your sidebar pals.

While sidebar conversations can be used to selfishly further an individual’s own interest and reputation, they’re an essential part of our social system, aligning with an innate need to affiliate and form a tribe. Those you trust with personal insights, and receive honest responses from in return, are the family you reach out to in the moment. Message by message, your group builds an intimate, immediate structure of humorous, heartfelt commentary in any given situation.

The sidebar conversation becomes a modern day chorus to life’s theater, a sportscaster’s commentary on the game, a narrator’s perspective on the unfolding story. Life just makes more sense, and decisions are better informed when you have a sounding board of confidantes to back you up.

This all happens without interrupting the flow of real-time conversations – people tell us that a sidebar conversation helps them to keep their cool in work meetings, or to focus on serious matters even when out and about – and often they mentally pull ahead of the pack by injecting an extra ingredient. That’s the sidebar power of camaraderie and social adherence. So let’s embrace the joy of the sidebar.

We wanted to tell each other that we loved each other the first time I met his parents during a family dinner, so we messaged each other.

FRANCE

Most people admit to using messaging for sidebar conversations, and a majority have these conversations daily. These interactions occur primarily at social events and family gatherings, often strengthening relationships.

When one colleague is annoying me I can complain to another, which helps me keep my cool.

FEMALE, LOS ANGELES, CA, USA

Who says they sidebar?

79% TEENS
82% MILLENNIALS
64% GEN-X’ERS
49% BOOMERS

71% HAVE SIDEBAR CONVERSATIONS
60% HAVE SIDEBAR CONVERSATIONS DAILY

62% SAY MESSAGING MAKES THEM FEEL CLOSER TO FRIENDS, VS 36% OF THOSE WHO DON’T SIDEBAR
53% SAY CONVERSATIONS ARE MORE INTIMATE, VS. 31% OF THOSE WHO DON’T SIDEBAR

Usage crosses boundaries

This trend knows no borders. People across various country and age groups indulge in sidebar conversations daily or more.
A New Visual Language of Hieroglyphics

The human brain connects images to unique emotional experiences approximately 60,000 times faster than we interpret a line of text*. A new vocabulary of emojis, GIFs, and camera-based messaging has sharpened the focus of modern interpersonal communications, making us more expressive than ever before.

Human history has shown time and again that images are worth more than words, especially when you need to grab attention in a vast space. Cavemen talked to spirits using burned sticks to draw images on rock, while the Egyptians developed an entire language of symbols with over 1,000 characters. There has always been a universe of those who use images to augment words to entertain, teach, barter, threaten, and protest.

With the rise in screen-based communication, we’re returning to more visual expression, driven by a desire for intimacy in a hectic world and an urgent need to release emotions. Bound by hurried schedules, we’re seeking new creative outlets for unique connection, and inventing a new kind of cave art through emojis, GIFs, and camera-based messaging.

Emojis present a fun, easy-to-use language for emotional expression that can’t be subverted by auto-correct. We can create a unique “language” that our closest friends will recognize and quickly translate into more complex conversations of subtext and shared experiences. Instead of sending a loud, all caps email, with a hundred exclamation points, that may not be seen for hours, we can slyly quip a couple of emojis that hit home right away.

As the world continues to globalize, and communication is more and more diverse, visual messaging is becoming a new universal language, opening up possibilities for greater connection and communication.

The emoticons bring more feelings onto paper.

GERMANY

WHAT WE FOUND

The majority of our global messagers communicate visually, with most feeling that these options encourage more frequent connection, more fulfilling conversations, and increased creative emotional expression than using words alone.

GLOBAL PHENOMENA

When it comes to visual messaging, different countries have unique preferences.

Americans send more humorous GIFs than all other countries combined.

Germans send both the most “angry” and the most “bored” emojis.

 Brazilians are the most likely to use photos and GIFs as expressions of love.


Any deep conversations where words can be misconstrued. You need to see a visual, or things can get lost in translation.

MALE, 41, DETROIT, MI, USA
KEEPING IN TOUCH THRIVES AS NEVER BEFORE

While most people continue to see face-to-face conversation as most fitting for many serious, emotionally-laden topics, an increase in messaging doesn’t mean we’ve stopped meeting in person. In fact, the reverse is true: there appears to be a direct correlation between more messaging and greater in-person connection.

It’s been decades since most of us lived in a world small enough that face-to-face communication served all our needs, and many young people have never experienced that way of living. Modern messaging acts as a welcome voice powered by technology. Whether sending a message across the ocean to a vacationing friend, or across the street before having coffee, messaging provides a quick, succinct means of keeping life moving.

This hasn’t supplanted our need for social contact and extended dialogue, but has become a speedy “go-between.” If you’re on the sending or the receiving end, messaging keeps ideas and agendas in focus and communication up-to-the-minute. Contrary to the common belief that people just don’t get together and talk like they used to, is the revelation that people believe the more they message the more they increase their in-person interactions. Now that is interesting.

When people can reach more of their important contacts with small messages here and there during the day, they tell us there is an increased ability to develop and hold those relationships in extended social settings. Between our hectic schedules, compressed timelines and an ever-expanding world, we’ve been handed a tool that allows us to reach out and keep connections and relationships alive at any time, no matter where we are. In other words, messaging acts as an interpersonal “appetizer” so you can sit down and share a long, enjoyable meal later. This table will accommodate a crowd.

WHAT WE FOUND

Many report that messaging has replaced other forms of conversation in their lives. But across the world, face-to-face conversations are on the rise, suggesting that messaging actually serves as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, in-person interactions.

ACROSS THE WORLD

Face-to-face interactions are increasing all over the world.

- 67% are messaging more than they did 2 years ago
- 38% are talking more face-to-face than they did 2 years ago
- 52% increased likelihood that those who message also talk face-to-face
- 51% report messaging has replaced other types of conversations

The frequency of use of digital media completely changed my communication; surprisingly it greatly improved the quality of direct in person communication. The situations became clearer and improved the understanding of my relationships, including those at work.

BRAZIL

I text way more than I used to but also meet in person a lot more. Before, I had maybe one or two good friends, now I have a community.

FEMALE, 25, DALLAS, TX, USA
Messaging and Authenticity

For some people – particularly those less comfortable with other forms of communication – messaging opens up new doors to more authentic dialogues. People say that messaging removes filters and makes them feel less self-conscious about what they say. Often by removing the pressures of face-to-face communication, messaging empowers ‘truth’ and ‘authenticity’ to thrive.

Most actors or performers will tell you they feel more comfortable behind the mask of their profession. They can be outlandish, crude, adventurous… someone else entirely. The anonymity of another character or persona gives permission to take a little more risk, live a little louder. While we don’t all have roles in the spotlight, we do gain a sense of freedom and confidence from our digital devices. Messaging has given everyone the opportunity to speak with a voice they may struggle to find in the physical world. Perhaps you haven’t found the time or opportunity to voice your opinion to your peer group. After all, there are too many topics, too many ears and too few hours in the day. Self-consciousness or other traits of introversion may further complicate the quality of your social interactions. As a result you find that other people are second-guessing your opinions, leaving you isolated in a crowd. This phenomenon of being a “familiar stranger” is common in modern society. Messaging helps make difficult or intimate topics easier to communicate, by allowing us to avoid the elements of face-to-face conversation that make us anxious. The digital stage is a playground the enables us to reveal our true selves.

I am more open in conversations than I was in the past. I like to be honest in my opinions, even if they’re not ones people want to hear.

FEMALE, 25, CHARLOTTE NC, USA

WHAT WE FOUND

People say they are often bolder, more impulsive, and more open and honest when they communicate via messaging, which ultimately leads to authentic conversations and deeper relationships. While some say it makes them impulsive, people who message more have more authentic relationships.

I think that the way I communicate is more in depth than it used to be as well as more honest and sincere.

MALE, 21, IDAHO FALLS, ID, USA

DID YOU KNOW?

Introverts who message daily are nearly twice as likely to have hourly face-to-face conversations as those who do not

LOVE CONNECTION

Preferred method of continuing a conversation began on a dating app.

ELEMENTS OF A GREAT CONVERSATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Messaging</th>
<th>Phone Call</th>
<th>Face-to-face</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GENUINE</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THOUGHT-PROVOKING</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENTERTAINING</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FREE-FLOWING</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLEAR</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>BALANCED</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td>EFFICIENT</td>
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<td>ADORABLE</td>
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<td>MOVING</td>
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66% OF THOSE WHO MESSAGE MORE HAVE MORE AUTHENTIC CONVERSATIONS
61% OF THOSE WHO MESSAGE MORE HAVE MORE AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

34% MESSAGING
19% PHONE CALL
26% FACE-TO-FACE