



Nothing Personal

By Tom Comi

Do you ever find it funny how much we rely on technology to communicate these days? It's not enough to make me ROFL, but it does make me LOL sometimes.

Phones are no longer just phones, they are *smart* phones. They allow us to call, email, text, surf, Facebook and even tweet.

I have to wonder, though, whether these smart phones are actually making us dumber. Have we become so absorbed in our respective techno-bubbles that we've lost the ability to communicate face to face? Perhaps author Jaron Lanier said it best with the title of his book *You Are Not a Gadget*.

My brother, sister and I were at the airport recently, and my brother walked past us while he was texting. My sister yelled his name several times before I finally resorted to the only solution possible to break his Blackberry trance.

"You just walked by the two of us," I texted him from my iPhone. He stopped in his tracks, turned around and walked back toward us.

Many storage operators I have talked to over the past few years say that smart phones allow them to be much more

productive with their time and their employees. It's much quicker and easier to send texts and emails rather than getting bogged down in verbal exchanges in person and over the phone. And I certainly get that logic.

What concerns me, however, is that the next generation of employees will be unable to communicate directly with others at all. A Pew Research poll found that only 33 percent of teenagers talk to their friends in person on a daily basis. Half of the teens polled are texting 50 messages per day and 1,500 times a month.

Are these the people you want running your storage facility in the future? Will they even be able to talk to potential customers or look them directly in the eyes? A *Washington Post* editor recently challenged his reporters to go a week without their cell phones, and several of them admitted afterwards that they rediscovered the art of communicating.

Maybe we should all take on that same challenge in our respective jobs. In addition to connecting better with others, it might spare us a severe case of carpal tunnel syndrome. LOL! ❖