

Texting gets more thumbs up on job

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A couple of years ago, Rob Nunziata sat on a plane staring in amazement as a high-school girl fired off a cell phone text message.

"I was watching her thumbs moving at this incredible pace; it looked like she was writing a story," said Nunziata, 36, the president of FBC Mortgage in Orlando. "I remember thinking, 'Wow, that must be cumbersome.'"

Now, Nunziata is one of an increasing number of adults text messaging for business. Like the teenagers who preceded them, corporate users favor texting for its immediacy and ease.

"It's definitely habit-forming," said Nunziata, who sends about 20 text messages a day. "For an immediate quick answer, it seems to be better than e-mail."

Adults have an additional reason for turning to texting: e-mail burnout.

Heavy corporate texters say even though they can send and receive e-mails on their cell phones, they're so overloaded with e-mail that a new message no longer catches their attention the way it used to.

"The e-mail goes off all day long -- it's a noise I am used to hearing," said Chris Gent, 44, the spokesman for the Kissimmee Utility Authority, who carries a Palm Treo. "So when a text comes in and it has a different sound, it gets my attention every time. I treat it more immediately than when I get an e-mail."

Texting in Florida has more than doubled since last year, according to Verizon Wireless, the nation's second-largest cell-phone carrier. Each month, about 1 billion texts are sent on the company's network statewide.

A recent study from marketing and communications company Universal McCann found that 78 percent of adults ages 18 to 34 reported sending a text message in the past week, up from 62 percent in 2007.

2 txt or not 2 txt?

Michael Slone, co-owner of Slone Brothers Furniture Store in Longwood, started texting about a year ago when he got a new BlackBerry Curve. He sends about four or five texts a day, mainly to his brother, who is also his business partner.

Slone, 40, and other text-messaging adults said the new medium means they must navigate a new realm of etiquette issues. For instance, sending someone a text message who doesn't have text messages built into their cell plan might cause them to incur a fee.

Others worry about overstepping the personal/professional boundary when sending a text to someone for the first time.

"It's a little more personal [than other forms of communication] and, quite honestly, there are still enough people who don't use it, so if I send them a text message, all of a sudden I am costing them money because I assume they are on the same technology level as I am," said Wendy Kurtz, 42, president of a Central Florida marketing and communications company.

Kurtz recently upped her plan to unlimited text messaging after she had to pay a \$11 fee for exceeding her 300 allotted text messages.

Speeding things up

Kurtz has picked up some pointers on texting from her kids, and she often decides to text even when she's sitting at her computer and could send an e-mail. For instance, she was recently on a conference call with one of her clients and an organization that wanted to hire the client. An idea popped into Kurtz's head, and she wanted to run it by her client before bringing it up in the conference call, so she sent a text.