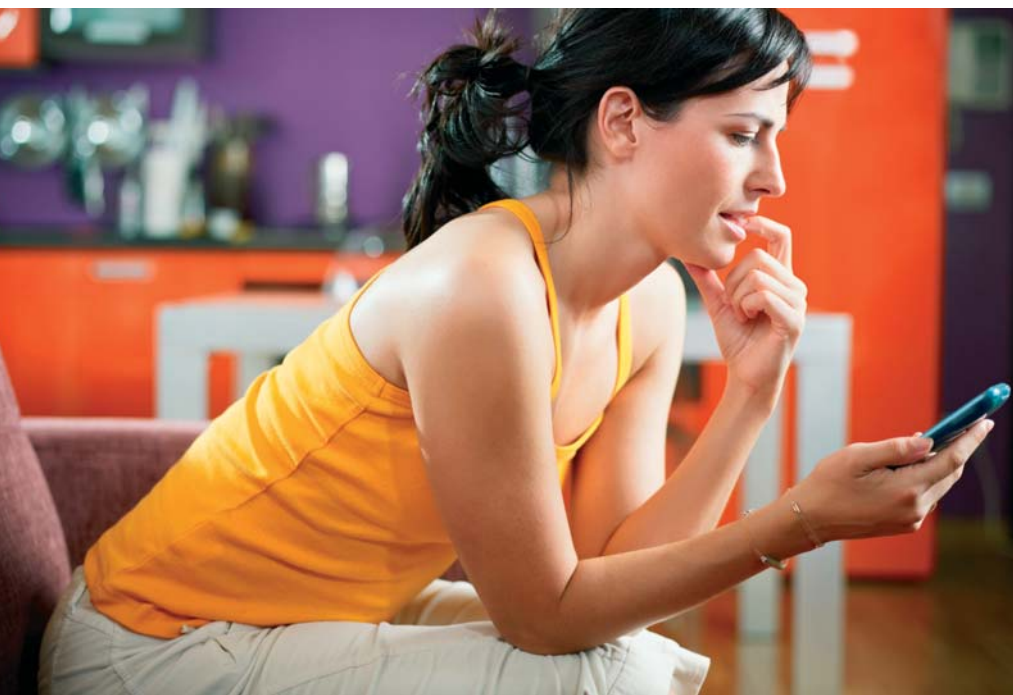


Rules of Engagement

If you want to establish meaningful dialogue with parents, you need to use the same methods of communication that they rely on every day, argues Lawrence Royston of Groupcall...



Could we go further, however? Currently, there are approximately 90,000 apps available for the iPad and a staggering 475,000 for the iPhone. While parental contact systems that enable schools to send text, voice or email messages, in any language, to parents' mobile phones or landlines, have proved popular with teachers and parents alike, the popularity of iPhones and iPads for communication and a source of information is undeniable. The next logical step, therefore, is surely to integrate parental communication systems with apps, providing teachers with the capability to communicate with parents and guardians directly from the palm of their hand. We recently completed such integration with our intuitive Emerge app, which has a rich interface, allowing messages to be sent to any group or individuals at the touch of a button. Parents can be informed, for example, of their child's helpful and good behaviour on a school trip, any delays when returning home, or a goal they scored at a football match, as each event happens. As a result, communication with parents becomes more meaningful, as it happens in 'real time' and as issues or

Undeniably, parents are a child's first educators; and the quality and quantity of the support they provide throughout that young person's learning journey can have a dramatic influence on achievement. Research conducted by Parent Councils UK found that a lack of parental interest in schooling reduces pupils' educational performance, and that engaging hard to reach families can have a disproportionately positive effect on student learning and achievement.

With this in mind, it is imperative that schools foster strong interactions and links with 'the home team' to ensure the learning experience is a fully developed one for everyone involved – especially once children reach Y7 and beyond, at which point parents are no longer likely to be available at drop off and pick up for a 'quick chat'. In such a technology driven age, it is important that all communication outlets are current, relevant and properly utilised to benefit the end user. Traditional means of contacting parents or guardians to alert them to their child's achievements, progress or behavioural concerns are proving increasingly ineffective for many schools; emails and text messages are proving to be a far more reliable way of contacting a younger generation of responsible adults than a letter in the post or, even more riskily, a student's backpack.

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THE INTUITIVE APP, EMERGE WAS DEVELOPED BY GROUPCALL. IT DELIVERS UP-TO-THE-MINUTE MIS DATA INSTANTLY, WITH ACCESS ON AN ANYTIME, ANYWHERE BASIS. REGISTRATION CAN BE TAKEN WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY BEING WRITTEN BACK TO THE SCHOOL'S MIS. ADDITIONAL STUDENT INFORMATION INCLUDING TIMETABLES, ATTENDANCE, MINUTES LATE, ABSENCE NOTES, MEDICAL INFORMATION, BEHAVIOURAL AND ACHIEVEMENT DATA CAN ALSO BE ACCESSED WHEREVER THE TEACHER IS LOCATED (BOTH ON AND OFF SCHOOL GROUNDS) WITHOUT THE NEED TO RELY ON A DESKTOP PC.

questions arise. Parents that are technology-rich but time poor become more readily engaged as the communication is on their terms and in a format they prefer.

All teachers understand that a successful learning experience begins in the home, therefore ensuring that parents are as engaged as possible in their child's education is vitally important. Implementing simple to use, relevant technologies is key to this.

The benefits of introducing modern, real time communication systems don't stop with parents; schools report that doing so can result in significant savings in administrative time, enhanced efficiency and accuracy, and overall improvements in achievement. Not a bad set of outcomes for a fairly basic systems upgrade...

