

Influence of networking on adjustment process of persons with visual impairments

(overview essay)

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Abstract: *This paper looks at the influence of networking in the adjustment process of persons with visual impairment, what the internet offers and how persons with visual impairment can benefit from it. It further looks at the meaning of networking, the history of internet. It lists examples of network which include: academic and research network, airline, car rental, and hotel networks, corporate network, private networks etc and also the types of networks which are local area networks, wide area networks, intranet, Ethernet and internet. It concludes with the benefits of networking in the adjustment process of persons with visual impairments.*

Keywords: *Networking, person with visual impairment*

1 Introduction

The internet has increased the rate of information awareness and with the advent of internet-based communication; persons with visual impairment developed more in their interpersonal relationship with others both internally and internationally. They are more informed about them networking the web. Visual impairment influences the most important sense (Wagner & Oliver, 1994). Over the years persons with visual impairment have been using the computer and other portable devices for in surfing the internet and World Wide Web (www). Visual impairment consists of low vision, partial or total blindness. Visual impairment affects the individuals that are afflicted with it in so many ways. It causes restriction in movement, adjustment problem in physical, social and emotional areas. With the advent of internet, networking has been made possible. Networking is a special form of communication through the use of the internet and the World Wide Web (WWW), e-mail to browse other people's

profile pages, get connected with other visually impaired persons all round the world and getting information about other people who are visually impaired but have been able to make it in life.

2 Networking

Networking is a term that has so many meanings. Networking according to entrepreneurs is compiling a huge database of names usually by collecting business cards. Others see networking as the opportunity to get in front of people and personally prospect for business. As for entrepreneurs, it is a way of getting connected to different business people in order to have connection with them for business purposes. Some see it as a process of developing and using their contacts to increase their knowledge, expand their sphere of influence or serve their community. For the purpose of this work, networking is the process by which people interact with online services within virtual, cloud-based communities for the purpose of communication and sharing information. Networking dates back to the birth of online bulletin boards prevalent during the late 90s. These bulletin boards allowed information to be posted and for participants to post comments. Bulletin boards evolved into more of an e-mail posts whereby members of a particular list serve could reply to e-mail threads.

3 Computer Network

A supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups having a common interest is networking. The design establishment or utilization of a computer network. Networking involves the use of a network including the physical hub. Networking has brought exchange of information. The internet itself is networking. Computer networking is when two or more computers connect to each other. The purpose of a network is to enable the sharing of files and information between multiple systems.

According to Lewis (2013), launching of web browser and internet technology started in the 1990s, which present us with information, but there was little to nothing that we could do with this information once retrieved. He said networking on internet provides us with materials.

4 Social Networking

Social networks have become the standard by which so many communicate within the classroom and workplace and with most acquaintances and friends with whom one shares similar interests. Networking has a great deal to offer, once the concept is firmly grasped and access obstacles dealt with. Social networking for people who

are visually impaired can be rewarding, fulfilling and fun. The social network according to Kef (1999) refers to all the connections within a specific group of people for instance the relations between close members in a classroom or relationships of colleagues in a certain division. Social networks include facebook, twitter, youtube, e-mail etc. Social networks according to Lewis (2013) have become the standard by which so many people communicate within the classroom, workplace. The network is designed to optimize the freedom, functioning and enjoyment of people.

The skills and experience needed to operate an electronic environment are gradually becoming widespread within the visually impaired community.

5 Types of Network

One way to categorize network depends on their scope or scale. The smallest and simplest networks are Local Area Networks (LANs) which extend over only a small area typically within a single building or a part thereof. A home network is a type of Local Area Network that is contained within a user's residence.

Wide Area Networks can extend over a large geographical area and are connected via the telephone network or radio waves. A metropolitan area of network (MAN) is designed to serve a town or city, and a campus area network is designed to serve a university or other educational institution. An intranet is a private network within an organization that uses the same communication protocols as the internet.

Extranet is when a part of an intranet is made accessible to suppliers, customers or others outside the organization.

Internet is a network that is composed of a number of smaller computer networks. The internet is the World Wide Network of interconnected internets that operate using a standardized set of communication protocols called TCP/IP (transmission control protocol/internet protocol). This ultimate internet is larger than any other network. Internet connects thousands of networks and hundreds of millions of computers throughout the world.

6 History of Internet

The ability for many computers to be connected over long distances began in 1969 at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) with the development of ARPANET, which was established by the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Project Agency. This made computers vastly more powerful and useful because it has, in effect, made the network into a computer. The internet has become the site of all sites where different information is obtained, different organizations, universities and so on, connect with their agents, students, all over the world. It forms a basis where

information all over the world can be obtained. It forms a basis for communication, social interaction etc. The internet has served the visually impaired in lots of ways.

7 Examples of Networks

- Banking networks in which one bank card can be used at many automatic teller machines over a widespread area.
- Message networks that allow people to use computers to send and receive mail electronically.
- Corporate networks are those networks which transfer the results of data processing operations between corporate locations.
Academic and research networks e.g. school portals.
- Airline, car rental and hotel networks: they enable travelers to make reservations from anywhere in the country.
- Private networks: They are designed to provide communications between a company's host computer and the employee's and customer terminals.

The internet covers commercial, academic and government endeavours. Users have access to unpublished data, journals on a huge variety of subjects. Networks have existed as long as there has been communication. Networking is part of any natural system.

8 Influence of Networking on the Adjustment Process of Persons with Visual Impairments

There is an important need to create awareness of what the web/internet constitutes, how it works and what it can offer to persons with visual impairment. According to Williamson and Schauder (2000), networking helps as an effective buffer for emotional and social adaptation to vision loss. It brings effective social support. It reduces depressive symptoms, brings higher life satisfaction and better adaptation to vision loss. Networking makes it possible for the visually impaired to communicate with other visually impaired overseas. They can advocate better for each other by forming a group online which reduces isolation. It makes it possible to get information about other visually impaired persons who have made it in life regardless of their disabilities. This will give persons with visual impairment a greater hope for a better future. It acts as motivator to them and helps them to develop positive self-esteem and self-image about themselves.

Networking makes it possible for them to know details about another person's life without ever previously having talked to the person. It provides explicit information. Networking will make them stay informed about changes in their lives at low cost.

They meet new friends online both at home and internationally. It helps them learn conveniently at their own pace through online learning, distant learning. This will make them have confidence in themselves that they are not left out in the information world, bringing adjustment emotionally and psychosocially.

Networking brings literacy to persons with visual impairment, easy employment achievement and economic success. It increases their functioning socially (they become socially adjusted). They are better adjusted psychologically and have an easier time maintaining gainful employment. They will be more socially accepted by their sighted peers and are likely to participate in e-commerce and in a wide range of social activities on internet. It engenders confidence and knowledge of self-worth. It will encourage and motivate them to learn skills and expertise needed for gainful employment.

Networking brings social support from others online when they are stressed up with life situation. Social support will enhance physical and psychological well being and reduces the effects of life stress. It improves their coping mechanism through helping behaviour. The presence of others online will prevent isolation, making them feel that they are a valued part of a network, receiving signs of love and understanding when needed.

Friendship helps them to develop and maintain positive self-images, and provides opportunities for self-disclosure, self-assurance and feelings of security, control over themselves and the environment.

Networking helps them to try to prove to the world and themselves that they are fully competent and adequate, striving for independence. It makes them feel happy.

9 Conclusion

The influence of networking in the adjustment process of persons with visual impairment cannot be overemphasized. The internet has contributed positively in the lives of many likewise for the visually impaired. Networking can help them adjust properly in the society psychologically, socially, vocationally, mentally, emotionally etc. It makes them feel safe, secure and loved by some people through communicating with friends on internet, it makes them have the feeling that they can make it in life through the profiles of others who are visually impaired and have made it in life. Networking, therefore, has a positive influence in the adjustment process of persons with visual impairment.

10 Recommendation

Despite all the positive influences of networking in the adjustment process of persons with visual impairments, most of them still have problem getting to and making use of the web.

1. Network developers should design the web in a way that persons with visual impairment will be able to network on it conveniently without problem.
2. Technologies should be developed to make access to the web easier for persons with visual impairment.
3. Awareness should be made about the influence of networking in the adjustment process of persons with visual impairment and these persons should be encouraged to use of the internet.
4. Easy guidelines should be made for visual impaired users on how to access different web pages. Visually impaired users of internet also need to be supported and actively promoted by government and industry.
5. There is need for private, public and voluntary sectors to promote and deliver increased awareness and wider accessibility. New models of integration should be developed for participation of persons with visual impairment to be satisfying.
6. There is need to create awareness about what the web constitutes and how it can be operated and what it offers.

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