

INFORMATION OVERLOAD: A BIGGEST PROBLEM IN BUSINESS DECISION MAKING

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Abstract: Information overload, typically characterized by an excess of information, is a foremost cause of concern for overall information users, researchers and information managers. This problem has been more widely recognized and experienced. Both insights and the actual effects of information overload have been aggravated by the speedy advances made in information and communication technology, though it is not clear cut as to whether the Internet has deteriorated or improved the situation. A theme strained in the literature is the contradictory situation that, though there is a plenty of information available, it is often challenging to obtain useful, significant information when it is required. The paper investigates the causes of information overload in the present century and puts forward recommendations for overcoming this problem. It stresses the significance of concerted efforts from academics, computer scientists and information professionals, to formulate techniques and technologies for contradicting the impact of information overload.

IndexTerms - Information Overload, Information Technology, Internet, Decision Making.

I. INTRODUCTION

Though many of us have a habit to view 'information overload' as a novel phenomenon, but this term, in fact, has been in presence for more than 50 years; and even earlier that, people were worried about the mounting volume of information that they had to handle within their daily life. A report that was published in 1963 by the U.S. President's Scientific Advisory Committee specified "We tend to consider that the life is getting easier, as one can effortlessly find numerous information accessible for any area under conversation but on the other hand, the availability of information is so huge that it becomes difficult to differentiate which is the correct information to be presented." The main reasons of information overload includes: a rapid level of information being produced, a large number of channels accessible for just in time received information (email, text message, and instant message), and enormous amount of old information to dig up through, inconsistencies in existing information and so on. We shall manage with the information outburst, in the long run, only if some scientists are ready to obligate themselves to the job of synthesizing information reviewing, sifting and managing complex information.

II. NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Information overload is an oxymoron. It is similar to drinking too much water; one cannot obtain too much information. What individuals mean is that they do not have the capability at that instant to develop all of the information they obtain. Overload can mean being loaded with a huge supply of unwanted information, several of which may be significant. It could also be related with a loss of control over the condition, at times combined with feelings of being incredulous. Construction of new concepts requires the documentation of those ideas. Individuals have been recording their opinions and actions and expressions in several ways since time immemorial. With the spread of literateness and invention of new approaches of recording ones views and ideas, the body of knowledge created and gathered by human beings started to expand.

The well-known term 'Information overload' was firstly familiarized by Alvin Toffler in his bestselling book in 1970, 'Future Shock'. This term denotes to the complications that an individual might face on understanding a specific issue or in decision making because of too many information available. This normally stands due to unconventional technology and an upsurge in production of information (Yousef & Gouveia, 2015). Burdened by information surplus, knowledge workers feel pressure, strain, and anxiety, thus threatening productivity and the acceptance of new technology (Franklin, 1997). Nowadays, this problem is growing in both private life and workplace as well. In today world where there are hundreds of sources obtainable to get different information, it is very problematic to categorize and find qualitative data.

The industrial revolution and several innovations in the 18th and 19th centuries created a huge body of information which was used as building hunks for cultural, social and economic progresses made in the 20th century. Countless advances in computer technology in the mid-twentieth century and consequently, the emergence of Internet World Wide Web have made our world actually information-driven. As Feather distinguished, 'The technical progresses of the last 50 years have made more information, more accessible to more people than at any other time in human history (Feather, 1998).

Along with the development of information media, including email and the Internet, subjects related to information overload take middle stage in the lives of millions of information workers worldwide. In an investigation of managers in a number of industries by Computerworld magazine, more than 40% of them pronounced their work as "extremely stressful," and 67% expected it to become worse as they required managing the information they wanted to keep up with their equivalents in their own organizations, as well as those in their industries (Shenk, 2003).

In a study sponsored by Reuters International, 1,300 managers in the U.S., Hong Kong, the U.K., and the Singapore described that although they needed loads of information to execute effectively, 25% of them also suffer ill health, stretching from headaches to depression, as a direct consequence of the massive quantity of information they have to absorb. Furthermore, most of them (94%) do not suppose the condition to improve, and 56% think the future to be even more demanding (LaPlante, 1997).

In the intermediate ages, the spread of literateness and new inventions in publishing played an essential role in serving us to understand the worth of ‘information’. People understood that, information would assist them make improved choices and take better decisions. As time passed, this understanding nurtured into a firm belief, resulting in the central role played by information in motivating the human civilization forward. David Shenk claimed that information makes us understand more about how to overcome the basic challenges of life. Our physicals assemblies are harder, more reliable. Our societies are more constant, as we have learned how to make political systems function. Our citizens are freer; thanks to extensive distribution of information that has authorized the individual (Shenk, 1997). However, with too ample information, comes too much tasks – tasks of scrutinizing through this eternally increasing body of information to find out the information we need. And in today’s frantic life, people have less and less time to do that. This is creating information overload a problem whose strength is increasing every day.

Information Technology (IT) is expected by corporate management to advance the productivity of knowledge workers, improve the quality of their work lives, and advance managers’ decision making skills, along with the bottom line. Nevertheless, the organizational capacity for creating information far surpasses the human capacity for processing it (Shenk, 1997).

Information overload has been connected with the information processing capability of information users. With slight or no information, persons have little or nonentity to process and consequently make unfortunate decisions. As the quantity of information upsurges, information processing and the excellence of decision-making too increase. However, after a certain point is touched, the decision-maker has got more information than he can process, information overload has happened and decision-making ability reduces. Any information obtained beyond that fact will not be administered, may lead to confusion and could have an undesirable impact on the person’s ability to set urgencies as well as remember preceding information. They have recognized five reasons of information overload which are revealed in the following chart (Eppler & Mengis, 2002).

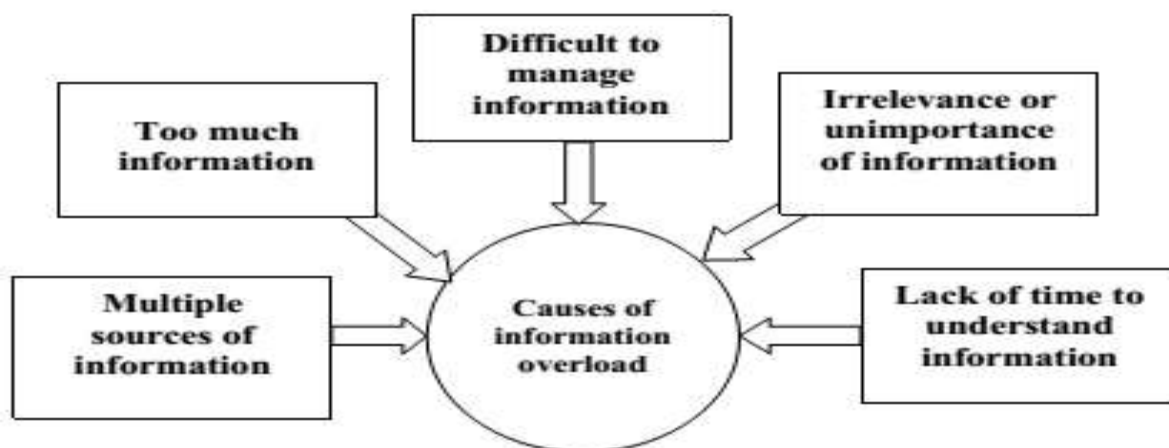


Diagram: Causes of information overload

An article that was printed by the Economist clarifies that “Information overload” is one of the major irritations in modern life (Jonathan, 2011). A study which was completed by Reuters in 1996 regarding the Information Overload was called ‘The dying for information’ established out that individuals at that time were spending a lot of time for finding information. Based on the study, 38% of overall managers that took part in the survey were spending massive amount of time to acquire the suitable information and be able to make decisions. 43% of the respondents that contributed in the study believed that the conclusion making process was deferred due to the nonexistence of information available. The foremost and most significant suggestion given by the survey was that companies would start to contemplate about information management very seriously as rapidly as possible (Teresa & Schumpter, 2011)

According to Bill Gates, Microsoft Chairman, the subject of information overload is over raged by general public and the media as well. He trusts that there are designated particular industries and areas where there is absence of information. Gates believes that the chief problem of the individuals is not being able to bargain full information at the similar place as the figures is spread all over and at this point they start to feel demanding and confused. Microsoft currently is occupied on a probing platform to find the correct answers just-in time in order to be more effective and well-organized for internet explorers (Fried).

III. HOW TO OVERCOME INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Knowledge is similar to a collection of identical helpful tools. Those tools permit you to function at tall levels in your community, family, at work and in society. We do essential knowledge to get through the day, even for the utmost basic things such as: how to love our families and friends, how to make particular kind of a living and as we grow and learn, possibly accumulate certain good judgment. Information by himself should never be misguided for knowledge. Knowledge management is considered to be the chief asset of the company. It is understood as the elementary and most important foundation of competitive benefit within organization. Knowledge should be measured as the essential business of an organization.

Experts agree that, for information users and information professionals alike, attaining information literateness is vibrant for effectively dealing with information overload (Kurbanoglu & Spiranec, 2013). The Presidential Committee on Information Literacy (1989) defines Information literacy as a set of capabilities requiring persons to recognize when information is desirable and have the capability to locate, evaluate, and use efficiently the needed information. An information literate individual is able to:

- Regulate the extent of information required.
- Access the required information efficiently and proficiently.
- Appraise information and its sources disparagingly.
- Integrate selected information into one's information base.
- Use information efficiently to achieve a specific purpose.
- Understand the legal, economic, and social issues adjacent the use of information, and access and use information properly and lawfully.

From the above deliberations, the significance of mastering information literateness skills has been highlighted by the authorities for effectively dealing with information overload. These services need to be imparted at numerous educational levels to prepare the information users with essential skills and proficiency to use information successfully for solving their livelihood complications and ensuring academic and professional excellence. ICT has been designated as an important tool for monitoring information overload. Besides outdated bibliographic supervisory tools used in libraries and information centers, progressive tools for information repossession and evaluation have also stood suggested by the authorities so that information users could take better control of their information usage and application activities. General information users want proper positioning and direction from information professionals, so that they might use these tools and techniques effectually.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that, from the point when internet began to be used for modest tasking as informative and communications channel, it's mounting to dangerous levels of replacing human effort and information with products identical to cloud computing.

The delinquent of information overload is now to stay and with mounting focus on research and development in the coming time, its strength will only upsurge. The beginning of novel technologies and numerous techniques of self-publishing, information overload will present itself to the worldwide spectators in new forms and dimensions. This demand for intensive exertions from library and information professionals, academics, computer scientists and knowledge management experts so that the contrary effects of information overload could be reserved at a minimum and the information searchers are provided with actual and innovative behaviors for undertaking this problem. How far can this novel association amongst internet and human develop can be responded only by how far can go services identical to cloud computing to the point when we will not be speaking about reliance, but rather control of humans by internet constructed artificial intelligence.

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