

WHITEPAPER OCTOBER 2022

Your brain is threatened

6 challenges for you in our new digital age



How do you take good care of your brain and tackle the 6 challenges?

KNOWLEDGE – ADVICES - TOOLS





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Master coach & communications expert. More than two decades of experience from management corridors as communications manager.

Interdisciplinary professional background in management, communication, journalism and environmental biology.

Entrepreneur of activities at Lederkommunikation.nu to distribute knowledge and create attention.

I offer in my services to help leaders and organizations in their daily life.



Can you make a decisive difference by moving 10% of your time?

Over several years, I have researched knowledge and developed tools that can help managers, workplaces and committed people to create a sustainable tomorrow in an increasingly confused world.

This White Paper contains my experiences, my knowledge and my views and is the value basis behind all my activities at Lederkommunikation.nu.

I do not hide the seriousness for you and me, for our surroundings, our welfare society and for generations that follow. Our brains are threatened by: "Six challenges in our new digital age".

Individually, the six challenges are well known. But what happens when the six challenges are mixed in a dangerous and unpredictable cocktail?

The good news is that we all hold the key to tackling the challenges.

All my activities in Lederkommunikation.nu are aimed at what you and I can do right now and here. In this White Paper you will therefore also find a few examples of advice and tools from me to you.

I do also provide documentation on how you can make a decisive difference by just shifting 10 percent of your time, attention and commitment.

I do firmly believe you can do that by focusing on your communication alone.

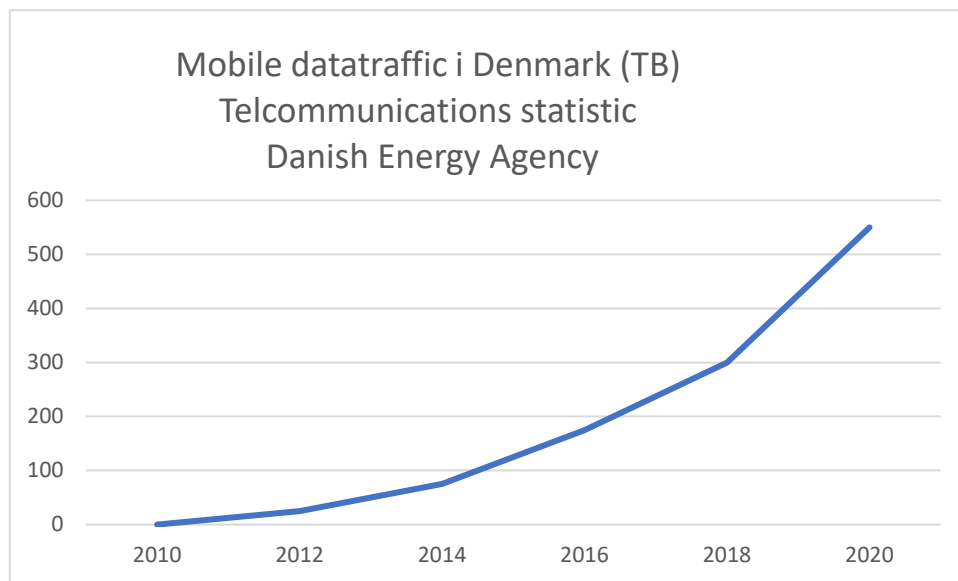
A White Paper is a report or guide, which informs readers concisely about a complex issue and presents the issuing body's philosophy on the matter. It is meant to help readers understand an issue, solve a problem or make a decision



Subjective
Objective = That's
Me

Conclusions

Therefore, communication is your most important challenge in this decade



This graph illustrates the conclusion and documentation of this White Paper. Do you remember what the world looked like in the first decade of the millennium? Back when a mobile phone was something we talked and texted with?

The exponentially increasing curve in the 2010s for mobile data traffic reflects the speed of digital development. How does the curve continue?

More and more of our data traffic takes place on mobile devices, and we are talking about several hours of daily screen time for more and more people. The amount of information we all distribute is growing exponentially. We text each other more and more, talk less in person and meet more online behind screens than in real life. The research is clear: The risk of misunderstandings between people are growing.

At the same time, all stress curves among children and young people and on the labor market point in the wrong direction. International organizations such as the WHO and the UN warn of the consequences of pace, data volumes and information pollution for

people's mental health. Science bears solid evidence that more and more negative news 24/7 negatively affects people's brains.

Korean researchers point out that the pollution with information threatens the decision-making processes in our society. Don't we all have the feeling that everything is moving too fast and by the way - what is really happening on social media? In hateful debates, fake news and in political debates in our Western democracy.

Our brains are threatened. Can the capacity and judgment of our brains even keep up with the exponential growth curves? Where is the limit of our brain?

It is not a claim. Those are the facts. Exponential increases in data, pace and information are something we have to find ways to deal with as people and as professionals. Of course, there is a limit to what our brains can capture.

For managers, workplaces and committed people, there is, according to my experiences and experience, only one way. The 2020s should be the decade in which we set management communication, the six challenges - and the cocktail they are mixed in - high on the agenda.

The happy and effective message is that studies and research document that if we can shift just 10% of our time consumption and commitment, we can create results and better well-being for ourselves, reduce sickness absence and increase productivity in our society - even with much more than 10%?



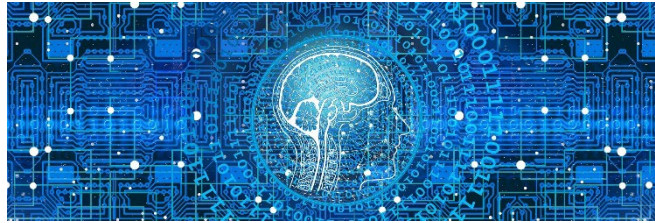
6 challenges

Exclusive summary – the full White Paper is only in Danish



1. **Information pollution.** The massive increase in communication and data can be characterized as pollution just as environmentally harmful substances.
2. **Pace and systems.** The exponential digital growth is happening with such speed and disrupting everything we know. No one can really keep up.
3. **Busyness and stress.** All stress curves point to the wrong path in schools and educations and in the labor market among managers and employees.
4. **Negative news.** Research shows that an ever-increasing bombardment of negative news 24/7 negatively affects people's mental health.
5. **Engagement.** International studies from Gallup show surprisingly low engagement among employees at our workplaces.
6. **Precious time.** International research shows that we spend only 30% of our time on creativity, planning and relationships.

First challenge: Information pollution



The massive increase in communication and data can be characterized as information pollution just as we characterize for example environmentally harmful substances and noise.

it is only about 20 years ago that the mobile phone really became widespread, and within the last 10 years that smartphones with an internet connection have become the property of every man.

A collection of data shows that from the time printing presses emerged back in the mid-15th century, the amount of data in the world doubled over 50 years. From 1987 to 2007, in 30 years, there has been a hundredfold increase in the amount of data.

The semi-annual telecommunications statistics today show that the growth in data volumes on mobile phones is increasing exponentially, and expectations are generally that there will be an exponential development of data on a global level in the coming decade. In 2016, energy consumption for data centers accounted for three percent of the world's energy consumption (sources: Oxford University, Danish Industry and the Danish Energy Agency).

Not many people use terms like information pollution, but researchers from the Korea Institute of Science and Technology have drawn exactly this conclusion and in summarizing scientific articles draw threads back to 2004, when a director from a Korean mobile company first mentioned that this development would be a threat to human brains. The researchers mention, among other things:

"Decision making ability of individuals, institutions and for that matter even of organizations gets hampered due to supply of polluted information".

"Information pollution is very much in existence for a quite long time now, but it is the consumers of information, who have not yet realized the pollution associated with it"

Put a Bodyguard in front of your brain

We need to put a guard in front of our brain and keep an eye on what information we let in, when and how. So that we don't let our brain and attention control too much of all the impulses and new information that we receive, but that instead we become more aware of what we choose to think and focus on.

Second challenge: Pace and systems



The exponential digital growth are disrupting everything we know with such speed, that no one can really keep up.

What does it really mean that digital growth is exponential? An example of this is the story of a faucet that drips in the middle of the lawn at a stadium as the national stadium, Parken, in Copenhagen (from the book "Understanding the future", People's Press):

- Imagine that you are sitting in the stands of the stadium in one of the upper rows.
- At 12.00, a water tap is placed in the middle of the pitch, which drips and doubles its volume every minute. When will the Park be completely filled with water?
- Already at 12.43 you will start to drown. In less than three quarters of an hour, the original modest drop of water has managed to fill the entire Park.
- Even more frightening is the fact that after 39 minutes the Park would only be seven percent full of water.
- If you didn't know what was going to happen, you probably didn't see the danger in time and get out.

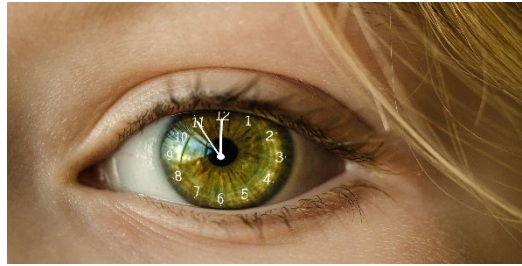
Half of emails with difficult content are misunderstood. What if we take the symbolism in this example and transfer it to our daily life and your work as a leader? Are we simply drowning?

What actually happens at your workplace and in your surroundings? Do you even know? Whether your news on the intranet, for example, are being read?

Employees often spend up to 25% of their working time on emails. On average, we check our inbox 72 times in a day, about 9 times an hour or approx. every 6 minutes. 66 per cent of all emails are sent from mobile devices. 25% of simple SMS messages and up to half of emails with difficult content are misunderstood (numerous different studies).

My advice is simple: Start talking about these issues. Openminded, searching, questioning and truly honest. We are all in the same boat.

Third challenge: Busyness and stress



All stress curves point the wrong way. Despite decades of focus on preventing stress, all stress curves in Denmark point in the wrong direction.

Together with working environment consultants, I have documented, that this applies both in workplaces and to both managers and employees, just as it applies in private life, and that children and young people in schools and education systems are also at risk.

I am referring to several studies on these issues in my two background articles on Point Of View International.

There are of course many causes of stress. Research points to time pressure and worries as the main reasons (sources include the National Research Center for Working Environment and Manchester University).

Many neuroscientists and doctors write books and participate in debates about how digital media affects our brain. There is little doubt that the focus on digital habits and health will become a more and more important area of effort.

It's easier said than done to turn down the heat, because the whole trend is towards your smartphone being the very key to your entire life. It is your index of friends and family, your bank, your encyclopedia, your love, your GPS, your work, your Corona passport and so on.

We all know that. The smartphone for conveying information, data and news directly into our brain has almost become a part of our body. Some experts talk about the fact that you can't even separate the digital and analog worlds anymore.

I truly believe in simplicity. Let us all remember the design principle from the American Navy in 1960 – Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS). I have therefore made 6 simple tips for you - who are always a little too busy.

6 tips for you – who are always a little too busy



- 1. Take a break for reflection – before moving on to the next thing**
When you feel that you are too busy, things are getting too complicated and there is a risk of making too quick and wrong decisions.
- 2. Be clear and personal – when conveying messages**
Do what you can to create as much clarity as possible so you can better achieve what you want.
- 3. Make time for the most important things - talk about priorities**
Take the lead in everyday life in talking openly about prioritizing which tasks must be solved super well, those which just have to be solved satisfactorily, those we sleep on - and those we might just forget right now.
- 4. Align expectations – with yourself and your surroundings**
Be realistic and be clear in your choice of words. Remember to ask for advice – and to ask for help.
- 5. Find peace in your thoughts – we are only human**
Talk openly and naturally about how important it is that we all take care of our mental health and prevent stress. Design your way to take care of your brain.
- 6. Cultivate the art of the possible - talk to and from with a smile**
If the tasks should actually be impossible to complete, who else but you as the responsible manager will make sure to tell that up in the hierarchy and make sure to organize the art of the possible instead.

Fourth challenge: Negative news



Research shows that an ever-increasing bombardment of negative news 24/7 negatively affects people's mental health. It is basically surprising that there are not more studies and more research that investigates how the tremendously increasing amounts of information and the acceleration in the dissemination of news from all over the world affect our brain in our every day life.

But there is actually research both on the effects in general and specifically around for example the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and around the Corona pandemic that shows an effect on our brain. Several studies thus demonstrate that streams of negative news led to increased frequencies of anxiety, worry, difficulty sleeping and stress as well as a decreasing degree of optimism (sources include: British Journal of Psychology, Psychiatry, Clinical Psychological Science, Washington Post).

It is surprisingly little talked about, that the World Health Organization WHO has directly published warnings against watching too much news during the Corona pandemic. On the WHO website it appears as follows in an official guideline:

"Reduce time spent on reading COVID-19 related news. WHO recommends minimizing watching, reading or listening to news about COVID-19 that causes one to feel anxious or distressed. WHO also recommends that one should seek COVID-19 related information updates at specific times during the day, once or twice".

In May 2020, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) published a so-called "Guidance Note" with the heading "Responding to COVID 2019 Information Pollution", because UNDP assessed that COVID 2019 represented an unprecedented global communication challenge. UNDP encourages people to be aware of dis-information, misinformation and mal-information:

"The resulting confusion of information is having negative repercussions not only on immediate public health outcomes, but also for human rights, social cohesion and conflict prevention".

Your vaccine against negative news

I have made my own recipe for your vaccine against too much negative news. With 7 ingredients – and its own little secret, the ultimate spice. The recipe is brewed with inspiration from the USA, where an American best-selling author bluntly says, "Quit the News". I would love to present my recipe for anyone interested.

Fifth challenge: Engagement



International studies show surprisingly low engagement among employees at our workplaces in Denmark. Over decades only around 20% are engaged in their work, and around 10% are "actively disengaged"

This challenge is daunting. As humans, we live in a period in the million-year history of the entire human race when our average standard of living and life expectancy have never been better. But commitment to our work and workplace - we obviously could do much better.

Consider the numbers one more time before you read on. What are the consequences of these numbers? There are at least two big ones:

1. **Economic loss.** Gallup concludes that the economic loss from disengaged employees is colossal: "This lack of engagement costs the global economy US\$ 8.1 trillion, nearly 10% of GDP, in lost productivity each year", it says.
2. **Our well-being.** Working environment research shows that the greater commitment employees have in their work, the better they feel. They sleep better, they have fewer sick days, and they are happier. The study shows that employees in departments with a high level of commitment generally have better well-being.

When we see these consequences in the light of the social debates in Denmark about for example a shortage of labor in the welfare sector and the need for reforms of society, it is worth considering what can happen if we manage to increase engagement in our workplaces by, shall we just say, 10%?

Gallup's call to leaders worldwide is: "Making the World better begins at work". If you are in doubt about how important you are as a leader, then Gallup's studies have shown that leaders are responsible for at least 70% of the differences in levels of employee engagement.

My advice to you: Take this very seriously – now.

Sixth challenge: Your precious time



International research shows that we spend only 30% of our time on creativity, planning and relationships. This time matrix comes from the publication "The 5 choices - the way to extraordinary productivity" (Time Management 2.0. Published by Kory Kogon, Adam Merrill and Tonny Maak, FranklinCovey). The publication is a follow-up to one of the world's most comprehensive management development programs "7 Good Habits", first described in the book of the same name published in 1989 as a business and self-help book written by Stephen R. Covey. The time matrix is based on the interaction between:

- **Urgency.** Things that are urgent. Something that feels like it needs to be done right now, whether it makes a difference to the results or not.
- **Importance.** Things that are important. Something that – if not done – will have serious consequences for the results.

In the matrix, your activities are divided according to how urgent they are and how important they are. Studies has been collecting data over decades around the globe, and they have, among a lot of other things, shown that, on average, people spend their time at work:

- 51.2% of time are spent on activities that are urgent.
- 30.8% of time are spent on things that really matter.
- 41.5% of time are spent on non-important activities.

What for me is particularly interesting is, that around half of the time we spent on activities, which are urgent, are actually not that important. Image what potential that reveals. If we could move just 10% of our precious time to more important activities?

The most important meeting of the week. The meeting with yourself

This is why I highly recommend you take decisive initiatives to make sure, that you spend your precious time in the most valuable way for you. And I offer you simple tools to help you on your personal journey.



Dear reader

I have invested most of my life, time and resources during the recent years developing activities, which can create attention and inspire to take action.

A lot of these activities are voluntary. Any backup and support will be highly appreciated.

In my professional services I aim to help daily leaders in a truly confused and challenging decade.

Most of my information and services are currently in Danish.

You are very welcome to contact me for further information, presentation and dialogue.

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