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Mobile's Lack of Culture

By Germán Bernate

Modern technology has delivered a powerful tool to all of us, planet earth inhabitants: the mobile telephony. TV images have spread cell phones' extensive usage: A Buddhist monk, located in one of the remotest spots of civilization, carries, in a very evident manner, a modern handset which enables him to get in touch instantly with any part of the globe; in Africa, an elephant keeper also owns one of these fabulous devices and informs his family on his day to day situations at work, reporting on what the dinner menu would be... he does not go to the supermarket, he hunts instead! (Will he be charged for VAT?)

In America, mobile's penetration is wide: Housewives, young students; office messengers; security guards; policemen; office workers; escort ladies; taxi drivers; intercity bus drivers; pilots; stewardesses; private and public car drivers; security escorts; organization executives of varied kinds; and politicians, all own their personal communication equipment. Big misfortune is, indeed, there is no regulation on mobiles use and abuse. It is said that speaking through the cell phone is forbidden while driving, encouraging instead 'hands free' utilization... 'Well-to-do' ladies, driving their 4x4 station wagons (we would rather say 8x8, due to their increasing pedantry) which go visiting while they drive. Poor of that one who dares to point them out their traffic law violation: He must be ready to hear quite a torrent of abuse, involving even his near family. No one would ever think of such beautiful ladies being so gross!

Lack of culture! There is plenty of it: In a theater, during the middle of a concert performance, a youngster of long and undulating hair finds no problem in calling one of his friends – it must be admitted that he talked in a whisper - just to gossip on public attendance. When an oldie member of the said 'third age' (old age) called for his tactlessness, the youngster stare at him, shrugged his shoulders and turned his head just enough for his long hair to, smoothly, fall down over his right shoulder.

Classrooms at universities, schools, institutes, or whatever education place may be, do not escape from the whip. Professor on duty must stop his lesson waiting for the student (or just a simple attendee?) to answer his friends calls arranging the place where they will meet after class... and the ladies, which deal with very interesting topics about fashion, the color of the shoes and many other aspects that demand their immediate attention. Anyone may ask itself why they attend classes, but answer seems to be straight and simple: They have no interest on the teacher's lesson; they just want to obtain the degree or certificate offered by the entity.

But – a young engineering student argues – teachers are inconsistent: It is impossible to stay at class without communication to the external world. How right she is! Professors are just simple temporary elements that stay at the classroom, jive talking and wondering how to mess-up students immediate plans.

This is something which, from any point of view, is hard to understand. A distinguished and accredited faculty invited several professors of an important US University planning to set-

up an exchange of the professional academic programs. It is an important opportunity to acquire knowledge. The Academic Event starts. Intelligence shines.

All attendees are invited to prepare smart plans and leverage foreseen opportunity. Everything is evolving under brilliant parameters; however uneducated mobile holders, not batting an eyelid, are present not mattering even who is addressing participants or the concentration required to pay attention and learn. No! They are here, quite happily, using their cell phones. They start talking in a murmur, turn then to whispers and continue escalating their tone until reaching openly the torrent of abuse directed to whom dares to call their bad manners and lack of consideration towards the audience.

Here is another success of uncultured mobile users. Every Sunday they attend, very punctually, the religious celebration and devote half an hour – just thirty minutes a week – to examine their acts, accomplishments and troubles. However it seems that there is no need to show any respect for others, mess them up! Cell phone rings and, without delay, they are immersed in such an important conversation (It must be God that called them!). And shall nobody dare to point out their bad manners... mess them up!

Bad manners may be, and must be, fought. Discipline and good manners shall prevail over uncultured mobile holders. It should be enough to examine the fierce persecution suffered by smokers. Nowadays, smokers must take refuge in remote places to exercise their habit.

We are starting a strong campaign from the university classrooms. Future professionals, specialists, masters and doctors must be formed under the values of the minimum respect for each other. Let's suppose for a moment that the professor stops his lecture to answer an incoming call. Or, alleging equal rights to students, does the same as they do, stopping the lesson to make a very important call.

Good manners were studied in the past from a book written by Don Manuel Antonio Carreño. He was born in 1812 and died in 1874. This native from Caracas published in 1853 his work "Rules of etiquette and good manners" ("Manual de Urbanidad y buenas maneras"). His success is important and his work is still valid. We are going to ask him to come back to this cybernetic world and to remind us how to act. There is no doubt he will point out a key fact: Respect for each other.

It may be necessary to return to the practices implemented in the "Far West" where participants of any meeting – public or private - were invited to put away their guns to avoid unnecessary fights. Bank branches already started: Clients must leave their communication devices in special places designed to that end. And utilization inside their premises is forbidden.

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Germán Bernate is an International Correspondent for PMForum and *PM World Today* in Colombia. Based in Bogotá, he is also General Manager and Founder of ALMAGESTON Consulting Firm. Mr. Bernate holds a degree in Electronic Engineering from the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. Mr. Bernate has dedicated 45 years of his professional life to the engineering and software industry in the areas of strategic management, Balanced ScoreCard, and Project Management. Germán worked for more than thirty years at IBM Colombia, where he assumed a wide range of responsibilities in both technical and management areas. He also worked as a Project Manager at NCR Colombia. Mr. Bernate has managed projects in Banks, government, distribution, communication networks, aerial transport, and retail stores. Germán has published several books, including "*El año 2000 al acecho*" (*2000 Year Coming*) related to the Y2K problem. In 2004 Mr. Bernate was a guest speaker at the congress organized by PMI Madrid Chapter, with the lecture "Triunfos y frustraciones de un Gerente de Proyecto en Latinoamérica'" (*Triumphs and frustrations of a Project Manager in Latin America*). In February 2006 he presented "*How to Grow in a Different Environment*" at the annual congress of the Association for Strategic Planning - ASP- in Los Angeles, CA, USA. In 1992 Germán won the first award of the fourth edition of the literary contest "Dr. Mariano Zumel" in Madrid, Spain. Germán is actually working in the fields of Project Management, Strategic Planning and Balanced ScoreCard implementation. He is the immediate past president of the PMI Santafé de Bogotá Chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI). Germán Bernate can be contacted at gbernate@cable.net.co.