Letter to the Editor on the Distractions of Technology

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Prewriting for Letter Assignment

1. **Theme/Topic**: Technology

2. **Angle**: I believe that technologies can harm one’s mental and physical states and therefore negatively contributes to the health and well-being of society as a whole.

3. **Purpose and Thesis**: The purpose of this Letter to the Editor is to support the author’s claims that technologies isolate people, kill conversation and encourage and help facilitate sedentary behavior. I agree with “The Distracted Generation Victims of Technology” because technology is severely distracting and invasive to the point of preventing any opportunities for users to be functioning and contributing members of a genuinely social society.

4. **Reader/Audience Profile**

1. Readers’ Expectations: By the title alone “The Distracted Generation Victims of Technology,” I would venture to guess that a reader of this publication has some interest in how the author feels that people are victims of technology. The article and its title/theme are one that is of high importance to most people the U.S. today – technology. But as I referenced already, it is clear to see that the author is challenging technology. This could either draw the attention of people who also wish to challenge technology, or those that feel technology is positive and are merely interested to see how and why someone could disagree with the concept of technology and claim that an entire generation has fallen victim to it. To accommodate the reader, I will address the notion that technology is meant to be, and is commonly considered, helpful, but will also focus and elaborate on the specific reasons the author feels technology has become a detriment to, and because of, today’s generation.
2. Readers’ Values/Attitudes: Readers’ values and attitudes towards the issue of technology is generally one that is of high praise. I would say that most readers probably disagree with the extremism of the author, but I would also say that the author does have some valid points in that technology has become distracting due to peoples’ inherit nature. My letter will be influenced by the general belief that technology is meant to serve as good, and offers efficiency, but I will reinforce the author’s notion that instead of technology being used as a method and a tool to make things easier and faster, the nature of people, in the U.S. especially, has instead allowed technology to detract from this ideology.

5. **Context**:Social and Political Influences: People are so trained and conditioned now to receive most of their information and stay current via the Internet, television, radio, smart phones and other on-demand technologies. In a generation that has become dominated by technology, activities that used to be important platforms for social interactions such as current political issues and social happenings, have been replaced by technological platforms. Instead, information is spoon fed to people without the “inconvenience” of having to even leave their home, therefore eliminating a lot of opportunities or the need to feel like social interactions are even necessary because one feels like they still have access to all relevant information. Aspects of everyday life that used to be important social interactions are now blurred and skewed by the constant allure of the ease and accessibility of using technologies and forgoing the traditional, face-to-face process altogether. What I want to make people aware of is the impact of always-on and always-available sources, particularly the impact and hindrance they have on social interactions. I feel people have trained themselves to let this “always” distract and deter them from real, everyday life.

6. **Personal Experiences**: I have a lot of personal experience with this issue. I am an avid user of technology and have basically spent my entire life on/using technology of some sort. I cannot imagine a time where there wasn’t an Internet, or where we didn’t have television to pass the time when we’re bored. I think this is exactly the issue. A majority of technology users simply use technology as filler for their empty lives. Of course technology can serve many great and time-efficient purposes, but I whole-heartedly agree with the author of “The Distracted Generation Victims of Technology” and his critique of technology, particularly how he feels people now choose to use a majority of it. Technology is very much a double-edged sword; it can be used for great benefit and productivity, or it can destroy attention span and create passivity and isolation. I can definitely attest to feeling like technology can create passivity and isolation. At one point in high school I had hundreds of “friends” on a former popular social networking site, yet I constantly found myself at home and isolated. I almost never went out except to actually go to school each day during the required times, but even when I was at school I spent the majority of the time quiet and alone outside of and in between classes. Even to this day, as I am doing online college courses, I still feel very self-isolated and sheltered. Online classes are generally offered for convenience for people who cannot make it to on-site classes at the given times for a course they need. I, on the other hand, chose online classes out of passivity and isolation to a degree, I feel. Sometimes I feel like it’s more effort than it’s worth to actually get ready, leave the house, and go partake in life when I have a whole world of information here at my fingertips. It’s sad, I know, but at least I can realize and admit it. This is why I feel a very personal connection to “The Distracted Generation Victims of Technology.” From personal experience, the author is right on so many levels. If technology didn’t exist and wasn’t exploited the way it is by today’s generation (such as myself), I, and so many others in my position and mindset, would probably be so much more social and all around more productive and contributing members of society. This would go a long way in changing the overall culture and health of a society.

7. **Summarize/paraphrase** specific arguments from the article you’re responding to.

1. Summary or paraphrase Point 1 with correct APA citations.

Vroon (2009) suggests that technologies are used in the manner that we make of them and asks that given human nature, are we really capable of not manipulating or making use of them for any purpose other than what they were intended for (p.53)?

1. Summary or paraphrase Point 2 with correct APA citations.

Vroon (2009) argues that technology, particularly television, is so intrusive and invasive to the point that it leaves people it affects hardly human due to its non-interactive nature, regardless of the content (p.53).

8. **Quoted Material**

1. According to Vroon (2009), “Friendship is almost impossible in this country at this time in our history. People are too distracted.” (p.54).
2. Vroon (2009) feels “The problem with most of these technologies is that they isolate people, kill conversation, and encourage sedentary behavior.” (p.54).

Letter to the Editor on the Distractions of Technology

I’m writing in response to Donald Vroon’s article “The Distracted Generation Victims of Technology” contained in the May/June 2009 issue of American Record Guide. This article is an excellent and brutally honest look into how technology distracts us from the bigger picture that is real, everyday life. Speaking as a prime example – a child of this technology obsessed and dependent generation – I feel I can help provide some insight and add credibility to the author’s claims. Through my personal experience and the author’s view on the matter, I hope I can help shed some light on just how blind we as a society have become to how we let technology control and influence so many aspects of our lives. Technologies are invasive and distracting to the point that they can harm one’s mental state and therefore prevent users from being functioning and contributing members of a genuinely social society.

First, Vroon (2009) suggests that technologies are used in the manner that we make of them and asks that given human nature, are we really capable of *not* making use of them for any purposes other than what they were intended for (p.53)? The answer to this question is quite simple and can be found by reviewing your own daily habits and actions. Typical Internet users nowadays find themselves constantly checking social networking websites, following celebrity gossip news and watching cat videos, all of which are largely unimportant and irrelevant to their lives and general well-being. There is so much to deter you from using the piece of technology for the purposes you intended for yourself. Computers, and the Internet, provide such a vast and accessible database at your fingertips, but perhaps there is too much accessibility and due to human nature, we let it consume us. According to Vroon (2009), “People are too distracted.” (p.54). These distractions take us away from real life, and also make us lose sight of a broader and more interactive society. Even when technology has the capacity to be as powerful a resource as computers and the Internet are meant to be, we as humans abuse and manipulate them.

Secondly, some technologies offer little to no potential to even be a helpful resource in the first place, such is Vroon’s (2009) argument that television is so intrusive and invasive to the point that it leaves people it affects hardly human due to its non-interactive nature, regardless of the content (p.53). Television is far different from the resource potential that a computer and the Internet can offer. Whereas as a computer provides accessibility to an infinite network of knowledge and we, often subconsciously, choose to neglect and/or abuse it, television simply is a technology in which we consciously choose to throw away our time to take in nothing of importance. The majority of people who watch TV generally do it out of pure boredom – they are not intending on getting something useful or productive done, as is sometimes the case with other technologies. I myself cannot honestly say I need or gain anything beneficial out of watching TV. It is purely a method to pass the time, and again contributes to the deterioration of society on a social level because it removes people from active thought and participation in the world.

Lastly, Vroon (2009) feels “The problem with most of these technologies is that they isolate people, kill conversation, and encourage sedentary behavior.” (p.54). I whole-heartedly agree with the author and his assessment, because I can definitely attest to the notion that technology can create a sense of isolation and passivity. At one point in high school I had hundreds of “friends” on a popular social networking site, yet I constantly found myself at home and isolated with no meaningful social skills to apply in the real world. If technology wasn’t exploited the way it is by today’s generation (such as myself), I, and so many others in my position and mindset would probably be so much more social and all around more productive and contributing members of society. This would go a long way in changing the overall culture and health of a society.

Technology is distracting, non-interactive, and isolating. Information is spoon fed to people without the “inconvenience” of having to even leave their homes, therefore eliminating the need to feel like social interactions are necessary. Aspects of everyday life that used to be a basis for important social interactions are now blurred and skewed by the constant allure and ease of using technologies, thus forgoing and forgetting what a face-to-face, social interaction should consist of. Let’s put down our phones, get off the computer, and get off our couches to salvage and recapture our lives and their meaning!

References

Vroon, D. (2009). The Distracted Generation Victims of Technology. *American Record Guide*, *72*(3), 53-54.