

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Bombarded with information

We are constantly bombarded with information.

In earlier times, we obtained information from radios, televisions, magazines, newspapers, and billboards.

Then it was computers connected to the internet.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Now almost everyone — including poor people — has a smart phone in hand, providing a steady stream of information from everyone in the world who's trying to tell you something or

sell you something.

Traditional print newspapers and magazines are hurting because fewer people read them every year.

We're all looking at our smart phones, and the person down the street has just as much access to us as the news media.

Earlier this year, the Pottstown School District added to the din. We've hired a "social media and communications specialist" who is using the latest technology for the district to communicate with parents and taxpayers.

Each of our four elementary schools, our high school and our middle school already have Facebook and Twitter accounts. One school also has Instagram and YouTube. Our acting superintendent has a Twitter and Facebook account.

So here's some wisdom about super-communicated societies from two advertising gurus, Al Ries and Jack Trout, in their landmark book, *Positioning*:

“The only defense a person has in our overcommunicated society is an oversimplified mind.

“Not unless they repeal the law of nature that

gives us only 24 hours in a day will they find a way to stuff more into the mind.

“The average mind is already a dripping sponge that can only soak up more information at the expense of what's already there. Yet we continue to pour more information into that supersaturated sponge and are disappointed when our messages fail to get through.

“The mind, as a defense against the volume of today's communications, screens and rejects much of the information offered to it. In general, the mind accepts only that which matches prior knowledge or experience....”

“Once a mind is made up, it's almost impossible to change it. Certainly not with a weak force like advertising. ‘Don't confuse me with the facts, my mind's made up.’ That's a way of life for most people.

“The average person can tolerate being told something about which he or she knows nothing. (Which is why 'news' is an effective advertising approach.)

“But the average person cannot tolerate being told he or she is wrong. Mind-changing is the road to advertising disaster.”

As a school board member, I am constantly told we must improve our district's image. In fact, the school district has had the same image for decades, and it's not going to change with a barrage of social media.

We should focus on the things we can control.

I love that Pottstown is a small town and a small district. That's a big advantage, because it gives us the opportunity to do relationship-building with students, families, and taxpayers. It would help, certainly, if more of our teachers and administrators actually lived here. But personal attention, one on one, is far more effective than ever-more technology.

Tom Hylton is a member of the Pottstown School Board. However, the views expressed are his alone and not the board's.

