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DIGITAL BRIDGE INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

Your guide to activities in the DIGITAL knowledge ecosystem



DIGITAL BRIDGE INSTITUTE

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES

The Digital Bridge Institute (DBI) was launched in the wake of the phenomenal Worldwide growth of the Telecommunication(Telcoms) and information communications technology (ICT) sectors, which was especially well noted in Nigeria . Led by the successful auction of Digital Mobile Licensing by Nigerian Communications Commission(NCC) the government regulator , and the subsequent roll out of mobile services , increased number of operators, and significant increased private capital investment , the sector as whole has been challenged by dearth of trained and suitably qualified human resources. Aknowledging the need to continue to foster the rapid development and growth of the Nigeria Telecommunication market-place as well as the potentially significant vulnerability as lack of human resources could , the Nigeria Communiactions Communications (NCC) established DBi in May 2004

Adress 8 P.O.W Mafemi Crescent , Off Solomon Lar Way, Utako, Abuja
Call +234(0) 9290 7018 OR 09290 7019

Email: Info@dbi.edu.ng

Website: www.dbi.edu.ng

Editor.Managing Editor.Editor-in-Chief: Professor Mohammed
Ajya FNSE
Editorial Assistant – Temidayo Olaloye
Graphics Designer – Chinwuba Igbokwe,Mekadese Tunde
Contributors:
Ms Viola Askia Usor – Head Lagos Campus
Sanni Tsoho – Head, Kano Campus
Abubakar Yolde – Head, Yola Campus

From the Editor

Digital Bridge Institute is pleased to present to its readers the 18th edition of its Newsletter. The Newsletter intends to reach out to the stakeholders and the general public on three major components:

1. Sharing of news updates on the core mandates and workings of DBI.
2. Presentation of articles on topical issues within ICT sectors and;
3. Offering of special announcements.

In this edition is a bunch of information carrying activities and programs within the confines of the institute, from Abuja and Kano Learning Centre and, Adapti programme (Advanced Digital Appreciation Programme for Tertiary Institutions) running simultaneously in some parts of the country.

Words are not enough to genuinely appreciate the Chief Executive Officer/President, Digital Bridge Institute, Prof. Muhammed Ajiya for his enormous contribution within and outside the newsletter production.

No doubt, that he has been the strength behind the continuous production of these newsletters.

Furthermore, thanks to the editorial team for their resilient undertakings in ensuring that this 18th edition is a reality.

Reiterating our determination on the newsletter unit mandate, we are committed to keeping staff, management, and the general public apprised of the happenings all around the institute.

For further information on our activities and bouquets of courses, do mail us at info@dbi.edu.ng.

On behalf of the management and staff of DBI, led by our President/CEO, Prof. Mohammed Ajiya, we wish you all a splendid reading adventure.

Akin Ogunlade
Editor.

DBI JOINS STAKEHOLDERS, DELIBERATE ON NDLF

Signed:
Akin Ogunlade
Head, Public Affairs Unit

The Digital Bridge Institute (DBI) was on Tuesday, February 1, 2022 participated in a Stakeholders Engagement on Draft Regulatory Instrument organised by the National Information Technology Development (NITDA).

The event which took place at Hawthorne Suites, Abuja featured deliberations on the National Digital Literacy Framework (NDLF) and review of the draft regulatory instruments viz-a-viz - Government Digital Service Implementation framework, 2022, National Cloud Computing Implementation Strategy, 2022 and National Digital Literacy Framework, 2022.



Dr. Niran Oyekale DBI Board Member and Mrs Ngozi Nwoche, Head, Learning and Development at the event.

The DBI team was led by the Head, Learning and Development department, Mrs. Ngozi Nwoche, accompanied by the Head, Business Development and Clients Services Unit, Mrs. Judith Uzougbo. Mr. Nelson Afundu representing the Head, Research, Innovation and Consultancy department and Mr. Richard Frank from the BD&CS unit.

The DBI team participated in a breakout session of three groups to deliberate on each framework.

DBI TRAINS STAFF OF DIRECTORATE OF ROAD TRAFFIC SERVICES

The Staff of the The Directorate of Road Traffic Services have, on Friday, 4th February, 2022, completed their training sessions on the course titled: Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) at DBI headquarters, Abuja.

The training which ran from Monday 31st January - Friday 4th February, 2022 had 7 VIO participants undergone thorough training sessions from seasoned DBI experts. At the end, certificates were issued to the participants and the training was pronounced closed.



Cross section of the participants of the Directorate of Road Traffic services training and DBI staff

ADVANCED DIGITAL APPRECIATION PROGRAMME FOR TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS



Participants of the Federal University of petroleum resources, EFFURUN, delta state

The institute flagship Programme; Advanced Digital Appreciation Programme for Tertiary Institutions (ADAPTI) took place in 4 different locations from the 7th to 11th February 2022. The centres are;

- Federal University Dutse, Jigawa State (SPSS & IOPT)
- Federal University of Petroleum Resources, EFFURUN Delta State (SPSS & IOPT)
- Federal College of Education (TECH) BICHI (SPSS & IOPT)
- Kebbi State University of Science and Technology Alero (SPSS & IOPT)

A total of 110 staff of each of these institutions were beneficiaries of the training and were awarded certificates at the completion of the training they were also declared alumni of DBI.

FCE (Tech) lauds DBI for making the difference in digital skills and capacity building



Class activities from the training

The Provost of Federal College of Education (Technical), Prof. Bashir Fagge has commended DBI for boosting the capacity of staff of tertiary Institutions.

Professor Fagge made the statement during the closing ceremony of the Advanced Digital Appreciation Programme for Tertiary Institutions, ADAPTI training held at FCE (Tech), Bichi, Kano State. Prof. Fagge who was represented by the deputy provost of the College, Mallam Abdulmumin Sulaiman congratulates the participants for being part of the lucky ones to be certified by the Institute.

"The institute is known all over the country for its quality training. I have to commend them for maintaining a top standard in capacity building." The provost said. A total of 110 staff of the college have been trained in the ADAPTI training which held at the ICT centre of the college from 7th February to 11th February 2022. A similar training was held in Alliero in Kebbi State, Dutse in Jigawa state and other Tertiary institutions in the country as part of the DBI's ADAPTI programme.



Group photograph from the training

Wangiri Scam: The multi - billion Naira scam that targets Nigerians

By Abdulsalam Abubakar

A strange number has called your phone. It is bearing a foreign code of a country you have never visited. This is not the first time you've received such kind of calls. They will ring for a second and drop just before you press the answer button.

You are tempted to call back. It could be your lost but found acquaintance from the United States. Perhaps it is in respect of your recent job application from a foreign multinational ICT. You are convinced it is an important call and decided to call back. But STOP, do not call back. It is a scam that will cost you dearly.

- **Wangiri Scam**

This approach is called Wangiri Scam. It relies and exploits your natural instinct to return a missed call even if that call is from a strange international number.

As you place a call to this mysterious number, your call is routed to an expensive premium rate number. You will then be manipulated into staying on this call for as long as the scammers can play you.

The technique relies on Psychology and or social engineering. Victims report to have been put through a wait music. Others are told that the have won a price and are asked to wait on the line to claim it. A victim report to have been charged over N250 for a call that lasted barely a minute.

Wangiri, the fraud which started over two decades ago originated from Japan. The term refers to "One ring and Cut". It is an international scam with victims spanning all over the world.

The scammers use phone set with foreign premium rate. It beeps your phone and terminate the call within one - two beeps, manipulating you into thinking a foreign contact is trying to reach you. It often costs the victims dearly when they call back.

According to Premium Times, the proceeds of the scam is deposited into the accounts of the fraudsters through a sophisticated Telecommunications revenue generating system with the revenue shared between the local telecom operator and the owner of the premium rate number. Premium rate telephone numbers are set of phone numbers used by some companies, Institutions, TV or Radio stations offering a certain type of programme or a company promoting a business or providing a service through telephone lines. The numbers are reserved for telephone calls during which an unusually high rate is charged. It is a source of genuine income by some businesses that promote premium call numbers.

The Wangiri scam involves a computer using a certain phone line randomly calling numerous phone lines. The numbers appear to the recipients as missed call, inciting their ibred curiosity and enticing them to call back. The victim is then charged the exorbitant fee set by the scammers.

The scams target phone numbers all over the world including Nigeria. Over a decade ago, telephone users in Nigeria have been targeted by premium rate phone fraudsters on a phone scam that was estimated to see the country lose over 1 billion Naira at once.

According to a report release by Begacom, Belgian Telecoms Company in respect of Wangiri Scams that targetted Nigeria, the fraudsters got about 50,000 callbacks from Nigerian victims. Recent reports by telephone users indicate the return of the scam with victims reporting to have missed (calls) and returned the calls with an alarming cal charge.

The legality of premium calls makes it difficult for telecom operators to anticipate. Victims have reported receiving calls from developing African countries like Chad, Comoros, Mauritania, Liberia and Pacific nations.

- **How to protect yourself**

To protect yourself from this kind of scam, users are advised to refrain from returning calls from numbers they don't recognise, particularly those that came from an international number.

Tagging and blocking the numbers is not alone as these calls do not usually appear to come from African countries. The scammers go extra mile to change the numbers so blocking the calls will not work.

You may also want to limit who gets your phone number. Phone scammers usually get their target numbers from data leaks and marketing data bases through legitimate or illegitimate means.

According to a security report by People Data Lab, hundred of millions of people have found their data leaked on the internet as a result of poor security practice. Some telecomms services their subscribers.

Senate begins amendment to Pension Act

- **Wants more retirees' access to pension fund**
- **Proposes 75% RSA withdrawal after exit from service**

From Business Development & Client Services (BD&CS) Unit

The Senate has commenced amendments to the Pension Act, in a move to ensure that retirees have more access to their funds (savings) under the Contributory Pension Scheme, immediately after their retirement from service.

Already, the Senate has passed for second reading, the Pension Reform Act 2014 (Amendment) Bill, 2022, which seeks to make funds in the Retirement Savings Account (RSA) more easily accessible to retirees.

The Bill, which proposed the payment of 75 per cent to retirees as lump sum upon attainment of retirement age, is in response to the distressed calls by retirees to the National Assembly.

The Pension Reform Act, which was signed into law by the President Olusegun Obasanjo Government in 2004 and amended in 2014, currently empowered the National Pension Commission (PenCom) and the Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) to pay between 25 and 50 per cent lump sum to retirees after retirement.

After the initial payment, the PFAs are equally empowered by the Act to "unilaterally" calculate the amount to pay retirees on monthly basis as pension, from the remaining percentage, which on many cases could be 75 per cent.

While debating the bill on the floor of the Senate, the sponsored, Senator Aliyu Wamakko, said the bill sought to amend the Pension Reform Act 2014, "to provide for a definite and reasonable percentage the retirees can withdraw from their Retirement Savings Accounts, at the point of exit from the service."

He explained that the purpose of the bill was also to provide succour to retirees in the delay and other difficulties they stumble upon in withdrawing their savings from the RSA.

Senator Wamako lamented the inability of pensioners to access their benefits after service, and regretted that this had resulted in their suffering and, in most cases, led to eventual and untimely deaths.

He said: "None of us can claim ignorance of the long-drawn-out anguish of retirees from the civil service, Nigerian Prison Service, universities and parastatals, among other federal agencies in this country.

"These retirees, rather than enjoy retirement after selflessly serving their fatherland, have continued to live in misery and pain, leading to diseases and even death, as they cannot easily access their benefits."

The Senator also lamented that despite the amendments to the Pension Reform Act 2004, with the Pension Reform Act Amendment 2014, the legislation had failed to achieve its objective of solving the intractable pension crisis in the country.

According to him: "In view of the retirees' protracted sufferings and pains, who are equally Nigerians, continued search for a lasting panacea is a duty-bound upon us and all others concerned."

The Act in Section 7(1)(a) was amended in the bill to allow retirees to withdraw 75 per cent of their benefits.

Senator Wamako decried the situation where pension administrators in the country benefit at the expense of Nigerian pensioners who continue to suffer neglect.

The lawmaker said: "These Nigerians who have retired from service after several years serving the nation are finding it extremely difficult to be the owners of their pension savings in this new arrangement. So, unless that law is made categorically clear that they can withdraw the 75 per cent, which we are proposing in this amendment, then they can definitely have some relief as retirees."

After the successful debate, and the bill scaled the second reading, it was referred to the Senate Committee on Establishment and Public Service Matters. The committee was given four weeks to report back to the Senate.

DBI President charges MDAs on benchmarking workforce for competency in Digital Literacy

- **As Institute seeks partnership with MDAs, labour, others**

From Business Development & Client Services (BD&CS) Unit

The President of Digital Bridge Institute (DBI), Prof. Mohammed Ajija, has charged government Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs), security agencies and labour on the importance of benchmarking their workforce and officers for competency in digital literacy. Prof. Ajija gave the charge in a letter addressed to the heads of MDAs and leadership of security outfits, trade (labour) unions and other organizations in Abuja.

In the letter, titled: "2022 Training programmes and DBI's request to benchmark your workforce for competency in Digital Literacy," the DBI President stressed the need for all MDAs and Organizations in all sectors of the economy to benchmark their workers for competency in digital literacy.

The letter read: "Digital Bridge Institute (DBI), wholly owned by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), is pleased to forward her 2022 Training Programmes and a request to benchmark your workforce for competency in Digital Literacy. As a forward-looking organization, there is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects has made it compelling to digitize the model of working.

"A critical component of any digitalization exercise is capacity building. Even the most impressive state-of-the-art technology is of no use to an organization deploying it if its staff lack the skills required to effectively utilize the technology."

He added that the DBI had published a wide range of ICT and ICT-related courses and programmes in Digital Literacy and Office Productivity, Information Technology, Cybersecurity, Management/Governance, Telecommunications and others.

Besides the published programmes, he pointed out that the DBI also runs customized training programmes that could be designed for their specific needs based on special request, adding, "our hands-on training which has been offered since the year 2004 is guaranteed to transfer usable skills to your employees, reinforce your corporate work processes and ensure delivery of quality services by your organization."

Prof. Ajiya said: "We wish to undertake the process of benchmarking your entire workforce for competency in digital literacy. The events of the past year, specifically the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its attendant consequences, have ushered in a new worldwide culture, changing the way we live, work, communicate, and collaborate." "The consequent focus on social distancing has forced most organisations to re-evaluate their operational models and look towards virtual or digital methods of executing their operational objectives."

While emphasizing on the importance of the exercise, he stated that, "benchmarking of digital literacy competency of all cadres of your workforce and subsequent deployment of training and certification in Digital Literacy will achieve compliance with the approval and recommendation of the 2017 and the 5th Regular Meeting of the National Council on Communication Technology of IC3 Digital Literacy as criterion for employment and promotion."

Besides, he said it would also provide the basis for measuring, evaluating and revalidating personnel operational skills to global standard; while it would assist in identifying digital literacy skills gaps with a view to bridging it for advancement to full proficiency.

Benchmarking, according to the DBI boss will also provide the workforce with reliable and firsthand performance guide for use in diagnosis and continuous improvement of current workers' capacity; even as it would also provide a guided curriculum review and development for continuous capacity development of in-coming personnel to achieve a customize professional training strategies.

More importantly, Prof. Ajiya said the process, being driven by the Business Development and Client Services (BD & CS) of DBI, would provide the basis for equipping the workforce with appropriate skills to cope with modern day operational techniques, challenges of life, career and educational advancement; while it would guide them to develop a seamless continuum of ICT digital literacy skills.

FAKE NEWS AND ITS CATASTROPHE ON OUR TODAY'S SOCIETY

BY AKIN OGUNLADE
PUBLIC AFFAIRS UNIT

Social media is becoming increasingly important in people's daily lives. These virtual spaces are now regularly used as a tool for information dissemination. However, using social media to consume information can affect the ethical decision-making process. This compares the influence of two online media dissemination formats – an online news article and social media discussion thread – on individuals' ethical perceptions and decisions. This indicates that social media usage has an effect on perceptions of social consensus, problem recognition, and ethical sensemaking. Overall, Social media is shown to inhibit ethical decision-making when used as an information dissemination tool.

Thus, Fake news in other words can be seen as information disorder. Fake news makes the truth hard to find, and can also be one of the leading sources of danger to personal security, society and even structured institutions.

What Is Fake News?

Superficially speaking, fake news is a false narrative that is published and promoted as if it were true. Historically, fake news was usually propaganda put out by those in power to create a certain belief or support a certain position, even if it was completely false.

Types of False Information: There are differing opinions when it comes to identifying types of false information. However, when it comes to evaluating content online there are various types of false or misleading news we need to be aware of. These include:

- 1. Propaganda:** Stories that are created to deliberately mislead audiences, promote a biased point of view or particular political cause or agenda.
- 2. Clickbait:** These are stories that are deliberately fabricated to gain more website visitors and increase advertising revenue for websites. Clickbait stories use sensationalist headlines to grab attention and drive click-throughs to the publisher website, normally at the expense of truth or accuracy.
- 3. Satire/Parod:** Lots of websites and social media accounts publish fake news stories for entertainment and parody.

For example; The Onion, Waterford Whispers, The Daily Mash, etc.

4. Sloppy Journalism: Periodically, reporters or journalists may publish a story with unreliable information or without checking all of the facts which can mislead audiences. For example, during the U.S. elections, fashion retailer Urban Outfitters published an Election Day Guide, the guide contained incorrect information telling voters that they needed a 'voter registration card'. This is not required by any state in the U.S. for voting.

5. Misleading Headings : Stories that are not completely false can be distorted using misleading or sensationalist headlines. These types of news can spread quickly on social media sites where only headlines and small snippets of the full article are displayed on audience newsfeeds.

6. Biased/Slanted News: Many people are drawn to news or stories that confirm their own beliefs or biases and fake news can prey on these biases. Social media news feeds tend to display news and articles that they think we will like based on our personalised searches.

It is worthy of acknowledgement that Social media has now created an environment where anyone with an agenda can publish falsehoods as if they were truths. People can be paid to post fake news on behalf of someone else or automated programs, often called bots, can publish auto-generated fake news. The motivations as to why people create and distribute fake news are as sundry as there are individual opinions.

Lots of things you read online especially in your social media feeds may appear to be true, often is not. False information is news, stories or hoaxes created to deliberately misinform or deceive readers. Usually, these stories are created to either influence people's views, push a political agenda or cause confusion and can often be a profitable business for online publishers. False information can deceive people by looking like trusted websites or using similar names and web addresses to reputable news organisations.

According to Martina Chapman (Media Literacy Expert), there are three elements to fake news; 'Mistrust, misinformation and manipulation'.

The Rise of False Information is not new, however it has become a hot topic since 2017. Traditionally we got our news from trusted sources, journalists and media outlets that are required to follow strict codes of practice. However, the internet has enabled a whole new way to publish, share and consume information and news with very little regulation or editorial standards.

Many people now get news from social media sites and networks and often it can be difficult to tell whether stories are credible or not. Information overload and a general lack of understanding about how the internet works by people has also contributed to an increase in fake news or hoax stories. Social media sites can play a big part in increasing the reach of these type of stories.

The False Information Business Model
The internet and social media have made it very easy for anyone to publish content on a website, blog or social media profile and potentially reach large audiences. With so many people now getting news from social media sites, many content creators/publishers have used this to their advantage.

False information can be a profitable business, generating large sums of advertising revenue for publishers who create and publish stories that go viral. The more clicks a story gets, the more money online publishers make through advertising revenue and for many publishers social media is an ideal platform to share content and drive web traffic.

False Information, Social Media, and the Filter Bubble. In a recent article on media literacy, Hugh Linehan noted; "Media is no longer passively consumed – it's created, shared, liked, commented on, attacked and defended in all sorts of different ways by hundreds of millions of people. And the algorithms used by the most powerful tech companies – Google and Facebook in particular – are brilliantly designed to

personalise and tailor these services to each user's profile."

When we go online or login to a social network we are generally presented with news, articles and content based on our own searches online. This type of content tends to reflect our own likes, views and beliefs and therefore isolating us from differing views and opinions. This is often referred to as a filter bubble.

Thus, the need to know How to spot False Information.

There are a number of things to watch out for when evaluating content online.

Take a closer look

Check the source of the story, do you recognise the website? Is it a credible/reliable source? If you are unfamiliar with the site, look in the about section or find out more information about the author.
Look beyond the headline

Check the entire article, many fake news stories use sensationalist or shocking headlines to grab attention. Often the headlines of fake news stories are in all caps and use exclamation points.

Check other sources Are other reputable news/media outlets reporting on the story? Are there any sources in the story? If so, check they are reliable or if they even exist!

Check the facts Stories with false information often contain incorrect dates or altered timelines. It is also a good idea to check when the article was published, is it current or an old news story?

Check your biases Are your own views or beliefs affecting your judgement of a news feature or report? Is it a joke? Satirical sites are popular online and sometimes it is not always clear whether a story is just a joke or parody... Check the website, is it known for satire or creating funny stories? Once these are critically scouted for, the harm of fske news on individuals and organizations could be curtailed.

We should also acknowledge the fact that, fake news is a broad term that encapsulates a few key ideas. Breaking the concept into specific terms helps us understand how it operates and causes harm. Claire Wardle, Ph.D. and Hossein Derakhshan reframe fake news as information disorder, a spectrum that ranges from falsehood to intent to harm. Wardle and Derakhshan use a Venn diagram to explain information disorder as having three parts, including:

Misinformation: Some spread false information without the intent to spread harm. People spreading misinformation believe it to be true before sharing it with others.

Disinformation: People may spread information to cause harm or manipulate people. Disinformation describes actual lies that people tell for money, influence or to cause disorder.

Malinformation: Information that may be true but is spread with malicious intent or taken out of context. Examples include divulging private information or manipulating facts to fit a false narrative.

This then means the danger of fake news can't be over emphasized even though some examples of fake news seem innocent or just an attempt at fun, a lot of fake news can be damaging, malicious and even dangerous.

Malinformation's dangers are blatant. For example, publishing a person's private address can put them at risk of physical danger. However, the potential dangers of misinformation and disinformation are more subtle.

Misinformation and disinformation can also pose cyber security concerns. Fake news articles can be entry points for hackers attempting to steal your information. Understanding the risk of fake news and learning to recognize it is a way to practice identity management and protect your data. A cyber breach can compromise your virtual banking accounts, so look out for fake news to grow your financial IQ and establish fiscal security.

How to Spot Fake News

So how do you protect yourself from fake news? The most effective way is to only trust something once you can verify it. In today's fast-paced world of social media, fake news surrounds us every day. If you are not careful, you run the risk of believing and acting upon it. Take the time to follow these basic steps to help ensure you make informed decisions based on facts.

Consider the Source: Think about the actual source of the news. A local blog will not be as trustworthy as a major academic journal. What does the source stand for? What are their objectives?

Supporting Sources: Look at the sources cited in the article. Are they themselves credible? Do they even exist?

Multiple Sources: Don't just rely on a single article. The more you read from various sources, the more likely you can draw accurate conclusions. Also consider diverse sources and perspectives, for example, news from different countries or authors with different backgrounds.

Check the Author: Who is the author? Research them to see if they are a credible author, their reputation in the community, whether they have a specific agenda, or if the person posting is a real person. Are they authoring within their field of expertise?

Check the Date: Ensure the publication date is recent and not just an older story rehashed.

Comments: Even if the article, video, or post is legitimate, be careful of comments posted in response. Quite often links or comments posted in response can be auto-generated by bots or by people hired to put out bad, confusing, or false information.

Check Your Biases: Be objective. Could your own biases influence your response to the article? A problem that we humans often run into is that we only read sources that simply confirm what we already believe in. Challenge yourself by reading other sources you normally would not review.

Check the Funding: Even legitimate publications have sponsors and advertisers who can influence an article or source. Check if someone funded the article and if so, find out who paid for it.

Repost carefully: Fake news relies on believers to repost, retweet, or otherwise forward false information. If you're uncertain as to the authenticity of an article, think twice or hold off on sharing it with others.

What to Do When You Encounter Fake News
Misinformation, disinformation and malinformation are prevalent in online circles, so how should we respond? The most frustrating part about fake news is that it's hard for one person to do anything about it. In many cases, an article with false or harmful information has done its damage by the time you see it.

The best you can do is learn to recognize fake news so that it doesn't fool you or compromise your security. Promoting online media literacy in your personal and professional lives is also important.

When you see fake news, consider blocking the website or source spreading misinformation or malicious fake articles so that you don't see them in the future. If you see a friend or loved one share a fake news article, politely let them know. Navigating information disorder is tricky — the offender may double down if you approach them with hostility. The best way forward is always a civil conversation. The people in your life likely have good intentions, even when sharing fake news.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

• How to Control Your Emotions During a Difficult Conversation

Amy Gallo
December 01, 2017

Summary. When you're in the middle of a conflict, it's common to automatically enter into a "fight or flight" mentality. But it's possible to interrupt this response and clear a path towards entering into a more productive discussion. Start by...more

It's hard not to get worked up emotionally when you're in a tense conversation. After all, a disagreement can feel like a threat. You're afraid you're going to have to give up something — your point of view, the way you're used to doing something, the notion that you're right, or maybe even power — and your body therefore ramps up for a fight by triggering the sympathetic nervous system. This is a natural response, but the problem is that our bodies and minds aren't particularly good at discerning between the threats presented by not getting your way on the project plan and, say, being chased down by a bear.

Your heart rate and breathing rate spike, your muscles tighten, the blood in your body moves away from your organs, and you're likely to feel uncomfortable.

None of this puts you in the right frame of mind to resolve a conflict. If your body goes into "fight or flight" mode or what Dan Goleman called "amygdala hijack," you may lose access to the prefrontal cortex, the part of your brain responsible for rational thinking. And making rational decisions is precisely what you need to do in a difficult conversation.

Not only are you losing the ability to think clearly but chances are your counterpart notices the signs of stress — your face turning

red, the pace of your speech speeding up — and, because of mirror neurons that cause us to "catch" the emotions of another person, your colleague is likely to start feeling the same way. Before you know it, the conversation has derailed and the conflict intensifies.

Luckily, it's possible to interrupt this physical response, manage your emotions, and clear the way for a productive discussion. There are several things you can do to keep your cool during a conversation or to calm yourself down if you've gotten worked up.

Harvard Business Review

Breathe. Simple mindfulness techniques can be your best friend in tense situations and none is more straightforward and accessible than using your breath. So when you start noticing yourself getting tense, try to focus on breathing. Notice the sensation of air coming in and out of your lungs.

Feel it pass through your nostrils or down the back of your throat. This will take your attention off the physical signs of panic and keep you centered. Some mindfulness experts suggest counting your breath— either inhaling and exhaling for a count of 6, for example, or just counting each exhale until you get to 10 and then starting again.

Focus on your body. Sitting still when you're having a difficult conversation can make the emotions build up rather than dissipate. Experts say that standing up and walking around helps to activate the thinking part of your brain. If you and your counterpart are seated at a table, you may be hesitant to

suddenly stand up. Fair enough. Instead, you might say, "I feel like I need to stretch some. Mind if I walk around a bit?" If that still doesn't feel comfortable, you can do small physical things like crossing two fingers or placing your feet firmly on the ground and noticing what the floor feels like on the bottom of your shoes.

Mindfulness experts call this "anchoring." It can work in all kinds of stressful situations. For example, for a long time I was afraid of flying, but I found that counting while touching each of my fingers with my thumb helped to get me out of my rumination mode.

Try saying a mantra. This is a piece of advice I've gotten from Amy Jen Su, managing partner of Paravis Partners and coauthor of *Own the Room*. She recommends coming up with a phrase that you can repeat to yourself to remind you to stay calm. Some of her clients have found "Go to neutral" to be a helpful prompt. You can also try "This isn't about me," "This will pass," or "This is about the business."

Acknowledge and label your feelings. Another useful tactic comes from Susan David, author of *Emotional Agility*. When you're feeling emotional, "the attention you give your thoughts and feelings crowds your mind; there's no room to examine them," she says.

To distance yourself from the feeling, label it. "Call a thought a thought and an emotion an emotion," says David. He is so wrong about that and it's making me mad becomes I'm having the thought that my coworker is wrong, and I'm feeling anger.

Labeling like this allows you to see your thoughts and feelings for what they are: "transient sources of data that may or may not prove helpful." When you put that space between these emotions and you, it's easier to let them go — and not bury them or let them explode.

Take a break. In my experience, this is a far-underused approach. The more time you give yourself to process your emotions, the less intense they are likely to be. So when things get heated, you may need to excuse yourself for a moment — get a cup of coffee or a glass of water, go to the bathroom, or take a brief stroll around the office.

Be sure to give a neutral reason for why you want to stand up and pause the conversation — the last thing you want is for your counterpart to think that things are going so badly you're desperate to escape. Try saying something like, "I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I'd love to get a quick cup of coffee before we continue. Can I get you something while I'm up?"

Keep in mind that you're probably not the only one who's upset. Your counterpart is likely to express anger or frustration too. While you may want to give them the above advice, no one wants to be told they need to breathe more deeply or take a break.

So you may be in a situation where you just need to let the other person vent. That's usually easier said than done though. It's hard not to yell back when you're being attacked, but that's not going to help. Jeanne Brett, a professor of dispute resolution and

negotiations at Kellogg School of Management, suggests visualizing your coworker's words going over your shoulder, not hitting you in the chest. But don't act aloof; it's important to show that you're listening. If you don't feed your counterpart's negative emotion with your own, it's likely they will wind down.

Let's face it. Conflicts with coworkers can be tough. But you're not going to solve the underlying issues or maintain a positive relationship if you barrel through the conversation when you're completely worked up.

SPORT XTRA

• FOOTBALL: DBI STAFF BATTLES CORP MEMBERS

By Akin Ogunlade

The Digital Bridge Institute Football team was on Friday, 11th February, 2022. slugged it out with NYSC members serving at DBI Headquarters, Abuja in a football match.

First half of the match had DBI TEAM in high possession which was dovetailed to second half of the match.

Some of the spectators remarked that, wining in a football match entailed team work and collective responsibility as no one is an island. Thus, they concluded that such team spirit and synergy displayed during the match should be applied in work environment.

The football match which took place at Eden Garden Playground had DBI team beat Corp members (11-8).

Hopefully, these five tactics will help you move from angry and upset to cool as a cucumber.

Amy Gallo is a contributing editor at Harvard Business Review, co-host of the Women at Work podcast, and the author of the HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict. She writes and speaks about workplace dynamics. Watch her TEDx talk on conflict and follow her on Twitter.





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Chinwuba - 08099993472
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📍 1, Nitel Road
(Former Nitel Training School),
Cappa, Oshodi, Lagos.
☎ **Valentine** - 08107157731
Iniobong - 08022228446
Akeem - 08142068883

KANO

📍 Plot 532 Katsina Road
Albasa Rail Lane
Kano-Nigeria
☎ **Abdulsalam** - 08064066119
Abuzarri - 08036981657

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