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Dear Developers of Communication Tools,

I would like to first thank you for taking the time to read this letter and giving some consideration to what I have to say. I would like to discuss an issue my group has come across when we were using communication tools to work on problems our group has. My group and I are a study group who help each other solve mathematical equations and understand any concept in math which one of our peers may be struggling to understand. There seems to be a lack of effective communication when my peers and I are reviewing information we send over to one another and are giving advice to solve problems concerning math. What I mean is there always seems to be some sort of miscommunication and the advice we give to one another is misinterpreted. This is due to the lack of nonverbal communication in our chats when we are using communication tools. In our daily lives, we use nonverbal cues to communicate certain pieces of information or to convey a message in a certain way. Eva Berkovic, a lecturer at Marbella International University, once stated, “having a conscious awareness of your non-verbal communication while verbally communicating can help others receive messages the way you actually intended to give them” (The importance of non-verbal communication). Without non-verbal communication, your intended message will be lost. This problem not only affects my group, but affects people who rely on communication tools. More and more people

are using these tools due to the pandemic and when we chat using these communication tools, we are missing an extremely important part of communication. We understand with the use of communication tools, some aspects of verbal communication and nonverbal communication will always be lost. However, we believe there might be a way to mitigate such effects and regain some of those aspects.

First, we must discuss various examples of this problem affecting our conversation when using communication tools. This will help clarify what exactly the problem is and how we can find a way to fix it. One example is someone on the internet can be giving some form of critique to a creator in order to help them improve, however with the loss of voice tones when we use communication tools, that critique can come across as harsh and demeaning. The person giving the critique could be seen in a negative light when all they were trying to do was give some form of criticism. With this, some hostilities can arise and people can be fighting over what is a misunderstanding. Such a problem could be avoided in a situation where both people were meeting face to face. The problem here is the lack of facial expressions. Facial expressions can make a person's intention clear. Four researchers in the department of psychology have stated in an article that "Facial expressions can display personal emotions and indicate an individual's intentions within a social situation" (Facial Expressions in Context: Electrophysiological Correlates of the Emotional Congruency of Facial Expressions and Background Scenes). Without facial expressions or a vocal, a person can not know when someone is saying something in a demeaning way or when someone is just trying to help another person improve their work. Another example I can give is something which has happened in my math study group. One of my peers was having difficulties with a math problem involving fractions. When I was helping him with those fractions, he misinterpreted my message and he swapped the places of the

numerator and the denominator. If I was communicating with my peer in person, then he would not have made this mistake since I would have been able to point out where the numerator and denominator were supposed to go. Other examples of miscommunication while using communication tools could be someone misinterpreting another person's desires, misinterpreting how they may feel in a specific situation and accidentally asking about sensitive topics.

I believe there is a solution to fix these problems by implementing some features into your communication tools. One such proposal I have is the implementation of some kind of interactive digital whiteboard available to all users. This whiteboard can allow users to write down any message they wish to give which can not be expressed in simple words. It can help a user give a visual representation of what their ideas are to another user. It can also help users point out some flaws in other users' ideas, which can help them improve on their original idea. For example, a teacher can use an online whiteboard to show his students how to solve a math problem and if any student sees a flaw in one part of the process, they can easily point out the flaw and the teacher can correct their mistake. Another possible feature you can implement is finding a way to add some tone to a message. While emojis have worked in helping bridge the gap of communication in communication tools, emojis can also be misinterpreted in situations too. Facial expressions and vocal tones are equally important when trying to convey a message and if a message and an emoji seemingly contradict each other, it can make the message seem negative. Finding a way to add tones to messages can help clear up such a misunderstanding. Now you may be wondering why you may want to add such features to your communication tools. I believe in adding such features, you can bring in more people who would want to use your services more. An interactive whiteboard can attract people who are working on projects, such as executives of companies, architects, and teachers, and tones to messages can attract

people who wish to socialize without being misunderstood. More people will want to come to you because you would have a service others do not. I would like you to at least consider the possibility.

Sincerely,

Abraham De La Rosa

Sources:

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