



## Don't Call Me ...

Sometime later this month ... or perhaps it might be next month, because I'll certainly be procrastinating about this as much as I can, I'll be finally biting the bullet and getting a cell phone.

It won't be all that difficult to do I suppose; there is a phone shop on every second corner these days. I'll get some advice from my staff about which of the competing carriers might be the 'best' one, because there is no way that I can work my way through one of those multi-page contracts in minuscule print in Japanese on my own, although I suppose none of the people I ask will have ever read through one either, so it will pretty much be a tossup for the choice.

For the phone itself, it'll be an iPhone of course. I have been an Apple customer since before some of my staff members were born, and have (almost) always found the products a pleasure to own and use.

But.

A minute ago I mentioned procrastinating, and I do have to say that I really don't want to be doing this. I know ... I know ... the new smartphones are *so* convenient! Having instant access to all sorts of information from anywhere, and always being in touch with one's co-workers and friends, are clearly 'good' things; with that I have no argument.

But when I look around me on the train these days, *every* time I ride the train, you know without me having to tell you, what I see there. On any given bench of seven people, *seven* of them have their nose buried in their phone! I can't tell what most of them are doing, but I certainly can with the two who sit on each side of me. Messaging, or Candy Crush.

Part of me says "Well, so what? A few years back those people would have been sitting there blankly, just waiting for their station. What's wrong with doing something to occupy the time?" And the simple answer is that there is nothing wrong with this at all, but I can't help but feel that we are in the process of running a vast experiment at modifying human behaviour. Always connected; always stimulated; never remaining on one thought for more than a minute or so. What are we doing to ourselves?

I myself am of course not immune to this, and even with the fairly limited number of hours per day that I use my desktop computer have felt the same thing happening to me. Check this web page, answer that email, follow that link ... Luckily for me my woodblock printmaking work is about as 'analog' as you can get, so - at least on workbench days - I am forced to remain firmly rooted in the real world, doing things that require my concentration for hours at a time.

And that brings me to a point that you must be thinking by now, "If Dave is so uncomfortable with the idea of having a cell phone, then why is he going to get one?"

The long answer will have to wait for another story (or stories, as we will surely see) but for now, I can simply mention that our Mokuhankan printmaking venture is about to take a pretty major step forward, one that will require me to spend a great deal of time away from my benches. As I zip back and forth here and there around Tokyo - as is the case this afternoon on Mokuhankan business as I sit here on the train writing this story! - it will be important that I be 'in touch' with the staff.

That's life these days for a business manager, and if I want to do that job properly, I'll need the proper tools.

But I tell you, if you ever catch me with Candy Crush, then you'll know it's all over with me; take me out behind the barn and ... well, you know what to do!

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