

## **EMAIL ETIQUETTE**

This training session is a tool to aid all participants in daily job functions.

### **Objectives:**

1. Minimize Liability Exposure
2. Professionalism
3. Effectiveness/Efficiency

### **25 Most Important Email Etiquette Rules/Tips**

#### **1. Be concise and to the point.**

Do not make an e-mail longer than it needs to be. Remember that reading an email is harder than reading printed communications and a long e-mail can be very discouraging to read.

#### **2. Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions.**

An email reply must answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions – If you do not answer all the questions in the original email, you will receive further emails regarding the unanswered questions, which will not only waste your time and the sender's time but also cause considerable frustration.

#### **3. Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation.**

This is not only important because improper spelling, grammar and punctuation give a bad impression of your company, it is also important for conveying the message properly. E-mails with no full stops or commas are difficult to read and can sometimes even change the meaning of the text.

#### **4. Make it personal.**

Not only should the email be personally addressed, it should also include personal i.e. customized content. For this reason auto replies are usually not very effective.

#### **5. Use templates for frequently used responses.**

Some questions you get over and over again. Save these texts as response templates and paste these into your message when you need them. You can save your templates in a Word document, or use pre-formatted emails.

## **6. Answer swiftly.**

An individual sends an e-mail because they wish to receive a quick response. If they did not want a quick response they would send a letter or a fax. Therefore, each e-mail should be replied to within at least eight (8) business hours. If the email is complicated, just send an email back saying that you have received it and that you will get back to them. This will put the sender's mind at rest.

## **7. Do not attach unnecessary files.**

Wherever possible try to compress attachments and only send attachments when they are productive. You should ensure that the virus scan is operational for all outgoing emails. Please see the system administrator to assist in ensuring compliance.

## **8. Use proper structure & layout.**

Since reading from a screen is more difficult than reading from paper, the structure and lay out is very important for e-mail messages. Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph. When making points, number them or mark each point as separate to keep the overview. Avoid generalization and repetitiveness should be minimized.

## **9. Do not overuse the high priority option.**

Should one overuse of the high priority option, it will lose its function when you really need it. Moreover, even if a mail has high priority, your message will come across as slightly aggressive if you flag it as 'high priority'.

## **10. Do not write in CAPITALS.**

IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. This can be highly annoying and might trigger an unwanted response in the form of a flame mail. Therefore, try not to send any email text in capitals.

## **11. Don't leave out the message thread.**

When you reply to an email, you must include the original mail in your reply, in other words click 'Reply', instead of 'New Mail'. If you receive many emails you obviously cannot remember each individual email. This means that a 'threadless email' will not provide enough information and you will have to spend a frustratingly long time to find out the context of the email in order to deal with it. Leaving the thread might take a fraction longer in download time, but it will save the recipient much more time and frustration in looking for the related emails in their inbox!

## **12. Add disclaimers to your emails.**

It is important to add disclaimers to your internal and external mails, since this can help protect your company from liability.

## **13. Read the email before you send it.**

A lot of people don't bother to read an email before they send it out, as can be seen from the many spelling and grammar mistakes contained in emails. Apart from this, reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.

#### **14. Do not overuse Reply to All.**

Only use Reply to All if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message.

#### **15. Take care with abbreviations and emoticons.**

In business emails, try not to use abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud). The recipient might not be aware of the meanings of the abbreviations and in business emails these are generally not appropriate. The same goes for emoticons, such as the smiley :-). If you are not sure whether your recipient knows what it means, it is better not to use it.

#### **16. Be careful with formatting.**

Remember that when you use formatting in your emails, the sender might not be able to view formatting, or might see different fonts than you had intended. When using colors, use a color that is easy to read on the background.

#### **17. Take care with rich text and HTML messages.**

Be aware that when you send an email in rich text or HTML format, the sender might only be able to receive plain text emails. If this is the case, the recipient will receive your message as a .txt attachment. Most email clients however, including Microsoft Outlook, are able to receive HTML and rich text messages.

#### **18. Do not forward chain letters.**

Do not forward chain letters. We can safely say that all of them are hoaxes. Just delete the letters as soon as you receive them.

If you receive an email message warning you of a new unstoppable virus that will immediately delete everything from your computer, this is most probably a hoax. By forwarding hoaxes you use valuable bandwidth and sometimes virus hoaxes contain viruses themselves, by attaching a so-called file that will stop the dangerous virus. The same goes for chain letters that promise incredible riches or ask your help for a charitable cause. Even if the content seems to be bona fide, the senders are usually not. Since it is impossible to find out whether a chain letter is real or not, the best place for it is the recycle bin.

#### **19. Do not use email to discuss confidential information.**

Sending an email is like sending a postcard. If you don't want your email to be displayed on a bulletin board, don't send it. Moreover, never make any libelous, sexist or racially discriminating comments in emails, even if they are meant to be a joke.

## **20. Use a meaningful subject.**

Try to use a subject that is meaningful to the recipient as well as yourself. For instance, when you send an email to a company requesting information about a product, it is better to mention the actual name of the product, e.g. 'Product A information' than to just say 'product information' or the company's name in the subject.

## **21. Use active instead of passive.**

Try to use the active voice of a verb wherever possible. For instance, 'We will process your order today', sounds better than 'Your order will be processed today'. The first sounds more personal, whereas the latter, especially when used frequently, sounds unnecessarily formal.

## **22. Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT.**

Even more so than the high-priority option, you must at all times try to avoid these types of words in an email or subject line. Only use this if it is a really, really urgent or important message.

## **23. Avoid long sentences.**

Keep E-mails short and to the point. An E-mail is meant to be a quick medium and requires a different kind of writing than letters. Take care not to send emails that are too long. If a person receives an email that looks like a dissertation, chances are it will not be read.

## **24. Don't send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.**

By sending or even just forwarding one libelous, or offensive remark in an email, you and the company can face court cases resulting in multi-million dollar penalties.

## **25. Don't reply to spam.**

By replying to spam or by unsubscribing, you are confirming that your email address is 'live'. Confirming this will only generate even more spam. Therefore, just hit the delete button or use email software to remove spam automatically ,

### ***As a final thought, good practice includes:***

1. Check e-mail regularly,
2. Reply promptly ,
3. Try to keep email messages brief, and
4. Be very careful how you express yourself.