EMAIL ETIQUETTE RECOMMENDATION FOR TODAY'S BUSINESS STUDENT

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ABSTRACT

Because of its many advantages over other forms of communication, electronic mail has experienced rapid growth in recent years and has become an indispensable tool in the business world. For this reason, email etiquette rules have also become an essential part of business communications. Just as etiquette rules should be followed in other forms of business correspondence, email etiquette rules should be followed in electronic correspondence.

As business students, there are some email etiquette practices you should learn and adopt when corresponding electronically in the business world. Your email correspondence needs to reflect positively on you as a professional.

Courtesy and professionalism need to be practiced in all business communications and in email correspondence more than ever. Because email is such a widely utilized form of communication, it is important to consider email etiquette practices when constructing email messages on mobile devices, in order to make good impressions, and when communicating during team communication.

Although email communication has been growing exponentially in recent years, communicating in person is still considered very important. Maintaining goodwill is a critical aspect of a company's going concern. Goodwill can be maintained via electronic correspondence and through in-person communication. Striking the right balance between virtual and personal communication is the most effective way to maximize the use of technology and yet sustain face time with people. The importance of face-to-face communication must not be forgotten in our fast-paced, technological world.

This study will make recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic mail has experienced rapid growth in recent years and has become an essential tool in the business world today. Email has many advantages and only a few disadvantages. The advantages are the primary reason email has become commonplace in all aspects of business operations. Therefore, etiquette rules must be followed in all forms of business correspondence. Courtesy should prevail when using mobile devices, communicating to virtual teams, and trying to make good impressions.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to recommend general email etiquette rules to follow to today's business students. First, the role email plays in the business world today was determined. Then, the research led to the formulation of email etiquette rules and universal recommendations for electronic business communication.
The findings of this study are organized into three main sections: electronic mail, email etiquette, and business communication and email. The electronic mail section explains what email is and the advantages and disadvantages of email. The email etiquette section is dissected further into mobile device considerations, virtual team considerations, and good impression considerations. The business communication and email section describe the importance of in-person communication in a technologically driven business world. Conclusions and recommendations about email etiquette are based on the findings of this study.

**ELECTRONIC MAIL**

In recent years, the rapid growth of electronic mail has been one of the most exciting communication developments (Lesikar, Flatley, & Rentz, 2008). To explain the sheer volume of email communication, Lesikar, Flatley, and Rentz (2008) state, "there are more emails sent every day than telephone calls" (p.96). Electronic mail has become a mainstream form of business communication and is used widely in both small and large organizations (Lesikar, Flatley, & Rentz, 2008). As any form of new technology, email has its advantages and disadvantages over other communication tools.

**Advantages**

Email's principal competitor is the telephone, and there are many reasons why email is a more effective communication tool than the telephone. According to Lesikar, Flatley, and Rentz (2008), the advantages of email include:

- Email eliminates "telephone tag."
- Email saves busy people time.
- Email can speed up decision making.
- Email is cost effective.
- Email provides written records.

**Disadvantages**

Although email provides many advantages, there are disadvantages as well:

- Email is not as private as it may seem (Hughes, Stolley, & Driscoll, 2007).
- Email does not communicate the sender's emotion and tone.
- Email may be ignored or deleted by the recipient (Lesikar, Flatley, & Rentz, 2008).

Although email has its disadvantages, the explosive growth of email continues and is expected to continue for some time (Lesikar, Flatley, & Rentz, 2008).

**EMAIL ETIQUETTE**

Courtesy should be practiced in all business communications and in email correspondence especially (Lesikar, Flatley, & Rentz, 2008). Email has rapidly become commonplace in today's society. Its volume surpasses that of the U.S. Postal Service (Lesikar, Flatley, & Rentz, 2008). Because email is such a widely utilized form of communication, it is important to consider email...
etiquette practices when constructing email messages on mobile devices, when communicating during team communication, and in order to make a good impression.

**Mobile Device Considerations**

The use of mobile devices to send and receive email has seen rapid growth in recent years. The BlackBerry and iPhone make it possible to communicate using email anywhere a cell phone signal connection can be made. There are some benefits to having the office in one's pocket; however, managing the daily flow of email is becoming a challenge (Forestier-Walker, 2007, p. 13). Forestier-Walker (2007) provides several tips about emailing to and from mobile devices:

- Resist the urge to press "reply to all."
- Do not read or send messages during meetings, when attending religious ceremonies, movies, or dinner parties.
- Respect personal time off (p. 13).

**Virtual Team Considerations**

According to Lindsell-Roberts and Settle-Murphy (2007), email is the lifeblood of virtual teams and other electronically collaborative efforts. Specific suggestions for emailing members of these virtual teams are as listed:

- Set boundaries.
- Standardize response times.
- Be clear, concise, and informative.
- Figure out what's important.
- Answer the "who, what, when, where, why and how."
- Think before you send.
- Always proofread.
- Be sensitive to cultural differences (p. 50).

Although Lindsell-Roberts and Settle-Murphy's (2007) suggestions were expressly regarding emailing virtual teams, many of their recommendations are transferrable to email etiquette in general (p. 50).

**Good Impression Considerations**

Using good manners, proper English, and sensitivity to bring a professional tone to electronic correspondence is another way professional businessmen and businesswomen can make a good impression (Mind Your E-mail Manners, 2003, p. 26). The Journal of Accountancy (Mind Your E-mail Manners, 2003) outlines several tips to ensure business emails reflect the sender in a positive light:

- Do not write in all capital letters; it is the equivalent of electronic shouting.
- Answer business emails within 24 hours.
- Squash the urge to forward chain emails.
- Watch the language.
- Resist attaching pictures, letters, and large documents to emails.
- When replying to an email, include the original in the body of the message.
- Turn on the auto-reply function if out of the office for an extended period of time (p. 26).
Writing clear, short paragraphs and being direct and to the point are ways to portray professionalism through email messages (Hughes, Stolley, & Driscoll, 2007). Professionals view their email accounts as another aspect of business. Writing unnecessarily long emails will only waste the recipient's time (Hughes, Stolley, & Driscoll, 2007). Keeping the courtesy is also important. Incorporating items such as a greeting and a goodwill close into the email message allows senders to control the tone, to influence how the message is perceived, and to make a more professional impression (Kallos, 2009).

BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS AND EMAIL

Although email communication has been growing exponentially in recent years, communicating in person is still considered very important. According to Hamstra's (2008) article in Supermarket News, phone calls and face-to-face conversations add a significant dimension that electronic communication cannot replace (p. 23).

Hamstra (2008) reported the discussion of panelists at a Network of Executive Women event. The panel is called "Leadership in a Virtual World" (p. 23). Many of the panelists agree that some communications should be done by email, but that nothing can beat sitting down and looking someone in the eyes and telling them how it is, or listening to them. The panelists also agree that tone and context can be lost in email messages and that communicating via phone or face-to-face is often more effective (Hamstra, 2008, p. 23).

On the other hand, none of the panelists could deny the extent to which they utilize electronic communications each day. One panelist explained, "Everything I do now is virtual . . . I work with people around the world, across the country and down the hall. We work in virtual teams" (Hamstra, 2008, p. 23). Striking the right balance between virtual and personal communication is the most effective way to maximize the use of technology and yet maintain face time with people.

CONCLUSIONS

Electronic mail is undeniably becoming an essential aspect of business operations. It is a communication tool that has many advantages. Electronic communications allow business professionals to connect and collaborate in new ways. However, common courtesy and professionalism need to be maintained in electronic communication as well. Lesikar, Flatley, and Rentz (2008) state as an important reminder, "People still judge you on how well you communicate . . . commercial email represents your company and your brand" (p.101). In conclusion, courtesy, professionalism, and etiquette must be maintained in all business relations, including email communication.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As business students, learning proper email etiquette is imperative before entering the business world. The findings of this study lead to the following overall recommendations:

- Know your audience
- Use proper English, grammar, spelling and punctuation
- Consult specific email etiquette instructions when electronically communicating under certain circumstances
- Always keep the courtesy
- Keep in mind the importance of face-to-face communication
Following these recommendations will ensure your email correspondence will reflect positively on you as a professional.

REFERENCES


