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## *Email Etiquette – Be Concise and Be Professional*

In a paper document, it is absolutely essential to make everything completely clear and unambiguous because your audience may not have a chance to ask for clarification. With email documents your recipient can ask questions immediately. Therefore, like conversational speech, email communication tends to be sloppier than communications on paper.

While I admit that it makes little sense to slave over a message for hours, making sure that your spelling is faultless, your words eloquent, and your grammar beyond approach, if the point of the message is to tell a co-worker that you are ready to go to lunch your business correspondence should take a much more professional approach.

### **What's the Subject?**

A useful subject line that leads into the body of the email will allow the recipient to mentally shift gears before reading the rest of your email. While it need not be long or a complete sentence, it should give the recipient a clue to the contents of the email. Always include a subject line in your email correspondence, otherwise it might be seen as spam and be automatically deleted by the recipient's spam blocker or automatically sent to the Junk or Trash folders and you will be left wondering "why" you never received a response to your inquiry.

### **And Your Point Would Be...?**

When possible, be brief. Get to your point as quickly as possible. However, please don't leave out necessary details. If providing a lot of background information will help the recipient answer your query, by all means, include it. You might even want to apologize for being so wordy in the beginning of the message.

Let's take a look at the following two examples of a technical support email, where the user is experiencing a problem.

Email 1: body of the message  
It doesn't work.

Email 2: body of message  
When I attempt to do "x" I receive the following error message "error description"

When the recipient of the email receives Email 1 they have no indication of what the true problem is, therefore, rectifying the problem may take up to 3 additional emails before a solution is provided.

When the recipient of the email receives Email 2 they immediately know when the problem happened and can quickly and efficiently provide a solution.

### **Plz Don't Abbrvt.**

While it's common for teenagers to send email messages using all sorts of abbreviations--U instead of you, 2 instead of to or too, plz instead of please, and thanx instead of thanks -- business email should be more formal.

Of course, frequently used abbreviations such as Mr. and Mrs., and FYI, and etc. are fine.

### **What's In a Name?**

Take a good look at your email address. What does it say about you? Are you a *sexymom@isp.com* or *qbsomething@isp.com*? Maybe.

But do you want a prospective business partner or potential client to think so?

Consider what information you are or are not conveying about yourself with your email address. Is it telling the recipient anything at all about you? Such as "what" your name is?

This is a common occurrence for those of us who create yahoo, hotmail, or even gmail addresses for the purpose of posting to forums, newsgroups, etc.; which, by the way, is fine for these types of situations. But using email addresses such as these when sending an inquiry regarding a service or product, tends only to portray to the recipient that we are attempting to "hide" our real identity for some reason.

### **And What About an Email Signature?**

Like a concise email name, take a good look at how you sign your emails. What information are you providing the recipient? Are you distinguishing the fact that you are a professional vs. a potential client or customer? We all should create an Email Signature block to be included at the bottom of every email we send.

A good email signature block should contain:

- Your full name
- Your Company Name
- Your Phone Number
- Your website URL

Including this information provides the recipient with additional information on how to reach you, should your inquiry require more assistance than an email can provide. It also conveys a higher level of professionalism and sets you apart from others.

Until next month.....

*Nancy*

