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Proper E-mail Etiquette--Part I

By Dean Phillips

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This article explains how to send effective e-mail replies. It also discusses why proper e-mail etiquette is necessary, and lists e-mail etiquette rules:

1. Always, Always, Always use a greeting.

Whatever happened to good old fashion courtesy and manners? For whatever reason, people just aren't as nice or considerate nowadays as they used to be.

For instance, I'm always amazed how many e-mails I receive that don't contain a single "hi," "hello," "good morning"—nothing! I just don't understand why people treat e-mail so casually, because e-mail is a form of communication and is really no different than answering your telephone and saying "hello." It's just the courteous thing to do.

You have to realize, people who don't know you form opinions and impressions about you, based on your e-mail communications. And if you come across as cold, rude, indifferent or unfriendly, it's a direct reflection on you and your company and it will negatively impact your business. Let's face it, we all like to do business with people we like.

Now if you're corresponding back and forth with someone several times a day, it's certainly not necessary to greet them in every single e-mail. However, your initial e-mail should always contain a greeting of some sort.

2. Be concise and to the point.

Don't make an e-mail longer than it needs to be. Remember that reading an e-mail is harder than reading printed communications and a long e-mail can be very trying to read.

3. Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions.

An e-mail reply must answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions – If you do not answer all the questions in the original e-mail, you will receive further e-mails

regarding the unanswered questions, which will not only waste your time and your customer's time but also cause considerable frustration.

4. Always reply promptly.

People send 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 24 hours, and preferably within the same working day. There's just no excuse not to be able to do that. If the e-mail is complicated, just send an e-mail back saying that you have received it and that you will get back to them shortly.

5. Do not attach unnecessary files.

By sending large attachments you can annoy customers and even bring down their e-mail system. Wherever possible try to compress attachments and only send attachments when they are productive. Moreover, you need to have a good virus scanner in place since your customers will not be very happy if you send them documents full of viruses!

6. Do not write in all CAPITALS.

IF YOU WRITE IN ALL CAPITALS, IT IS CONSIDERED 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 e-mail text in capitals.

7. Don't leave out the message thread.

When you reply to an e-mail, you must include the original mail in your reply, in other words click 'Reply', instead of 'New Mail'. Some people say that you must remove the previous message since this has already been sent and is therefore unnecessary. However, I disagree. If you receive many e-mails, you obviously cannot remember each individual e-mail. This means that a 'threadless e-mail' will not provide enough information and you will have to spend a frustratingly long time to find out the context of the e-mail 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 e-mails in their inbox!

8. Always proofread your e-mail before you send it.

A lot of people don't bother to read their e-mail before they send it out. This is evidenced by the many spelling and grammar mistakes contained in e-mails. Apart from this, reading your e-mail through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.

9. Mass Mailings: Use the Bcc: field or do a mail merge.

When sending an e-mail mailing, some people place all the e-mail addresses in the To: field. There are two drawbacks to this practice: (1) the recipient knows that you have sent the same message to a large number of recipients, and (2) you are publicizing someone else's e-mail address without their permission. One way to get round this is to place all addresses in the Bcc: field.

However, the recipient will only see the address from the To: field in their e-mail, so if this was empty, the To: field will be blank and this might look like spamming. You could include the mailing list e-mail address in the To: field, or even better, if you have Microsoft Outlook and Word you can do a mail merge and create one message for each recipient. A mail merge also allows you to use fields in the message so that you can for instance address each recipient personally.

10. Be careful with abbreviations and emoticons.

In business e-mails, 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 e-mails 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.

11. Don't forward virus hoaxes and chain letters.

If you receive an e-mail message warning you of a new super virus that will immediately delete everything from your computer, this is most likely 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 super 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 determine whether a chain letter is real or not, the best place for ALL chain letters is the recycle bin.

12. Never make any libelous, sexist or racially discriminating comments in e-mails, even if they are meant to be a joke. There's nothing remotely funny about those types of comments. All they do is perpetuate an ugly, endless cycle of ignorance and intolerance.

13. Don't send or forward e-mails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.

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

There's too much of this garbage already being circulated on the Internet. Don't get involved with this ignorant and irresponsible behavior.

14. Don't reply to SPAM.

By replying to SPAM or by unsubscribing, you are confirming

that your e-mail address is "live." Confirming this will only generate even more SPAM. Therefore, just hit the delete button or use e-mail software to remove SPAM automatically.

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Business Etiquette

By Neil Payne

Business etiquette is in essence about building relationships with people. In the business world, it is people that influence your success or failure. Etiquette, and in particular business etiquette, is simply a means of maximising your business potential.

If you feel comfortable around someone and vice versa, better communication and mutual trust will develop. This comfort zone is realised through presenting yourself effectively. Business etiquette helps you achieve this.

Business etiquette revolves around two things. Firstly, thoughtful consideration of the interests and feelings of others and secondly, minimising misunderstandings. Both are dependent upon self conduct. Business etiquette polishes this conduct.

Business etiquette varies from region to region and country to country. For the international business person, focusing too deeply on international business etiquette would leave no time for business. However, there are some key pillars upon which good business etiquette is built.

Behaviour

Your manners and attitude will speak volumes about you. They will point to your inner character. If you come across selfish, undisciplined or uncouth your relationship is unlikely to prosper. Appropriate business etiquette promotes positive traits.

Honesty

A reputation for delivering what you say will deliver goes a long way in the business world. Remember, a reputation for integrity is slowly gained but quickly lost. Understanding a particular country's business etiquette provides a framework in which you can work without fear of crossing boundaries in terms of agreements, promises and contracts.

Character

Your character refers to what you as an individual bring to the business table. Proper business

etiquette allows you to exhibit your positive qualities. For example, knowing when to be passionate and not emotional or self-confident without being arrogant. Just through learning another's business etiquette you demonstrate an open-mindedness which will earn respect.

Sensitivity

Sensitivity and consideration underlie all good business etiquette. Being prepared for foreign ways and methods and responding thoughtfully is achieved through experience and business etiquette know-how. By avoiding misunderstandings and misinterpretations through business etiquette you lay

foundations for a strong business relationship.

Diplomacy

Avoiding thoughtless words and actions protects you from negative consequences. Impulse often leads a business person astray. Business etiquette encourages the careful thought of the interests of others and choosing acceptable forms of expression.

Appearance

Dressing appropriately, standing and sitting in the right place at the right time, good posture and looking physically presentable are all elements in making a good impression. Business etiquette teaches you how to suitably present yourself and what to avoid.

Analysing, understanding and implementing the above will help you recognise what business etiquette is and how it should be employed within the business world.

For the international business person business, etiquette acts as a key. It locks the doors of poor communication and misunderstandings and opens doors to successful business relationships.

Neil Payne is Director of

Business Etiquette
Business Meeting Etiquette
Business Card Etiquette
Leotard Etiquette - Should You Be Wearing One?
Business Letter Etiquette

Mega-Wealth Audio Library
Build Your Own Mail Order Empire
Free List Pro
Stamp Collector Software
Profitable Puppets



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