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Using Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) For Email Privacy

By Robin Henry

Need for Privacy

People have become hypersensitive about their privacy during the last few years. They now expect that their details will be used only for the purposes for which they have been provided and not shared by original trustees. This is especially true of email addresses because of the huge volume of unsolicited commercial email (spam) circulating the web.

In Australia and elsewhere, there are statutes requiring privacy when collecting and using personal information. (In Australia the Privacy Act (Commonwealth) was recently amended to include private sector use of personal information eg, medical records retained by private practices).

In an increasingly litigious society, there are not only sound business reasons, but legal reasons why you should ensure the strictest standards of privacy are applied to personal information of which you are custodian. Despite this, numbers of people using email unwittingly reveal the email addresses of other people to whom they are sending email.

This article tells you how to maintain client confidentiality when sending email to multiple addressees by using Blind Carbon Copy or BCC.

Blind Carbon Copy

The term Blind Carbon Copy is a hangover from the dim, dark ages before word processors when we used typewriters (some of you have probably never seen a typewriter). To produce multiple copies of a document, one had to place a sheet of carbon paper between sheets of plain paper so that the type key impact on the top sheet would be copied to the second sheet (and any subsequent sheets).

It was a somewhat messy, but proficient process. When one wanted to send an original letter to one person and copies to several other people without showing each recipient who the other recipients were, a BCC annotation was made on the original. Each copy displayed only the name and address of the individual recipient, but the BCC notation on the original showed to whom the copies had been mailed. A BCC looked like this: Bcc: Mr Tom Jones, 14 Weaving Court, East Melbourne VIC 3000

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Some email programs allow you to enter email addresses into the BCC field and send them. When you do that each recipient receives your message, but the names of other recipients are not displayed.

That is why they are called `blind' - they are not seen.

By using the BCC feature you preserve the identities of those who are on your mailing list and ensure that anyone receiving your email cannot email your list or harvest their email addresses and sell them.

Your Email Program

When you obtain an email program, make sure it has a `Blind Carbon Copy (BCC)' feature. Programs

such as Outlook Express and Outlook 200? have BCC capability. Although I have never used it, I'd be surprised if Eudora and other common email programs didn't have it too.

If when you click to send a new email your email client displays only the To ... and Cc ... boxes it may be that the Bcc feature IS available, but is simply not displayed. Try the View menu or Help menu to see if you can find a Bcc option.

If your email program has a BCC option that you can select as a permanently visible option, select it. If it doesn't, you may need to think about getting a new program.

How to Use BCC

When you send email messages to multiple addressees and you do not want each addressee to know who else has received a copy, use the Blind Carbon Copy field.

Simply enter all the addresses in the BCC field separated by a semi-colon, comma, or whatever your program uses. When you click the send button, your email will go to each individual with only his or her name in the To field. None of the recipients knows to who else the email has been sent.

Outlook 200? will allow you to send BCC addressed email without an address in the To field. Other email clients require at least one address in the To field before they allow multiple recipient addresses in the BCC field. Test the program you use to see if it needs to have an addressee in the To field. If so, address it to yourself. (Surprisingly, email programs usually allow us to email ourselves ... that's why I receive so many emails from Jennifer Lopez (just joking).

If you need to make an entry in the To field, place your own email address in that field and everyone else's address in the BCC field.

Disadvantages

What you need to know about BCC is that some spam filters automatically delete email addressed in the BCC field so it never reaches its destination. This means that while sending BCC is okay for

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privacy, your email might not always reach the intended recipients.

A problem I had with Outlook Express 2002 was that if I sent my email using BCC I couldn't print a hard copy of the sent message with the addresses on it. I had to write address details on my file copies for record keeping purposes.

If sending BCC email is likely to be impractical for you, then you need to consider upgrading your email client from the standard run-of-the-mill version to a professional version. That's what I did.

Email Management Programs

If, like me, you distribute large quantities of email regularly to newsletter subscribers, clients, club members, colleagues or anyone else, you will be better off getting a program designed for high volume mailings.

I use and sell a heavy duty bulk email program that lets me do simply, many tasks not easy to achieve with standard email clients like Outlook 2002. For example, the program I use will allow me to:

Automatically record subscriptions to my newsletter

Personalise each email with a recipient's name or any other information I choose to include eg, place of residence

Send as HTML or plain text with or without attachments

Do a partial send to my distribution list eg, if I wanted to email everyone in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, clients 64–73 of 3,000 or all persons whose title is Ms I can do it

By having a separate program for bulk emailing, I overcome the problems involved with privacy and reduce the likelihood that my messages will be eliminated by overzealous spam engines.

If you rely on email to carry out business activities (and who doesn't?), it may be time to consider how well your email strategy meets the needs of your business in today's security conscious society. More information and a free download that will help you save time can be found at our site.

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Robin is an HR specialist and Internet marketer who helps businesses work smarter. He frequently tries and tests time-saving software and services and reveals tips for working smarter.

Email Etiquette IV

By Kathie M. Thomas

Further to my previous issues this subject continues – part IV. This month I'll share on Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) field and the use of backgrounds for your emails. The use of Bad language in emails will

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also be mentioned.

Many people do not understand the function of the BCC field in their email programs. When you set up a new message, if you cannot view the BCC field after TO: and CC: then click on View to see if you can add it to your current view, or check your Help file for the program you use for assistance. BCC is an old typing term – 'Blind Carbon Copy'. It means a copy of a letter or document that is being sent to someone not showing on the original addressee or distribution list. To use BCC in email means that recipients only see their address on received email and not the list of people that you've sent the email to. I often receive emails from people in business who put every single recipient address in the TO: or CC: fields, when in fact they should be placed in the BCC: field. Your distribution list should be kept private so you are not exposing firstly, who your clients are, and secondly, their email addresses, should a spammer or someone unscrupulous come across the email. If you're sending out a newsletter, or a merged letter by post you wouldn't have your full address list or database included with that mail for all to see – so why do it with your email?

Backgrounds

There is a great supply of backgrounds now available for use in various email programs – which help make your emails look more attractive and less boring. However, some backgrounds would be better used as wallpaper on your computer desktop and make it difficult to read the email message you are sending. If you want to use them, keep them for family and friends, but stick with fairly plain backgrounds for business email. I like to use those that have a simple corner frame, or a side border with a pale background but never a background that has a print across the whole of the email that makes it difficult to read the text. And if you are replying to an email that uses a background give some consideration as to whether it should continue to be there or whether the background should be deleted before sending the email response.

Bad Language

On occasion over the past few months I've noticed some messages with bad language posted to online discussion groups that are usually maintained for business purposes, i.e. those groups that are designed to assist people with their line of business. Whilst I appreciate that we all get annoyed with some things I really do not feel that bad language has a place in a public forum that is used for business. Perhaps this might be an old fashioned value but I doubt that people would write a business letter using bad language so I cannot understand them doing the same when posting a message to a business group. Think carefully when writing your email – is the language you are using something that might offend another person? Could the message get in front of someone you'd like to do business with? How would you like them to think of you? It only takes a moment to think about what you're written and to read it again before sending it on.

I hope you have found these tips for Email Etiquette interesting and thought-provoking. For any assistance relating to the use of email please feel free to contact our team.

Article reprinted by permission Kathie M. Thomas, Founder "A Clayton's Secretary". Kathie is a multiple award winner in her industry as a Secretary and Virtual Business Operator, and has 30 years'

experience in the secretarial/ administrative field.

Email Etiquette IV

Email Tips

The Top 10 Easy Ezine Development and Promotion Tips

Ten Ways Not To Use Email

Email and Newsgroup Etiquette

Email Spider Software

Instant Email Scramble

Guerrilla Mailer

Email Commando

Free Government Grants



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