Ecommunication: Harnessing Cyber Civility

M. Laurel Walsh
Associate Director
Writing Services
Walden University

An Overview

Written Communication in an Asynchronous Setting:

- What is expected of us?

- What is appropriate for us to expect from others?

- Viewing written correspondence as the intersection of audience, purpose, and tone.

- Email etiquette, cyber civility, and modeling excellence.

What would you do if…

You received this message:

"We are getting less than 40 hours of work from a large number of our EMPLOYEES. As managers, you either do not know what your EMPLOYEES are doing or you do not CARE. In either case, you have a problem and you will fix it or I will replace you. NEVER in my career have I allowed a team which worked for me to think they had a 40-hour job. I have allowed YOU to create a culture which is permitting this. NO LONGER. You have two weeks. Tick Tock!" (Delves, 2001)

Employee Morale Matters

The previous quote was from Neal Patterson, chairman of the board, chief executive officer and co-founder of Cerner Corporation.

After the email was released, company stock plummeted 22% as analysts questioned the impact on company morale.

Efail?

Did you know that 28% of our work day is spent on unnecessary email interruptions?

Estimated cost of wasted time by knowledge workers equals $650 billion dollars per year (Spira, 2008).

Cyber Courtesy Counts

- The golden rule still works; do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

- Paying attention to our emotional reaction is the first step toward civility in tone.

- Awareness of audience, purpose, and tone creates a culture of communication excellence.

Patience is a Virtue

Email is a form of mail. We don't assume an immediate response when we put a letter in the mail, but we get impatient while waiting for a response to an email.

Instant Message

Use your instant message capabilities for quick questions.

IM can be used to (a) set up a time to chat, (b) clarify a request from a colleague, (c) verify a phone conference number, or (d) any quick turn around issue.

IM is the ecommunication form of a phone call.

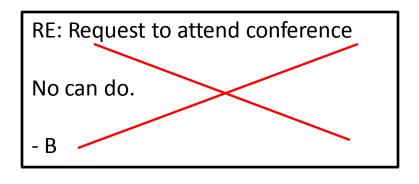Email is the ecommunication form of a letter.

Email Ettiquette

Following the best practice suggestions can enhance the quality of asynchronous written communication.

Exceptions exist, but the following information can help facilitate online communication.

Use Salutations

In initial electronic communication, use salutations to ease into back and forth electronic conversations.

RE: Request to attend conference

No can do.

- B

RE: Request to attend conference

Hi, Maria. Sorry . . . We just don't have money in the budget right now.

- Betty

Subject Lines Rock!

Good subject lines are arrows to the message that you are sending:

- All important information should be available in the subject line.

- People are less likely to lose the email.

- People are less likely to ignore it.

Be Concise

- Using an economy of words is essential.

- Having read your message, the reader should know exactly what you need, and should *want* to do what you've asked.

Avoid an abundance of acronyms

Unless you're positive everyone reading your message knows all of the acronyms, avoid their overuse.

TO: Jim G.; Kris P.; Ernesto E.; Velma Q.; Susana R.; Enrico A.; Robin R.

RE: IMF needs a Q-RET before the ASC3 is filed with a PET

All: Received your IMF. Did you talk to the folks in Q-RET about first getting a DERT? The new REM in PET will need you to fill out an ASC3 if you are going to pursue TXMX certification. Thx.

Avoid Curt

Be concise but not clipped. One boss lost her star employee based on a two-word email she sent to him following a major presentation that stated simply:

Good job

The employee felt it was a sarcastic jab, and he started sending out resumes. The issue was cleared up in an exit interview. His boss said later that she lost a lot of money by omitting one exclamation mark.

Compose in Haste; Regret in Leisure

- Avoid immediately sending an email that you composed while angry. Save the draft and reread it later.

Vent and Save to Drafts

To rage is human; just don't press send. Emails are not the place to express this feeling. Do not send an email that you would not read out loud to the person if they were standing in front of you.

Reply vs. Reply All

Questions to ask when you choose Reply All:

- Does everyone need to know?

- Do I want everyone to know?

- Could this upset anyone?

- Who is my audience for this piece of communication?

Ignoring Is an Answer

- Avoiding an email is one way to deal with contact that is not professional.

- By not replying to an email, you are indicating that you do not want to communicate your response.

- All econversations end.

CAPS LOCK

- Using all caps looks like yelling.

- Don't do it.

- Even if you feel like yelling (actually, *especially* if you feel like yelling).

NonWalden Real Life Example

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  AS OF THIS POINT I HAVE NOT RECEIVED A RESPONSE FROM ANYONE. THE DIRECTORS WERE BUSY MISSING THE FORECAST BY 200 HOURS YESTERDAY SO THEY DID NOT HAVE TIME TO RESPOND. BEFORE I SEND THE DAILY REPORT I AM GOING TO GIVE YOU 4 HOURS TO REVIEW THE NUMBERS YOURSELF.

  I AM SPENDING A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF TIME ON THESE REPORTS AND I DO NOT INTEND FOR IT TO BE WASTED

  IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE SAID BUT I WILL SAY IT ANYWAY - PROFITABILITY IS A FUNCTION OF YOUR JOB RESPONSIBILITY

Thanks, Sam

Answer and Anticipate

- We receive many similar emails, so try to recognize patterns and answer preemptively.

- You will seem like Radar O'Reilly (and that is a good thing).

How to Help

- To: <u>WritingSupport@waldenu.edu</u>

  I HAVE TRIED to schedule an appt. NO open times through April!!!! No white spots to sign up! On waiting list but that is not really helpful.....WHY can't i sign up??????????? I ned a DISSERTATION EDITOR.

  I need March 15, March 22, or March 29 or last resort, April 12.   WHat is going on that I don't see any white spots for me to sign up for an appt??????????????????????????????

Email as Mail

- What do you do to letters addressed to "Dear Occupant"?

- Personalize the response.

- Remind yourself that this is communication between you and another person.

- Worst rejection letter I ever received came addressed: Dear Poet/Fiction Author/Memoirist….

Composition and Composure

The act of writing involves three aspects, cognitive, affective, and interpersonal. The cognitive aspects of writing include having ideas, being able to present those ideas in written language, and being able to organize them sufficiently to be understood. (Brilliant, 2005, p. 506)

Best Practice Suggestions

Elementary Principles of ecomposition:

- In email messages, keep paragraphs short.
- Make the paragraph the unit of composition (the paragraph is the house for one idea to live in).
- Use the active voice.
- Omit unnecessary words.
- Put statements in positive form.
- Use definite, specific, concrete language.