



Email Etiquette - Ask the Publisher

By Edward F. Nesta

Email has become so much a part of our lives, it is instant gratification, but have we misplaced the etiquette and importance of constructing a proper communication?

I'll send you an email; Hey did you get my email; Let's email; Drop me an email; Didn't you hear about it, I emailed you. This has become one of the most informal methods of communications available, and it may have replaced "Let's do lunch," but should it always be so informal? To me, email is fraught with a lack of understanding on how, what, and when to send messages.

I am not going to touch the area of Spam, the email type not the food, although spam the food often gets a similar reaction as that of email spam. I am concerned about the lack of respect that people show through their email messages. A few of my email pet peeves are:

- » Inclusion of everyone from the Manhattan phone book on the "To" or "Cc" line.

Where was this emailer when the discussion on Cc and Bcc was conducted during "Email 101" class, or covered in the book "Email for Dummies?" I personally do not like to have a Who's Who (most of the time I do not know who) to have my email address. This form of sending an email becomes even more of an issue when someone sends out questionable content and you struggle to try to remember who the person is that is sending the email, as well as thinking "Oh my, who is going to see my email address on this email?"

What really gets to me is that it takes the same amount of time to build a list of names on the Bcc line as it does on the To or Cc.

- » The use of the option to 'Recall This Message' for sent items.

First, we have to understand the difference between working on an Intranet (internal office Internet that can handle this option) versus the World Wide Web [Internet], which cannot recall a message once it has been sent. An incorrectly sent message via the Internet is akin to the judge saying, "Strike that from the records" during a court case, yeah right, we are going to forget what was just said, or delete that missent email. Depending on the message content and its sensitivity, you may have to contact each person individually; do not use the response, "but, I sent out a Recall This Message email."

- » The use of "Reply to All."

Okay, in some cases the "Reply to All" is the right course of action to those who properly used the "To or Cc" to include relevant people on a message, but in the case of the "To/Cc" abuser this becomes a series of shots fired over the bow as everyone gets copied on typically irrelevant information, and soon your delete folder starts to fill up as the people on the To/Cc line fire back via the "Reply to All."

- » Not using the Bcc option.

The use of Bcc in letter writing is synonymous with CYA, and in this format it is used correctly.

An email blast (to many people) is fine, just do not blast it to everyone via the To or Cc option. It is just as easy to place all the email addresses in the Bcc area, and it is a much cleaner email to read.

- » Having to click down through the series of attachments to view an email.

This is one process that drives me crazy, so I have set up my own email rule - "Delete any email that is buried within a set of attachments." I believe that the person who sent the email is getting back at me by adding an additional layer on to what they had to click to read the message, but my rule trumps them all - one click to the delete folder.

- » The forgotten feature - Spell Check

There are many different solutions to handle processing email (example: Microsoft Outlook, Outlook Express, Mozilla, Yahoo, Google, AOL, and MSN), and there is one constant feature across the solutions, and it is called "Spell Check."

Just one click on the "Spell Check" button and it will open a whole new world of information while enhancing and tightening up your message. So, why is it that it may be the least used feature? There seems to be no problem selecting the "Urgent" button for an email, but are people a bit intimidated by the spell check feature? Do not be intimidated; be forceful and sure of yourself. The next email you send, just move your mouse in a direct and confident manner to the "spell check" feature, click the button, and open a window to opportunity.

Within a business environment or business relationship, I still advocate a properly constructed email with a greeting, body of content, and a salutation will differentiate you in a positive manner. In addition, if you are doing business to an international clientele, I have found that a crisp to the point and well structured message has more positive impact and has less chance of being misunderstood. I feel that people who are 'connected' via an email capable mobile device should be selective in responding to emails as it is difficult to construct a formatted response, so wait until you can communicate your thoughts succinctly.

Email can be a tremendous medium to stay in touch or open a new line of communications, but remember that email can be your altar-ego, and that you are viewed through the way you communicate through your email. You are what you email.

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