Emails at Work

Kamran Khodaparasti

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Part 1

Important General Points

We live in an era where the use of **email** has become an inseparable part of our lives.

There are some important general points governing the use of emails which must be observed.

If you are working in a company, paying attention to the following points can make your emails more effective and efficient.

There is a tendency at work to use the same rather informal, colloquial or even abbreviated style of writing that is routinely used in non-work related communications. More often than not, this means that grammatical correctness, spelling, punctuation, and structure are not considered important, and that rules and conventions may be ignored. While this could be considered acceptable outside work, this is not the case in business. As with more traditional formal documents, emails are still "a written mode of communication that highlights a person's ability - or inability - to write"

1 Regard any email message as a formal memorandum.

Emails should be used for short messages.

2

Generally, emails should be used to convey specific information, short answers or advice on particular issues, or as the modern equivalent of a covering memorandum which relates to attached documents. Emails are not suitable for presenting a large body of information or tables. It is highly likely that any formatting will be lost in the sending and receipt of the message. This means that the message can come out garbled. Therefore, for reasonably sized documents or where formatting is important e.g. tables are required, use attachments prepared in the word processor.

Email is not a substitute for meeting and talking with the recipient(s), or for telephone conversations. So in the majority of cases, talk to the recipient before sending your message. The email is then used to summaries the discussion. The main advantages are that the recipients will not be surprised, the likelihood of misunderstanding is minimized or avoided.

if you can't start the message with "As discussed", then don't bother sending it.

3

time for discussion

If Email don't have an objective, then the more you say, and the more often you say it, the less likely it is that anyone will pay attention and the more likely it is that you'll create problems for yourself and the company.

Emails must have a definite purpose.

4

Emails are forever.

5

Emails can be rapidly and widely distributed, easily stored and can come back to haunt the author. They are their own records and can be held against you. Therefore take great care in creating your email message, choose the words carefully and make sure that it's properly reviewed and approved. Include only content that is appropriate to your professional position at work. The normal steps taken in preparing and issuing a memorandum must be followed when generating an email.

Clearly state the action you want to be taken, or your recommendation. Make sure that it is not inferred or buried in many lines of text.

6

Clearly state the action you want to be taken.
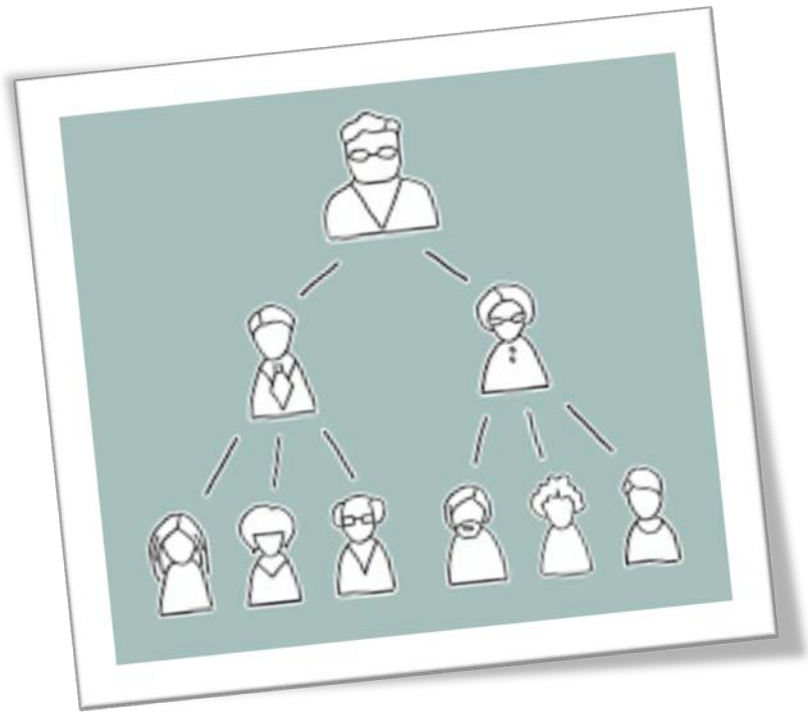
7

Company's chain of command must be respected.

Do not use emails to circumvent correct communication channels and schedules of authorities. There have been examples of people at a lower corporate level writing to general managers or higher levels, with complaints or asking for information or follow-up.
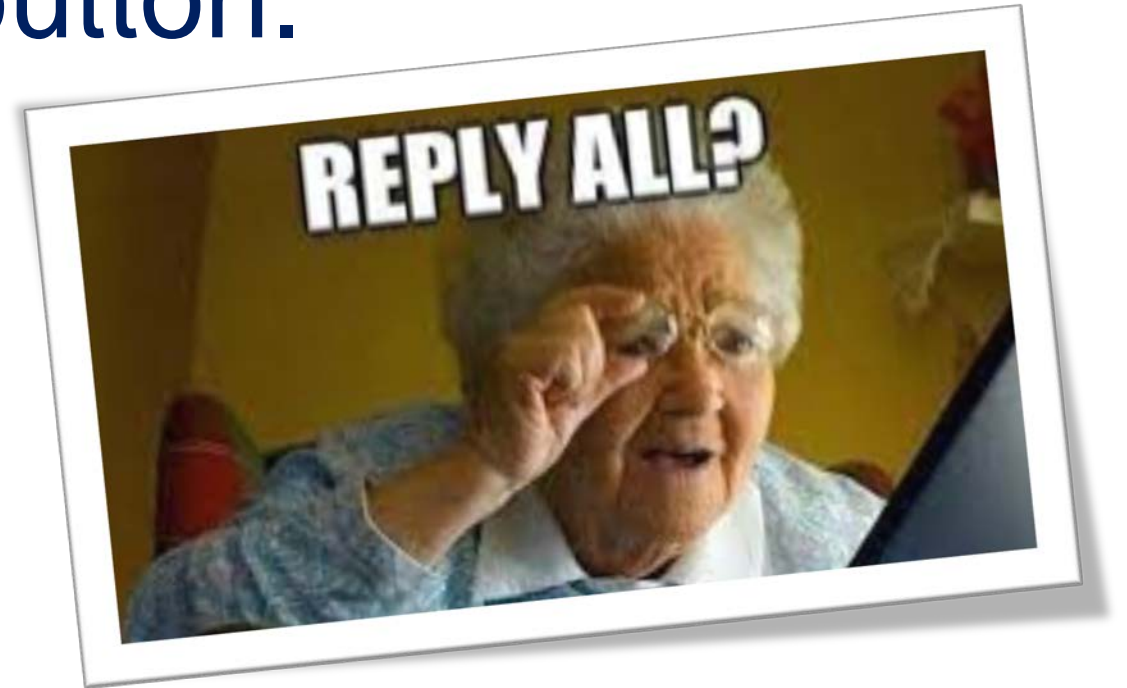
Ensure that they are the appropriate and relevant people for your message. It is equally important that you do not include someone who should not or would not want to receive your message.

Decide carefully on the addressee(s) and the distribution list.

8

When replying to emails, do not just hit the "reply to all" button.

9

Ensure that the recipients i.e. the addressee(s) and those on the copy circulation list are relevant to the subject and the message. Too many times an email is initiated and copied to multiple parties, many of whom do not need to be copied, and probably do not want to be copied. Hence do not add to the problem by thoughtlessly replying to everyone.

Sometimes you will receive an email, which is very upsetting and can easily move you to anger. This sort of unprofessional behavior goes on in any organization. In such a situation do not reply immediately, in the heat of the moment. Allow yourself some breathing space to calm down, and discuss the matter with your supervisor and/or colleagues. If you decide to reply, then prepare a formal, cold, technical and factual reply. Your reply must be kept on a technical level highlighting the deficiencies, whatever they might be, in the original message. It should not be a personal attack on the originator of the email message. Typically send your reply the next day.

10

Sometimes you will receive an antagonistic or abusive email.

Never use emails to call for a meeting.

11

Always talk to people in person or via telephone to establish the mutually convenient date and time, and then follow up with a final email of confirmation. If you don't do this then you can end up with many, many emails, all with different views, suggestions, and changes, all of which clog up the inboxes with useless information.

To avoid the tone of your message and your attitude being misunderstood, never use emoticons, and be careful with your use of conventional punctuation e.g. even an exclamation mark can appear as very strong and threatening.

Never use emogis.

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13

Most emails are not needed.

As everyone is well aware, we are inundated with emails at work. Supervisors can easily get more than 50 in a day. Most emails are not needed, but unfortunately all have to be read at some stage in case there is a real request or action item. Therefore, contribute to improving the system by ensuring that your messages really are required and by copying only those who really are concerned with the subject. Do not use general copy lists.

Part 2

Etiquette and Conventions

In addition to the main points in writing and sending emails, there are also a series of common points that may be used as etiquette or netiquette.

Etiquette is a French word which originally meant "small ticket". In France, those who participated in ceremonies or public gatherings were given small tickets on which were written instructions that the holder of the ticket should behave during the ceremony. It has been nearly two decades that the word netiquette was created from the combination of the words network and etiquette, and it means the rules of online behavior.

Use appropriate size and font for example, Arial or Calibri size 10 or 12 font. Use black rather than different colors for the text, which do not print or copy well. If you have edited a message for forwarding, then it is likely that the changes are shown in a different color. Therefore, before sending the message, ensure that all the text is in black.

Use appropriate size and font.

1

Font 10
Font 16
Font 22
Font 28
Font 34
Font 40

Do not use 'artistic' backgrounds in your email messages.

2

Do not use colored, 'flowery' or 'artistic' backgrounds in your email messages. They are distracting, frustrating and annoying and have no place in a professional document.

Start the message with the name(s) of the recipients only, and ensure that the names are spelled correctly to avoid inadvertent insults. It is also acceptable not to have any names but just start with the message.
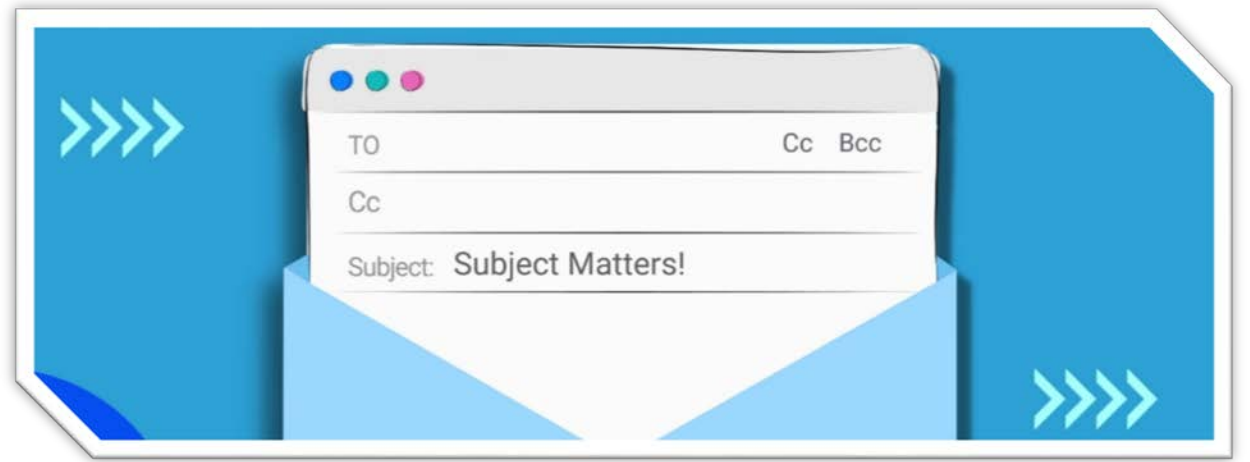
Name is very important. **3**

you named me
WHAT!?

4

Choose the subject title carefully.

The subject must be relevant, succinct, and in some cases may even effectively summarize the purpose and content of the message e.g. a meeting time and date. Do not leave the subject line blank, or use an irrelevant title – this leads to confusion and creates some doubt about the subject. Do not reply to an email, retaining the subject, and then write about a different topic. This is lazy and confuses the reader, and it's unprofessional.

Remember to actually attach the attachment, and check that the attachment is what you want it to be. Open the attachment and check it before sending any message. If you need to revise an attachment to an email, save the attachment as a separate file with a new name, revise and save the document, and then attach it to your outgoing email message. Do not update the existing attachment and keep the same file name. This is procedurally wrong, it is confusing at the very least and it could have serious implications if the information is misinterpreted or wrongly used.

5

Attachments

Use complete, grammatical sentences.

6

Emails are not the modern equivalent of telexes in which it was a point of honor to minimize the number of words, as well as the cost. There are examples of people who still use this minimalist approach and their messages are sometimes incomprehensible. In particular make sure that you use the indefinite article 'a', and the definite article 'the', as appropriate. Emails must be grammatically correct. Do not use shortcuts and abbreviations that are accepted for private communication and 'sms-ing' e.g. do not use "u r l8" but "you are late".

In general be polite e.g. the genuine use of the words 'please' and 'thanks' will certainly enhance your message. However there are also occasions when your message needs to be very formal and firm, and to achieve this tone, the words, structure and even the distribution list need to be carefully selected.

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Use of the words 'please' and 'thanks' will certainly enhance your message.

Use subtitles and bullets, as appropriate, to present information clearly.

8

- Management
  - Leads
    - Individual Contributor

Even though emails are generally short documents compared to memoranda and reports, they must be structured in the same way. Use subtitles and bullets, as appropriate, to present information clearly.

The easiest thing in the world is to define a deadline at the end of the email, for example, ask the recipient of your email to deliver the requested work by tomorrow. The best way is to talk to your recipient before sending the email and find out about the amount of work they have and then coordinate with them to determine the date. Even if there is no way and the date you want to announce to the recipient is certain, it is still better to talk to the recipient before sending your email and tell him this compulsion and ask for his cooperation. You will definitely get a better result.

9

Due date rules

To: sarahj@gmail.com
Cc: norman@gmail.com
From: zoe.brn@readdle.com

10 Dear Sir/Madam, Colleagues

There is a lot of variation in organizational cultures, but what is common in most cases is the need to respect the organizational hierarchy in using people's names, for example, it is true that your manager's boss is also considered your colleague, but using the title Dear Colleagues at the beginning of the email and putting he/she in CC is not nice. This happens mostly when we have placed many people in the CC of the email, all of whom do not have the same organizational ranks. It has been seen that in some companies, the sensitivity to this issue is so much that people's names should even be placed in the CC email in order of seniority.

This presentation was developed by Kamran Khodaparasti.

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References:
BAPCO technical writing style guide
Personal experience

kkhodaparasti@yahoo.com

www.linkedin.com/in/khodaparasti

kamrankhodaparasti.ir