

Tips for Effective E-Mail Communication

E-mail has revolutionized the way we communicate; it is fast, effective, and saves time, but e-mail has inherent risks. An inappropriate e-mail can ruin someone's day, disintegrate interpersonal relationships, and in some cases damage a person's reputation or cost someone his or her job.

E-Mail is **not** meant to be a weapon of mass destruction or a substitute for face to face communication when there are difficult issues to confront. Interpersonal etiquette demonstrates respect and collegiality. Etiquette is no less important in e-mail form. E-mails are permanent records, easily misunderstood, and difficult to mitigate if they are offensive. The following guidelines will help ensure effective e-mail communications:

Before you click "send:"

- ✓ Be sure there is a greeting and closing, the message should always be polite. (Follow-up communications may be less formal.)
- ✓ Write using proper grammar, punctuation and spelling and make sure your message is clear.
- ✓ Eliminate needless words and sentences—keep the message brief and to the point, this is respectful to the time of others.
- ✓ DO NOT USE ALL CAPITALS AS THIS IS CONSIDERED SHOUTING IN AN E-MAIL
- ✓ Be sure that the message is appropriate for an e-mail—avoid counseling or reprimanding by e-mail, gossip or highly personal subject matter.
- ✓ Ensure that it is not aggressive, venting, or could be perceived as offensive
- ✓ Be sure it's sent only to those who need to know, and avoid blind copying.
- ✓ Do not forward others' emails without permission if there is sensitive information or the sender intended the message to be private.
- ✓ Be sure it is professional and not a personal attack
- ✓ Be sure that you do not react to an offensive e-mail in an e-mail, ask to speak or meet. Responding in kind only escalates the problem and causes more damage.
- ✓ Be sure that the motivation for sending the e-mail is to communicate, accomplish something positive and build relationships, **not** to alleviate one's frustration, demean or embarrass others or score points.