

Top 5 Email Blunders and How to Avoid Them

By Judy Sheridan

Most of us rely on email as one of our primary communication tools, and given the number of messages we send and receive each day, we do it with remarkable success. You can make or break your first impression in one email. This common daily means of communication has the potential to be extremely volatile if you are not careful. The approach you take to your email etiquette could enhance your level of professionalism or seriously harm your career with the stroke of a key. The more emails we send, the more likely we are to mess one up, and simple email mistakes can be disastrous. They can cost us a raise, promotion or even a job. Here are some common mistakes and the steps you can take to avoid them.

Blunder #1: Personal email address

Many people make the mistake of using an inappropriate email address to send a resume from without realizing the repercussions. Don't send a resume that asks someone to respond to purplepeopleeater@gmail.com. Don't risk your personality being judged by a silly email address.

How to avoid: If you are applying for a position, create an email address in Gmail, Hotmail, etc. that is professional. Keep it to pieces of your name or profession. It can be as simple as 1ITdirector@gmail.com or mary.smith@hotmail.com.

Blunder #2 Using email as speech

Sending a confidential email to the wrong person or impulsively can have more serious, career-impacting consequences. Email has become the preferred method of communication for many people in business, but if not used properly, it can become hazardous to relationships and careers. Email is a silent form of communication. One can neither see you as you say the words nor hear your vocal inflections. The message is contained entirely in the words you choose to write and send and therefore your messages should be clear, concise and specific.

How to avoid: Re-read your emails before you hit send. Because the reader misses out on the nuances of your verbal and visual delivery the results are often miscommunication and misunderstandings. This can be avoided by taking the time to proof read your email. Only use CC or BCC as an information tool. Make sure the people copied on your emails are not responsible for replying to these emails and that the information sent is relevant information for that person to receive.

Blunder #3 Venting Frustrations

We tend to want to write out our frustration when we get angry or anxious at work. Writing and emailing using all caps and numerous exclamation marks will always imply YELLING AT SOMEONE!!!!

How to avoid: Write your angry email, write away, get it all out, but don't you dare send it. Maybe give it to someone else you trust to read first. Or, save as a draft. Reread it later when you have calmed down and think about how you would rephrase or even if you still want to send it. Sometimes just writing will help you work through your frustrations and you will feel much better after.

Blunder #4 Relying on email exclusively

Email quickly provides written information. But never let the convenience of email overshadow the value of a phone call or face-to-face meeting. The human touch is often missing from our communications and customers and co-workers alike may appreciate the time and effort it took for you to call or stop by.

How to avoid: Remember not everyone is as connected as you. If it's urgent, pick up the phone or try doing both at once – send an email, but call as well to give the recipient a “heads up.” Hearing your message will enhance their reading of it.

Blunder #5 Forgetting your manners

Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar are important. Remember that emails can be saved, shared, and printed. Not knowing how widely an email may be forwarded nor into what future it may be revisited. Use your manners, people will appreciate it. Don't forget to add “please” and “thank you” to your emails. Those two phrases can transform the snippiest of demands into a polite request.

How to avoid: Reread your email. Make sure you spell check and that you check your spell check, it doesn't always pick up on every error. Ensure that your content is presented in a professional manner. Start with a salutation, i.e. Dear James. Continue to use salutations until the relationship is well established.

With the ramifications of a business email blunder ranging from extreme embarrassment to job loss, taking a few extra moments to exercise due diligence is well worth the effort to help you remain blunder-free. Don't forget your emotional tone gets lost in words on the screen. Read, re-read and read once more emails before hitting send. Keep your reader in mind. Take time to write an effective email.

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