Effectively Managing Your Email

Of all Internet activities, email is the most popular. Almost 88 percent of all Internet users in the U.S. use email. This information comes from a survey conducted by the UCLA Center for Communication Policy (*The UCLA Internet Report: Surveying the Digital Future*. UCLA Center for Communication Policy. 2001). According to the same survey, approximately 90 percent of those who use the Internet at work use it to access business email.

Do you have an effective way to process and organize your e-mail so that you can get to an empty Inbox on a routine basis? If you have lots of e-mail in your Inbox, you might want to rethink your processing methods. Really, it is possible to empty your Inbox. The key is to evaluate how you are processing and organizing your e-mail and make some changes.

No doubt you've opened an e-mail and thought, "Hmmm, not sure what to do with this. I'll deal with it later!"—and promptly closed the message. If you do this over and over again, it doesn't take long to end up with several hundred (or thousand) messages in your Inbox.

Developing a new approach to processing your Inbox will help you to gain more control, improve your response time, and keep up with critical actions and due dates.

Using a decision making process for determining what to do with emails

4 key factors that will help you process your e-mail more efficiently

1. Set up a simple and effective e-mail reference system

The first step toward an organized Inbox is understanding the difference between **reference information** and **action information**.

- **Reference information** is information that is **not** required to complete an action; it is information that you want to keep in case you need it later.
- **Action information** is information you **must have** to complete an action.

Most people receive a considerable amount of reference information through e-mail. Sometimes as much as one-third of your e-mail is reference information. So it is essential to have a system that makes it easy to transfer messages from your Inbox into your e-mail reference system. An E-mail Reference System is a series of e-mail file folders where you store reference information to ensure you have easy access to it later.

Group similar messages in folders

By creating new mail folders you can group messages related to each other. For example, you can group messages by topic, project, contact, or other categories that make sense to you. You can even create a folder for all the messages from your manager or that include tasks that you have to complete.

To group messages in folders:

1. In the Outlook Navigation Pane, click **Mail**.
2. In the **Mail Folders** section (called the **All Mailbox** section in Outlook 2003), right-click one of the folders and click **New Folder**.
3. Type a name for the folder.
4. Select where to place the folder. You can set it apart as its own folder, or list it among your other Inbox folders.
5. Move the desired message into the new folder.

Once you take care of filing your reference information, you can use the next three steps to handle e-mail you have to do something with, your **action information**.

2. Schedule uninterrupted time to process and organize e-mail

How many interruptions do you get every each day? It's nearly impossible to complete anything when you allow constant interruptions from the phone, people stopping by your office, and instant messaging. So it's critical that you set aside uninterrupted time to process and organize your e-mail.

Many e-mail messages require you to make a decision. Good decisions require focus, and focus requires uninterrupted attention. You need to establish a regular time each day to process your e-mail so that you can empty your Inbox. Of course, you can scan your e-mail during the day for urgent messages or requests from your boss.

Book yourself a recurring appointment for an hour a day to process e-mail, and mark it as "busy." During this time don't answer the phone or take interruptions, and work only on processing your Inbox.

At first, keeping these appointments will take discipline, but over time the discipline becomes habit. And once you get to zero e-mail in your Inbox, you'll see the value of this one hour a day and you'll stick to it like glue.

3. Process one item at a time, starting at the top

When you sit down to process your e-mail, the first step is to sort it by the order in which you want to process it. For example, you can filter by date, subject, or who the e-mail is from. In Outlook 2003, click the **Arranged By:** box at the top of your Inbox and click how you want to arrange your e-mail.

Tip: If you use Outlook 2003, enable the preview pane so that you can view your messages without having to open them. To enable the preview pane, on the **View** menu, click **AutoPreview**.

Resist the temptation to jump around in your Inbox in no particular order. Begin processing the message at the top of your Inbox and only move to the second one after you've handled the first. This can be hard at first when you might have thousands of messages in your Inbox. But as you reduce the number of messages over a few sessions, eventually you'll get to the point where you can process the 60-100 messages you get every day and get your Inbox down to zero every day.

4. Use the "Four D's for Decision Making" model

The "Four D's for Decision Making" model (4 D's) is a valuable tool for processing e-mail, helping you to quickly decide what action to take with each item and how to remove it from the Inbox.

Decide what to do with each and every message

How many times have you opened, reviewed, and closed the same e-mail message over and over? Some of those messages are getting lots of attention but very little action. It is better to handle each e-mail message only once before taking action—which means you have to make a decision as to what to do with it and where to put it. Under the 4 D's model, you have four choices:

1. Delete it
2. Do it
3. Delegate it
4. Defer it

DELETE IT

Generally you can delete about half of all the e-mail you get. But some of you shudder when you hear "delete." You're hesitant to delete messages for fear you might need them at some point. That's understandable, but ask yourself honestly: What percentage of information that you keep do you actually use?

If you do use a large percentage of what you keep, then what you're doing is working. But many of you are keeping a lot more than you use. Here are some questions to ask yourself to help you decide what to delete:

1. Does the message relate to a meaningful objective you're currently working on? If not, you can probably **delete it**. Why hang on to information that doesn't relate to your main focus?
2. Does the message contain information you can find elsewhere? If so, **delete it**.
3. Does the message contain information that you will refer to within the next six months? If not, **delete it**.
4. Does the message contain information that you're required to keep? If not, **delete it**.

DO IT (in less than two minutes)

If you can't DELETE IT, then decide, "What specific action do I need to take?" and "Can I DO IT in less than two minutes?" If you can, just DO IT.

There is no point in filing an e-mail or closing an e-mail if you can complete it in less than 2 minutes. Try it out—see how much mail you can process in less than 2 minutes. I think you will be extremely surprised and happy with the results. You could file the message, you could respond to the message, or you could make a phone call. You can probably handle about one third of your e-mail messages in less than two minutes.

DELEGATE IT

If you can't DELETE IT or DO IT in two minutes or less, can you DELEGATE IT?

If you can delegate it, do it right away. You should be able to compose and send the delegating message in about two minutes. Once you delegate the action, delete the original message or move it into your e-mail reference system.

Levels of Delegation - examples

These examples of different delegation levels progressively offer, encourage and enable more delegated freedom. Level 1 is the lowest level of delegated freedom (basically none). Level 10 is the highest level typically (and rarely) found in organizations.

1 "Wait to be told." or "Do exactly what I say." or "Follow these instructions precisely."

This is instruction. There is no delegated freedom at all.

2 "Look into this and tell me the situation. I'll decide."

This is asking for investigation and analysis but no recommendation. The person delegating retains responsibility for assessing options prior to making the decision.

3 "Look into this and tell me the situation. We'll decide together."

This is has a subtle important difference to the above. This level of delegation encourages and enables the analysis and decision to be a shared process, which can be very helpful in coaching and development.

4 "Tell me the situation and what help you need from me in assessing and handling it. Then we'll decide."

This is opens the possibility of greater freedom for analysis and decision-making, subject to both people agreeing this is appropriate. Again, this level is helpful in growing and defining coaching and development relationships.

5 "Give me your analysis of the situation (reasons, options, pros and cons) and recommendation. I'll let you know whether you can go ahead."

Asks for analysis and recommendation, but you will check the thinking before deciding.

6 "Decide and let me know your decision, and wait for my go-ahead before proceeding." The other person is trusted to assess the situation and options and is probably competent enough to decide and implement too, but for reasons of task importance, or competence, or perhaps externally changing factors, the boss prefers to keep control of timing. This level of delegation can be frustrating for people if used too often or for too long, and in any event the reason for keeping people waiting, after they've inevitably invested time and effort, needs to be explained.

7 "Decide and let me know your decision, then go ahead unless I say not to."

Now the other person begins to control the action. The subtle increase in responsibility saves time. The default is now positive rather than negative. This is a very liberating change in delegated freedom, and incidentally one that can also be used very effectively when seeking responsibility from above or elsewhere in an organization, especially one which is strangled by indecision and bureaucracy. For example, "Here is my analysis and recommendation; I will proceed unless you tell me otherwise by (date)."

8 "Decide and take action - let me know what you did (and what happened)."

This delegation level, as with each increase up the scale, saves even more time. This level of delegation also enables a degree of follow-up by the manager as to the effectiveness of the delegated responsibility, which is necessary when people are being managed from a greater distance, or more 'hands-off'. The level also allows and invites positive feedback by the manager, which is helpful in coaching and development of course.

9 "Decide and take action. You need not check back with me."

The most freedom that you can give to another person when you still need to retain responsibility for the activity. A high level of confidence is necessary, and you would normally assess the quality of the activity after the event according to overall results, potentially weeks or months later. Feedback and review remain helpful and important, although the relationship is more likely one of mentoring, rather than coaching per se.

10 "Decide where action needs to be taken and manage the situation accordingly. It's your area of responsibility now."

The most freedom that you can give to the other person, and not generally used without formal change of a person's job role. It's the delegation of a strategic responsibility. This gives the other person responsibility for defining what changes projects, tasks, analysis and decisions are necessary for the management of a particular area of responsibility, as well as the task or project or change itself, and how the initiative or change is to be implemented and measured, etc. This amounts to delegating part of your job - not just a task or project. You'd use this utmost level of delegation (for example) when developing a successor, or as part of an intentional and agreed plan to devolve some of your job accountability in a formal sense.

DEFER IT

If you cannot DELETE IT, DO IT in less than two minutes, or DELEGATE IT, then the action required is something that only you can accomplish and that will take more than two minutes. Because this is your dedicated e-mail processing time, you need to DEFER IT and deal with it after you are done processing your e-mail. You'll probably find that about 10 percent of your e-mail messages have to be deferred.

There are two things you can do to defer a message: turn it into an actionable task or turn it into an appointment. When you're using Outlook 2003, you can DEFER e-mails with actions by turning the e-mail into a task on your Task List. Name the task to clearly state what action is required so that you don't have to reopen the e-mail message. The result is a clearly defined list of actions in your task list that you can prioritize and schedule to complete on your Calendar. Learn how to:

- Turn a message into a task
- Turn a message into a meeting request

Do it Daily

Using the 4 D's model on a daily basis makes it easier to handle a large quantity of e-mail. Our experience shows that on average, people can process about 100 e-mail messages an hour. If you receive 40 to 100 messages per day, all you need is one hour of uninterrupted e-mail processing time to get through your Inbox. Statistics show that of the e-mail you receive:

- 50 percent can be deleted or filed
- 30 percent can be delegated or completed in less than 2 minutes
- 20 percent can be deferred to your Task List or Calendar to complete later

Of course, if you have a backlog of hundreds of messages, it will take time to get to the point where your daily routine keeps you up to date. It's important to get that backlog down, so I would suggest setting chunks of time aside to work through it. Then you can really enjoy processing your messages every day using the 4 D's.

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Section 2

Keep the message focused and readable

Often recipients only read partway through a long message, hit "reply" as soon as they have something to contribute, and forget to keep reading. This is part of human nature.

If your e-mail contains multiple messages that are only loosely related, in order to avoid the risk that your reader will reply only to the first item that grabs his or her fancy, you could number your points to ensure they are all read (adding an introductory line that states how many parts there are to the message). If the points are substantial enough, split them up into separate messages so your recipient can delete, respond, file, or forward each item individually.

Keep your message readable.

- **Use standard capitalization and spelling,** *especially* when your message asks your recipient to do work for you.
- **Skip lines between paragraphs.**
- **Avoid fancy typefaces.** Don't depend upon bold font or large size to add nuances. Many people's e-mail readers only display plain text. In a pinch, use asterisks to show *emphasis*.
- **Use standard capitalization.** All-caps comes across as shouting, and no caps invokes the image of a lazy teenager. Regardless of your intention, people will respond accordingly.

The Importance of the Subject Line of Your Email

How many times have you received an email with a subject line that said something like “Question” or “FYI”? Or, worse yet, had no subject at all? For all the millions of email messages that travel the Internet every day, the ability to effectively formulate an indicative subject message seems to be fairly unimportant to most people. A quick skim of the last 100 or so email messages you’ve received will likely verify this.

It is because of this seemingly global issue of email subject apathy that I give you 3 simple tips that, if implemented properly, will make your email subject (and, subsequently, your email) much easier to read.

1. **Use ‘Keywords’** - All email messages fall into one or more of 4 possible categories:
    - Questions (or messages that elicit a response from the reader)
    - Responses (messages that are in response to questions or other inquiring messages)
    - Informational (or FYI - messages that are meant to inform but don’t require a response)

- Spam (jokes, pictures of your nephew's baseball game, etc. - as well as actual spam)

The first tip is a simple one - label your messages with one of these keywords. For example, if I'm going to be emailing my buddy Ted about the fishing trip this weekend and I'd like him to respond, my subject might look something like: "Question: Fishing Trip this weekend". Alternately, if I need to email my entire family about my upcoming appearance on Oprah, it might resemble this: "FYI: Upcoming Oprah appearance".

Basically, use a keyword from one of these 4 categories to immediately identify what type of message it is: "**Question**","**Response**","**FYI**" and "**Spam**". This makes it very easy to quickly skim the inbox (or, better yet, sort it) and pick out which stuff needs to be acted upon.

2. ***Briefly* describe the subject** - This is best done *before* you start writing your message. Finding the right balance between vague and overly-specific can be tough. Personally, I think it's like anything else - you get better at it with time. A few examples of what I mean:

   Let's say you're emailing a coworker about a presentation you'll be giving to Joe's Chili Cookery next week. You're not sure if you should use the green pepper graphic or the red pepper graphic. Some people would be tempted to create a subject like this: "Are we using the green pepper or the red pepper graphic for the Joe's Chili presentation?" A better subject might be :"Question: Joe's Chili Presentation - Graphic". You could omit the "Graphic" word altogether because the recipient will read all about that in the body of the email. The point is to be brief and concise.

   Using the same example, some other folks might have a subject like this: "Graphic". Obviously, that's terribly vague and says virtually nothing about the rest of the message.

   Give a preview of what's to come - don't try to shoehorn the whole message into the subject, and don't make the recipient open the email just to figure out what the hell you're talking about.

3. **Never leave the subject blank**

   Tom walks over to Mary's desk and asks, "Mary, can you send over that Proposal template again? I've somehow lost my copy!". Mary says "Sure thing, Tom!" and immediately opens a new email message. She drags the document into the window, fills in Tom's address and hits "Send". So, what's wrong with leaving the subject blank in this situation? Well, a blank subject accomplishes one pretty crippling thing:

It makes it pretty certain that Tom will never be able to find the email again!

Most email applications have what are referred to as “search capabilities”. So, if Tom takes the email and drops it into his “Templates” archive folder, the next time he needs it he’ll have to search through every message Mary has sent him without a subject to figure out which one contains the template he’s looking for. So, Mary’s doing Tom a disservice by being too lazy to type “Proposal Template” in the subject line of the email before sending it.

Taking just a few seconds to build a proper and accurate subject will save you (when you go back through your Sent Items) and your recipients (when they’re digging through their Archives) much happier people. The email subject becomes much more important a few months down the road too.

So, please, fill in the subject. And do it correctly.

EOM = End of Message

EOM can mean much more than End of Message. It means "good use of time." It means "concise." It means "clarity. Here are some great reasons for you to adopt EOM while crafting your email messages.

1. EOM saves your recipient's time. You value your time, right? Isn't it nice when others value your time too? By keeping your subject line short and using EOM you are showing the people you send to you value their time. They'll thank you for it (when they know what it means).

2. It saves you time. Why write the body of a message if you don't have to? Is it really that important for quick answers?

3. You craft better subject lines.—One of the reasons people might glaze over when they receive your email is a subject line that doesn't grab them or give enough information. With EOM, you have no choice but to create a powerful subject line. The space for subjects is limited. You create better subject lines because you can't write a whole paragraph.

4. You can easily paste EOM subject lines.—You can cut and paste a well-crafted subject line into calendars, task lists, and notes. Have you ever gotten a request for a meeting that had nothing in the subject? What an annoyance. In order to create an appointment, you have to go into your calendar, type a meeting subject and set the schedule. Nobody would have this problem with an EOM message.

Example: "Let's meet in Conf. Room 223 RE: the Orange account at 3pm 8/21/08 EOM"

You can drag and drop that email right into your calendar as-is. You know the topic of the meeting, the time, the place, the date and the subject. You've saved yourself and everyone else time fumbling with the request.

5. EOM encourages others to EOM.—Once people see the resulting effectiveness of EOM, they will begin crafting EOMs of their own. It's win-win. You get concise, non-time wasting emails and they get the same.

6. EOM facilitates one-on-one discussion.—Have you ever gotten an email that, if it were printed would be five pages long or more? Of course you have. These emails are annoying, because it would have been more efficient if you had met for 10 minutes.

When you begin to utilize the EOM philosophy, you become keenly aware of when an email should really be a discussion. You can use the formula below to determine:

Can you fit it into a subject line? No?

Then can it fit into one paragraph? No?

Then can it fit into two paragraphs? No?

If it cannot, then **a phone call or meeting** is likely more efficient.

7. EOM forces you to keep email messages focused on a single topic.—Good email etiquette says you should keep the number of topics in an individual email to only one. If you have only one subject line to work with, you cannot cover more than one topic.

8. EOM guarantees greater readership—We've all had the frustrating experience of waiting on someone to read our important email and respond. Sometimes we wait a long time and follow up to find out they haven't even read the message at all. Perhaps the most powerful advantage of EOM is near 100% readership. Why? Because the entire message is in the subject line. Your message becomes impossible to ignore because it comes in front and center—no need to double click.

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Section 3

The difference between formal and informal email situations

When it comes to writing in English, there are two main styles of writing - formal and informal.

Consider these two examples:

Example 1:

This is to inform you that your book has been rejected by our publishing company as it was not up to the required standard. In case you would like us to reconsider it, we would suggest that you go over it and make some necessary changes.

Example 2:

You know that book I wrote? Well, the publishing company rejected it. They thought it was awful. But hey, I did the best I could, and I think it was great. I'm not gonna redo it the way they said I should.

The difference between the two is obvious. The first one is formal, and the second is informal. But what is it that makes them formal and informal?

It is the style of writing, or the way we use words to say what we want to say. Different situations call for different ways of putting words together. The way we write in academic and scientific settings differs greatly from the way we write to a friend or close one. The tone, vocabulary, and syntax, all change as the occasion changes. This difference in the styles of writing is the difference between formality and informality, or the difference between formal and informal writing.

Let's look at a list of some of the main differences between informal and formal writing:

Informal: May use colloquial words/expressions (kids, guy, awesome, a lot, etc.)
Formal: Avoid using colloquial words/expressions (substitute with children, man/boy, wonderful, many, etc.)

Informal: May use contractions (can't, won't, shouldn't, etc.).
Formal: Avoid contractions (write out full words – cannot, will not, should not, etc.).

Informal: May use first, second, or third person.
Formal: Write in third person (except in business letters where first person may be used).

Informal: May use clichés (loads of, conspicuous by absence, etc.)
Formal: Avoid clichés (use many, was absent, etc.)

Informal: May address readers using second person pronouns (you, your, etc)
Formal: Avoid addressing readers using second person pronouns (use one, one's, the reader, the reader's, etc.)

Informal: May use abbreviated words (photo, TV, etc)
Formal: Avoid using abbreviated words (use full versions – like photograph, television, etc.)

Informal: May use imperative voice (e.g. Remember….)
Formal: Avoid imperative voice (use Please refer to.….)

Informal: May use active voice (e.g. We have notice that…..)
Formal: Use passive voice (e.g. It has been noticed that….)

Informal: May use short and simple sentences.
Formal: Longer and more complex sentences are preferred (short simple sentences reflects poorly on the writer)

Informal: Difficulty of subject may be acknowledged and empathy shown to the reader.
Formal: State your points confidently and offer your argument firm support.

These are just some of the differences between formal and informal writing. The main thing to remember is that both are correct, it is just a matter of tone and setting. Formal English is used mainly in academic writing and business communications, whereas Informal English is casual and is appropriate when communicating with friends and other close ones. Choose the style of writing keeping in mind what you are writing and to whom. But whichever style you write in – formal or informal – be sure to keep it consistent, do not mix the two.

A five step approach to proofreading your email

The steps we'll cover here are the most basic ones. I use these for almost all of the proofreading that I do. Try going through these steps the next time you are proofreading one of your writing projects.

1. Gain a Fresh Perspective

When writers proofread their own work, it's not unusual for them to misread their own material. Your mind knows how the text *should* read, and it will insert missing words, adjust misspellings, and gloss over punctuation errors. Try setting your writing project aside for a few days before you proofread, and you will be able to read it with a fresh perspective. That means you'll be able to catch more of those annoying little mistakes.

2. Spell Check

I keep spell check on as I'm writing, so I don't run it when a piece is complete. However, many writers turn off spell check so their inner editor won't be tempted into taking over the project during the writing phase. If you do keep spell check off, make sure you run it manually before you start proofreading.

3. Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation

Spell check won't catch all of your mistakes and typos. For example, it won't call out homophones. The grammar check on word processing software (such as Microsoft Word) might falsely identify grammar mistakes. Read through your piece slowly, and fix all those mistakes.

4. **Do Not Read Too Fast**

If you are the type of person who reads too fast, develop the habit of reading more slowly when reviewing your work for errors. This will help you pick out details that you would not have noticed if you read fast.

5. Review Until It's Error-Free

Once you've finished proofreading, read the piece again (preferably aloud). Chances are, you'll catch one or two more mistakes, or you might find areas that you want to clean up or spots where you want to change the wording. Keep reviewing the piece in this manner until you get through it a couple of times without needing to make any changes.

One thing to do to guarantee that you'll never send an email without proofreading it first

Read Your Document Aloud

This may sound strange, but it helps actually to hear what you have written. Reading your document aloud will alert you to grammatical errors when you hear something that does not sound right.

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Section 4

Organizing Your Logins and Passwords

• Keep them as part of the bookmark for the website its used for: example; LL Bean – Eva12345. Of course, this method is only good on a very secure computer.

• Keep them on an Excel spreadsheet or Notepad document with an innocuous name for security. You can also type in password hints for yourself instead of the actual passwords.

• For added security, keep the Excel file is on a jump drive instead of directly on your computer. Some jump drives even allow for adding password protection, so all you have to remember is the one password for the jump drive and you're set!

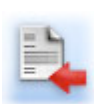
• Keep them in a small spiral tablet, notebook or address book. That way it can go in a purse or pocket to be used on the go.

• Store them in an address book or Rolodex file. Just enter the passwords alphabetically by business name or website.

• Tape a 'cheat sheet' with all your passwords in a hidden place near your desk. Just make sure to tell one person you trust 'just in case…'

• You might also want to check into Passkeep.com, KeePass.info, or RoboForm.com for some free downloadable software that keeps track of them for you. I chose RoboForm and I love it! All I have to remember is one master password to be able to access all the rest. And the software fills in the info and submits it for me in one click - Pretty nifty!

When and how to use email templates to save time and keystrokes



New Message Templates

New Message Templates are used to create a new message from an existing template. New Message Templates are 'applied' to an existing message by first opening the message or selecting the message from a chosen folder. Various selections from the previous message are carried over to the new message in the form of elements. The new message is then created when a template is selected from the template menu

Reply Templates

Reply Templates are used to automatically create a custom reply to a message from an existing template. Reply Templates are email messages provided in a special folder. As with New Message Templates, Reply Templates are 'applied' to an existing message by opening the message or selecting the message from a chosen folder. The To: field of the message is automatically filled with the sender's email address. The or template list and displayed for approval. It can then be submitted by clicking the send or submit button in the toolbar, just like other new messages. You can pre-address your template by entering the recipient's address in the template's To:, Cc:, or BCc: fields.

original subject will be retained with the Re: prefix added. The new message is then created when a template is selected from the template menu or template list and displayed for approval. It can then be submitted by clicking the submit button in the toolbar, just like other new messages.

Forward Templates

Forward Templates are used to automatically forward a message using a custom envelope created from an existing template. As with New Message and Reply Templates, Forward Templates are 'applied' to an existing message by opening the message or selecting the message in the chosen folder. The template will retain the subject of the original message with the Fw: header added as a prefix. Like New Message Templates, the To: field does not carry over the sender's original email, although you may pre-address the message just as you would with the New Message Template. The new message is then created when a template is selected from the template menu or template list, and displayed for approval. It can then be submitted by clicking the submit button in the toolbar, just like other new messages.

Quote Templates

Quote Templates provide the functionality of a clipboard. Unlike the other templates, Quote Templates are applied to the message you are currently composing. These templates offer a place to store frequently-used text which can then be pasted into other messages. They appear as email messages in a folder. Normally these Templates are kept in a subfolder of Templates named Quote. When composing a new message you can click on the Quote Template button, select the desired text and automatically paste it into your new message. The text is pasted into the current location of the cursor inside the message. You may also use Quote Templates to create a new message, just as you would a New Message Template.

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Section 5

Does your library need an email policy?

Before you answer that question…answer this quick assessment:

Y	N	Do you believe that there is an unreasonable amount of work time lost due to non-work related use of e-mail by employees?
Y	N	Are you and/or other employees complaining of receiving excessive "Spam" or non-work related email content?
Y	N	Are you aware of instances of personal and/or confidential information being sent by employees via email in your organization?
Y	N	Are you aware of any emails that have been sent in your organization that discriminate against employees by virtue of any protected classification including race, gender, nationality, religion etc?
Y	N	Are emails being sent that are not responded to in a timely manner or at all?

If you answered "yes" to at least one of the questions it may be in your organizations best interest to investigate and adopt an email policy.

Before you create your email policy

Before you start creating an email policy, do some investigation into already existing company policies, such as guidelines on writing business letters, access to confidential information, personal use of the telephone systems and sexual or racial harassment at work. It is important that your email policy is compatible with your company's existing policies. You will also need to decide whether your company is going to allow personal use of the email system, and if so, to what extent.

The email policy should be drafted with the help of human resources, IT and the library board in order to reflect all viewpoints in the organization. It is also advisable to have several employees look at the policy and provide their feedback. Make sure that your policy is not so restrictive that it will compromise your employees' morale and productivity.

Important verbiage for your email policy

Keep in mind that any communication sent via email or that is stored on the organizations equipment is the property of the library. Management and other authorized staff have the right to access any material in email or on a computer at any time. Please do not consider your electronic communication, storage or access to be private if it is created or stored at work.

How to handle an “urgent reply needed” when you don’t have time or the answer

Answer urgent emails quickly. If you can't give a clear answer to an email that someone needs a timely reply on, let them know you received their email. Be considerate and send a quick reply letting the sender know you received their email and will reply as soon as possible. That leaves the "I wonder if they got my email" question out of play.

Remember: an email is a permanent record. Before you tell someone how much you hate them or squeal to a co-worker that your boss is a real jerk for putting pressure on you, take a step back. Write it if that makes you feel better but save it. Step away from the email for an hour or more. If you still feel that you can live with the consequences of sending an angry email, then go ahead and send it. Just be prepared for the outcome.

3 Things to absolutely avoid in an email to co-workers and customers

1. **Copying a message or attachment without permission**

Do not copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator. If you do not ask permission first, you might be infringing on copyright laws.

2. **Using email to discuss confidential information**

Sending an email is like sending a postcard. If you don't want your email to be displayed on a bulletin board, don't send it. Moreover, never make any libelous, sexist or racially discriminating comments in emails, even if they are meant to be a joke.

3. **Forwarding chain letters**

Do not forward chain letters. We can safely say that all of them are hoaxes. Just delete the letters as soon as you receive them.

Bookmarks - Effectively Managing Your Email

http://www.microsoft.com/atwork/productivity/email.aspx

Microsoft at Work Website. Excellent source of information on using Microsoft Office applications more efficiently in your work.

Book: Outlook Personal Trainer

By Custom Guide, Inc. ISBN-13: 978-0-596-00935-9

http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,1543544,00.asp

Article on more efficiently using Microsoft Outlook features for managing email.

http://humanresources.about.com/od/policiesandsamples1/a/email_policy.htm

Article on email policies in the workplace

http://www.emailreplies.com/Email_policy.html

Article on what should be included in an email policy

http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook/HA010865001033.aspx

Article on creating and using email templates

http://www.shrm.org/

Articles on email etiquette and formal and informal writing

http://blogs.techrepublic.com.com/msoffice/?p=561

Article on saving time and keystrokes with templates and email

http://www.campaignmonitor.com/templates/

Website offering free email templates

Report: UCLA Center for Communication Policy

(*The UCLA Internet Report: Surveying the Digital Future*. UCLA Center for Communication Policy. 2001)