



## Creating a Communications Charter

Quite possibly, publishing a Communications Charter would help to solve a myriad of sins regarding the use of email. Emails have become the most common form of workplace communication, and directly reflect the mood, style, and image of the sender. In order to upgrade the quality and the effectiveness of email messages, consider the possibilities for improvement if your *entire team agreed* on the following.

### Understanding the “urgency” of email

- Establish regular email check intervals with your team, e.g. every two hours, or four times a day, etc.; don't answer emails as you receive them.
- Consider using the phone or speak face-to-face if your request is urgent.
- Don't use emails to try to achieve a consensus on anything.

### Use email sparingly

- Agree that you don't have to send acknowledgement replies to all emails received (“Thanks” or “OK” etc are unnecessary – thank them personally instead).
- Reduce your use of Cc – only Cc people who really need to see the information.
- Don't use “Reply to All” unless it is necessary that everyone on the original distribution need to read your response.
- Don't use emails for just “floating ideas before you forget them” – note such ideas down and arrange instead to meet to discuss (perhaps set up a contact for the person and note it there).

### Select the appropriate method for communicating your message

- Use the To: field for those who have an action to take or from whom a response is required.
- Use the Cc: field for those who are being “kept aware”.
- Use your company intranet or online newsletter for general broadcast information. Avoid company-wide distribution lists.
- Create your own “targeted” distribution lists to avoid sending to people who do not need to see the message.

### Write “crystal clear” subjects on emails

- Include key words on subject line so recipient may quickly identify the new message.
- Change the “Subject” each time you reply.

### Avoid attaching large documents

- Use attachments sparingly – downloading messages with large file attachments is slow at remote locations (remote connections for laptops).
- Cut and paste from documents into the emails when text is minimal; it is best to use attachments when text is lengthy or document includes graphics.
- Use another method to transfer very large files.

### Observe general email etiquette

- Spell check before sending (Automate this by selecting **Tools, Options, Spelling tab, Always check spelling before sending, Apply, OK**).
- Read for grammar and ease of comprehension before sending.
- Be brief and concise.
- Do not use ALL CAPS (indicates anger or yelling).
- Don't use graphic or rolling backgrounds (uses excessive memory on server and is distracting to recipient).
- Keep the length to one page or less and one subject per email.

### Organizational Policy

- Do not transmit or store emails of a discriminatory, defamatory, demeaning, harassing, threatening or obscene nature.
- Do not expect any electronic communications to be private or protected from access by the organization.