

2.5.16: Internal Business Communication

Learning Objectives

- Describe the professional standards of intra-office emails

You probably learned about table manners, thank-you notes, and other forms of etiquette when you were younger. Many people believe that the way you conduct yourself says a lot about who you are in life, and by extension, in business. Although many companies have a casual dress code, don't be quick to assume that protocol and established practices aren't important. It would be easy to misinterpret lack of formality as lack of professionalism.

Email has become the most accepted method of communication in most businesses, whereas text messages, instant messages, and messages through social networks can also be commonplace depending on the company. Since the use of these channels varies by company and even by department, it is crucial to be aware of etiquette when using any of these methods of communication.

One way to practice etiquette when communicating in a business setting is to take time to choose your method of communication carefully. Letters, memos, proposals, and other written communication are considered formal, whether they are sent on paper or transmitted via e-mail. However, text messages, instant messages, and social networking are considered informal methods of communication and are best used to communicate less-formal information, such as a the change in a meeting time if schedules have been adjusted during a factory tour. Text and instant messages should never be used to communicate company policies, proposals, pricing, or other information that is an important part of conducting business with customers.

It's also worth noting that in all these methods, your communication is permanent, so always take the time you need to write a complete and accurate message. The following tips for electronic communication will help you be viewed as professional.

Things you Should Do

- Do use an email subject line that clearly tells the recipient about the content of the email. For example, a title like "New Promotional Materials" might be too vague if you have several promotions running at the same time, instead try "Spring 2018 Housewares Promotion."
- Do create a short, concise message that uses proper grammar and spelling—use spell-check to be sure all words are spelled correctly. Use uppercase and lowercase letters as grammar dictates.
- Do proofread carefully. Look for missing words or extra negatives (such as not), which make your meaning the opposite of what you intend.
- Do use email, text messages, and instant messages when appropriate, according to your company's practices. Use with your customers only when you need to communicate factual information such as to confirm meeting date, time, and location.
- Do use social networking sites to join the conversation and add value—you can build your personal brand by creating a blog or joining a professional conversation on social networking sites such as Twitter or Facebook.

Things You Shouldn't Do

- Don't use all capital letters in an email; it will appear that you are shouting or angry.
- Don't use "Reply to All" unless it's absolutely necessary that all the recipients see your response. Be selective to avoid mailbox overload. Use your best judgement about whom to cc.
- Don't send an email, text message, or instant message when you are angry or in an extreme emotional state. Take the time to think about what you send because you can't take it back after it's sent.
- Don't use abbreviations like "ur," "2b." This is not appropriate language for business communication. It's easy to forget to adjust our language for professional purposes since we use electronic communication methods with friends and acquaintances.
- Don't use company email, text message, or instant message accounts to send personal correspondence. All communication that takes place on company hardware and servers is property of the company.
- Don't use text messages, instant messages, or social networks to communicate information such as pricing, proposals, reports, service agreements, and other company information that should be sent using a more formal method.

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