

Email Dos and Don'ts

| By Henry Wallwork

Technology changes fast. Many young people now coming into the workplace tend to view email as a technology that belongs back with the dinosaurs. For them, the only way to communicate is via text, chat and real-time interaction. This is the way they have grown up using **social media** to communicate. However, while this form of communication has its place in the office, it is in no way a replacement for email.



Email has come to take the place of the business letter. Emails are now seen as communication that stands in the formal record of a company's **transactions**.

Emails are now the first place that investigators go to search for evidence of how a company really behaves when a question of wrongdoing or criminal activity is raised. This is because emails have a trail of records that is hard for a company to wipe out. For this reason, business people now tend to use the trail of their email records as a way of confirming the transactions that they agree with others. It is now hard to see how much of modern business could function without the support of email communication.

However, because many new starters have grown up with the less formal communications of social media, it is important to understand that there are effective ways to use email and ways that need to be avoided.

Effective emailing includes:

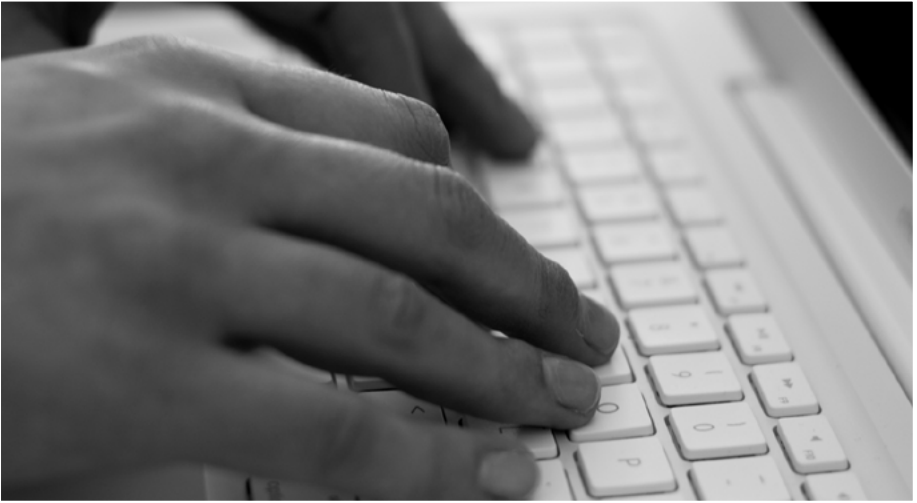
- Sending information to individuals or teams who need to know something specific
- Informing others of specific things they need to take action on
- Confirming and clearly recording decisions you make in a conversation or a meeting



- Letting others know you have received information
- Telling others how and when you will proceed, reply or take action
- Informing someone that you are trying to reach them by phone
- Saying a quick thank you
- Sharing a success

Things to avoid when emailing:

- Do not try to make a difficult decision by email – you need to speak to others in person to do this well, so use the phone or set up a meeting if you want to make good decisions well
- Do not email someone sitting close to you – talk to them or use instant chat
- Never say something disrespectful



about someone on email – this always causes difficulties and bad feelings

- ✚ Never try to bring others into an email discussion that does not concern them – this always wastes time and energy and focus for others
- ✚ Never reply to an e-mail with difficult or emotional content – it is always better to talk in a situation like this if you want to avoid creating misunderstanding and confusion
- ✚ Never respond right away to something that has upset you – let things settle in your own mind before you write anything down – this is definitely a case for letting

things settle overnight so you can respond in a clear and appropriate way

Remember, email is one means of communication. While it is useful, it is never a **substitute** for actually talking to others for real. The most effective communicators are those who spend more time talking and interacting with each other than sitting and emailing! ^{BT}

Titbit #3

"A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes."

Mark Twain

social media (n) – modern way of communicating using the internet.

transactions (n) – business dealings and communications.

substitute (n) – replacement; alternative.