



## Ø **Is email the best form of communication for what you need to say?**

Many people resort to email as it's easy to do, but is it the best form of communication to get across the message you need to relay? Face-to-face is often the best option when available, so if it can be done this way then make the effort to meet. Can your message wait for an upcoming meeting to be discussed? Think about WHY you are sending the message. Does it really need to be sent or can another form of communication be more effective? Remember, every message sent takes up your time as well as the recipient(s).

## Ø **Who are you addressing your message to? Do you have to CC others in?**

Only send messages directly **TO** people that need to know or respond. If you are CC'ing others into the message it is always good practice to include in the main message why they are being copied in, e.g.

*CC James – Just for your info*

*CC Wendy – so you know what's happening in your neighbourhood.*

## Ø **Do you need to 'reply all'?**

Do you need to **reply all** to your messages or can the message be dealt with effectively by only responding to the person who sent the original message? Replying to all can lead to hundreds of messages being created and take up everyone's time in looking at the responses.

## Ø **Don't reply to everything**

This sounds counterintuitive, but you really don't have to reply 'Thanks', 'Got it' or 'Let me get back to you on that' to every email. When asked a question feel free to not answer until you know the reply. If it is a simple FYI just consider yourself informed. When the email contains a question then answer it as best as you can. If we all assume that people are grateful for the message or actions taken, then there is no requirement to send an acknowledgement. This will significantly reduce the number of emails circulating amongst colleagues. It's not about reducing respect or courtesy, it's about reducing stress and maintaining people's health and we can all be 'grown up' about this approach.

## Ø **Time-manage how you view your inbox**

Some email accounts unfortunately need constant and continual monitoring. This is due to the nature of the work involved. However, for most jobs this is not the case. So, plan time in your day when you will look and deal with your email. This can be once, twice or possibly three times a day but be strict with yourself and keep to these times. Book the times out in your calendar if that helps. When accessing your inbox apply the 2-minute rule. If you can read it and respond within 2 minutes, then do it and complete it. If it needs more thought or preparation before responding, then mark it 'UNREAD' and the message will clearly show that it still needs action. Alternatively create a folder called 'FOR ACTION' and move the message there for later completion – BUT don't forget it's there to be dealt with.

### Ø **Be brief and to the point when writing**

When composing your messages, be as succinct and brief as possible. This will reduce both the time spent in writing your messages as well as reducing the time it takes for others to read it. No-one wants to trawl through reams of paragraphs in emails. Use bullet points if appropriate and be clear what action you are expecting from the recipient. Use the title bar to make this clear, e.g.

*FOR ACTION: Decision required on purchase of equipment*

*FOR YOUR INFO - NO RESPONSE REQUIRED: Latest crime strategy*

### Ø **Work email is for use during work hours**

Every single one of us deserves a home life. Whilst many of us spend the vast majority of our waking hours at work it is hugely important to health and wellbeing that time at home and away from the workplace is relaxing and focussed on family, friends and social pursuits. Work emails should only be used during work hours (sending and replying). If you are tempted to send a message, please consider:

- The impact on the recipient receiving your email out of office hours
- Is sending the message urgent or too important to wait? Can it wait until the morning? If it can then don't send.
- If you are a manager, then be aware that sending messages to your own teams may 'force' people to respond because they feel that they must because you're the boss. Your staff deserve uninterrupted time away from work and it is your responsibility to make sure that they get just that. We all have a duty of care to each other and should consider each other's health and wellbeing when making requirements of them.

By adopting these simple tips, you have the potential of significantly reducing stress across your teams. Efficient and effective management of email is something that every single one of us can do which will collectively have a significant impact upon the health and wellbeing of our colleagues. But it needs a concerted effort to apply these principles across the whole organisation to make a real and tangible difference to the way you work and help yourselves and your colleagues to work more efficiently, productively and healthily.

Wayne Chance-McKay, Westminster City Council