



The Art And Etiquette Of E-Mail: Making A Connection

By Gayle Bayer, Henning Software, Inc. PMPA Information Technologies Committee



E-mail is the heart and soul of all communication these days. You do it at work. You do it at home. You text on your cell phone. Your most prevalent contact with your customers is via electronic mail, but are you making the right impression?

The written word is an art form, and connecting with people requires some etiquette. What you say to others has a direct impact on their reflections of you. So, the

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next time you write an e-mail to a customer or colleague, consider some of the following etiquette suggestions:

Your tone. Because the reader misses out on the nuances of your verbal and visual delivery, the result is often miscommunication or misunderstandings. Every time you write an e-mail, make sure to edit it before you send it. Consider saving it in your drafts folder to re-read and edit later.

Don't forget to add "please" and "thank you." Those two phrases can transform the snippiest of demands into a polite request.

Spelling and grammar. If your recipients are receiving e-mails from you that include spelling and grammar mistakes, your messages could be lost to them as they become distracted by the errors.

Be succinct. The amount of productive time that is wasted by reading overly long missives, dealing with junk mail or deleting spam is staggering. State your information briefly, get to the point and use a pleasant tone.

Never read or forward jokes at work. It's unprofessional.

Watch your caps. It is generally accepted that writing with the capital letters lock on is the same as screaming. Use grammatically correct upper and lower case letters.

Don't "cc" everyone on the planet. If you get an e-mail that has been carbon copied to many people, make sure to reply only to the people who are capable of taking a direct action or whose job is directly affected.

For example, two years ago, I was involved in an e-mail barrage when a customer complained about something. The initial recipient carbon copied 11 people. Soon, 24 e-mails went back and forth with finger-pointing on whose fault the complaint was, with angry exchanges and with no resolutions.

All 24 e-mails went to all 11 people. That's 264 e-mails—a waste of many hours of productive time in just one day. Later on that day, the vice president of operations asked me why the initial recipient included her on these e-mails when it had nothing to do with her, and no resolution was achieved. Good question. That leads me to...

If you receive an e-mail that requires a dialogue, pick up the phone. Don't point fingers. Take the time to gather your facts, count to ten and make the call. Once the problem is identified and the resolution is achieved, reply to that e-mail, including all of the people who were copied on it. Explain it in a succinct, professional tone.

Assume that any message you send is permanent and likely to be forwarded to others. Also, make sure that when you forward an e-mail, you are not forwarding any sensitive information that could be included in the e-mail string.

Never use e-mail to reprimand someone. Reprimands should be conducted in person or over the phone.

Never express political or religious opinions via e-mail.

Controversial topics should not be discussed via office e-mail.

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Why Join PMPA?

ADVOCACY

Advocacy encompasses the activities and resources for supporting legislation that is favorable to our industry. PMPA's proactive involvement in national issues important to our industry includes voicing support or opposition with our nation's elected leaders. PMPA has an active Government Affairs Committee that leads groups of members on lobbying trips to Washington, D.C. Members can also use the Legislative Action Center through the PMPA Web site to voice their concerns to the president and the U.S. Congress.

Don't Miss The Industry's Finest Networking Event

By Rob Kiener, Director of Marketing and Communications rkiener@pmpa.org



Have you ever attended a PMPA national-level conference? If not, take the time out of your schedule and make sure you're at the industry's premier networking conference—the PMPA annual meeting. It takes place next month, October 12-16, at The Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa in Tucson, Arizona.

Come to the annual meeting and share ideas with manufacturers from across the United States and Canada. Learn how your peers are dealing with the challenges that precision machined products manu-

facturers face in today's competitive global environment.

There will also be plenty of time during the daily schedule to "pick the brains" of owners and senior managers. These people are looking for the next big thing to make their companies more productive and profitable.

Members of the Precision Metal-forming Association (PMA) will join the group for three events, including a joint business session on Saturday, October 13th. As North American manufacturers, PMPA and PMA members have similar concerns. This additional networking opportunity is one more reason not to miss the PMPA annual meeting.

For more information, contact PMPA director of marketing and communications, Rob Kiener at rkiener@pmpa.org / Phone: (440) 526-0300, extension 16. To register on-line visit: http://www.pmpa.org/meetings/annual_mtg/. ■

Etiquette Of E-Mail...continued

Use humor and sarcasm sparingly. Recipients may not get the joke.

Provide relevant content in all e-mails. Irrelevant information blurs the message.

Determine what your customer/co-worker is really trying to say. Ignore the tone and concentrate on the message.

Respond to all e-mails within 24 hours. The sooner, the better.

Follow through. Make sure that your messages are understood and that problems are resolved.

In our desire to be more efficient within our hectic schedules, we might overlook the basic tenets of good communication. But you can maintain a connection with customers and co-workers. Just take your time and follow the guidelines. ■