



The average worker spends about 23% of their work day on e-mail. It seems like we're always in "Reply" mode.

We often write e-mails quickly, even thoughtlessly, and this can be a major cause of conflict and loss of business in the workplace. This month's newsletter highlights how to navigate the tricky terrain of e-mail and online communication. How can you make sure that you're building constructive, respectful relationships with your co-workers and customers while maintaining your own opinions and policies? Turns out, it's a lot easier than you might think.

5 Rules for Online Communications

Rule #1: Stay on Topic

Stay clear and concise, and reread when you've finished to make sure your words aren't open to misinterpretation. If there is any danger of misinterpretation that can't be edited away, skip the e-mail and speak to them directly or on the phone.

Rule #2: Stay professional

Even when you're writing a friendly e-mail to a colleague, don't gossip about others or write anything you wouldn't say out loud in your office. Who among us hasn't accidentally sent or forwarded an e-mail to the wrong person? Online communications aren't private. Everything you write can be forwarded, shared, or printed with your co-workers and supervisor.

Rule #3: Stay cool

If you're angry, don't press send. Consider saving your e-mail as a draft instead and revisit it later. When you are calm, you can make the decision whether to edit what you have written or send as is.

To Emoji or Not To Emoji

Emoji are an important part of our culture, but the jury is out as to whether they're appropriate for the workplace.

Harvard Business Review recommends you pay attention to **"behavioral mimicry"**: "using emoticons...in a similar manner to the person with whom you are communicating."

- If the person with whom you are communicating is formal and doesn't include emoji, follow their lead.
- If they are informal and do include emoji, you may choose to follow their lead. However, just remember that if they are a supervisor or a customer, their expectations for you might be different than for themselves!
- If you are unsure, avoid the smiley face and express your feelings in text.



Rule #4: Know your audience

Don't assume the person you're e-mailing shares your communication style or priorities. Sarcasm might come across as disrespect. Informality might come across as a lack of education or leadership skills.

Rule #5: Be accessible

Try to answer your e-mail within 24 hours. If you're on vacation or out of the office, make sure you have an away message set up. If you can't fully answer an e-mail that quickly, send a note letting the recipient know when a proper response should be expected.

Are you dealing with incivility in your workplace?

You can meet with a counselor to discuss any work or life stressors as a part of your EAP benefit. There is no cost for you to access this totally confidential service, and it also covers anyone who lives with you. Call to set up an appointment today.