

Check yourself before sending that email

Posted At : May 28, 2015 8:32 AM | Posted By : Admin
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Editor's Note - How many times have you received an email and wondered what the sender was thinking when they wrote it? Before any email gets sent a content review usually makes sense. Here are some additional tips.

Despite the numerous means of communication, email is still heavily relied upon to deliver messages in the business world, especially for remote workers. Even in the office, it often seems easier to shoot off emails to colleagues instead of walking the 50 feet to their desk. If email is replacing some basic human interactions, we need to pay more attention to how we're using it.



When composing an email, it's often easy to forget there's a human on the other side. You should manually check the tone of each and every message you send to make sure you're communicating your message in the most effective way possible, leaving less room for misinterpretation.

Simplify

Remove unnecessary words and ideas. Take out the extra question marks or exclamation points. And make sure you're conveying a single message, or clearly format the email if you have more than one point. Not only is it good practice at concise writing, it's a way to trim distracting extras that may skew the email's overall tone.

Read

When in doubt, read your email out loud as if you were reading it to the recipient. You may notice that some of the word or punctuation choices you use in email come across in a different way than you intended. If you're uncomfortable speaking it, revise how you're getting your point across. Using email as a crutch for information you don't have the guts to communicate in person is a habit worth breaking.

Wait

The Drafts folder is extremely handy, especially when tensions are high. Write your email, without a name in the "to" line (lest you mistakenly hit send). Save it as a draft and reread the email in an hour or two, or the next day if it can wait longer. If you still stand behind what you wrote, send away. But chances are, with a clearer head, you'll want to comb through and make a few changes.

Emoji-fy

While emoji don't have a place in all email communications—for example, an email about a promotion or a job application—they are handy for day-to-day communications with people you know well. They act as

digital context clues, a makeshift replacement for hand gestures and facial expressions that, when working remotely, are missing.

Call.

Sometimes it takes longer to write an email than picking up the phone or getting on Skype. But when laziness hits, email seems like the easier, less-energy draining option. Combat unnecessary email by asking yourself: “Is email the best way to communicate this message?” Second-guessing email each time you go to use it will make you more efficient and ensure fewer of your messages are misconstrued.

Recognizing nonverbal, emotional expression is a challenge, and the difficulty is amplified for remote workers. But when so much of business is conducted via email, it’s important that each one you send has the intended effect—and gets the result you want. Checking your tone, and making sure it’s positive, is key to inviting a positive response.