Email
Essentials

commsPLUS®
Making complex information appear simple

Introduction

Jackie Barrie founded Comms Plus in 2001. It's a writing and design agency that specialises in making complex information appear simple.

This FREE report is **only** available to people who subscribe to '*Writing Without Waffle*', Jackie's regular e-newsletter, packed with hints and advice from her various areas of expertise.

The report contains her **top tips** to remember when using email.

History of email
Email has been with us since 1965 when it was on just one computer. The first @ email communication between different computers was sent in October 1971.

More here:
http://openmap.bbn.com/~tomlinso/ray/firstemailframe.html

Billions of emails are now sent every day – how did we ever manage without it?

"I am really impressed Jackie. I am impressed with your work but most of all I am knocked out that you took the initiative without me chasing you."
Jackie Mackay, Mapscape

2

Send with care

Think carefully before you send an email to more than one person.

CC and BCC

These terms arose from the days of the typewriter. CC stands for Carbon Copy, and BCC stands for Blind Carbon Copy (so the other recipients can't tell who's been copied in).

If you are mailing a list, be sure to put all the addresses in the BCC field. This:

- meets the data protection act
- prevents people accidentally replying to 'all' addressees
- protects your mailing list from your competitors

Reply all

Be extra careful before hitting 'reply all' - make sure you really do want **everyone** on the recipient list to receive your reply.

When I was working in the corporate world, one colleague who was having an affair with another accidentally sent an intimate message to everyone in the department, including the big boss. Oops!

"My client, Autocure, loved your design and wording, and was amazed at the speed you turned it around!"
Phill Tulloch, Destiny Printers

Attachments

Some email clients accept attachments up to 2MB. However, many files are bigger than that (particularly high-resolution image files).

In this case you need to compress them first with WINZIP (Windows) or Stuffit (Mac). Alternatively, you can send large files via the Internet using FTP (e.g. Fetch or Transmit) or a provider such as www.yousendit.com or www.dropload.com.

Top tip: Make sure your attachment is actually attached before you send your message. Oh, how I wish I had a pound for every time I've done that!

"Love the new site! It's so easy to navigate and pleasing to the eye. I know exactly where to find what I want and the information is plentiful."
Yvonne Bignall, Virtual PA Service

Snopes is your friend!

We're all busy these days, and our email inboxes are packed with messages. Some may be essential business communications, and some may be personal correspondence or jokes you want to share with your friends.

But there are also many chain letters going around, which promise good luck or threaten bad luck; illegal pyramid-scheme letters that offer to make you lots of money; messages about companies allegedly giving away cash or prizes; as well as various hoaxes and urban legends.

Top tip: Before you forward any such messages, first check **www.snopes.com.** It's a wonderful FREE resource where you can find out if the message is true before you send it on.

"Your talk was great. Interesting - you are good with the written word yet you demonstrated this using the spoken word. Clever!"
Liz Copeland, Tranzformations

Yours sincerely

Salutations
Hi there! It's not necessary to address an email as formally as a letter, while the salutation can be dropped altogether when exchanging a series of messages.

Signatures
You can end your email with pleasantries such as 'Best wishes' or 'Kind regards', plus your name and contact details.

Since December 2006, limited companies need to include specified particulars on on their printed stationery such as letterheads, publications and order forms as well as on websites and electronic communications (i.e. emails). This includes: registered name, number, registered office address, where they are registered (e.g. England) and their legal form (e.g. private limited). For more information, please contact Companies House on 0870 3333 636 or see the Companies Act 2006 http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060046_en.pdf (be warned, it's 760 pages long).

"Jackie's work on the leaflets was better than we had imagined. She took no time at all to do them and she let us know of any changes by keeping in constant contact with us. All we can say is: 'you're a star!'"
Sharon & Laurence, The Cambridge Dynamic Duo

Before you hit 'send'

As with pen and paper correspondence, you should never write anything in an email that you are not happy to have on permanent record. If you are an employee, you need to take extra care because your employer may well store all your emails on a central server for security reasons.

Remember, anything you write in an email can be forwarded under your name. So before you press 'send', make sure you are happy for your words to be seen by anybody and everybody.

Especially beware of using jokes and sarcasm in writing. People are more likely to take offence because there are no visual or sound clues.

"Thank you for doing such a splendid job with our website content. I am absolutely thrilled with the service that you have provided. I will certainly be recommending your services to others."
Maureen Smith, Tropical Connections

7

Plain and simple

HTML v plain text

Just because you **can** use multiple colours, fonts and images in an HTML email, doesn't mean you **should**! Although more recipients can now accept HTML messages due to increased use of broadband, here are the results of a poll I posted on the www.ecademy.com online business network in December 2006, to help you make your decision:

63% loved well-designed HTML emails

24% had turned off the HTML option

8% hate HTML emails because they are still on dial-up connections and they slow everything down

5% other responses, not specified

Auto responders

UK2Net won the Plain English Campaign Golden Bull Award 2005 for this email to a customer:

'YOUR EMAIL DID NOT REACH A HUMANOID. IT ONLY REACHED REPLICANT LEVEL 1. E-MAIL ARRIVING FROM HERE ARE SPOOLED FOR AUTOMATIC CHECKING AND WILL NOT BE READ BY HUMANOIDS.'

"Thank you for designing and writing my website. I have had such a fantastic response to it, everyone has said how great it is and that the website is true to my identity and ideas."
Annette King, Kingswood Eco Cleaning

Spam, spam, spam

Spam

Unsolicited commercial email ('spam') is the curse of our age! You should never reply to spammers, as this confirms your email address is 'live'. Ask your email provider about filtering it out, or set up a 'spam trap'. Don't send unsolicited sales messages yourself, and always offer an 'unsubscribe' option from your mailing list.

Phishing

Beware of emails that seem to be from official organisations, requesting sensitive information such as your bank account details or passwords. Never respond to these or you risk your bank account(s) being emptied and your identity being stolen.

"Love your website and have only stopped reading it to send this message. Will go back again in a minute."
Julie Lefebve, Bowler Hat

Keep talking

Email is great, but sometimes it's quicker and easier to have a conversation instead. Here are 3 examples:

1. If the person sits near you in the office, simply walk to their desk and talk to them!

2. To avoid email tennis, use the phone to book meetings. It's much quicker!

3. I once received an email from Alice, complaining that Bill had sent her a rude message. She had copied and pasted sections of it so I could see the problem for myself. Instantly, I phoned her to discuss it. I know there is always another side to every story, so I then phoned Bill. He complained that Alice had sent him a rude message, and told me what she'd put (it wasn't included in her message to me).

It turned out a misunderstanding had arisen due to ambiguous wording in their first exchange of messages. It had escalated into a major flaming* match whereas the whole thing could have been sorted out with a simple phone call.

*Flaming = rude or abusive email

"News of your dynamic presentation will reverberate around the Club for quite some time. It was very enjoyable and beneficial. Members really will know how to make an impact in their 1-minutes from now on!"
Frances Conn, Bromley Business Club

E-speak

CAPITALS
Never write emails in capital letters - it seems as though you are SHOUTING!

Abbreviations
BCNU . . . be seeing you
BTW . . . . by the way
FWIW . . . for what it's worth
FYI . . . . . for your information
IMHO . . . in my humble opinion
LOL . . . . laugh out loud
OBO . . . . or best offer
ROTFL. . . rolling on the floor laughing
RTFM . . . read the f-ing manual
TNSTAAFL there's no such thing
　　　　　 as a free lunch
TTFN . . . tata for now
TTYL. . . . talk to you later

Smileys
:-) Smiley face　　:-(Frowning
;-) Wink　　　　　　　(sad, angry)
　　 (light sarcasm)　:-P Wry smile
:-| Indifferent　　　;-} Leer
:-> Devilish grin　　:-Q Smoker
　　 (heavy sarcasm)　:-e Disappointed
8-) Wears glasses　　:-@ Scream
:-D Shock or　　　　 :-O Yell
　　 surprise　　　　　:-* Drunk
:-/ Perplexed　　　　:-{}Wears lipstick

COMMSPLUS ®

Making complex information appear **simple**

Newsletters
Copywriting
Web design
Proof-reading
Events

Tips booklets available on my website:

• 8 Guaranteed Icebreakers

• Checklist for events that go with a bang!

• The Little Fish guide to
running your own business

• Magical Marketing Strategy for SMEs

• Climb that marketing mountain,
with ease

• Ssh! Discover the secrets
of successful communication

86 Belmont Road Beckenham Kent BR3 4HL

tel/fax: 0845 899 0258 mob: 07903 92 98 95
email: jackie@comms-plus.co.uk

www.comms-plus.co.uk