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10 ways to use email effectively

Email is a very convenient communication tool, but it can present all manner of pitfalls, from the bad impression created by sloppy grammar to problems caused by hitting 'Send' before thinking your message through.



Here are ten tips to help you use email more effectively

1. **Keep your message brief.** It's more difficult to read from a computer screen than from a printed document, so use short paragraphs and bullet points to break up text and highlight key points. Use a clear title in the 'Subject' line and don't resort to capital letters for emphasis – this will appear bossy.
2. **Know your audience.** Corresponding with customers requires a more formal tone than emailing colleagues. If in doubt, avoid using over-familiar terms of address, and steer clear of email-speak and symbols that look like facial expressions.
3. **Don't forget to proof-read.** Emails with spelling mistakes or lazy grammar make your business look slapdash, and bad punctuation can make messages difficult to read. Re-reading as if you are the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings.
4. **Avoid sending unnecessary attachments.** These tend to annoy recipients and clog up inboxes. If you have a lot of files to send, compress or 'zip' them. Avoid passing on viruses by making sure you have up-to-date anti-virus software.
5. **Respond swiftly.** After receiving an email, send a brief acknowledgment ahead of a full response. Avoid flagging your own mail as 'urgent' or requesting 'read' receipts unless absolutely necessary.
6. **Stop and think before you press 'Send'.** Never send an email in anger and don't send anything that you wouldn't be comfortable seeing published – emails do not always end up where you intend them to go. Remember, it may be more appropriate to speak on the phone or in person.
7. **Don't pass on junk mail.** Chain letters, emails promising good fortune or just plain old spam are unlikely to be welcomed so it's best just to delete them.
8. **Blind copy with care.** Try not to get into the habit of concealing recipients from one another for deceptive reasons using the 'blind copy' (bcc) facility – it is underhand and could harm your business relationships. On the other hand, use of blind copy is courteous if you are sending a message to a number of people who don't know each other and would appreciate having their email addresses kept private.
9. **Use a clear, concise signature.** Record your name, job title, company address, website and telephone number at the bottom of your emails to look serious and professional. Keep the layout simple and try to keep fancy fonts, colours or graphics to a minimum – these can be cumbersome and could make you and your employees look like you can't be taken seriously.
10. **Consider a disclaimer.** Adding a disclaimer to the end of your emails may protect your business from liability if your employees make defamatory statements in messages.

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How Are We Doing? - Your Chance to Say!

At Tarragon, we think we're doing a good job for all our business partners - but what do you think?

With your October copy of **Solutions!** we'll be including a questionnaire asking for your feedback on various aspects of the service we provide. We realize surveys can sometimes be a real pain to complete so we promise it won't take you too much out of your day.

To encourage you to give up your innermost thoughts about Tarragon, senders* of completed questionnaires received by the closing date will take part in a draw for a case of wine (red, white or mixed 12, the winner's choice) which will be delivered nicely in time for Christmas.



* One per customer will be entered into the draw

Tip of the Month - Word: fitting text on a page

You will know how annoying it is when you've typed your document into Word and it just won't *quite* fit on a page. Here are a couple of tips that might help:

Shrink to Fit

Word includes the Shrink to Fit option that will (attempt to) reduce the size of your document by one page each time you use it. Display your document in Print Preview (File > Print Preview or, for Word 2007, Office Button > Print > Print Preview) then click on the Shrink to Fit (Word 2007: Shrink One Page) button on the toolbar of the Preview window. Word will automatically reduce the font size of the document (maintaining the relative font sizes).

If you want more control over the way the document is 'squeezed', try these:

Margins

You're probably aware that you can decrease the document margins to fit more onto a page, but this can save some trial and error: Having selected the printer you wish to use, set all the document margins to "0". Word will pop up a warning message - choose "Fix" and Word will reset the margins to the minimum allowable for the printer you have.

Font sizes

Did you know that you can use half-point font sizes? Just select the text you want to change, then click in the font size box on the formatting toolbar (on the Home tab in Word 2007's ribbon). Type in a size such as 11.5 or 10.5, and press ENTER.

Paragraph spacing

If you're using a blank line to separate your paragraphs, you can better use the space by adjusting the paragraph spacing:

1. Select (or place your cursor in) the paragraph above or below which you would like to add space.
2. From the Format menu select Paragraph (Word 2007 ribbon: on the Home tab, click the arrow at the right-hand end of the Paragraph label)
3. Under Spacing, choose measurements in the "Before" and "After" boxes to add space above or below the paragraph. This spacing is measured in points, the same unit of measurement used for font sizes.
4. Choose other options if desired, then click OK.
5. Remove those blank lines!

Please let us know what you think of **Solutions!** - email solutions@tarragon.co.uk