

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Digital communications in the workplace

Before the widespread use of computers, the invention of the Internet and the creation of smartphones, written communication in the workplace was slower, more civilized and less frequent. People either spoke directly to one another or sent letters.

Today, digital is the favored form of communication in the workplace, and employees are receiving and sending written messages at a rapid pace. So the question is - how do you ensure the increased quantity of digital communications doesn't sacrifice quality?

How to optimize your office email

1. **Sending an email?** Slow down! Brevity and speed have become synonymous with digital communications, especially with the advent of text messaging and Twitter's famous 140-character limit. But what may be acceptable via text or social media may not be appropriate in the office. Instead of truncating words, omitting punctuation and using acronyms, take a moment to carefully craft your message with proper sentence structure and ensure you hit all the key points. Remember, just because you can send an email in less than a minute doesn't mean you should.

2. **Review and edit.** Incorrect spelling, bad grammar, incomplete information and an edgy tone are not uncommon in the world of corporate emails. However, by taking the time to review and edit your emails, you'll come across as thorough, thoughtful and professional, which ultimately builds credibility. Conversely, sloppy, curt, unprofessional emails can hinder effective communication and tarnish your professional reputation, especially if this is your typical email style.

3. **Write like you speak.** In the interest of time, people often neglect to filter their email correspondence the same way they edit their speech. The result can be curt, tonal, bossy, rude or confrontational, often when that's not the intent. So before you hit send, ask yourself: Would I say this to the recipient's face, and would I be comfortable if my manager read it? If the answer is no, rewrite your message.

4. **Question the mode of communication.** Okay, it's true – email is one of the easiest and most convenient ways to deliver a message, but is it always the most effective? Before drafting an email, consider if there is a more effective way to deliver the message. Perhaps a phone call or face-to-face meeting will achieve what you need and help to build relationships in a more meaningful way.

5. **Relax!** At some point in time, everyone will receive an email that gets them fired up and on edge. Usually the tone of the message is to blame, even though this was not the intent of the sender. Instead of letting it get the better of you, take a deep breath and remember that there was probably no malicious intent behind the email; it was likely just caused by speed and brevity. Why not pick up the phone or drop by your colleague's desk to clear things up? Chances are it will quickly diffuse your negative feelings and, again, help to build inter-office relations.

Email fun facts

- Approximately 294 billion emails are sent every day globally
- In 2012, the typical email user wrote 41,368 words – the length of a novel!
- In 2012, the average email user received 5,579 emails

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- The busiest time to receive emails is 11 a.m. on a Tuesday