Business Communications IV: Digital & Other Communication: Email, Texts & Letters

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National Association of Elevator Contractors

Contents

About this Study Guide

This guide is intended to supplement your individualized Skillsoft learning by providing materials and examples specific to the vertical transport industry.

This guide provides helpful guidelines for employees about using digital communication methods in the workplace.

Information included in this study guide is intended for educational purposes only. Check with your company for specific guidelines.

Overall, keep in mind that the employee should be following the Company's Code of Conduct in all actions, including their digital and other communication. Any violation of the Code of Conduct while using digital communication is obviously also a misuse of the communication.

The employee has no right to privacy when using Company email, related information systems, Company devices, or networks. In other words, there is no "personal" in the Company context. Furthermore, explicit personal use of the Company's resources, including digital or other communication, is prohibited because it compromises the employee's ability to work and the Company's limited resources.

Email Guidelines for Employees

The following Email Guidelines for Employees is taken from the Collaborative Electronic Research Project's September 2006 "Email Guidelines for Managers and Employees."

Initiating Email

- Limit use of e-mail to official business

- Write in formal style, using salutations, e.g. "Dear Mr. Smith:"

- Use a closing signature consisting of your name, title, organization, address, telephone number, and e-mail address. Most e-mail programs provide an option for entering this information once for automatic attachment to all outgoing e-mail.

- Always use the spelling and grammar check feature and proofread for errors.

- Follow your department's subject heading name standards.

- When replying to a message, always put your response at the top of the sender's e-mail.

- Keep messages brief and to the point.

- Be considerate of other people's time by not answering e-mails simply to say "I agree" or "Thanks" unless it is important to let the sender know you received the message.

- Use blind copies judiciously and be aware that recipients could inadvertently "reply to all" including the person who received the blind copy.

- If confidential information must be sent via e-mail, follow departmental procedures regarding encrypting or marking as confidential.

- Do not write down your password and do not give it to other employees.

Managing, Organizing, Saving Email

- Handle each e-mail only once.

- Delete immediately after reading any e-mails that are not considered records under your employer's Records Retention Policy.

- File those that are records immediately after reading in accordance with your organization's policy.

- Use file and folder names consistent with the organization's policy, e.g. folders titled "Grant.Thompson.Brazil" and "Board Minutes.2006."

- Regularly move e-mail no longer needed for active projects from the Inbox to "archive" folders according to your employer's Records Management Policy.

- Unless instructed otherwise, save e-mail on a drive that will be automatically captured in regular server backups. You may need to consult your Network Administrator or Records Manager to identify the appropriate drive.

- If you will not be checking your e-mail for longer than one day, set up an "out of office" automatic reply feature.

- Any e-mail transmitting an attachment that is considered a record should be retained in order to show that the attachment was sent, to whom, and when.

- Don't open attachments unless you are expecting them as viruses are often transmitted that way.

- Regularly run the anti-virus program your IT department offers.

- E-mail and attachments saved on laptops, removable devices such as flash, iPod, and offsite computers, should be transferred as soon as possible to a designated drive that is regularly backed up on the server.

- Log off when you will be away from your computer for more than a few minutes; at the end of the day, log off or shut down according to IT guidelines.

Email Etiquette

- Although humor or sarcasm will rarely, if ever, be part of a business e-mail, if you include either, identify it as such. Remember that one person's joke may be another's humiliation and could cause personnel action against you or a lawsuit.

- Avoid emotional responses. Give yourself at least several hours to calm down after receiving an upsetting e-mail before you respond. Compose and save your reply as a Draft, then edit and send after reflection.

- Do not forward or quote messages without permission of the author.

Unacceptable Email Use

- E-mail with content or links that are threatening, obscene, repeated and unwanted, harassing, and/or racially, sexually, or ethnically offensive

- E-mail with content that slanders, libels, or defames anyone

- E-mailing software programs, audio, or video files from the Internet unless required for your job. If that is the case, discuss the issue with the IT Department as such large attachments could cause problems.

- Fraudulent e-mail

- Chain letters

- Sending work-related information to unauthorized recipients

- Sending or receiving software or other products outside of licensing agreements

- Using your employer's e-mail for personal use (including political, social, religious, recreational, financial gain)

- Accessing your personal e-mail account through your employer's system unless specifically allowed by the company's Records Management Policy

- Using ListServs or other discussion groups that are not work-related

- Unauthorized access of someone else's computer or mailbox

- Taking or accessing your employer's data outside your workplace without your department head's approval

- Revealing confidential business information

- Interfering with or attempting to interfere with others' access to computer use or in any other way to damage the organization (including launching computer viruses, worms, or engaging in criminal activity)

- Using e-mail for illegal or unethical activities

Text Guidelines for Employees

The following is taken from an employee handbook developed with HR professionals for an existing elevator company.

The use of Instant Messages and/or Text Messages to communicate with other employees in the Company is permitted with prior Company approval. No employee may download or use an IM program or resource without prior approval. In addition, employees may not use IM programs or similar resources to communicate with non-employees. Like all other use of the Company's Information Systems, IMs and text messages are subject to Company monitoring and review at any time, without notice.

➢ Did you know that as of October 16, 2013, *prior express written consent* is required for all telemarketing calls, including text messages? You also can not force consent through an exchange of goods and services. Be sure your company is compliant or it could face fines.

Letter Guidelines for Employees

Keep in mind that a letter, which is words on paper with your signature, constitutes a written record in someone else's possession. By signing, you are responsible for the contents of that letter.

The content and style of a letter will vary depending on your purpose and addressee. A sales letter to a potential new customer, for example, will look different than an order letter to a long-standing client. Nevertheless, it is important to always be clear, precise, and use a businesslike tone that matches your voice as a businessperson.

Here are some tips for writing:

- Do your best to address your letter to a specific person; this increases the chances of a reply.
- Check your mechanics, including sentence structure, spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- Correspond in a timely fashion.
- Be short and concise as much as possible.