EMAIL

Email is still among the most widely used communication tools in the workplace today. However, while email is still the go-to medium for a lot of people, companies find that its disadvantages overtakes its advantages if they don't take steps for improving email communication.

The Advantages of Email

Email is a free tool. Once you are online, there is no further expense that you need to spend on in order to send and receive messages.

1. Email is quick. Once you have finished composing a message, sending it is as simple as clicking a button. Email, especially if an email system is integrated into the network, is sent, delivered and read almost immediately.

2. Email is simple. It is easy to use. Once your account is set up, composing, sending and receiving messages is simple. Also, email allows for the easy and quick access of information and contacts.

3. Email allows for easy referencing. Messages that have been sent and received can stored, and searched through safely and easily. It is a lot easier to go through old email messages rather than old notes written on paper.

4. Email is accessible from anywhere – as long as you have an internet connection. Whether or not you are in the office or on the field, or even overseas, you can access your inbox and go through your messages.

5. Email is paperless, and therefore, beneficial for the planet. Not only can you reduce the costs of paper, you are actually reducing the damage paper usage does to the environment.

6. Email allows for mass sending of messages. An effective medium to utilize to get your message out there, you can send one particular message to several recipients all at once.

7. Email allows for instant access of information and files. You can opt to send yourself files and keep messages so that you have a paper trail of conversations and interactions you have online just in case you may need them in the future.

On the other hand, while email certainly has its advantages, it can also have disadvantages especially if an email alert system is not available in the workplace.

The Disadvantages of Email

Email could potentially cause information overload. Some messages may be dismissed or left unread, especially if there are a lot coming in and the network has not integrated some sort of email alert system into the computers at work.

1. Email lacks a personal touch. While some things are better off sent as written and typed messages, some things should be verbally relayed or written by hand in a note or letter.

2. Email can be disruptive. Going through each email can be disruptive to work as it does require a bit of time. This disruption is decreased through the utilization of an email alert system.

3. Email cannot be ignored for a long time. The thing with email is that it needs constant maintenance. If you ignore it, more and more messages will enter your inbox until it gets to the point that your inbox is no longer manageable.

4. Email can cause misunderstandings. Because email does not include nonverbal communication, recipients may misinterpret the sender's message. This is particularly true of senders fail to go through their messages before they send them.

5. Email messages can contain viruses. It's best to be aware of this possibility so that you are careful when opening messages from people you don't know, or when downloading attachments.

6. Email should be kept short and brief. This is especially difficult if you are one to send messages that are too long.

7. Email requires timely responses. While some people tend to disregard messages, those that require responses should be replied to as soon as they are received and read. If not, urgent and important messages may be left untended.

Improving email communication in an organization

Love it or hate it, email is probably here to stay for a long time to come. It doesn't have to be the bane of corporate life if you take steps to make it work more effectively for your organization, recognizing both its strengths and limitations. Actively improving email communication will make it a much more valuable internal communications tool.

Effective email communication in the workplace is achievable if you set clear guidelines for employees about appropriate email use.

This includes:

• Minimizing the use of email when there is an email substitute that is a more effective option, such as having a face-to-face conversation with a colleague, using instant messenger, sharing ideas on a project platform etc.

• Employees should be discouraged from hitting "reply all" or responding with unnecessary one-word emails like "ok" or "thanks".

• Emails should only be sent to relevant employees.

• Restricting access to those who are able to send emails to the entire organization.

• Encouraging employees to adopt "inbox zero" or similar programs to cut down on their emails.

• Using clear subject lines that people can look at and instantly know what the topic of the email is going to be about.

• Email communication should be clear, concise and easy to understand.

• Insisting on a standard of professionally written, proof-read emails.

• Encourage employees to delete unnecessary emails and to set up good archival systems to hold on to important emails they may need in the future.

For urgent communications and in situations where it is critical that you have to ensure everyone sees the message you are sending, you can overcome the disadvantages of email in business communication by using an alerting system, such as DeskAlerts, to bypass email and send messages straight to computers.

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