PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE: Emails, Memos, etc.

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Context and Intro

• Over 22 years experience in pharmaceutical industry R&D across companies
  • Abbott Laboratories – US company with multiple global sites
  • TAP Pharmaceuticals – US joint venture with multiple international partnerships
  • Takeda Pharmaceuticals – Japanese company with international sites and a large US workforce

• I asked colleagues with experience in other companies for examples
  ➢ Workplace email etiquette and ‘email disasters’
Memos, Instant Messaging, etc.
Depends on the business culture

• Memos
  • Today, less common for routine, daily communication
  • Considered an ‘official’ business document, e.g.
    • Key results with conclusions for regulatory purposes
    • Status report for senior management of a key milestone achieved
    • Official agreements or report between partner companies or with a third party vendor that might be appended to a contract

• Instant Messaging, Cisco Jabber, etc.
  • Use varies with company and business – check the policy and ask others
  • Be aware of differences in comfort levels with IM
  • Does it fit the message you are communicating?
workplace email etiquette

About 1,480,000 results (0.72 seconds)
Workplace Email Guidelines

• *Neither the computer nor content are yours – do not expect privacy.*

• Does the company have a policy on internet and email use, including email retention? If yes, read and understand it.
  • Likely some accommodation for reasonable personal email use

• Learn the email culture from others: observe how/when is it used?
  • No slang, emojis, LOL, clever ironic statements, etc.
  • Humor may not translate – no facial or vocal expression
  • Be cautious with jargon and idioms, especially across countries/languages
Workplace Email Etiquette*

1. Use a clear, direct subject line – e.g. include your objective or action needed
   
   Need your input; Please review; FYI only; Meeting agenda changes

2. Keep the email short or put 1-2 bullet point summary at the start

3. Use clear and reasonable size fonts; most people are viewing on a mobile phone

4. If using a personal email account, make sure it is professional
   
   your.name@gmail.com instead of beerlover@gmail.com

5. Use professional salutations or given names unless invited to do otherwise

Workplace Email Etiquette*

6. Proofread and spell check **every** message
   Email becomes part of your impression and you don’t want to be
   seen as sloppy.

7. Fill in the recipient names last

8. Check that you have the correct recipients

9. Never send an email when angry or argumentative; save as a
draft or send it to yourself and let it sit. Then delete it or
revise. Better yet make a phone call instead.

10. Unintended consequences: once you hit ‘Send’ it is out of
    your control

workplace email disasters

About 5,950,000 results (0.85 seconds)
‘Reply All’ or when email takes on a life of its own

• Everyone on the email feels compelled to contribute.
• New people are added. The contents become a long chain with information not intended for all recipients
  • If you have any hesitation or worry your email might be ‘forwarded’ – make a phone call or schedule a meeting
• Email is not a good place for complex technical or scientific data analysis
  • Team discussion of data is best done in a meeting to permit thorough sharing of ideas and achieve consensus of conclusions
  • Data may be communicated ‘up’ before the team has time to discuss, draw conclusions, and make an action plan
Email is Discoverable

• Never put something in an email you would not want to
  • Be questioned about under oath in a deposition or before jury
  • See on the front page of the paper or the lead on CNN
• Email contents may be actionable within your company
  • Even when sent to one, trusted person and not forwarded