

technical terms is more common in email messages than in business letters. Such shortcuts save time with audiences who will understand the intent. In practicing empathy, however, consider whether the receiver will likely understand the terms used.

- **Use graphic highlighting to add emphasis.**

Enumerated or bulleted lists, tables, graphs, pictures, or other images can be either integrated into the content of the email or attached as supporting material.

- **Revise your email before sending.** Even the average email requires at least one pass to ensure that the intended message is clear, concise, and error-free. The number of passes increases depending on the number of people receiving the email and the complexity of the message. Revising for brevity and conciseness is a primary goal for messages that are often read on the run and on mobile devices. Keep to one screen, eliminate redundancies,

and tighten wording. Avoid off-topic material that detracts from the email's single subject, as well as clever or amusing statements that are funny only to the writer.² Direct, concise messages sometimes sound impersonal and curt if not revised for goodwill. Question whether a phone call would be more appropriate for the message; a businesslike, yet conversational tone might sound less aggressive or demanding. Revise emails to achieve a similar tone.³ Use the email spell checker and then proofread onscreen for content and grammatical errors.

5-1c Effective Use of Email

The email message in Figure 5.1 illustrates guidelines for using professional email. The sender begins the email message reminding the receiver of an employment interview. The paragraphs that follow include timely

FIGURE 5.1 GOOD EXAMPLE OF AN EMAIL MESSAGE



New Message

To: Janna Lu [jl@stein.com]

From: Lonny Winters [lwinters@stein.com]

Subject: Lunch orders for Friday's meeting

Lunchorders2_16.docx

Hi Janna,

You will find the lunch orders for Friday's meeting attached to this message. Please confirm that the caterer, Rose's Deli, can fill the order and deliver it to us before the meeting starts.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at noon in the Bell conference room on the tenth floor. I would like the food to be available for pickup by attendees as they enter the room. I assume the lunches will be delivered in individual brown bags as they were at our previous meeting.

If there is a problem with the delivery, please let me know as soon as possible in case we need to make other arrangements. I will have a check for the lunch available for the delivery person when he or she arrives. Thanks for your help with this and be sure to order a lunch for yourself.

Best,
Lonny

Lonny Winters
Human Resources Manager
Stein, Inc.

- *Provides subject line that is meaningful to reader and writer.*

- *Includes salutation and closing to personalize message.*

- *Conveys short, concise message limited to one idea and one screen.*

information about the interview and instructions for an alternate meeting, if needed.

While email offers various advantages in speed and convenience, problems arise when it is managed inappropriately. Learning fundamental **netiquette**, the buzzword for proper behavior on the Internet, will ensure your online success. The following guidelines will assist you in using email effectively:

- **Check mail promptly.** Generally, a response to email is expected within 24 hours. Ignoring messages from coworkers can erode efforts to create an open, honest, and cooperative work environment. On the other hand, responding every second could indicate that you are paying more attention to your email than your job.
- **Do not contribute to email overload.** To avoid clogging the system with unnecessary messages, follow these simple guidelines:
 - Be certain individuals need a copy of the email, and forward an email from another person only with the original writer's permission.
 - Never address an email requesting general action to more than one person if you want to receive an individual response. Sharing responsibility will lead to no one taking responsibility.
 - Avoid sending formatted documents. Messages with varying fonts, special print features (bold, italics, etc.), and images take longer to download, require more storage space, and could be unreadable on some computers. In addition, enhancing routine email messages does not support the goals of competitive organizations, and employees and clients or customers might resent such frivolous use of time.
 - Edit the original message when you reply to email if the entire body of the original message is not needed for context. Instead, you can cut and paste pertinent sections within a reply that you believe will help the recipient understand your reply. You can also key brief comments in all caps below the original section.
 - Follow company policy for personal use of email. Obtain a private email account if you are job hunting or sending many private messages to friends and relatives.
- **Use email selectively.** Send short, direct messages for routine matters that need not be handled immediately (scheduling meetings, giving your supervisor quick updates, or addressing other uncomplicated issues).



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- **Do not send messages when you are angry.**

Email containing sensitive, highly emotional messages could be easily misinterpreted because of the absence of nonverbal communication (facial expressions, voice tone, and body language). Sending a *flame*, the online term used to describe a heated, sarcastic, sometimes abusive message or posting, might prompt a receiver to send a retaliatory response. Email messages written in anger and filled with emotion and sarcasm could result in embarrassment or even end up as evidence in litigation. Because of the potential damage to relationships and legal liability, read email messages carefully before sending them. Unless a response is urgent, store a heated message for an hour until you have cooled off and thought about the issue clearly and rationally. When you *must* respond immediately, you might acknowledge that your response is emotional and has not been thoroughly considered. Give this warning by using words such as “I need to vent my frustration for a few paragraphs” or “flame on—I’m writing in anger.”⁴

- **Exercise caution against email viruses and hoaxes.**

An ounce of prevention can avert the problems caused by deadly *viruses* that destroy data files or annoying messages that simply waste your time while they are executing. Install an *antivirus software program* that will scan your hard drive each time you start the computer or access external devices, and keep backups of important files. Be suspicious of email messages that contain attachments if they are from people you don’t know. Email text is usually safe to open, but the attachment could contain an

netiquette the buzzword for proper behavior on the Internet



executable file that can affect your computer's operations. **Social networking sites** such as Facebook and MySpace are also common sources of viruses and spyware.

Additionally, be wary of *computer hoaxes*—email messages that incite panic, typically related to risks of computer viruses or deadly threats, and urge you to forward them to as many people as possible. Forwarding a hoax can be embarrassing and causes inefficiency by overloading email boxes and flooding computer security personnel with inquiries from alarmed recipients of your message. Investigate the possible hoax by visiting websites such as the following that post virus alerts and hoax information and provide tips for identifying a potential hoax:

- Urban legends: www.urbanlegends.com
- Snopes: www.snopes.com
- Truth or Fiction: www.truthorfiction.com

If a bogus message is forwarded to you, reply to the person politely that the message is a hoax. This action allows you to help stop the spread of the malicious message and will educate one more person about the evils of hoaxes.

• **Develop an effective system for handling email.**

Some simple organization will allow you to make better use of your email capability:

- Set up separate accounts for receiving messages that require your direct attention.

- Keep your email inbox clean by reading an email and taking action immediately. Delete messages you are not using and those not likely to be considered relevant for legal purposes.
- Move saved messages into a limited number of email folders for quick retrieval. The email search feature is also useful for identifying saved messages quickly. If you receive many messages, consider setting up your account to sort and prioritize messages, send form letters as replies to messages received with a particular subject line, automatically forward specified email, and sound an alarm when you receive a message from a particular person.

5-1d Instant and Text Messaging

Business use of **instant messaging (IM)** has phenomenal growth. Analysts estimate that in 90% of companies, some employees use IM, whether to close a sale, collaborate with a colleague, or just trade pleasantries with a colleague.⁵ This real-time email technology allows the sender to know when someone is available to respond immediately.

The best known IM programs are free and require no special hardware and little training. With some programs, users can exchange graphics and audio and video clips. To use instant messaging, you maintain a list of people with whom you want to interact. You can send messages to any or all of the people on your list as long as the people are online. Sending a message opens up a window in which you and your contact can key messages that you both can see immediately. Figure 5.2 illustrates a sample IM conversation that occurred to arrange for last-minute report changes.

Many of the guidelines that apply to the use of email for business purposes also apply to instant messaging. With IM, however, spelling and grammar matter less when trading messages at high speed. IM users often use shorthand for common words and phrases. IM and telephone communication also share common challenges: being sure that the sender is who he or she claims to be and that the conversation is free from eavesdropping.

Some managers worry that employees will spend too much work time using IM to chat with buddies inside and outside the company. They also emphasize that IM is not the right tool for every business purpose. Employees should still rely on email when they need a record and use the telephone for a personal touch.

social networking sites websites that provide virtual communities in which people with shared interests can communicate

instant messaging (IM) a real-time email technology that blends email with conversation; sender and receiver who are online at the same time can type messages that both see immediately