

# Electronic Communication Etiquette

Prepared by:  
Jordan Jensen, Ed.D.  
*Freedom Focused LLC*

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# **Electronic Communication Etiquette: What Every Customer Service Professional Should Know**

*Written by Jordan R. Jensen, Ed.D.*

## **Part I. E-Communication & Professional Relationships**

- Your long-term success depends upon the quality of your interpersonal relationships at work.
- Relationships are NOT static.
- A given relationship is always getting stronger (better) or weaker (worse).
- Every communication exchange influences the quality of your relationship with the person(s) involved.
- Every live conversation, phone call, formal written correspondence, e-mail, and text message either contributes to or vitiates the quality of your relationships.
- A means of effective intra- and inter-office communication
- Makes for ease & convenience, but not a cure-all
- Tools for building quality interpersonal office and client relationships

## **A Means of Effective Intra- and Inter-office Communication**

- Communication inside the office with:
  - Superiors
  - Subordinates
  - Peers
  - Supporting staff



- Communicating outside the office with:

Current Clients

Prospective Clients

Advertisers

Competitors

Government Representatives

Press

### **Ease and Convenience, but NOT a Cure-All**

- There are times we e-mail or message someone when we should give them a call.
- There are times we call when we should make a personal visit.
- There are times we pick up the phone or visit someone in person when we should e-mail or send formal written correspondence.
- Don't use email / instant messaging / voicemail to shift responsibility

"They never responded to my email" is not an excuse for incomplete work.

Confirmation is Key (in person is best)

- Guidelines for when to do what?
  - E-mail
  - Phone
  - Face-to-Face
  - Know Your Audience's Preferences

### **Building Quality Interpersonal Office & Client Relationships**

- Build Credibility
  - Clear, concise, cogent, and well-organized communications stand out positively and generate approving attention.

Articulate speech is almost universally respected.

Effective articulation in speech or writing makes you look intelligent, well-educated, clever, and well-prepared.

- The Power of Being Pleasant

Remembering your Please's & Thank-You's is professional, and will be viewed as tokens of courtesy, kindness, and refinement.

Everyone needs encouragement & support. Giving it to others will win you friends and build productive alliances.

- The Power of Praise

A Powerful Lesson from Charles Schwab

## **Part II. E-Communication Best Practices & Etiquette**

### **Guidelines for *when* to call**

- A phone call is an excellent communication tool when your goal is to:
  - Make a personal connection
  - Address an urgent issue
  - Explain a complex concept / situation (instead of typing)
  - Hear someone's *actual* tone
- A phone call is a poor communication tool when you need to:
  - Keep a record of the communication
  - Observe someone's body language
  - Share bad news (when in-person is possible)
  - Communicate with someone in the opposite time zone
  - Deliver information to a large audience

## Phone & Voice Messaging

- Words = 14% ~ Tone = 86%
- Body language influences tone
- Consider a mirror
- Smile
- Be conscious of your posture
- Aim for being:
  - Upbeat
  - Pleasant
  - Cheerful
  - Yourself!
- Avoid speakerphone
- When you can't avoid speakerphone, apprise your audience
- Consider notes for phone conversations
- Consider a script for voice messages
- Most people prefer a text / IM
- Keep voicemail message up-to-date
- Utilize your phone as a tool
- Don't become its slave

## Guidelines for *when* to email

- Email is an excellent communication tool when your goal is to:
  - Be efficient & reduce costs
  - Maintain a paper trail (record) of past communication
  - Reduce unnecessary confrontation
- E-mail is a poor communication tool when you need to:
  - Hear someone's *actual* tone
  - Observe someone's body language
  - Give performance feedback

Deliver extra personal information  
Announce bad news  
Share highly confidential information

### **E-mail Example**

Mary... Your report has some real problems. Here are the details...Your overall tone is too condescending. REMEMBER, YOU ARE WRITING TO SUPERIORS, NOT SUBORDINATES. Your sources need to be cited in footnotes, not in in-text citations. Your structure lacks the kind of logical flow needed to project the kind of professionalism required for this client. Time to try again! We need to get this revamped ASAP in order to meet our appointed deadline of next Tuesday. Do whatever is necessary to see to it that it gets finished on time. If you need to get the help of Neil and Maria, that is fine. Just forward this e-mail on to them and let them know that the three of you will be responsible for getting the work completed and in on time. You will ultimately be responsible to see that the proposal is a success. Warmly, .....  
Barbara

### **E-mail Revised for Formatting**

Mary:

Your report has some real problems. Here are the details...

1. Your overall tone is too condescending. Remember, you are writing to superiors, not subordinates.
2. Your sources need to be cited in footnotes, not in in-text citations.
3. Your structure lacks the kind of logical flow needed to project the kind of professionalism required for this client.

If you need to get the help of Neil and Maria, that is fine. But YOU will ultimately be responsible to see that the proposal is a success.

Time to try again!

Warmly,

Barbara

### **E-mail revised for Formatting & Tone**

Hello Mary,

Hope your day is going well.

I received your report yesterday, and wanted to thank you for the time and effort I know it took to put all that together. Below, I have included some specific points that need to be implemented on the next go-round.

1. The overall tone may come across to some as condescending in light of the fact that we are writing to superiors, not subordinates.
2. Please replace in-text citations with footnotes.
3. You will notice in your review of the report that I have redlined a few areas I would suggest further review to enhance clarity. Let me know if you have any questions. I would be happy to help in any way needed.

Also, if you need extra help, Neil and Maria can also assist to ensure this project is completed and ready for presentation by next Tuesday.

Thanks again for your hard work!

Warmly,

Barbara

### **E-mail Content Formatting**

- Telephone Test for Tone

Salutation



Greeting  
Please & Thank-You  
Praise & Compliments  
Support & Encouragement  
Closing pleasantry  
Gratitude  
Complimentary close

### **Email Best Practices**

- Mechanics of Email
  - To line
  - CC line
  - BCC line
  - Subject line
- Inbox Management
- B.L.U.F.
- K.I.S.S.
- C.T.A.
- W.I.I.F.M. (Informative/Basic Request)
- W.I.I.F.T. (Persuasive/Sales/Marketing)

### **Common Email Pet Peeves**

- No subject line
- Only subject line (blank documents)
- Reply-All
- Email debris
- Incompleteness / Inaccuracy
- Poor organization (no outline)
- Poor formatting (run-on sentences & cinderblock paragraphs)

On average, keep sentences to 1-full line.

Avoid going over 2-full lines in a single sentence.

On average, keep paragraphs to 3-5 lines.

Avoid going over 8-full lines in a single paragraph

### **Guidelines for *when* to use text or instant messaging**

- Messaging is an excellent communication tool when your goal is to:
  - Be efficient & reduce costs (global locations)
  - Receive a quick response
  - Address an urgent issue if a call doesn't work
  - Talk to someone with whom you have an established relationship
- Messaging is a poor communication tool when you need to:
  - Hear someone's *actual* tone
  - Observe someone's body language
  - Deliver bad news / give performance feedback
  - Deliver personal or confidential information
  - Chat with a buddy

### **Text and Instant Messaging Tips**

- Don't rely solely on messaging: text / instant messaging can be disruptive to the other person's current activity
  - IM: Respect the indicated status of your colleagues (Do Not Disturb / In a Meeting)
- K.I.S.S.: If more than a few back-and-forth messages are required, pick up the phone!
- B.L.U.F.: Make good use of first message for a faster response
- Telephone test

- Productivity Tips:
  - Text Messaging: Group texts can reduce email clutter
  - Instant Messaging: screen sharing in conjunction with a phone call, group messaging
- Don't neglect editing & proofreading!

## **Text & Instant Messaging Pros & Cons**

### **Pros**

- Efficient & Cost-Effective, especially for global locations (no accent!)
- Simple to use
- Increased productivity
- Reconnect with past colleagues
- Avoid email clutter
- A record is kept

### **Cons**

- Some people do not use it or prefer not to use it
- Can be hazardous (texting while driving)
- Disrupts current activity
- Personal conversations are visible to others who see your screen
- A record is kept

## **Social Media Mediums**

- Instagram
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Pinterest

- Tumblr
- Other (Snapchat, etc.)

### **Social Media Guidelines**

- Be careful about the personal information you share online.
- Consider obtaining Identity Theft Protection (e.g., *Lifelock*)
- Assume employers, potential employers, and anyone and everyone else will eventually be looking at ALL of your social media platforms
- Be yourself, but be your BEST SELF
- Be extra careful with photographs
- Plethora of information available online to get the most out of your social media OR Read a good book
- Discipline the amount of time you spend on Social Media each day (30 minutes)

Timely Advice About Social Media Use from the Father of Time Management (*Hyrum W. Smith*):

[freedomfocused.blogspot.com/2015/10/timely-advice-about-social-media-use.html](http://freedomfocused.blogspot.com/2015/10/timely-advice-about-social-media-use.html)

### **Social Media Resources**

- *LinkedIn for Dummies* By: Joel Elad (Feb. 2014)
- *Twitter for Dummies* By: Laura Fitton and Anum Hussain (Dec. 2014)
- *Facebook Marketing: How to Use Facebook to Master Internet Marketing and Achieve Social Media Success* By: Kenneth Lewis (2015)



- *Instagram: How to Use Instagram for Business and Fun: The Ultimate Guide to Instagram Marketing for Beginners* By: Jamie Gray (2015)
- *Snapchat: The Ultimate Insider Tips and Secrets Guidebook* By: Neo Monefa (2015)

### **Part III. E-Communication Practices to Avoid**

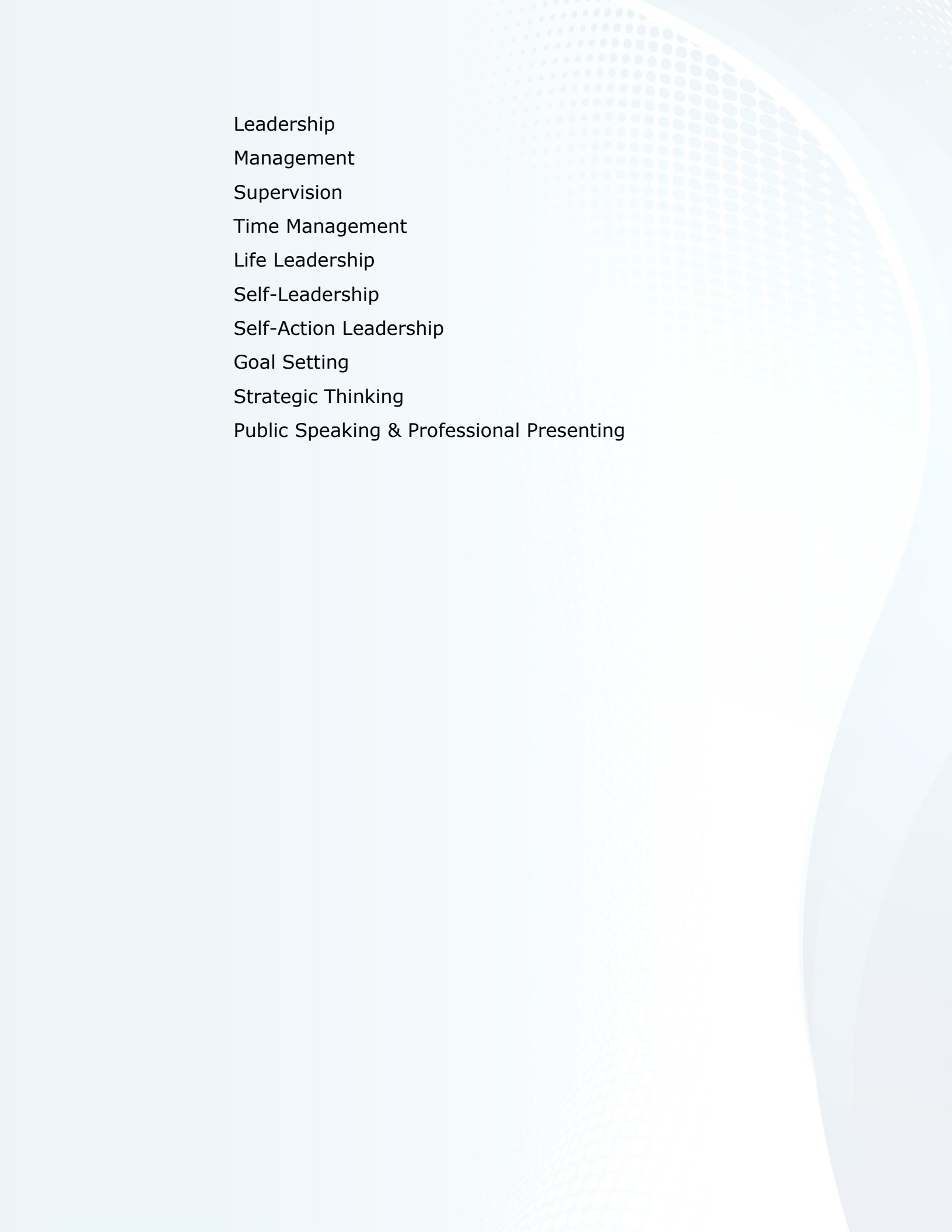
- Safety First!
- Common Pet Peeves
- The “Courtroom Test”

### **E-Communication Practices to Avoid**

- Safety First!
  - Don’t talk on the phone while driving
  - Don’t text while driving
  - Don’t text while walking
  - Be aware of e-addictions
  - Get help when/where necessary
- Social Media Pet Peeves
  - Posting too often
  - Spamming
  - Trolling
  - Flaming
- The Courtroom Test

### **That’s All Folks!**

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