KEEP CALM AND EMAIL ON

Establishing A Protocol For
How Foothill Does Email

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OBJECTIVES

- To share a suggested protocol for how we can do email at Foothill College, especially given COVID19 and the heavy influx of email that has occurred as a result
- To provide tips for how to email more effectively and efficiently among employees
- To improve our communication response time
- To minimize stress/workload of employees

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FOUR AREAS COVERED

- When and why to email - what should email really be used for?

- Organizing the body of an email

- Subject lines/salutations/CC, BCC/Reply All

- Managing your inbox

EMAIL: IS IT A TOOL OR IS IT A HORROR?

Poll: When I think about checking my email inbox, I…..

a) can't wait to check messages and follow-through on everything immediately. I love email, it's my favorite thing.

b) my inbox is always empty so I have no idea what you are referring to

c) want to get back in bed and throw the covers over my head

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EMAIL: IS IT A TOOL OR IS IT A HINDRANCE?

A few crazy facts about email

- A 2016 study found that the average office worker checked their email an average of 77 times a day and spends almost 1.5 hours dealing with it.

- About 124 billion business emails are sent and received each day.

- The average office worker gets 120 emails/day.

- Forty-two percent of Americans admit to checking email in the bathroom, and 50% do so while in bed.

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How Should we Approach Email?
When and Why to Email?

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EMAIL: WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR? NOT EVERYTHING!

Email is good for:

- sharing documents
- starting a paper trail
- distributing lots of information to people at one time
- FYI's
- non-urgent communication
- simple back-and-forths

EMAIL: WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR? NOT EVERYTHING!

Email is not the best tool for:

Immediate responses
you can't control when people read it and when they might respond

Discussion and debate
long threads get confusing, unclear about what everyone's role in the discussion is, hard to make decisions over email.

Confidences/Confidentiality
once an email is out there in the world, you lose control over where it might end up

Nuance
tone is hard to express in an email; can't use verbal and non-verbal cues

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EMAIL: WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR? NOT EVERYTHING!

What to do when an email spins out of control?

Scenario: You send out an email with the greatest intentions but somehow it was misperceived, misunderstood and next you know, you are fuming upset. What do you do?

 a) keep adding to the email string to make your point plus you want this in writing.

 b) Don't respond. Just drop it, you don't have time for this.

 c) Respond respectfully saying that you would prefer a phone conversation to clear
   things up.

How Should We Organize
The Body of the Email?

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CONCISION AND CLARITY IN EVERY EMAIL

Make concision and clarity your guideposts for professional emails.

Concision

- Assume that everyone you email is busier than you so aim for brevity

- Make clear why you are writing in the first or second sentence: be direct

- Include questions in an easy list form (like bullets or a **colored font**) if you have multiple questions

- Use another form of communication if you find it hard to be concise with what you need.

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BE CONCISE AND CLEAR IN EVERY EMAIL

Clarity: Go for clarity E V E R Y time!

- Avoid ALL CAPS UNLESS YOU ARE REALLY TRYING TO SHOUT AT YOUR READER (And if you are: **don't!**)
- Check yourself when using abbreviations, text language, emojis, lots of exclamation points!!!!!
- Embed links in words rather than include long URLs….
- Use bullet-points instead of long paragraphs for clarity and question
- Don't write "Thoughts?" at the end of an email. Be specific such as, "Are there any reservations about us moving forward on this plan?"
- Consider your tone: humor, irony, and sarcasm may not be received as you intended

Take time to make each email clear and concise

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Subject Lines, Salutations, Niceties, etc.

SUBJECT LINES

- Go for short and specific. Clear and concise subject lines might be the difference between someone reading your email and ignoring it.
- Keep it short and obvious. Let the reader know what they can expect to read about. That way they can easily search the subj line later if needed
- Suggest to keep it to around 6-10 words if you can
- Don't leave it blank. They are perceived as "I'm not an important email"
  For example:
    - SUBJ: "Following up - number of attendees to expect at student orientation" VS
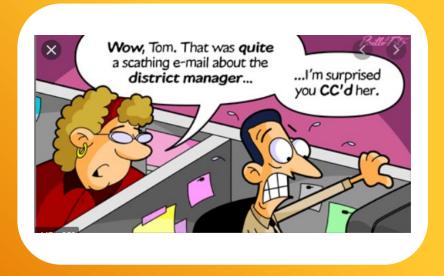   - SUBJ: "Follow up"

REPLY ALLPOCALYPSE!

- Reply all - PLEASE THINK ABOUT IT BEFORE YOU HIT REPLY ALL (yes I am yelling here).

- This fills email inboxes like crazy and then no one can keep up.

- Only "reply all" when everyone on the email thread needs to be kept in the loop on your reply.

- Try to limit sending a "thank you" to an entire "reply all" list.

  - Thanking people is awesome but instead how about you just thank the person/people and leave the others off - optionally you can copy their boss.

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CC V BCC: WHEN SHOULD I USE THEM?

- <u>To</u> is for primary recipient(s) who you are expecting to inform or want a response from (duh).

- Consider using one of the many Foothill email listservs so you don't have to think of every person in a dept and inadvertently someone is missed. You can create a listserv too.

- <u>CC</u> is for people who need to see the email for reference only and don't need to respond but may be mentioned in the email. Consider saying this when CCing folks, "I've copied Kevin on this email to loop him in since it involves the CARES act." That way all are clear who is on the email and for what purpose.

- <u>BCC</u>: I am moving you to BCC to spare your inbox.

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CLOSING & NICETIES

Close an email with letting the recipient know what action you'd like taken and by when or that you don't need any action taken. Consider **bolding** or <u>underlining</u> the action/response you need.

Signing Off

- "Pour on the Sugar" for your direct reports or really for anyone as a nice way to say you appreciate them. This is to spread good vibes and give out kudos. For example:

    "Cleve, Thank you for your great work on the transfer celebration, it's coming together nicely!"

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BEFORE YOU HIT SEND - CONSIDER CONFIDENTIALITY

- Once an email has been sent into the world, it is no longer in your control and can be passed along.
- Go with an in-person meeting (or a phone call) if you have sensitive or confidential information no matter how much you trust the recipient
(e.g. keep information about student disabilities out of emails).

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Other Thangs to Consider:
OOO & Managing Your Inbox

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OUT OF THE OFFICE (OOO) & (EOM)

Out-of-Office Messages—Two reasons to use them

Lets people know not to expect an answer a response from you

Absolves you of guilt for not reading your emails

End Of Message (EOM)— Sending a brief attachment

Example: Your annual budget is attached (EOM)

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INBOX ZERO - TIDYING UP YOUR INBOX

The idea of Inbox Zero (coined by Merlin Mann in 2006) is to keep your inbox empty by processing every email in some way as soon as you read it.

- Start with a clean slate
- Turn off notifications
- Set aside a specific time during the day to read and deal with emails. Then....
- Only read each email once. <u>Do something with it: **delete, delegate, respond, defer, do.**</u>

TAKEAWAYS

- Use email when effective; sometimes something else might be better

- Aim for **concision and clarity** in every message

- Use bullets for an easy read - don't send out essays

- Be clear on your ask: ask for what you need and when you need it

- Subject lines are important: make them short and obvious

- Proofread and double check before you send

- Don't put confidential information in a message

- "reply-all" - think real hard before you do it

- Set aside some time each day to read and deal with emails; Do something with it: **delete, delegate, respond, defer, do.**

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Keep Calm and Email On

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