

EFFECTIVE EMAILS - SECTION 3 – KEY POINTS

Group emails must have a clear purpose for all recipients; otherwise, they will be ignored or filed for later. To make the purpose clear, do the following:

- Have a clear subject line and introduction.
- Say why the group is getting the message.
- State the purpose of the message for each subgroup (if there are subgroups).
- Define any rules you want for how people reply (i.e., is it okay to “reply all”).

Cc'ing People

People interpret the Cc field in different ways. They may not treat it the way you intend. To avoid problems, follow these steps:

- Don't use the Cc field. Put everyone in the To field and explain why they are included in the group.
- If you do Cc people, explain why in the introduction.
- Don't be passive-aggressive by copying other people's managers without explaining why.

Bcc'ing People

There are two legitimate reasons to use Bcc. Anything else can be interpreted as being sneaky.

1. Protecting the privacy and data of the recipients by hiding their details.
2. Copying yourself on a message.

Forwarding Email Chains

- Always add an introduction.
- Change the subject line to include the purpose for the new recipient.
- Summarize the content of the chain rather than make the new recipient dig for information.
- Never forward with just an “FYI.”

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Adding & Removing People from Email Chains

- Explain to the group why you added or removed recipients.
- Inform the added recipients why they have been added to the email.
- Inform removed participants why they have been removed in a separate email.
- Check with the email chain owner before removing people they've included, unless there's a level of urgency, in which case make the change and then talk to the sender of the original email.
- If other people change the recipients, find out why before reacting. There may be a good reason.

Keeping Email Chains on Topic

- If an email chain has drifted off-topic or introduced a new topic, reset the conversation with a summary.
- Move new topics to new email chains and start a new subject line with topic and purpose.

Moving Communication Beyond Email

If an email conversation changes to a new channel (meeting, call, etc.) always close the loop with the rest of the group so that everyone is kept up to date.