Article: COMPUTERS BEHAVING BADLY
Topic: Email Fundamentals
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Generally, writing an email message should be like writing a letter, picking up the phone or talking in person to someone; common sense prevails. So in this instalment, I would like to point out some 'other' points to be aware of.

Like, formatting. Be aware that due to different email programs, versions, operating systems, security etc, the way your email appears on your computer may vary greatly in how it presents itself on the recipients PC. Will attachments be readable or require special software to open?.

In the two popular email browsers, Outlook and Outlook Express, you can fill in User Information fields. One advantage of this is your personal name appears alongside your email address when receiving emails. Very useful when deciding if something is spam or even worthwhile looking at. Also for the same reason, use a meaningful Subject description.

A personal annoyance for me was receiving joke emails. Just because one person finds something amusing they happily send it to everyone in their address book. These little ditties used to take ages to download under dial-up. Maybe a quick email asking if the receiver is happy to get this sort of mail would be beneficial.

Use the Bcc: field (blind carbon copy) to send an email to a recipient but have their name and email address remain 'silent'. This keeps people in the loop while maintaining privacy. Useful if sending a distribution list without disclosing every recipient's identity.

If an email is important, follow it up. Just because it's been sent, don't assume it's been read. It could be hours or days before the recipient logs on to download their mail. An email can be 'flagged' as High Importance which changes the way it is display to the recipient. You can also request a receipt which alerts you when the email has been read.

Emails biggest failing, I feel, is the context of the medium – or lack of. It is totally devoid of body language and vocal inflections. It is difficult to tell if someone is happy or sad, serious or kidding. Nuances just don't come across easily. Sarcasm is virtually impossible. Keep this in mind. Always re-read your emails before sending. Put yourself in the receivers' shoes.

To help in this matter, simple formatting may help. Bolding or underlining implies importance or extra meaning. Upper case signifies SHOUTING and can also be used to stress significance. Even easier is to use the 'smiley face'. :-) or :) implies happiness. :-(or :(is sadness. And ;-) is for that something naughty.

Remember these golden rules with emails;
No Privacy - your email can be 'eavesdropped' or stored on various company servers.
No Control – the person you sent it to may not be the person who reads it.
No Undo – once you hit send, you can't get it back.
No Soul – the intent when writing may not be conveyed when reading.

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