

Title:

What's Your Company's Email Policy?

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Summary:

Does your company have an email policy? Did you even know there was such a thing? Well, there is, and if your company doesn't have one you are not only risking the professional image of your firm, but also risking potential liability issues that may arise from the misuse of your company email system.

Having a published email policy accomplishes three objectives.

First, it teaches your employees how to use email in a professional manner. What's that? You've never really ...

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Having a published email policy accomplishes three objectives.

First, it teaches your employees how to use email in a professional manner. What's that? You've never really given much thought about the emails your employees send out? Well, you should, because ill-composed and unprofessional emails not only reflect on the employee, but on you and your company, as well.

Chances are most of your employees don't even spell check the emails they send to your customers and partners. Chances are even greater that they are sending other items through your company email system that may get you sued.

Consider this: if one of your male employees sends an email to a female employee that might be considered harassing in nature, you may be judged to be just as liable for damages when her attorney comes calling with harassment suit in hand.

Creating a company email policy also helps lay out the ground rules for personal

use of company email. When an employee is on your clock, using your computer equipment, and your network, and your resources they should understand that personal emails should not be sent or received using the company email system.

This can be a hard rule to enforce, given that kids now email their moms at work after school and soccer coaches email everybody, but as a rule, personal use of the company email system should not be allowed.

An effective company email policy also helps cover your corporate backside against liability. Take the example above of the potential harassment suit caused by an insulting email. If your company has a clearly-stated email policy that details what is considered inappropriate, you can minimize the company's liability by proving that employees were trained in the proper use of email.

If you can prove that employees knew that sending such emails were not acceptable under company policy, your liability can be greatly lessened.

Having a good email policy can also give you a competitive advantage over the competition. As email becomes the professional communication medium of choice, composing professional, thoughtful emails can truly put your company ahead of the pack.

I can tell you from experience that I have actually won contracts simply because the customer was impressed that I replied to his email quickly and professionally. In other words, I've made thousands of dollars just because I respond quickly and use a spellchecker. Is this a great country or what?

How do you create an email policy? If you have other existing policies in place, such as those that pertain to business communications, access to confidential materials, personal use of the telephone, sexual harassment, etc. you should be able to establish an email policy using the existing policies as guidelines.

If you need to start from scratch you can still write the policy yourself with a little time and research, however, many companies rely on professional consultants to do the job for them. When you realize the importance of an email policy and understand the ramifications of not having one, you'll probably agree that its money well-spent.

An email policy doesn't have to be a long, drawn out document. Most policies are no more than a few pages long, written in plain English that every employee can easily understand.

The key to the success of your company email policy lies in the training of your

employees. You can't just establish a policy and expect everyone to follow blindly. Once the policy is written it should be distributed to employees and can even become part of future employment contracts. Explain the policy to your employees and have them read and sign to signify that they understand and will adhere to the rules.

Many companies are now realizing the importance of email and are putting on training seminars that not only teach their employees how to stick to the policy, but how to compose and respond to emails, as well.

Here's to your success!