

**(PLEASE DON'T) REPLY ALL**

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Trevor Quinn is the Chief Marketing Officer for F&K Brands, a leading company in the maternity apparel and accessories industry. The company is doing well and Trevor is looking forward to mapping out future product development and advertising campaigns that would start with gathering input from customers. Because they were able to turn around customer suggestions into new products and processes, F&K's customers were very willing to provide regular, penetrating insight. F&K, in response, rewarded specific customers for their suggestions and promoted those customers in future product/service rollouts.

With all of this success and promise, one would think that Trevor's staff was a highly functional, cohesive team. And, while they had their moments of brilliance; lots of moments of brilliance, when things went bad, it was as if he was supervising recess of a second grade elementary school.

Meetings were almost always friendly and productive, even when the creative tension was running high. Everyone was focused, found ways to disagree without being disagreeable, and came together on the final decision with amazing clarity of purpose.

Electronic communication was a completely different story. Internal email was very informal; e.g., grammar and spelling weren't checked; salutations often weren't used; and subject lines were missing or just borrowed from a previous email. But beyond that, people seemed to be careless about what and how they wrote. And, once an argument broke out it could continue for hours. More often than not, the list of individuals cc'd expanded, as if each protagonist needed to include their allies in the fight. It seemed like all of the problems, big and small, that weren't addressed in face-to-face meetings, bubbled up in emails.

Some of Trevor's favorite email strategies included:

Hide and speak . . . "I didn't want to say something in the meeting (so I'm going to hide in my office and say the following) . . . I really thought that what you said was unfair."

Daggers hiding in the joke . . . "Wow, you really needed to show who was boss today, didn't you? 😊  
Haha."

Cold war . . . the steady escalation of I'm right and you're wrong.

Today, Trevor found himself . . . once more . . . at the end of his rope. In fifteen minutes, two of his top direct reports had managed to take a simple task; schedule a meeting to discuss the Easter customer satisfaction campaign, and turn it into a mess. The email string (see Figure 1) was a highly representative example of electronic dysfunction. He knew that one of the two protagonists would be in his office within five minutes and he would have to call the two together for an hour to get them to a point where they would "kiss and make up."

"Three wasted hours," he sighed.

As if they were reading his mind, at 10:08, Clay Slicker stormed into his office.

“I’ve had it!” he bellowed, shutting the door behind him. “What is her problem? Do I have to work with her? Really? Can she be transferred to Mongolia?”

At that moment, Trevor’s phone rang. The caller ID was no surprise: Bray, Autumn 4216. He let it go to voice.

Trevor had thought about instituting an email etiquette policy, and he looked at a draft that was sitting next to his keyboard:

1. Every email should have a subject.
2. Use a first name salutation.
3. Use a first name closing.
4. Check all spelling and grammar.
5. Use proper paragraph and sentence construction.
6. If the message was completely contained in the subject, end the subject line with “eom” (end of message).
7. If the message doesn’t need a reply, end the subject line with “ntr” (no need to reply).

But the real issue seemed to be something different . . . deeper than etiquette. Finishing the etiquette policy would be nice, but it seemed that the company needed an email code of conduct. A code of conduct would remind people that everyday manners that are expected in the office also need to be present in every form of communication; even between (or especially between) colleagues.

### **Assignment**

Compose a company-wide code of conduct for internal email.

A code of conduct is a set of rules or norms to guide the person or organization towards appropriate behavior and decision making. Those expectations are considered binding for members of the organization.

The policy should not address issues like those illustrated in the draft of the etiquette policy. Think about the core issues illustrated in the case and the core values that would be supported if this code of conduct were not necessary. Make sure that the code is based on broader aspects; e.g. respect, and tailors those specifically towards electronic communication.

-----Original Message-----

Date: September 10, 2011; 9:58 a.m.  
From: Clay Slicker  
Sent:  
To: Autumn Bray  
Cc: Trevor Quinn, Kasey Harper, Lori Michaels  
Subject: RE: Customer Satisfaction Letters--Timelines

I'm not opposed to two sessions and I am okay with whatever the group decides. I just know at this time we are all swamped, so I would like to use our time as efficiently as possible. Maybe you have more time than me . . .

BTW- I don't respond to every side comment in a meeting – we were discussing more important things... at least I thought so...

-----Original Message-----

Date: September 10, 2011; 9:52 a.m.  
From: Autumn Bray  
Sent:  
To: Clay Slicker  
Cc: Trevor Quinn, Kasey Harper, Lori Michaels  
Subject: RE: Customer Satisfaction Letters--Timelines

I don't know why your opposed to two sessions (my current idea), but if your truly opposed to two sessions, Trevor and I could meet to discuss a timeline and then you can join us for the second meeting to discuss specific content and message. That would also give you time to work on writing an easter promotion letter. Is this anything close to something you would approve or at least could work with? BTW: I did mention the timeline and the proposed TWO meetings the last time we all got together...

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Date: September 10, 2011; 9:48 a.m.  
From: Clay Slicker  
Sent:  
To: Autumn Bray  
Cc: Trevor Quinn, Kasey Harper, Lori Michaels  
Subject: RE: Customer Satisfaction Letters--Timelines

Like everything I propose, I've thought it through a lot. If we don't have to waste too much time (like we're doing now), I believe we can achieve this in one session but if you need a second session to get your points across, I am okay with that. I'm not sure about you, but I have a lot of other stuff going on... It is possible to discuss letters in one meeting. The letters for the Special promotion program have been completed and drafted simultaneously with Marketing. In reference to special promotion planning for next year I feel that it is a little premature; we are working to finalize plans and participants for the fall.

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Date: September 10, 2011; 9:45 a.m.  
From: Autumn Bray  
Sent:  
To: Clay Slicker

Cc: Trevor Quinn, Kasey Harper  
Subject: RE: Customer Satisfaction Letters--Timelines

I don't think you've thought this all the way through. I think we really need to break it into 2 sessions. this way, we can get an idea of what letters even go OUT, and there purpose. That would give us some time to revise what we have before we bring the actual letters to the group. Otherwise any revisions we do on letters prior to determining purpose and intent could be wasted time, and we'd still need another meeting for finalizing. I do understand that the special promotion cycle is already in place for this year but it would be good to get that timeline down and we could look at things for next year—but this year its already to late.

-----Original Appointment-----

Date: September 10, 2011; 9:43 a.m.  
From: Clay Slicker  
Sent:  
To: Autumn Bray; Trevor Quinn  
Cc:  
Subject: Accepted: Customer Satisfaction Letters--Timelines  
When: September 15, 2011; 10:00 a.m.  
Where: Big guy's office

Figure 1. Easter Promotion Email Argument