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Professional Development

Get the most from your email

Perhaps, like me, you weren't one of the first people to start using email. But now we wonder how we ever did without it.

Here are five more tips on making email easier and nicer for – and from – you. They are some of the best ideas from Stephanie Hobbs, owner of Pixel and Paper Designs in Greer.

Sign your work. Email is a business tool. Take advantage of free space to advertise your business (within reason). Almost every mail program lets you append what's called a "signature" to your email messages. This could be your business name, contact information, even a line or two about what you or your business does. Some programs let you include a graphic, such as an electronic version of your business card. Not having a signature either means you're typing this information in each time or leaving it out altogether. Set up a signature once and it's automatically inserted in every message you send, should you choose.

Think outside the (in) box. Don't leave important emails to get lost amid the spam in your inbox. Most email programs support the creation of multiple mailboxes or folders. Take advantage of that fact. Create a separate mailbox for each client, to keep all correspondence from them in a single place. If you subscribe to any mailing lists, keep those emails segregated from more urgent messages.

Message Rules rule. If you listened to us in the previous tip, you've set up multiple mailboxes. Now what? Most mail programs have the ability to create rules (filters in Eudora mail program) that direct incoming mail to the box of your choice. You don't have to manually move messages out of your inbox to another mailbox. For example, a message rule takes those emails from a mailing list and diverts them to the mailbox of your choosing, before they even have a chance to reach your inbox.

Have a secret identity. If you do a lot of chatting or shopping on the Internet, consider setting up an email address that's just for online use. Many ISPs allow more than one address per account. If you have an online-only email address, and start receiving a lot of spam or unwanted messages, you can simply delete that address

and create a new one for online use without having to change your address with friends and family.

Watch your mouth. As we said before, email is a business tool. What you say and how you say it reflects on you and your business. People consider email to be a transient, informal mode of communication, but any messages you send could live a lot longer than you expect (as Microsoft can attest). We're not saying you can't relax when emailing family and friends. Just stay close to the rules when corresponding with clients and associates.

Thanks, Stephanie!

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