Tips for Setting Email Boundaries to Improve Well-Being

1. Have discussions amongst your team to set norms and culture around email communications. Ask your team how and when they like to communicate. Setting clear expectations around response time can significantly reduce workplace stress related to email overload.

2. When setting expectations, it is important to recognize that people have different working hours and that team members may have specific blocks of time to read, write and respond to emails.

3. As a team, determine a communication plan if an urgent matter arises and does require a more immediate response.

4. If you've designated non-traditional work hours as your email time, consider using the "delay send" option so that your message is delivered when typical business hours resume. Off hour emails from a leader or supervisor can often put unintentional pressure on employees to be responsive and infringes on personal time.

5. Communicate your email expectations clearly by adding a note in your email signature or via an out of office email.

   "If you are receiving this email on weekends or after hours, please respond during your working hours. If this is urgent, please text or call me."

   "Thanks for your message! I am working on a time sensitive project and only checking my email periodically. You can expect a response from me within 24-48 hours. If your request is urgent, please contact xyz@xyz.com."

6. Set aside specific "email hours" to avoid distractions during work periods. Turn off notifications and badges or close your inbox while working on a project that requires concentration.

7. Use filters or labels to automate your inbox.

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Best Practices for Email Etiquette

1. Avoid using email for urgent, clinical matters.

2. Make subject lines as specific as possible, especially if it is a follow-up. For emails with patient information, put [secure] in the subject line.

3. Include your main point upfront and follow with the relevant context.

4. Ask yourself the following before "replying all":
   a. Is the content of the message intended for everyone in the group?
   b. Is the content of the message potentially disciplinary and could be perceived as hurtful to a single individual?
   c. Is the content of the message substantive or does it simply acknowledge receipt?
   d. If the message is congratulatory or a thank you, limit response to the individual and the sender, or consider thanking or congratulating when you next see the individual.

5. Mostly avoid blind carbon copies (Bcc). Consider the reason for the email message and ensure that this practice would not be perceived as deceptive. Bcc can be a useful tool when sending to large groups, but include a note about who is receiving the message.

6. Use discretion when forwarding or adding people to an email and remove information that may not be needed for additional parties. It is also recommended to explain why you added or removed a recipient.

7. Always remember that all emails can be subpoenaed.

8. Use "read receipts" and "high importance" tags sparingly.

9. Read an email aloud prior to sending. This allows you to check for errors or typos and think about your word choices. It can be difficult to convey emotion or tone via email so think about your audience and how your tone may be perceived.

10. Avoid all caps. Capital letters are perceived by many as angry or shouting.

11. If an email involves tense issues/exchange, save it in your drafts folder and re-read 24 hours after composing.

12. Include a proper salutation and sign-off. A lack of these items can be perceived by many as curt or rude.

13. Don't use email like chat and consider a phone call after 3 email exchanges. A simple phone call often supplants 10 emails.

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