Technology Etiquette in the Modern Workplace

Many employers' top e-mail pet peeves in the professional setting:

- MESSAGES IN ALL CAPS
- messages in all lower case
- Incorrect, punctuation
- Responding messages that don't answer the question
- Writing the Great American Novel (e-mails that are too long)
- Sending unnecessarily large attachments
- Forwarding non-work related jokes or chain e-mails
- Discussing personally sensitive issues
- Forwarding offensive or off-color jokes or attachments
- Not using the subject line—or not changing it to agree with the topic

Suggestions for using cell phones and MP3 players in the workplace include:

- Use may be restricted to breaks—know your company's policies
- Select a ringtone that is appropriate for your work environment
- When talking on a cell phone, speak in a normal tone of voice
- Record a professional voice-mail greeting, not "What's up? This is Todd"
- Stand apart from others when speaking so as not to interfere with others' work or conversation
- Avoid discussing personal issues on a cell phone when co-workers can easily overhear you. Keep your cell phone strictly as an accessory, avoid laying it down on a desk or table in front of co-workers or clients
- Turn it off when in meetings; even a vibrating cell phone can be distracting
- Do not text during a meeting unless it relates to the topic at hand
- Check text messaging for spelling and grammar before sending
- Think twice before taking photos with your phone camera; doing so may be against company policy

General Rules of Thumb for New Employees:

- Know your company's policy regarding the use of electronic devices in the workplace; if these policies were not shared, look on the company's web site. If not available, request the information
- Understand that your company has the right to monitor your use of e-mail and may terminate you if you do not adhere to its policies

- Beware of a false sense of security before sending an e-mail; ask yourself if you would mind if your message was sent to the world. Remember you have no control where your message goes after you click send
- Certain sites can be off-limits; understand what these are. If you accidentally log into one of them, immediately report it to your information security officer or IT department
- Downloading of some programs can be prohibited (RealPlayer, freeware, shareware, games, and so on); find out what these are
- It is often against company policy to use office technology for commercial or personal use; set up a separate e-mail address for these purposes
- If policies prohibit the personal use of the Internet during work hours, limit your use to breaks or lunch hours
- If company guidelines permit a "reasonable use" for personal reasons, let your friends and family know of this restriction and ask them to respect this privilege

10 Tips for Successful E-mailing in the Professional Setting:

- Carefully read e-mail and answer all questions, to avoid going back and forth
- Avoid sending confidential information via e-mail—make a phone call or ask to discuss sensitive issues in person
- Don't use text message or chat jargon (such as "BTW") unless it is widely used within your organization
- Include a brief greeting that is appropriate for status of sender ("Hey Lori" may be fine for a friend but not for a supervisor). Also include a closing like ("Thanks," or "Best Wishes, John")
- Watch the tone—remember no body language can be interpreted, only your words
- Use spell check and read message for errors before sending
- Respond promptly; if you cannot respond at the time, indicate that you will do so later
- Use proper color, fonts, layout, and formatting (those that fit with your work environment)
- Avoid "casual speak" or slang; use abbreviation sand emoticons wisely
- If you e-mail back and forth three times, and the problem is not resolved, pick up the phone

E-mail: Use of Subject Line, CC, BCC, FW, and So On…

- Write a short and direct subject line—it is the "hook" to getting the message read
- Take of "FW" from the subject line if the message has been forwarded
- Modify the subject line to fit the topic if it has changed
- Do not share others' e-mail addresses unnecessarily (use a distribution list or BCC)
- Use "reply all" judiciously; do they all really need to know?
- Avoid overusing "urgent" and "important" (remember the boy who cried wolf?)
- Save and "read receipt" for crucial messages—would you request a receipt for every phone call?
- Do not forward others' messages without their permission

Some Helpful Web Sites:
www.e-mailreplies.com
www.netmanners.com
Langland, M. (2009). Evolving e-etiquette in the workplace. *National Association of Colleges and Employers*. Retrieved from http://www.naceweb.org/journal/2009march/workplace_etiquette/