# DELIVERING STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS ACCA'S 2000 ANNUAL MEETING

## E-MAIL ETIQUETTE

### Don't Cry Wolf

Some e-mail systems allow you to tag messages with such terms as "Urgent" or "Priority". Avoid these unless the message really is very urgent. All e-mail is delivered instantaneously, so the use of those messages doesn't get it there any faster.

### Receipt Requested

Use "Receipt Requested" sparingly. Some services allow you to request a receipt indicating that the e-mail was actually read. Use it sparingly. Some people view this as a sign of distrust. On the other hand, it can be useful if you are not sure the person actually logs on to the service to read e-mail. This feature is best reserved for those situations where you really do need a written record that the mail was received, or when you are not sure whether the person logs on to read his or her mail.

### Remember Oliver North

Be aware that e-mail can be archived and, under some circumstances, may not be secure. On-line services and e-mail companies protect the confidentiality of subscribers' e-mail. But some internal- mail systems are not secure. There are companies that consider their employees' e-mail to be company property and subject it to scrutiny.

Regardless of the system you use, e-mail, like mail and phone records, can be subpoenaed by a court of law in certain situations. That is what happened with Lt. Col. Oliver North's e-mail.

### Identify Yourself and Your Subject

If the recipient doesn't know you, give him or her a simple sentence or two describing who you are and why you're sending the e-mail. Don't just start in with the message. And in the message, try to let the reader know, as soon as possible, what you are writing about.

Many services allow users to type in the subject heading. USE IT!

### Use Humor with Care

Be careful with your use of sarcasm, irony or even some forms of humor. It can be easily misinterpreted.

Unlike phone calls or face-to-face meetings, there is no interactive feedback from the other person, so clues like smiles or a warm tone of voice that might soften a comment are missing. Also, don't forward jokes you receive by e-mail without letting the recipient know and asking permission.

### Use Common English

Unless you know that the other person appreciates such things, be judicious in your use of slang, dialects, and other unusual forms of expression.

This is not to say that you shouldn't be expressive and personal, but it's best to stick to normal conversational language.

Know Your Recipient

Different people have different ideas of what is acceptable. Find out and respect each person's wishes.

If you don't know the other person, it is best to be more conservative. Avoid sarcasm or anger and go lightly with humor - it can easily be misunderstood.

If you know the recipient, and know his or her tastes, there is little to worry about. But if you're posting a public message or sending a note that is likely to be forwarded to others, behave as you would in a public forum.

Control Emotional Outbursts

Everyone gets angry, sometimes. Be careful how you express anger on e-mail. An angry, emotionally charged e-mail message could get you in trouble or embarrass you. If you are tempted to write an emotionally charged message, it's best to write it "off-line" and let it sit for a while before you send it.

Remember, on most services, once a message is sent, it is out of your hands. Unlike the Postal Service, there's no cooling-off period between writing a letter and depositing it in a mailbox.

Be Respectful

Some people who are otherwise pleasant and civil become rude, disrespectful or easily angered in using e-mail. The apparent anonymity makes them feel immune from standards of common decency.

Well, you are not anonymous - especially with services that automatically post your name or ID number. Remember that there are human beings on the other end of that e-mail. The people reading your message will be as hurt, angered, or insulted by rude e-mail as they are from rude speech. E-mail is not a license to abuse or insult.

Use E-mail Whenever Possible

The biggest abuse of e-mail is lack of use.

Always ask if you may contact a person by e-mail. Some people, especially in social relationships do not wish to correspond by e-mail.

Why play telephone tag with someone when you can send a message and log on later for the answer? Why waste paper from fax machines when e-mail will do the job, often for less money?

Read Your E-mail

Unlike a fax or posted letter, e-mail doesn't get "delivered". You have to log on and read it.

If you use e-mail, check your mail regularly. Some people subscribe to e-mail services, publish their names and never bother to log on.

Be Up Front About Copies

If you distribute copies of a message, it's considered common courtesy to let the addressee know who else is receiving it.

Some services allow you to send "blind copies" - that is, to send copies without informing your original recipient that duplicates of your message are going to others too.

Before using that feature, consider how you would feel if people distributed blind copies of letters they addressed to you.

Don't Be Pushy

In some situations, copies are used as a way to intimidate people - especially if you tell them that you're sending a copy of your message to their boss.

Aside from seeming to be using intimidation, sending unnecessary copies of your message can be annoying to the people who receive them.

Be Succinct

Consider the recipient's time and, on some systems, the online charges that may accrue.

Some people love long messages - like they love long letters. Others find them annoying. One problem with long messages is that sometimes the important points may get lost.

Don't SHOUT

Many people express concern about too many capital letters. They may be used to emphasize a word or two in a message, but not for the entire message.

Using all capitals for an entire message is perceived by many as "shouting" and it makes the message more difficult to read.

Remember _You are on Record

Because of the informal and conversational nature of e-mail, it's easy to forget that it is a written communication. Unlike phone calls or personal conversation, there is a written record that could come back to haunt you. Anything you say in an e-mail message can be saved, printed or sent to others.

Relax and be casual, but try not to write something you wouldn't want to see printed on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper. It may well get there.

Use Cute Symbols Sparingly

The surveys revealed mixed reactions to the use of symbols or icons such as for "grin" or little frowns or happy faces that you make with the keyboard, such as <:)> or <:(>. Some accept them as people "having fun." But others feel that the text itself should be used to convey any emotions and such symbols are unnecessary. As with other new terms, they may end up as acceptable parts of our vocabulary on-line someday.

"The Lett Group