

## **Ten Topics You Should Never Put in an Email**

**By Dianna Booher**

Ask any ten people if they know of someone who has been terminated or an organization that has been hauled into court over an email, and at least one can cite person and case. The story usually has an unhappy ending.

Here are the no-no's:

- 1) **Negative comments about upper management** (Even if “deleted,” these emails can be retrieved. Often such remarks accidentally get passed on. After four replies on an ongoing saga, someone forgets your sarcastic line buried at the bottom and forwards the email to another colleague to answer a different question.)
- 2) **Criticism regarding peer or staff performance issues** (Written comments cause employees to brood. They seem more official than spoken words.)
- 3) **Bonuses or salary issues** (If positive plans fail to materialize, the writing seems like “proof” that they are deserved.)
- 4) **Racial or gender slurs** (Surely not in this decade)
- 5) **Product or service liabilities** (Opponents can subpoena your emails as evidence that you were aware of problems and ignored warnings.)
- 6) **Competitor untruths** (See you in court.)
- 7) **Gossip about colleagues** (Even the most innocent “news” can strike people the wrong way. If they want it told, they’ll tell it.)
- 8) **Sloppy writing** (Clear writing reflects clear thinking. The opposite is also true. Your image may depend on daily informal email more than on formal documents.)
- 9) **Humor—particularly sarcasm and tongue-in-cheek** (What comes across well with proper inflection, a smile, a goofy expression, and a slap on the back frequently falls flat on the screen.)
- 10) **Anything about your personal life you’d be embarrassed to have printed on the front page of your newspaper** (Your love life, your weekend adventures, your political views. Nada. Enough said.)

So what’s left? Work. Ho-hum. And I think that’s the general idea.

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Author of 42 books (Simon & Schuster/Pocket, Warner, and McGraw-Hill), Dianna Booher, CSP, CPAE, delivers keynotes and training on communication and life-balance issues. Her latest books: *Speak with Confidence*<sup>®</sup>, *Your Signature Life*<sup>®</sup>, *Your Signature Work*<sup>®</sup>, *E-Writing*, *Communicate with Confidence* and *From Contact to Contract*.. For more information on Dianna and her programs, visit [www.booher.com](http://www.booher.com) or call 800-342-6621.