



Email Problems Will Make You CRAZY!

We KNOW! They are making us CrAZY too!

Email is getting harder and harder to deliver, especially since the Pandemic started. Those crazy, creepy spammers have made every email look suspicious – even ours! For example, we can't use the word COVID in an email because it's one of the most used words by spammers – it's a hot topic and, in the early days of 2020, people would open anything that had COVID in the subject line; we all were worried and needed to know everything about it!

In our enthusiasm, we've added people to our email lists who we don't know but who we just **KNOW** would find what we have to say fascinating! (Hey, it's actually happened – once or twice!)

So, if you're getting this newsletter, there's a good chance that we've tried to email you.

Why?

We usually send email messages for one of four reasons:

1. To **alert** you to a danger
2. To **educate** you about something new or helpful for your business
3. To **sell** you something (In reality, we don't send these out very often)
4. We want to **keep in touch**, so we are always top-of-mind when you have an IT problem.



Here's the thing... maybe you opened an email or two that didn't interest you, you were having a bad day and said, "I don't want this \$#!% anymore!" and you opted out or, even worse, reported us as SPAM!

We've also recently learned another thing about email deliverability; if the people that you are sending emails to don't open them, even if they know you and like you, even if it's only because they're too busy and think they will get to them later but don't – the email servers believe you're SPAM and stop delivering, even to the people that should be getting your emails!

So, here's what we'd like to do, and we need your help!

1. We're going to go through our entire email list and delete all the strangers who have never opened an email!
2. We'll go through the list again
 - a. We'll make sure every email address is correct
 - b. We'll note who has opened email and who hasn't
 - c. We'll see who has opted out and who has marked us as spam (No worries, we won't hold any grudges)
 - d. We will contact anyone who hasn't opened any emails, has opted out or who has called us Spam.
 - i. There is ONE email category that we really believe that you need to open – Alerts to Danger. We'll give you the opportunity to just get those emails.
 - ii. We'll ask you if you'd like to get the ones that educate like Finally Friday
 - iii. We'll ask you if you'd like to receive all our emails (you may have changed your mind)
 - iv. We'll ask you if you NEVER want an email from us again. (In this case, we'll be worried because you may be in danger and never know it!)

We get it, we really do! We get WAY TOO MANY emails ourselves! Pam deleted 69,223 emails when we switched over to Microsoft 365 and she has become RUTHLESS in opting out of emails ever since!

If you find that you are having troubles with the deliverability of the emails you send, let us know. We may be able to help! 781-826-9665 or 855-WOW-SERVICE

From the desk of



We have had an exciting month of March with lots of changes and milestones.

First, we'd like to announce the addition of baby Mack to the ACTSmart Family! Helpdesk Tech Michael, wife Lauren, and sisters Marlow and Laurel are delighted to have welcomed 7lbs 14oz - 21.25 inches Mack on March 18th! Everybody is doing great!

Pam and I got our first COVID shot (Moderna) this month. We had to go to Natick Mall, which handled the system like a well-oiled machine. Although it was a bit of a trek, we were relieved to get the process started!

We had no side effects other than sore arms, and I'm going to try to move us closer to home for the 2nd shot.

Justin and I both had birthdays this month, and the team and the grandchildren celebrated with us.



We established our new Cytracom phone system here at the office. It ran pretty smoothly, and we are tweaking the roll-out so when we do it for clients, it will be seamless! We've had many callers comment on the clarity.

We're all happy with the new Microsoft 365 suite of products that we installed this month. Our Outlook mail's new look makes it easier to find specific email senders and the ability to delete read or unwanted email right off your phone is much more simple than before. We are anxious to try Microsoft Teams and see how it compares to Zoom. We'll let you know!



Pam is anxious to get back to her Dental Managers (Healthcare managers) monthly meetings. They are usually held on the 2nd Friday and had been canceled due to her eye surgery. Although she's getting her vision back slower than she'd like, she's "So ready to get back to her group!"

I'm getting my garden ready; have a great month!

~David

Avoiding an IRS Tax Audit

by CPA Site Solutions (cpasitesolutions.com)

Just 0.45 percent of taxpayers were audited in fiscal year 2019. Still, with taxes becoming more complicated every year, there is an even greater possibility of confusion turning into a tax mistake and an IRS audit. Avoiding "red flags" like the ones listed below could help.

Red Flags That Trigger IRS Audits

Claiming Business Losses Year After Year

When you operate a business and file Schedule C, the IRS assumes you operate that business to make a profit. Claiming losses year after year without any profit raises a red flag with the IRS.

Failing to Report Form 1099 Income

Resist the temptation to underreport your income if you are self-employed or have a second job. The IRS receives the same 1099 forms that you do, and even if you didn't receive a Form 1099 when you think you should have, you can't be sure the IRS didn't either. If the IRS finds a mismatch, you are sure to hear about it.

Early Withdrawals From a Retirement Account

In general, if you withdraw money from a retirement account before age 59 1/2, you will need to pay a 10 percent penalty. You will also owe income tax on the amount withdrawn unless you qualify for an exception. Sometimes - but not always - these types of early withdrawals trigger an audit, typically a correspondence audit where the IRS sends you a letter.

Hobby Losses

Income derived from a hobby such as operating a vineyard or breeding horses must be reported on your return. Expenses are deductible up to the amount of that income. On the other hand, you can only deduct losses if you run your hobby like a business, i.e., with a reasonable expectation of making a profit. Most hobbies that make a profit in three years out of five are considered a business.

Excessive Business Expense Deductions

Too many deductions for your income and type of business, claiming 100 percent use of a car for business, and inflating business meals, travel, and entertainment

expenses are examples of excessive business expenses that could raise a red flag. Always save receipts and document your mileage and expenses.

Overestimating Charitable Deductions

Taxpayers that don't itemize can take an above-the-line deduction for charitable contributions made in tax year 2020 on their tax returns of up to \$300 for qualified charitable cash donations that reduce taxable income. The maximum amount for 2020 tax returns is \$300 (i.e., not \$600), even if you are married filing jointly.

For taxpayers that do itemize, taking disproportionately large deductions as compared to your income could raise a red flag. The IRS keeps records of average charitable donation at various income levels, and even if you inherited a large sum of money and want to donate it to charity, there's a chance you could get audited.

Failing to Report Winnings or Claiming Big Losses

Professional gamblers report winnings/losses on Schedule C, Profit or Loss from Business (Sole Proprietorship). They can also deduct costs related to their profession, such as lodging and meals, for example. Gambling winnings are reported on Form W-2G, which is sent to the IRS. As such, you must report this income. You may deduct gambling losses, but you must itemize your deductions on Schedule A (Form 1040) and keep a record of your winnings and losses. Ordinary taxpayers (recreational gamblers) report income/losses as "Other Income" on Schedule 1 of their Form 1040 tax return.

What To Do if You Are Audited

If you've received correspondence from the IRS in the U.S. mail that indicates that you are being audited, don't try to handle it yourself. Instead, contact the office immediately for assistance.

Taxpayers who have been audited or otherwise interacted with the IRS should know that they have the right to know when the IRS has finished the audit. The right to finality is one of ten basic taxpayer rights - known collectively as the Taxpayer Bill of Rights. All taxpayers dealing with the IRS are entitled to these rights.

*If you have any questions about tax returns, please contact Glivinski & Associates Inc.
email: books@capecodcfo.com or call (508)398-9300*

Do You See What I Do?

by Susan Rooks, www.GrammarGoddess.com | 508-272-5120



Do you see or hear what I do, I wonder? Where do you get your ideas for articles? Do you see something, hear something, or react to something that stops you in your tracks? Something you could teach to others?

If you're a musical artist, you probably occasionally hear riffs / chords / notes that the rest of us don't – ones that cause you to mentally or physically wince.

If you're a visual artist – you have likely visited art galleries or galleries of other artistic endeavors hoping to just enjoy the work others put so much into creating. Do you sometimes still see shapes, forms, or colors that just don't seem quite right?

Most of us don't hear or see what you do, because it's not our area of expertise or focus. We just move on, happy to be surrounded with color, shapes, and sounds, but usually unaware of the details that make sense to you but don't even cross our mind.

I know it happens to me – as it happens to other editors / copyeditors / proofreaders – when I read something that's "off." I wince. Sometimes it's a wrong word (e.g., affect vs. effect). Sometimes it's the punctuation or the lack thereof. Sometimes it's a sentence that could have been written so much better, as one I saw yesterday morning in a magazine.

Confession: My mind still rebels at the thought of using "they," "their," or "them" to refer to a singular subject. I know the idea is gaining traction, much as using just one space between sentences has done (although some still refuse to do it), but I am definitely not there yet. Why not? Probably



because there's an easy fix that eliminates the need to use "they" to refer to a singular subject at all.

Rewrite the sentence. Yes, sometimes it's just that simple. First, we can just reorganize the words. This is close to the sentence I read in the newspaper: "If the doctor wasn't listening intently, they might have made errors." Doctor is singular; they is plural. For me, no. Shivers. Just plain wrong.

But it can easily be rewritten as: "A doctor who wasn't listening intently might have made errors." Of course, if the sentence goes on to still use a pronoun that refers to the subject, a simple rewrite won't work as well as this next idea will:

Rewrite it, making the subject plural, if you're not writing about a specific person. Using plural pronouns to refer back to the subject will be proper, and no one will notice what you've done.

NO: "If the doctor wasn't listening intently, they could have missed issues they could have addressed right then."

YES: "Doctors who weren't listening intently might have missed issues they could have addressed right then."

NOTE: The above examples presume you're writing about doctors in general, so you don't know the genders involved. But if you're writing about ONE person whom you know, please use the appropriate he or she, OK?

NO: "The doctor said they'd be with me in a moment." If doctor refers to Dr. Mary Smith, then you know her gender and you have to use she. Of course, they might refer to another group who will be with you in a moment. Context is important here.

Another NO: "The mother should have picked up their child from school." Since when are mothers not female? If you want to write it in the singular form, it has to be, "The mother should have picked up her child from school."

Right?

Does this all make sense? Yes, I am fighting a battle I likely won't win, but since there are ways around it ... I'll continue to show and use those ways.

With nearly 25 years' experience as an international speaker and workshop leader, Susan Rooks is uniquely positioned to help people master the communication skills they need to succeed. Contact her today!

Creating A Sustainable Quality Of Life For Your People

by Meghan Steinberg, www.SteinbergHR.com

Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced companies and individuals to evaluate their work-life balance continuously. In my opinion, this year has blown up that term, “work-life balance”, a more appropriate term to be considered may be “quality of life.” This pandemic has busted the doors open and challenged the pre-COVID worry some businesses and industries have had regarding change, remote work or flex time. Over the course of the year, leaders have had to truly understand:

- What their employees need to do great work, during a pandemic and with many influences outside of work?
- Why their employees have stayed with the organization?
- What has changed in work design to provide the level of service the organization and clients expect?

Paying close attention to results and conversation is critical. A few questions to ask yourself:

- Is the work getting done?
- Are clients/customers expectations being met?
- Is the level of output and productivity satisfactory?
- Is there strong employee engagement?
- Has there been clear communication on what is next?
- Are you listen and encouraging your team to speak up and share how this year has impacted them?

Last December, BBC published an article stating, “Now that the world has shifted, the way we feel about work and our careers will never be the same, either.” The article was part of a larger investigation. The Life Project from BBC was created to explore how people of all ages are re-evaluating their goals in response to the unprecedented events of 2020. Readers submitted their experiences throughout the transition to working at home; here are a few comments shared:

- “Turns out neither four-year-olds nor clients are good at respecting

boundaries. I am learning to move past ‘mom guilt’ and workaholism to unapologetically spend my time balancing these conflicting demands.” – Anjeli, Trinidad and Tobago

- “I still find it very hard to find a ‘cut off’ time for work as it seems like I never really ‘log off’ when I am working from home.” – Kavita, Canada
- “For me, [it] has confirmed that many of the professions we have can be from anywhere.” – Angela, United States

Quality of life, at work and beyond, is a crucial component of employee satisfaction. More companies will continue to shift their operational structures to accommodate a healthier work environment for the physical and mental well-being of the organization. McKinsey predicts that one in five individuals within the global workforce could work from home 60% to 100% percent of the time post-pandemic. This is such a change from where we were at the beginning of 2020. Now we are hearing how the fatigue is setting in. Yes, some work can be done remotely, though the key is understanding how your employees stay productive and engaged and what the business is doing to stay nimble to retain the talent. We know and hear that “pandemic fatigue” continues to drain productivity and engagement across every industry in the United States. In response, companies such as Microsoft, Twitter, and Facebook are attempting to get ahead of the curve, implementing remote work as a permanent option for employees and continuously evaluating what that means for the workforce.

Although everyone loves a free t-shirt, pen or mug, no freebies will dismantle a tired and worn work culture. To change deeply-ingrained habits, companies must create enough flexibility and security within their culture to retain their people; allow space for them to share. Accommodating individual employee needs is crucial to investing in your brand’s optimal performance and reputation.

Instead of assuming what is needed, ask your people, “So, it has been a year, what have you learned, what do you need, and how can we provide that quality of life you want to

thrive?” So hold-off on reacting, instead ask and listen. Perhaps investing in a workshop, hosting a guest speaker, or training will continue to educate and refresh perspective. One of the many things this year has taught us is that it takes a village; it takes kindness, adaptability, and perseverance. You, your team and/or company did not weather the storm because of luck. You did it because you had a village and support system. You did things differently, and you got it done. Now it is time to evaluate and build on what you started.

A few tips from a Harvard Business Review:

1. Pause and denormalize to become aware of the disconnects between your current situation and personal priorities. What is currently creating stress and unbalance in your life?
2. Pay attention to your emotions. What is your capacity to recognize how a situation is making you feel?
3. Reprioritize. What regrets will you have if you continue along this path?
4. Consider your alternatives and possible solutions.
5. Implement Changes.

Following these steps is not an activity; instead, a cycle of continuous mindfulness and improvement.

‘Leadership has the power to improve culture simply by living a quality lifestyle themselves and changing the environment from the top-down. For example, improving your boundaries, such as choosing not to work weekends or taking a 30-minute break to enjoy the sun, breath, or walk away. Being under the influence of an overpowering, demanding culture will always lead to retention, performance, and growth issues. Even if you are content, it is important to explore alternative ways of working and living. It is important to stay curious and be better for ourselves and those around us, whether personally or professionally; find your quality of life, just take a look back on what you have been through this past year.

SteinbergHR is a boutique HR firm providing full-service human resource consulting, outsourcing and solutions. Our capabilities are utilized on an as needed, part time or project basis. We are engaged with industry experts across all human resource related disciplines and specialties to meet your needs. Email Meghan at Meghan@steinbergHR.com or call 617-680-0358

5 Business Lessons Learned Amid COVID-19

by Bernie Heine, www.TheProfessionalBusinessCoaches.com | 781-319-9820



We are all learning to live by the new rules in all aspects of our existence; we also realize what we can do.

For the past ten months, businesses all around the world have faced various challenges. Some have suffered terrible losses. However, others managed to emerge from the

crisis more potent than ever – even without proper coaching. We continue to see how flexibility stands out as a prominent feature that often determines the fate of a company.

Many business lessons learned amid COVID-19 are here to stay, and that, it turns out, is a positive thing.

Agility Means Survival

As gamers will know, building a fighter's agility is crucial in many fighting games. Strength, dexterity, and health are vital, but it's agility that will determine whether you will beat or be beaten. It's similar in business; flexibility will decide if you will sink or swim. During these turbulent times, it is of the utmost importance to have the ability to assess the situation instantaneously and have quick reflexes. Only then will you succeed in adapting to newly developed conditions and ensure survival.



The sudden explosion of the COVID-19 pandemic left many businesses with their back against the wall. They had to make the decision, and they had to make it fast.

Were they going to try and adapt or close their door for the unforeseeable future? The rapidly changing business scene has forced many to get out of their comfort zones. In some cases, such actions have revealed the companies' hidden weaknesses. The smart ones used the newly acquired information to their advantage, fixed the underlying issues, and got out of the gutter even stronger.

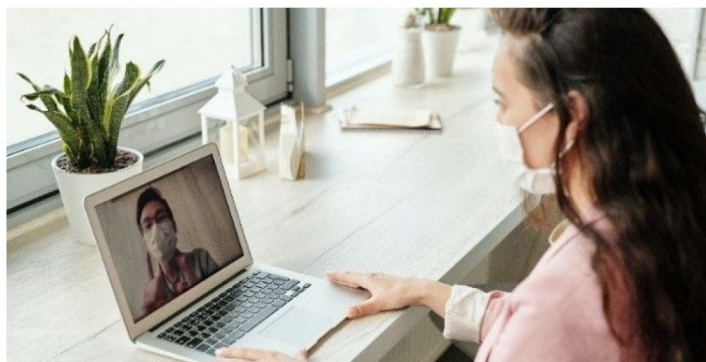
Technology to the Rescue

Given that everybody who can work from home does so, the reliance on technology has grown even more significant. Due to the remote work, many companies had to react quickly and provide the technological infrastructure to make the work possible. Naturally, this required substantial resources in some cases. In other cases, employees have started to use the technology that was already available to them. However, they had ignored it, unaware of the advantages it could have provided for them.

Moreover, everybody had to learn new skills. Initially, many people stood perplexed in front of the array of different online conference platforms, but soon they became pros at Zooming, Skyping, Teams, and other video conferencing forms.

The Talent Pool Has Just Grown Larger

With remote work, and consequently, more flexible working hours, businesses are no longer limited to one geographical location when hiring new staff. They aren't even limited to a single time zone. While that's nothing new for some business areas, such as customer support or software engineering, other businesses that had



never imagined such possibilities felt like a whole new world was opening up before them. And the benefits of having diversity in your team and the opportunity to recruit the right person, regardless of where they physically are, are tremendous. This factor has affected many of our clients very advantageously.

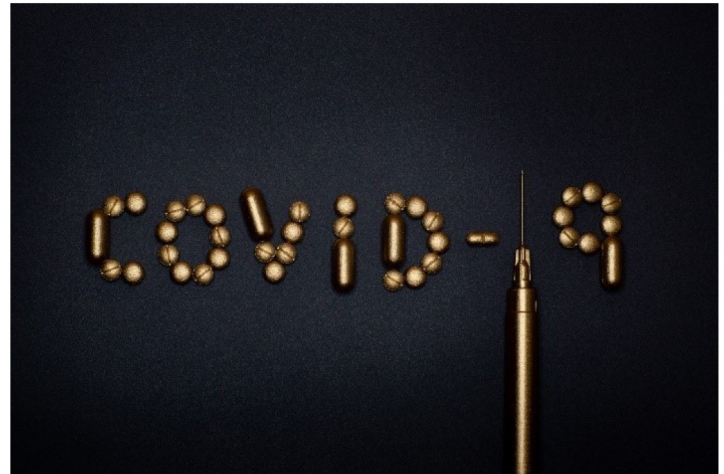
Home Offices Foster Productivity

Not being able to go to work prompted many people to relocate their offices to their homes. To ensure settling in a new space trouble-free, they did their best to create a comfortable working atmosphere at home. And so, an unexpected revelation came to them: Somehow, productivity has increased as is clearly shown in the latest productivity numbers in the U.S. It came as a surprise that they could do more work at home, but they soon realized that the home offices protected them from the usual distractions and interruptions that happened regularly at work.



This revelation may lead to some healthy practices even when the whole COVID-19 situation dies down:

- More flexible working hours will eventually create better organizations.
- Virtual team working – the ability to team up cohesively with colleagues from other departments and branches – will improve the company's problem-solving capacity, boost creativity, and ultimately create a better work atmosphere.
- More-empowered employees working independently without physical supervision will elevate their confidence and feeling of responsibility, and their trustworthiness will be respected.



The Need for Social Interaction Prevails

Humans are sociable beings. With the development of technology, its increasing accessibility, and the appearance of ever-growing social media, it seemed for a second that humans were growing distant from each other. The pandemic has proved that we desperately need social interactions. Although digital collaboration is present among colleagues, and they even organize informal online meet-ups, it was evident that employees miss the traditional water-cooler chats and lunch breaks.

When it comes to the managers, it's harder for them to maintain high morale and motivation remotely. However, the unfavorable situation we all face has made us think outside the box. Such creative thinking has resulted in finding unconventional solutions to any issues that might come up. Finally, it all boils down to the glaring fact that the attitude of those in charge will dictate the level of positivity at the (virtual) workplace.

The global pandemic has affected every possible sphere of life and has made us uproot many of our habits. It has also forced us to develop new skills and learn to adapt to new situations. When it comes to work, many people and businesses have been facing severe problems. The entire hospitality industry ground to a halt at one moment, which was a massive blow to many countries' economies. Moreover, many people have struggled to find work-life balance because the line between them has become blurry. And it's no wonder because all of a sudden, your home has become your workplace. Therefore, it's imperative to learn to adapt. Businesses need to be agile and strive to reinvent themselves to fit the current world order. It is the way to become resilient and emerge stronger. And remember, we are all in this together. Be safe and prosper.

Give us a call if you want to discuss ways to make your organization more agile or help you personally navigate this difficult time; we're only too glad to help. 781-319-9820

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For More Info Visit
www.ACTSmartIT.com



IT'S FINALLY HAPPENING!

LINKEDIN PROFILE BASICS

PRESENTED BY SUSAN ROOKS, THE GRAMMAR GODDESS

ON TUESDAY, APRIL 13TH AT 8:30AM

You'll learn:

- How to make the most of your banner with lots of examples
- How to actually make the changes
- What to put in your headline for maximum results
- What your Dashboard will tell you
- Hashtags – Best Idea Ever!
- And so much MORE!

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