10 Tips for Effective E-mail Communication

1. **Keep your e-mail message short...** Never write a message where your reader will have to scroll down more than two screens. Send longer messages as an attachment, but be sure your reader has the software needed to read it. If in doubt, use .txt files or .rft format. When working in a group, establish software norms within the group. In an office environment, communicate more detailed information by publishing an intranet link.

2. **Treat the subject line like a headline...** It's your chance to grab the reader's attention; use concise, detailed information. Set your response expectations by prefixing the subject line with "Action Required", "Info Only", "Response Requested". When replying to an e-mail, use the subject line to convey the essence of your response.

3. **Write your message like you are telling the news...** Get to the point quickly. Focus on the readers needs in the lead paragraph. Make it compelling. Put the information that's most important in the first paragraph – answer who, what, when, why, where, and how.

4. **Focus attention with bullets...** Bullets call attention to themselves, identify important items, and allow you to present data in the briefest possible form.

5. **Don't send highly sensitive or confidential information...** It is easy to forward your message somewhere either on purpose or by accident; avoid sending any message you would be ashamed to see reprinted elsewhere. If someone has messed up, avoid e-mail – pick up the phone or meet the person face-to-face.

6. **Refrain from using the "Priority" and "Importance" options...** The message needs to be written with the recipient in mind. The level of priority or importance should reflect the recipient's viewpoint, not the sender's. This is very difficult to determine.

7. **Give your readers alternative ways to reach you...** Include your telephone or fax number. Set up and use a signature, if your e-mail software supports it.

8. **Proofread your message...** Double check for typos, misused words, and poor grammar. If your e-mail is consistently sloppy, your readers could interpret your sloppiness as incompetence or lack of professionalism.

9. **Review the tone of your message...** Send a positive image by writing in a courteous and constructive manner.

10. **Re-read your message before hitting the Send key...** Don't send a message you'll regret later.