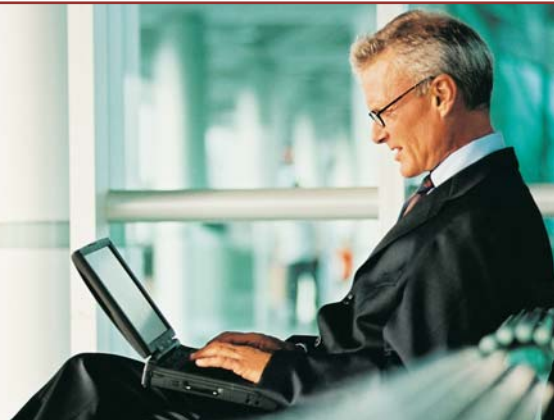


Log off, you losers!



By Stanley Bing

They say all good things must come to an end. Thankfully, the same is often true of bad things. Sometimes, you have to give the evil that men do a little guidance in the direction of the door, however. So, let's do that right now.

I want all of you within the sound of my voice to pause. Put your hands in your laps. Close your eyes and ask yourselves: Is the e-mail I'm about to send necessary? And if not, is it at least fun? If you cannot answer "yes" to either of these questions—don't hit that SEND button. Electronic flatulence must cease!

I saw it clearly last week. Some guys wanted to set up a conference call with me. That's fine. I can sit on the end of a telephone line and look out the window as well as the next person, and some people need elaborate conference calls set up by professional conference-call setter-uppers to feel good. There were three individuals who needed to talk to one another, so why one of us couldn't just dial one of the others and then patch the third in I don't know. But a professional was designed to establish the important communication hookup, and off we went.

First we all exchanged e-mail about our schedules. That was okay. I thought it was interesting that Bob was going to be in Denver and Ted was going to be in Chicago, although it had nothing to

do with the subject of our call. Then it developed that Thursday looked good until it was Tuesday because Bob was flying and Ted was driving, and then there was a mix-up between Thursday and Tuesday, and then there was some more effluvia that went back and forth about 3:00 versus 3:30, and once the great event was established for Wednesday then everybody had to thank everybody, and a lot of jolly huzzahs went back and forth, and self-congratulations all the way around, and pretty soon there was a confirmation e-mail that got one thing wrong so a bunch of stuff had to then fly around clarifying the situation, and there were observations about the amusing snafu and more thanks and high-fives for one and all, and by the time it was over I believe more than 100 e-mails of one form or another had crossed the electronic portal, popping up like cockroaches that keep pouring into a nighttime kitchen no matter how many efforts you make to kill them.

How many phone calls would it have taken one good assistant to set up this thing? Three? Come on!

During this time I noticed that several of the people who work for me were indulging in similar shenanigans. Supposedly entertaining e-mails were making their way around the system with trenchant observations like "See you there!" and "Will do!" I was copied on all of them, because people like to

copy executives on things, for obvious reasons.

It got to the point where I had to fire off a message to all on the distribution list, saying “This is a relatively unimportant matter that has occupied us all for far too long. I will kill the individual who sends the next unessential e-mail on it.” I have no idea whether it stopped the chain, but I was no longer copied on anything. That’s something.

So here’s what I’m suggesting:

1. Stop telling people you Will Do something. The best way of telling people you Will Do something is to DO It and then send a message saying the job is done. Until then, I assume you Will Do It. So Go Do It.

2. Stop thanking people so much. If I get one more message telling me “tks” for something, I’m going to crush the one who sends it like an anchovy. I’m also not interested in hearing that there’s “No problem.” Know what? There better not be.

3. Stop using e-mail when there’s a damn phone on your desk. E-mail is for confirmation and simple discussion. Phones are for doing business. Here’s how it goes: You think about the e-mail you are about to send. You realise that the distribution

list is very long. You further see that if you simply talk to one person, you need not send the e-mail nor the 124 subsequent ones it will generate. You call that one person. End of story.

4. Never hesitate to send an e-mail that has actual data in it. It’s the followup that says “Way to Go!” that’s got to be run through the karmic shredder.

5. Stop copying me on transitional crud. I want stuff that’s fully baked, not half-baked!

6. And absotively posilutely no e-mail chains of more than 10 individual communications! None! Once you reach that number, it’s over. Have a meeting! Get a cup of coffee! Send a telegram! I don’t care what you do! But if I see the same SUBJECT line in my INBOX once too often—you’re toast! Toast!

Look. I recognise that this is a big change for us. We’re like junkies who started off with a little recreational pot in the 80s and are now mainlining a couple ounces of horse every day. Well, it’s time to hit the e-hab! We’ll be glad we did!

Okay? Will do? Tks! CPM

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