

Executive Stress

OFFICE SUPPORT

Newsletter — July 2002

Welcome!

July already - we're half way through the year. I hope you've managed a start on your tax returns - if you haven't finished already! Don't forget, a VA can help you get things sorted.

Thanks to those existing clients who have sent referrals this quarter - don't forget our referral policy: 10% or \$50 off your next invoice of \$100+ when you refer a paying VA client.

I've just about finished the presentation on the industry I've been working

on. If anyone knows of organisations looking for speakers, I'd love to hear from you!

On a more personal note, my dad passed away on Wednesday 10 July, after battling prostate cancer for a number of years. He was 65. I want to thank those clients who supported me through this difficult time, and for their understanding when I had



Harry Prowse
1936-2002

to rush off to Victoria at a moment's notice. It was a tough time, but I was with him at the end.

Dad was a great sounding board when it came to business advice and

I'll miss his "mini lectures" as he used to call them!

Love you dad! I'll miss you!

Till next quarter.

Virtually yours
Lyn P-B

July 2002

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The Email Jungle by Jo Gibney, Business Decision (www.businessdecisions.com.au)

Can't cope with the e-mail overload? Having nightmares about e-mails stalking you through the corporate jungle?

Don't despair! Here are 10 tips that will restore your sanity, improve your reputation as a professional communicator and put you back in control of your mail.

1. Control your urge to respond now

Only check your email two or three times a day. Opening every email as it arrives distracts you from the task at hand. It may take hours to get back on track.

Ask yourself "What will really happen if I don't see every email as it hits my computer?" Twice a day is sufficient.

2. Don't use groups to send all your emails

We are all complaining about the sheer number of emails that hit our computers every day. Most of them are a complete waste of time, but we have to open them to find this out! And when you use standard groups to send emails - through laziness, to cover yourself so they can't say they weren't told, or because you just like to tell everyone everything - you add to this over-supply of useless emails.

Emails are a communication system and

should be used to do just that - communicate. You wouldn't invite the entire department to a meeting if you just wanted to talk to 2 or 3 people would you? Use the same logic when it comes to email. Your colleagues will thank you for it. And if you pass on this tip to them, your own in-box may lose some weight too. If you do think it necessary to send emails to a group, then mark the email clearly with either "for your action" or "for your information only" in the subject line so the recipients can easily determine its priority and

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Technology/Security Tips

Computer Security Risks to Home Users

(Courtesy www.cert.org)

Information security is concerned with confidentiality, integrity and availability. Some security risks arise from the possibility of intentional misuse of your computer by intruders via the internet; others are risks that you would face even if you weren't connected to the Net, such as hard disk failures, theft or power outages. This newsletter we're going to take a look at intentional misuse of your computer.



Trojan Horse Programs - As the name implies, these programs are used to trick you into installing "back door" programs which allow intruders easy access to your computer without your knowledge, change your system configurations, or infect your computer with a virus.

Back Door & Remote Admin Programs - Once installed, these

programs allow other people to access and control your computer. On Windows computers, tools used to gain remote access to your computer include BackOrifice, Netbus and SubSeven.

Denial of Service (DoS) - This is another form of attack which causes your computer to crash or to become so busy processing data that you are unable to use it. In most cases, the latest patches will prevent the attack. As well as being the target of a DoS attack, it is possible for your computer to be used as a participant in an attack on another system.

Intermediary Computer for Another Attack - Intruders will frequently use compromised computers as launching pads for attacking other systems. For example, intruders install an "agent" (frequently through a Trojan Horse program) that runs on the compromised computer awaiting further instructions. Then, when a number of agents are running



on different computers, a single "handler" can instruct all of them to launch a DoS attack on another system. The end target of the attack is not your computer, but someone else's - yours was just a convenient tool in a larger attack.

Mobile Code (Java/JavaScript/ActiveX) - These are programming languages that let web developers write code that is executed by your browser. Although generally useful, the code can be used to gather information (such as which sites you visit) or run malicious code on your computer. If you are browsing sites that you are unfamiliar with or do not trust, you should disable Java, JavaScript and ActiveX in your browser. Mobile code can also be used within email programs, many of which use the same code as browsers to display HTML. So vulnerabilities affecting Java, JavaScript and ActiveX are often applicable to email as well as web pages. ✓

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choose when to open it.

3. Avoid the reply-reply-reply merry-go-round

Have you had a ride on this merry-go-round? By the time you reach the tenth reply, you have changed the subject or lost the thread of thought completely. Here's what to do to keep some order.



If the subject changes at all, then send a new email using a new subject title. Remember, the subject title should say it all, and give the recipient a clear and concise idea of what your message is about. If the subject is still the same, but only

some sections of the chain remain relevant, cut and paste the relevant sections of the original message into a new message. For long messages, type your reply in a different colour, in the body of the original message - this helps to identify what section of the message you are replying to.

For short messages and short replies, set your software to type replies in a different colour.

4. Use signature blocks to save time

Most email software allows you to design a number of signature blocks. You could create one for external customers, using a more formal farewell, your job title, your phone/fax details and a company slogan or

message of the month.

For internal emails, you could create a signature block with an informal farewell, just your first name and some fun sign off.

5. Use folders to organise your correspondence

Just like letters used to be filed in various filing cabinets in the dim, distant past, similarly emails should be filed on your computer's hard drive. Create folders, which make sense to you. File "skinny" not "fat". That means put fewer emails in each folder, and use more folders. And remember to create a "read later" file for

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the emails marked “for your info only” which you will be receiving from now on.

Use your archive function to keep your folders a manageable size. Apply archive dates by folder, so you can choose to keep frequently accessed information for longer periods, and archive less important information more often.

6. Think (and cool off) before hitting the reply button

Emails are often like conversations, but with time between each speaker. Use this time effectively. If the message sets your blood boiling, the temptation is to hit the reply button immediately with an equally inflammatory retort. Don't! Take time to consider what you are saying. Unlike the spoken word, the written word can be forever.



7. Not all emails deserve a response

Emails, though often likened to a telephone conversation in slow motion, are nothing of the sort. They are the same as all correspondence, with new rules of etiquette and new levels of access and speed. Unlike telephone conversations, not all emails need, or expect, a response.

You neither have to acknowledge receipt of all messages, nor have the last word on a chain of reply-reply messages. Unless you are asked for a reply or a specific action, or you must advise the recipient of some vital piece of additional information, do not reply.

8. Group incoming email for more efficient reading

File your emails before you even open them, so you can decide which ones need urgent opening, and which ones could wait till you have a spare fifteen minutes. Most email software allows you to set rules for incoming emails. The system will direct emails into folders you have set up, depending on the rules you apply.

9. Make sure you are legal

Simply put, take extra care when sending words which have not been authored by you, including the common practice of “forwarding” messages sent to you. Copyright on email belongs to the writer, not the recipient. If you have any doubt about forwarding another person's message – don't.

10. Filter messages to get rid of unwanted bulk mail

Again, use the features of your email software to help remove bulk or junk mail before it reaches your in box. Most software will allow you to filter out junk mail based on options such as blocking BCC (blind copies), blocking mail from certain addresses (lists created by you or your organisation), colour coding junk mail so you can recognise it or moving junk mail into separate folders so you can deal with it later.

One final Word

Finally, think before turning to email. Email is often seen as informal communication - quick, efficient and immediate. But to many (especially those whose careers began pre the email revolution) email is not the medium for well-mannered communication.

Before you send an email, ask yourself what is the recipient expecting. In some cases, snail mail is a better option, especially if speed is not the primary issue. Examples where traditional mail is better include:

- Client presentations or proposals
- Formal requests or invitations
- References
- Bulky correspondence (eg reports)
- When you are trying to make a good impression

Email can be either a blessing or a curse of the modern workplace. Either take control over your email jungle by applying these ten tips or keep cursing each time another email hits your inbox. The choice is yours!v

New Clients

The following new clients benefited from partnering with Executive Stress Office Support and we welcome them all!

- ¶ Ellen Burton - Lifecare Counselling Service (Proofreading/Research)
- ¶ Mei Li - Author (Manuscript typing)
- ¶ Denis Byrne - Denis Byrne & Associates Pty Ltd (VA Support)
- ¶ Gary Banks - Automotive Business Services Pty Ltd (Copy Editing)
- ¶ Anthony Carr - South Coast Rural Lands Protection Board, Bega, NSW (Tape Transcription)

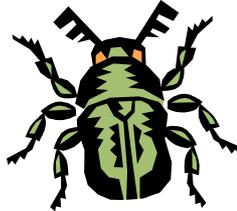


If you haven't discovered the benefits of partnering with a VA yet, give us a call and we'll answer all your questions.

Virus Alerts

According to Symantec Security Response: "Peer-to-peer (P2P) networks look like the next target for worms, we've already seen worms exploit this type of architecture and we had more than 900 samples of W32.Benjamin.Worm in 7 days. This is a lot for a worm that does not replicate itself but requires users to manually retrieve it."

And who didn't get at least one email with the damned Klez virus attached?!! In fact, I had a number of irate people calling me to say that I had infected their computer. Just to set everyone's mind at rest (and if you don't know by now!) Symantec has confirmed that "Because of the way Klez spoofs (impersonates) the sender by modifying the From: address of email, the average user is led to believe that their best friends and work colleagues are sending them infected emails." According to Symantec, Klez is now fading into the background noise of other malicious code around the Net.



Enter Frethem which works a lot like Klez. W32.Frethem.K@mm is a worm, and is a variant of W32.Frethem.B@mm, using its own SMTP engine to send itself to email addresses that it finds in the MS Windows Address Book and in .dbx, .wab, .mbx, .eml, and .mdb files. The email message arrives with "Re: Your Password!" in the Subject line and with attachments: Decrypt-password.exe and Password.txt Something to note with these viruses: they're not "targeting" Outlook or Outlook Express but exploit security holes in Internet Explorer. So, turn your attention to patching the holes in IE rather than ditching Outlook and OE as a quick fix.

And if you're running a Linux server, you're not immune. A company called mi2g reports a 20% increase in Linux attacks from the first half of last year to this year. (http://www.mi2g.com/cgi/mi2g/press/images/digital_attacks_OS.pdf)

The most prevalent viruses this quarter (per Symantec) were: W32.Klez.gen@mm; W32.KlezH@mm; W32.Klez.E@mm; JS.Exception.Exploit; Trojan.Horse; W95.Hybris; W32.Magistr.39921@mm; Backdoor.Trojan; Backdoor.Autoupder; W32.Badtrans.B@mm. Trend Micro add the Snoopy Proof-of-Concept Virus VBS_BIMORPH.A as a low risk but prevalent virus doing the rounds that "... uses Outlook to send copies of itself ... with the subject line 'Check this out' and two infected VBS attachments..."

Two other low risk viruses are WORM_LIAC.A and TROJ_DOALA.A. Both send themselves to all addresses in the Windows Address Book. The former arrives as an email attachment with the Subject: "LILAC project video attach", the body "Things that the govt. don't want you to know" and the attachment: LILAC_WHAT_A_WONDERFULNAME.avi.exe. The latter is destructive malware disguised as a Windows XP Home Edition Key Generator.

David Banes, Editor of Securitynews at Symantec sums it up this way: "We will never have a 'clean' internet [but] if we can relegate the levels of malicious code and network intrusions to mere background noise and create an environment where businesses can operate safely and securely, then we have done our job." ✓

VAs in the News!

YAY! This quarter a couple of Aussies have been featured in the news and I was one ...!

During June I was featured in the VA Spotlight on the A Virtual Solution website (<http://avirtualsolution.net/spotlight.html>), and the article on my collaboration with my US-based client also appeared in a local suburban publication, "The Lake News".

The Sydney Morning Herald finally picked up on the industry, running an article in their My Career section titled

"Help, I need somebody" which featured Sydney-based VA Teri Southwell.

OS, the Oakland Tribune noted that two local coaches use the same VA based in Florida. Rich Fettke of Walnut Creek said that last year when Simon & Schuster agreed to publish his "Extreme Success" he knew he needed help "to stay focussed on writing."

His three VAs took over the

management of his newsletter, his travel needs, Web site maintenance, dispatching his videos to clients and booking some speaking engagements.

"I don't do any of my admin," he said. "My calendar is online so they can all access it. So are bill payments, charges, bookings, setting up conferences, proofreading, documents, everything. My entire focus is on my clients and my books." ✓

