

# The Risk of Email

It seems that email is turning otherwise friendly colleagues into bitter enemies. The reason: A reader misinterprets a simple quip meant to be funny or a message intended to be straightforward.

According to the *Washington Post*, in a survey of 1,000 workers, workplace research company Vault.com found that 51 percent of people said the tone of their emails is often mistakenly perceived as angry, too casual, or abrupt.

The problem is that email comes at us without the benefit of any body language or facial expressions that help us determine the meaning behind a person's words. The result is that a sarcastic remark that's normally delivered with a grin is taken literally when sent via email. And it could set off a chain of unpleasant events and the downward spiral of a professional – or personal – relationship.



Some folks use abbreviations like LOL (laughing out loud) or emoticons like the smiley face to help get the right message across. But ironically, not everyone in the workplace has caught on to the practice. In fact, the survey found that 37 percent of respondents said they hated the smiley face, and 63 percent said they didn't mind it.

All of this reminds me of a plaque that appeared a few years ago in Chairman Forrest Preston's office that said something like this: I know about email and voice mail, but whatever happened to face mail?

In this day and age, obviously, we can't get along in the business world without email. But it sure can't beat face mail.

And it's a whole lot more fun, too!

– Beecher Hunter