Here is a list of the kind of agreements you might want to have in place in your team. Use this as a starting point for your own charter of how and when you communicate electronically as a team. You may wish to create something similar for other communications channels such as Teams or Slack.

OUR EMAIL CHARTER:

Sending emails

1. We'll use the phone and leave a message (or other communications channel) if something is truly time critical.

2. We'll write email subject lines that immediately explain what the email is about.

3. When we need input to make a decision, we'll preface email subjects with 'for comment' or 'action required' with a clear and realistic timeframe for responding e.g. 'action required by 31 Sept midday BST'.

4. If input is not required we'll use 'for info/FYI'.

5.. We use bold to help people scan key information

6. We use headings to help readers understand which area of our business or which project, the email is about.

7. We consider our organisation's values when we are drafting emails (you may wish to flag specific values here and an example of how this translates into email behaviour).

8. If we're having interpersonal problems, we don't use email – we'll pick up the phone or arrange to meet face to face.

9. When we write an email and are feeling emotional, we agree to save the email and come back to it when we are feeling calmer e.g. the next day.

Responding to emails

10. We assume that if somebody is copied (cc) into an email they don't need to respond.

11. We will avoid using the "reply to all" unless everyone absolutely needs the information.

12. We'll pick up the phone or call a meeting after 3 emails on one topic.

13. We accept that emails sent from phones occasionally have typos.

14. We always give people the benefit of the doubt if something can be understood in two ways.

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Receiving emails (continued)

15. We'll check our email at least every (X) hours/days.

16. We don't check emails when we are in meetings (unless.... you may wish to caveat this, e.g. unless it is an all staff briefing)

Additional points

17. We understand that complex issues are best explained in person, whereas email is useful for short, factual dissemination of information. We do our best to choose the most appropriate means of communication every time.

18. We use our team calendar to keep informed about when our colleagues are out of the office and seek alternative input or plan our communications, as necessary.

19. If we use other communications channels/social media e.g. Whatsapp, salesforce chatter, Slack, Teams we are clear about what kind of communication each channel is for, and how it is going to be used.

What are your biggest communications challenges as a team? How do you want to be describing how you work together as a team? What one change could help improve your communication?

This check list is based on a sample provided by www.targettraining.eu

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