

Work e-mail: innocent or insulting?

Sunday, July 3, 2005

My friends and family know I am a Christian and will not accept foul language or off-color jokes or sexually related material. But I know once in a while I get stuck in a "group" mailing. It still makes me mad. Take me out of the group or off your list altogether. — Joyce Self

It is up to the employer and their rules. Public employees work for the public, and as part of the public, they need to be more productive to the public good, not wasting my tax dollars on personal needs. — Fleet Price

"The Man" is never going to get eight whole hours from us. The question, really, is do we get the job done, isn't it? And who monitors that? — Joy Lynn Lewis

An e-mail arrives from the guy who sits three desks over. You can tell it's a joke and, knowing him, a bawdy one.

Did he just commit a serious office "no-no," or did he make your day? Do you open it or delete it?

That depends.

When raunchy e-mails became an issue in state offices earlier this year, the Department of Education fired 17 employees and suspended seven others. At least nine workers in two other state agencies also got the boot.

Obviously career-ending stuff to state officials. But how about to the rest of the work force?

To find out, the Democrat turned to Kerr & Downs Research to poll the Tallahassee Voices panel. The poll is not scientific.

There were 743 responses, almost evenly divided between state and private employees. More than three-quarters of them felt that offenders should be punished, with nearly one in five voting for termination.

This is what they had to say.

It's very common to get some "rude" jokes at work. As long as they are not offensive to the person receiving the e-mails, don't interrupt work, or keep you from doing your job because you're too busy sending and getting jokes, then it should be the discretion of the employee. — Mary Hickey

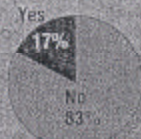
I think all personal e-mail (with the exception of emergency family situations) is inappropriate. My employer pays me for my time and talents — not to conduct personal business. — Julie Hare

People steal from their employer if they spend a significant amount of time on personal e-mails, and my experience is that weak-minded people spend hours on sexually explicit stuff on the internet and e-mails once they get hooked. Ground rules need to be set and stuck to. — Charles Wright

How would you define an "inappropriate e-mail sent or received during work hours?"

- Anything containing sexual, suggestive, explicit material 44%
- Anything on work-related 12%
- Anything that offends the recipient 18%
- Racist or sexist e-mails 22%
- Anything I wouldn't show my family boss 7%
- Religious e-mails 7%
- Foul or off language 7%
- Political e-mails 4%
- You know it when you see it 2%
- Other 5%

Have you ever sent or forwarded an e-mail with sexually suggestive or explicit material to a friend or co-worker during work hours?



Which of the following best describes your feelings toward e-mails with sexually suggestive or explicit material received at work sent by friends or co-workers?



- A. Never received this type of e-mail at work 3%
- B. It's mild, irritating, but no big deal 20%
- C. It's just more spam, easy to delete 18%
- D. Every body needs a laugh once in a while 9%
- E. It makes me mad 5%
- F. Other 3%

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