

Communication and Collaboration

7.0 Introduction

Effective communication is an essential skill needed to thrive in the world. Beyond mastering subject area content, we need to be able to express ourselves in a variety of methods. Our choices for how we express ourselves digitally are growing every day - through voice and video-chats, Instant Messaging and even avatars in immersive virtual worlds - which we need to learn to be able to communicate with others.

7.1 Objectives

In this chapter you will learn:

- To use communication tools on the Internet
- To build sustainable online communities

7.2 Basics of Email

7.2.1 What is Email?

Email stands for electronic mail. It consists of two components – *header* and *body*. The message header contains control information, including, sender's email address and one or more recipient addresses. Usually additional information is added, such as a subject header field. Internet e-mail messages consist of following two major sections:

- **Header** — It has many components like summary, sender, receiver, and other information about the e-mail. Some of the components are:
 - **From:** The e-mail address, and optionally the name of the author(s). In many e-mail client setting is not changeable except through changing account settings.
 - **To:** The e-mail addresses, and optionally name(s) of the message's recipient(s). Indicates primary recipients.
 - **Bcc:** Blind Carbon Copy; addresses added to the SMTP delivery list but not (usually) listed in the message data, remaining invisible to other recipients.
 - **Cc:** Carbon copy; many e-mail clients will mark e-mail in your inbox differently depending on whether you are in the To: or Cc: list.
 - **Subject:** A brief summary of the topic of the message. Certain abbreviations are commonly used in the subject, including "RE:" and "FW:"
- **Body** — The message itself is unstructured text; sometimes containing a signature block at the end. This is exactly the same as the body of a regular letter.

7.2.2 Email address

The process of sending an e-mail message can be explained in some basic steps. Let's say you have an e-mail address `client@my-best-domain.com` and you need to send a mail message to us at `support@my-ntc-domain.com`. This is the route which your mail travels until it is delivered:

- Open your email client program and compose the message. The message composition can include typing the text message in the text field, attaching files and photos.
- Fill the To, BCC, Cc, etc. fields as required.
- Click the "Send" button. The email software will automatically format the mail message in an e-mail format and send it to your pre-configured SMTP server.
- The next major step proceeds in your mailbox's SMTP server. Once the message is sent from the mail client, the SMTP server receives it over the network and reads the email address set in the "To" field. Then it asks for the MX record corresponding to the recipient's e-mail address. For example, if we send a message to support@my-ntc-domain.com, the SMTP server asks the DNS Zone server for a MX record for the domain my-ntcdomain.com.
- Once the DNS server responds with the MX DNS record of the recipient's e-mail address, the SMTP server connects to it and delivers the message to the opposite mail server.
- Once the e-mail message is delivered to the mailbox on the recipient's mail server, the recipient can start his/her mail client software application and receive the message by downloading it from the server using the POP3 protocol.

Benefits of Using E-mail

E-mail has following benefits:

- **Easy to use:** E-mail helps us to manage our contacts, send mails quickly, maintain our mail history.
- **Speed:** The e-mail is delivered instantly, anywhere across the globe. No other service matches the e-mail in terms of speed.
- **Easy to prioritize:** Since the mails have subject lines, it is easy to prioritize them and ignore unwanted mails.
- **Reliable and secure:** Constant efforts are being taken to improve the security in electronic mails, thus making it one of the secured ways of communication.
- **Automated e-mails:** It is possible to send automated e-mails using special programs like the auto responders. The auto responders reply back to the sender with generalized pre-written text messages.

7.3 Working with email

7.3.1 Opening an email account

If you do not have your own email address, here are some web sites which provide free email facility:

- google <http://mail.google.com>
- yahoo <http://www.mail.yahoo.com>
- msn <http://mail.msn.com>

Each free email site has its own sign-on procedures that you need to follow. When you are done you will have an instant email account and you should check your mail. The first message is usually a welcome mail from the mail service.

7.3.2 Mail Box: Inbox and Out-Box

The "in box" contains the mail sent to you, available now to read, answer, store, or delete. The out box (or sent box) shows mail you have already sent.

7.3.3 Creating and Sending New Email

Follow these steps to create a new email message and send it:

- In the To box, type the e-mail address of at least one recipient. If you're sending the message to multiple recipients, type a semicolon (;) between e-mail addresses.
- If required, type e-mail addresses in Cc and Bcc boxes as well.
- In the Subject box, type a title for your message.
- In the message box, type your message.
- To attach a file to the message, click the Attach File to Message button on the toolbar (located just below the menu bar). Locate the file, select it, and then click Open. The file now appears in the Attach box in the message header.
- To send the message, click the Send button.

Note: - To change the style, font, size, or color of the text, select the text, and then click one of the buttons on the formatting bar (located just above the message area).

7.3.4 Replying to email messages

You can reply to a message by clicking on "Reply" link in the message. A new compose message window opens where sender's email address is put in the "To" field, subject is repeated with "RE:" prefixed and message is repeated in the body.

7.3.5 Email forwarding

Email forwarding refers to the operation of re-sending an email message delivered to one mail address to one or more different email addresses. You can click on "Forward" link to do that.

7.3.6 Sorting and Searching mails

All mail providers (like gmail, yahoo, etc.) give search box on the top or left hand bar of the inbox. You can search the e-mails on the basis of sender name, message subject or any other word(s).

7.4 Document collaboration

Collaboration of documents is very crucial in a business or any institution since it allows people within the establishment to work on the same document in pieces to produce a single document. It involves file exchange of work done through removable media or by email, through file server, information portals or SharePoint and Wikis. With document collaboration, the contributors have the ability to add, edit and even remove the text in the system if deemed appropriate.

7.5 Instant Messaging

7.5.1 Instant messaging (IM)

Instant messaging (IM) is a form of communication between two or more people based on typed text. The text is conveyed via computers connected over a network such as the Internet. Instant messaging requires an instant messaging client that connects to an instant messaging service. Instant messaging differs from e-mail in that conversations happen in real-time. In certain cases IM involves additional features, which make it even more popular, i.e. to see the other party by using web-cams or to talk directly for free over the internet.

7.5.2 Instant messaging providers

Some of the popular Instant Messengers are Yahoo Messenger, MSN Messenger, RediffBol, Google Talk and Skype.

7.5.3 Netiquettes

Etiquette is the practice of good manners - being polite and helpful, being kind and not aggressive, and being mindful of the fact that others may see things differently than one. Netiquette is etiquette to be followed while using the Internet. Some common netiquettes include:

- You should behave with others the way you want them to behave with you.
- Do not be abusive.
- Don't copy information shared by others blindly.