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Significance of Email Communication in Today's World

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Abstract: Email or Electronic mail is considered as one of the premier uses of Internet. It is a flexible and handy tool of communication via the electronic medium. Its most attractive features are: speed, portability and versatility. Email is a system of global communication in which the user can compose a message in his or her account and send it to person/s possessing email accounts. It is an exchange of information among online service provider users. The message sent can be regenerated at the receiver's email account within seconds. Over the years, a number of tools of electronic communication such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs etc. have emerged yet email has retained its charm and will continue to do so in the future. Due to its unique features and adaptability, it lends itself to a number of uses.

The advancement of technology and the flooding of smart internet enabled phones, in present times, checking, sending and receiving emails is not only restricted to PC or laptops but it can be accessed on the cell-phones also making email communication accessible at all times. Email communication is used in almost all aspects of human interaction. It is used for formal as well as informal communication. It is used for interaction in marketing, news, academics, broking etc. alongwith large number of other areas. The present paper focuses on the significance of email and its various uses.

Keywords: Email Communication, Electronic communication, Versatility, Adaptability and Advancement of Technology.

I. INTRODUCTION

Kennedy feels, "Communication is the principal mechanism through which human relations exist. Purposeful and meaningful communication in different forms (e.g. speech and writing) is the key factor that separates human beings from all other species... Communication is such ever present part of our daily lives that even deciding not to communicate is in itself a form of communication (Kennedy 1)³. In ancient times, communication was possible by primitive modes like signs, symbols etc. Gradually, more advanced modes of communication emerged and electronic communication began to gain popularity. One such mode is email. It is the abbreviated version of 'electronic mail'. It has considered as one of the first uses of internet. Over the passage of time, new modes of communication have been available for internet users; but email has managed to retain its popularity because of its unique features and flexibility. An email is an exchange of information among online service provider users for a variety of purposes. The term has been defined thus,

Concise Oxford Dictionary defines 'email' as,

- n. the system of sending messages by electronic means from one computer user to one or more recipients via a network.
- v. mail or send using email (COD).¹

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines 'email' as,

1. A system for sending and receiving messages electronically over a computer network, as between personal computers.
2. A message or messages sent or received by such a system. (Thefreedictionary.com)²

Thus, email is a system of global communication in which the user can compose a message in his or her account and send it to person/s possessing email accounts. The message sent can be regenerated at the receiver's email account within seconds.

II. HISTORY OF EMAIL

The ARPANET has played a vital role in the popularity of the Internet. Ray Tomlison was the first to create and use email to share information between two computers in 1971. He differentiated between the username and the password by using '@' between the both. The two computers between which he shared messages were placed next to each other; they were known as DEC-10 (Digital Equipment Corporation). After the successful experiment, the email began to be used for regular communication on ARPANET. And with the making of Internet its popularity increased by leaps and bounds.

III. COMPONENTS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF EMAIL

Online email service providers generally have: sign in window, inbox, compose mail, viewing received mail, sent mail section, spam and folders. Email communication is versatile and includes the following characteristics: accuracy, cost-effectiveness, portability, lightening speed and wide range. Due to its unique and formidable characteristics, it becomes the most suitable medium of communication on both personal and professional level.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF EMAIL IN AND ITS DIFFERENT USES

The letters sent by post were the most popular medium of communication in the previous century; but in the present times, with the Internet boon and the most popular of computers, emails have become a more convenient option to convey a messages and are used extensively by people from each and every strata of society. Micheal Eisner, CEO and Chairman of the Board, Walt Disney Corporation, realizing the power of emails considers it as, "bright potential for productive and enlightened communication in a new century and a new millennium" (Lesikar 1).⁴

1. Government organizations like Income tax department

Many government and private organizations have recently begun to use email communication. For e.g. The income tax department of India issue confirmation of online direct tax payment via emails thus:

2. Travel agencies

Many travel agencies use emails extensively to inform perspective customers to avail different schemes they offer. Due to cost-effectiveness and wide range using emails for advertising appears to effective medium of promoting or informing about their schemes and offers. Many renowned Indian companies like SOTC and ORBITZ regularly sent emails alerts of their schemes. Compared to post and other forms of communication, there are no two opinions that, emails are far more effective, accurate and speedy.

3. Data storage option

One unusual use of email is its ability to store data. Many users store information and scanned documents on their email by attaching the required files and self-addressing them. These documents can be retrieved at any time and from anywhere with Internet access. Hence one does not need to carry data in pen-drive or CDs etc. But can simply open one's email account and have access to the required data. Users also store data in email account for the purpose of back-up.

4. Marketing

Email communication has proved to be of immense benefit for those involved in marketing. The marketing companies or executives can communicate with their customers one-on-one via email and display their products directly and more personally then was possible while communicating through traditional modes like post etc. Also, the option of 'bulk email' makes

advertising of products very convenient and reduced much effort and waste of time that was earlier involved in advertising and marketing.

5. Railways

For booking tickets, one has to declare his email id. Therefore in order to avail the services of online booking on Indian Railways site: www.irctc.co.in possession of an email id has become a necessity. Care@irctc.co.in also sends its customers regular alerts about its schemes and developments via email.

6. Air Travel

In order to beat the stiff competition prevailing between airline companies many airlines have begun to aggressively advertise their routes and schemes; for them email communication proves to be an option that not only saves time, money and effort but also has a wide appeal making their advertising task easier and efficient. The airline companies regularly send their customer emails.

7. Academics

The use of email for communication is many folded: Many universities and colleges stay in touch with their students and faculty members via email. They often convey complex or important information, that which cannot be conveyed by other forms of communication, by emails. Also, many colleges ask their faculty members to email the exam papers as attachment which is password protected in order to prevent leakage of question papers. The question paper that is sent via email is generated in printed form only an hour or couple of hours before the exam.

In addition to this, email is also used to send invitation or alerts of Seminars, Workshops or conferences. One of the most beneficial parts for academicians is the fact that workshop, conference and seminar brochures, can be sent almost instantly to the desired academic fraternity by email. The brochures can be converted into PDF format and sent as an attachment or intimation can be given in the 'body' portion of the email.

8. Chat

For chatting on the internet one needs to first and foremost mention one's email id; without email id or account chatting is not possible. Therefore, if one desires to adopt latest methods of communication, then possession of an email account has become a compulsion.

9. Brokerage houses

The brokerage houses have benefited the most due to the widespread use of email communication. Sending of statements like gain-loss, transactions, holdings or information regarding changes in rules by SEBI etc. have become less effortless and cumbersome for them. A large number of effort, man-hours and stationery is saved because of the use of email communication with their clients. Earlier, when post was the only option for communication, the brokerage houses used to have a tough time printing the statements, putting them in envelopes, attaching appropriate address and sending them for post. While, in present times, with system generated emails, statement sending has become less complicated and tedious.

While talking about the usefulness of email for sending transaction statements, Nehul Shah, a franchisee of Kotak Securities Private Limited, located in Maninagar, Ahmedabad, points out, "Around 80-85% customers now request for transaction statements by email. Primarily because it is free while for getting transaction statement by post can cost 10 Rs extra for each statement"(Shah)⁵. He has 153 customers trading with him. From Shah's statement if it is assumed that 80% customers use email statement once a month it can save Rs. 1,220.4 per month and Rs.14,644.8 annually. If it is assumed that it takes 2 minutes to print and post the statement, the man hours wasted add to 244.8 minutes or 4.08 hours per month or 48.96 hours or

approx. 2 days annually. Another important aspect is that the paper used up in printing these statements can add to deforestation and environmental hazard.

10. News

In present times, one of the best ways to keep in touch with one's group, fraternity or circle is by subscribing to a newsletter that are sent to one's email account. Many sites offer subscription to news and updates; one has to fill up the required information and state one's email id to start receiving the news-letters as attachment.

11. E-journals

There are various on line journals or e-journals like IJARCSMS or ELTWeekly INDIA'S FIRST WEEKLY ELT eNEWSLETTER which are sent regularly to its subscribers on their email account.

12. E-voting forms

The Government of Gujarat had decided to send online voting application forms in PDF format for the municipality elections (2010) on experimental basis. This version has been send to numerous people as attachment by email.

13. Greetings

The traditional way of greeting people on festive occasions was by sending greeting cards by post. The greeting cards would take days and sometimes months to reach the receiver. But with the recent popularity of emails 'egreetings'- sending greeting cards attachment or wishing the person by writing a message has become a norm. This mode of sending greetings is not only speedy but almost free of cost (depending on individual choice).

14. Business organizations

Nearly all the correspondence that took place by post or courier in any business organizations can and slowly is, in present times, being replaced by email communication. Letters, reports, proposals, memos, bills, quotations invoices, confirmations, challans, statements- all the parts of written communication can be send and received via email. The advent of technological tools in organizational communication has proved to bring major economic benefits to the world at large. The concept of 'paperless office' or 'e-office' of the future is not hard to imagine. Many sites like IndiaMART.com also forward inquiries to companies via email.

15. Group Memberships

For membership to different groups on the internet there one has to possess compulsorily an email account and after one's membership is approved the member received approval message on his or her email account.

16. Surveys

Emails are widely used for surveys. The main reason behind its popularity is that they are fast and free of cost. Thus, email communication has contributed in the advancement of research as researchers are using it efficiently to carry out different finds of surveys for a variety of purposes like research papers, dissertations, theses and projects.

V. CONCLUSION

Email has become an integral and eminent part of present day communication. Possession of an email account has become a must and is considered of equivalent importance to that of having a cell-phone number. Also, holding an emails account has become a must for both personal communication as well as professional communication.

Email accounts can be opened on either chargeable or on free basis, depending on the requirement. For e.g. an institution requires a large storage space and customized features then it has to go for opening paid accounts whereas for personal use, free

email accounts can be used. With the availability of a number of free email service providers, an individual has plenty of options to hold single or even multiple email accounts depending on the individual choice depending on the purpose or the circle of communication. Due to the advancement of technology and the flooding of smart internet enabled phones, in present times, checking, sending and receiving emails is not only restricted to PC or laptops but it can be accessed on the cell-phones also making email communication accessible at all times. Finally, email increases the range of communication considerably, as Taylor points out, "Email messages may be sent to one individual or simultaneously to several recipients (Taylor 20)."⁶

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Rajani Mevada, working as Assistant Professor of English and Communication Skills. She has experience of working in Arts, Science, Engineering and Commerce colleges. She is Goldmedalist at Undergraduate level and has procured first class at both Undergraduate and Post-Graduate level. She holds M.Phil degree and has procured distinction in it. She also holds Diploma in Informations Systems Management and Diploma in Export Import Management from Indian Institute of Shipping and Foreign Trade. She has done her M.Phil. in English with specialization in Communication. She is presently pursuing her Ph. D. from Hemchandracharya North University, Patan on the topic, 'A Study of the Effects of E-communication on the English Language'. Her areas of interest in research are communication skills, ELT (English Language Teaching), literature and e-communication and has published articles and presented several papers at National and International Seminars. She has served as an expert at the 'Module Framing Workshop' for the teachers of 8th, 9th and 10th standard students organized by Gujarat Textbook Board. She has worked as Resource person for Teacher's Training Workshop. She has also taken lectures at teleproject-BISAG, Govt. of Gujarat Initiative.

