Dear Student,

I have attached the full solution as a word document although below is a copy of the Q&A I created for you.

Q and A

1. Please comment on the two memos. What could be done to handle this flaming exchange in a more effective manner?

John Doe appears to be the editor of the company newsletters and it is his job to criticize and select the pieces that would fit into what is seen as acceptable and ideal for the company, befitting company rules, ethics or relating to the readers (its staff, employees, etc.) as well as reflecting events or ideas related to the company and its people. His email appears to be genuinely concerned with specific problems detailed, a constructive criticism of an article submission – that of Tom Jones. The tone is formal but at the same time seeks to guide and explain something one expects as general in a formal bureaucracy. Tom Jones, as the addressee of the first email shows that he is greatly offended and deeply feels that John has singled him out, and it shows in his ‘flame’ answer towards the sender – hostile, angry and insulting. It does not explain or answer the points raised by John, it however tries to ‘one up’ the sender by criticizing the spelling (which can easily be explained) and it does not have any bearing to the problem presented about the article submission at hand. The manner by the way it was written – all capitalized is equated to ‘Shouting’ on the net. Tom tries to insult John and his position of authority as editor and ‘shifts’ the blame to John by coming up with accusations based on his own opinion alone presenting a self-righteous and self-involved personality. The flamer in this situation is Tom reacting in a hostile manner towards John who was just doing his job in what seems to be a responsible manner.

2. What is “flaming”?

How email can flame exchanges between two people can involve the whole organization, consuming significant time and money?

Flaming, the hostile interaction between internet users, occurring within the social areas of the web (discussion boards, emails, chatrooms, forums, etc.) happens when a user creates a response to that of another. By nature, this response “is usually not constructive, does not clarify a discussion, and does not persuade others. Sometimes, flamers attempt to assert their authority, or establish a position of superiority over other users. Other times, a flamer is simply an individual who believes he or she carries the only valid opinion. This leads him or her to personally attack those who disagree. In some cases, flamers wish to upset and offend other members of the forum, in which case they can be called ‘trolls’. Most often however, flames are angry or insulting messages transmitted by people who have strong feelings about a subject (Wiki, 2009)”.

There are varied ways by which flaming can harm an organization. If the flaming happens to be within that organization’s discussion board, open for reading by all its members, it divides people, leading many to take sides, creating unhealthy tension especially if the users are required to identify who they are which is the case in this ‘Email Flame’. If it continues, it is a waste of valuable resources – time, equipment & people. Since its part of an organization’s problem, it will naturally involve hierarchy. For example, Tom, to resolve the issue will have to talk to his senior manager who will in turn either warn John or meet both of them to mediate the dispute. In the meantime, their jobs are set aside for that dispute, affecting their quality of work. Perhaps the newsletter might get delayed. Imagine then if flaming happens regularly within emails and organizational discussion boards – productivity & personal efficiency is affected, destroying moral and wasting resources.

3. What are characteristics of email messages versus other types of communication (e.g., telephone, face-to-face, etc.)? What are important things to remember when using different kinds of communications?

Email messages are delivered as ‘text-based’ information/message exchanges on the net. It is just like receiving a letter but in this case, electronically. A user opens his inbox to find what ‘new messages’ he has received and can respond to it just as quickly. The exchanges between email users are faster than when using actual postal mail, allowing people to express on the spot emotions and opinions. Many ought to think about what response to give, especially when communicating with colleagues and co-workers or professionally. The line though sometimes is blurred for many. Social niceties are forgotten when an individual receives an email and he reacts out of passion. Telephone messages allow for niceties to happen, as the other, more level-headed person in the conversation can clear the air and steer the talk to a more sensible nature, what with the more personal exchange in a telephone conversation where voices are heard in a fluid exchange, real-time. Nothing, however, can beat face-to-face communications via formal or informal meetings where body-language can help tell of actual feelings and state of things and the more level-headed of the people in a conversation or exchange can mediate it.

It is important to remember the basic etiquette in communication whatever the medium or nature – formal or informal, work-related or personal. When communicating in a workplace situation, whatever the form (email, mail, personal exchange, telephone) the following are the basic courtesies expected in a business exchange (Manor & Hoffman, 2007):

Email - not only should you be returning emails in a timely way, but you need to set the context each and every time of why the email is important and what information it is that you want to deliver. Spam filters help, but in order to more easily control your email load, you need to be in more control of what you generate yourself. In business, be brief, be informational and be gone.

Cell phones - the ring tones that are available now are fun outside of the office, networking situations, client lunches etc. Put them on vibrate or shut them off. Take and make calls when you are with people sparingly. Most people are not interested in listening to your conversations no matter how stimulating you think they might be. If you need to take or make a call, excuse yourself and then make it brief.

Returning phone calls – We are not sure when it became ok to not return phone calls, but it is not ok. Whether you think you have time to return the call or not, find out what people need, make sure you are clear on whether you can help them or not and then get back to your own work. People who return phone calls are trusted and respected. You do not need to make the calls long. In fact, returning all calls twice a day instead of doing it piece meal all day long is a good way to manage your time more appropriately.

Word Count: 1,142

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(Web)

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