



Timely Information for Personal Success

## Sloppy Emails Wreck Productivity

By Carson Tate

**W**e are all bogged down by the volume of email we receive at work. The amount grows even more daunting because so much of that communication is unclear, ambiguous and flat out sloppy. Discerning exactly what we need to know or do and determining if a response is needed requires a lot of our attention and focus.

These sloppy emails waste your time. And they cost you hours each week, which means they're also costing you money. *So, how do you keep this from occurring?*

❖ **Automate responses to unclear messages.** When you receive an email message that is unclear, vague or just causes you to say 'WHAT?' send a response asking for additional information or clarification. To do this quickly, use a free text expander software app, like FastFox for PCs or Text Expander for Mac. A text expander works in any program, including your email platform, and allows you to insert commonly used text with just a keyboard shortcut. No longer will you waste your precious time typing out a response, you will reply automatically within seconds.

❖ **Use the subject line to improve response time.** NEVER hit the send button while the subject line of your email reads RE: RE or FWD: FWD, or some other cryptic phrase that relates

to a prior email message. Why? Because when you send an email like this, you're sending a message with an unclear purpose. Do not be part of creating the email pigsty we have come to expect and accept.

The subject line of your email message is your topic sentence. It clearly states the topic of the email. A clear subject line is essential if you want to communicate effectively and improve both the quality and response time on the email messages you send. Make sure the subject lines on your email messages reflect the current topic, purpose or desired outcome.

When you respond to an email you've received, change the subject line to make it current and clear.

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## Healthy Recipe: Egg Sandwich

### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 strips turkey bacon
- 1-1/4 cups egg whites
- 4 slices whole-grain bread, toasted
- 1/2 cup shredded, nonfat cheddar cheese
- 1-1/4 cups diced, seeded tomatoes
- Cracked black pepper and salt to taste
- Cooking oil spray

### NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories per serving: 338
- Carbohydrates: 47 g.
- Protein: 34 g.
- Fat: 5 g.
- Saturated fat: 1 g.
- Fiber: 7 g.

### DIRECTIONS:

- 1 Microwave turkey bacon strips for 3 minutes or until crisp. Set aside.
- 2 Whisk together the egg whites, salt and pepper. Coat a non-stick skillet with cooking spray and heat the skillet.
- 3 Add the egg white mixture. Cook and stir about 1-1/2 minutes or until egg whites are set.
- 4 To serve: Spoon the egg whites onto the toast. Top with cheese, turkey bacon, and diced tomatoes.

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### Questions and Answers

## Behavioral Health Apps

**Q:** *I've heard that behavioral health apps are all the rage these days. What can you tell me about them?*

**A:** With the U.S. workforce now comprised of 36% Millennials and 16% GenXers, it stands to reason that these "digital natives" see apps as a viable mechanism for self-help. As a result, KGA, an employee assistance and human resources program, sought to identify the current "Best 10 Behavioral Health Apps for 2014." Once the list was pared down to 30, counselors started testing them, analyzing the usefulness of the app and trying to break down apps for each category of need.

The top 10 behavioral health apps, released from KGA and reported by the *Boston Business Journal* are listed at: <http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/blog/health-care/2014/10/human-resources-consultant-kgaranks-the-top-10.html?page=all>. ■

**Editor's note:** Watch for more information on this topic in the April issue of *Employee Assistance Report*.

### Sloppy Emails...

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Consider using some of the following standard email subject lines:

- Action Required – DATE
- Update: TOPIC
- Reply by – DATE
- NRN – No response needed
- EOM – End of message

The last subject line above (EOM) is an especially powerful one. Here's how it works: when you have a short, simple message to convey, type the entire email in the subject line of the email, and put EOM at the end. (For example, "Tuesday marketing meeting moved to 2 p.m. EOM.") Now your recipient does not have to actually open a message, saving them precious time.

❖ **Craft more effective messages.** Dramatically reduce the volume of email messages you receive by crafting more effective email messages that are understood upon opening and do not require multiple back and forth emails asking clarifying questions. To craft more effective email messages, answer the following four key questions in every single email you send – *who, why, what and how*.

### Summary

Before you send that next email, ask yourself: will the recipient(s) know what it's about? If the topic requires action, and/or a deadline, will *that* be clearly understood? If not, make the appropriate changes before pressing send. Also, change the subject line on the next email you receive to the most recent topic. ■

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