

LESSON 7: INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION AND E-MAILS

In this section, you will learn how to:

- Communicate online
- Participate in online communities
- Share content
- Preserve privacy and security
- E-mail usage
- Structure of an e-mail address
- E-mail attachments
- Fraudulent and unsolicited e-mail
- Phishing e-mails

7.1. COMMUNICATING ONLINE

A variety of tools are used to communicate online, including Instant Messaging, SMS/SMS, and VoIP.

Instant Messaging

IM – short for instant messaging. Is a type of real-time communication service. It is somewhat like e-mail, but much more like a chat room. Both parties are online at the same time, and they "talk" to each other by typing text and sending small pictures in instantaneously.

SMS

The acronym SMS stands for short message service. SMS is also often referred to as text messaging. The service allows for short text messages to be sent from mobile phone to another mobile phone or from the Web to another mobile phone.

MMS

Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) is a standard way to send messages that include multimedia content to and from mobile phones. It extends the core SMS capability that allowed exchange of text messages only up to 160 characters in length.

The most popular use is to send photographs from camera-equipped phones, although it is also popular as a method of delivering news and entertainment content including videos, pictures, text pages and ringtones.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)

VoIP is a technology that allows you to talk with other people using the Internet. You can talk at no extra cost to other people using VoIP on their computers or Internet connected devices. You can even make calls to "real" telephones at a much cheaper rate than normal.

Common VoIP services include WhatsApp and Skype.

7.2. ONLINE COMMUNITIES

An online community (also referred to as virtual community) is a network of individuals that primarily interact via online communication methods, as opposed to face-to-face interaction, for social, professional, educational and other purposes. This is done through social networks, forums, e-mail,

newsletters or instant messages. As the mechanism is a computer network, it is called an online community. Virtual and online communities have also become a supplemental form of communication between people who know each other primarily in real life.

Social Networking Websites

There are a lot of social networking sites through which virtual communities are usually created. Social networking websites offer you the possibility to find old and new friends, communicate with your friends through messages and instant messages, upload your photos and comment on friend's photos, and more.

Two examples of Social Networking websites include:

1. Facebook (www.facebook.com)
2. X (formerly Twitter), (www.X.com).

Internet Forums

An Internet forum is an online discussion site where members can post discussions as well as read and respond to posts created by other forum members. An Internet forum can be focused on a specific subject, or host a range of subsections that can contain hundreds of threads and topics.

An Internet forum is also called a message board, discussion group, bulletin board or web forum. What makes a forum different to a chatroom or personal blog is that it is usually focused on a particular topic and contains in-depth replies, allowed to be posted by any member. A chatroom generally has a more general tone, while blogs (web logs) are typically written by one author, and only responses to their posts are typically allowed on the site.

Web Conferencing

A web conference is an online meeting in which users connect to the Internet and use computers to conduct a meeting as though they were all in the room together.

Some Web conferencing systems include features such as texting, VoIP (voice over IP) and full-motion video.

Web conferencing allows users to carry out activities such as business meetings, seminars, presentations through video. Screens can be shared so that presentations and visual items can be seen by all, and control over the conference can be shared. Some web conferencing services automatically enlarge the picture of those speaking during a web conference to show who is talking and when. This type of service does require high speed Internet between all users for it to be fully effective.

Chat Room

A chat room is a virtual space on the Internet that allows users to communicate with one another in real time, text communication. Chat rooms can be a website in its own right or a part of a larger site, such as social media (Facebook) or a part of a business's customer support section on their website.

Chat Room Etiquette

Because chat rooms are places where so many different types of people come together to communicate with one another, certain rules need to be in place to keep the peace. Many chat rooms

are constantly moderated for any offensive activity, but smaller chat rooms may lack such moderation, and it is therefore up to the users to be sure that no offensive activities take place.

Online Computer Games

Online computer games are also another type of online communities. Such games enable thousands of players from across the globe to come together online through computer gaming.

7.3. PUBLISH AND SHARE ONLINE CONTENT

There are a variety of ways for content to be published and distributed online, through both audio and visual media. They include Blogs, Podcasts, Images, and Audio and Visual clips.

Blog

A blog is a shared online journal that allows authors, called bloggers, to write about subjects they specialize or have a keen interest in. These blogging sites can have one author or many, and can vary in how content and blogs are presented.

Popular blogging platforms include WordPress.com, Blogger.com, and Tumblr.com, with the latter combining elements of social media to its site.

Microblog

Microblogging is a shared online journal with shorter updates compared to a conventional blog post. Microblogs tend to be found on social media platforms, most prominently (X formerly Twitter), as well as status updates posted on Facebook.

Podcasts

A podcast is a digital audio file released regularly and downloadable, often through an RSS feed. Podcasts are generally released as part of a series, and can include documentaries, debate shows or radio shows released by a radio station after their broadcast ends.

Images

Thanks to improved camera technology on smart phones as well as social media sites dedicated to photo sharing, such as Instagram, original digital photos and graphics can be shared and distributed almost instantly.

Audio and Video Clips

Audio and Video clips are most commonly shared on websites such as YouTube and Flickr, primarily as a source of entertainment. They can also be used to produce and share educational, informative and opinion-based videos.

7.4. GOOD ONLINE COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

It is important to maintain good practice when communicating online for the safety and enjoyment of you and fellow users of an online communication service.

These are guidelines that can be followed and applied to most forms of electronic communication, including e-mails:

- Be accurate and brief: Try not to send messages that are overly long and complex, and choose your words carefully to accurately express your view.

- Use clear subject headings: Make the topic of the message clear for the recipient. This will also help ensure your mail doesn't end up in a spam or junk folder.
- Do not inappropriately disclose personal details: Be careful to who and how you disclose personal details as they may be misused.
- Do not circulate inappropriate content: It is important to remember who you are mailing and to consider what tone and content is appropriate for that person. Also remember that messages can easily be distributed more broadly by the recipient.
- Spell check content: In all forms of interaction, but particularly when sending formal communication, it is important that your grammar and spelling is correct.

7.5. PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Because people are spending an increasing amount of time online, it is important that everyone takes reasonable measures to protect their privacy and security.

Privacy Settings

Applying the appropriate privacy settings when using online communication tools can help you stay safe and keep sensitive information secure.

- Making your profile private on some social media sites might not be the option everyone chooses, but it can help you moderate who can see your posts, news and any information you choose to share.
- Restrict Available Personal Information. This will help you the most when avoiding identity theft and fraud. By restricting where and when you post information such as your address, date of birth, telephone number, you can improve your chances of staying safe online. A lot of websites that ask you to sign up require you to give personal information, but always be wary of how secure the links are and how legitimate the site is.
- Private Messaging. If there is a private messaging service available to you, you should always use it when communicating information that you do not want others to see. If you make personal communications public there is a higher chance someone unwanted will view it and use this to their benefit, if they are capable of doing so.
- Disable Location Information. Disabling the service that tracks (and sometimes posts) your exact location when you post on a social media network is vital in ensuring your own security. People can monitor what time you are out of your house, where you go at certain points of the day. This could leave you open to crimes such as burglary.
- Block / Report Unknown Users: If you are receiving online abuse or repeated messages from an unknown sender, it is best to block and report them to the website.

7.6. GETTING STARTED TO E-MAIL

Electronic mail, generally known as e-mail, is a technology for exchanging information or messages on the Internet between a sender and one or many recipients.

E-mail is generally acknowledged to have revolutionized business correspondence, and has become the main medium of electronic communication for many organizations. E-mail is easy to use and is more practical and efficient than postal mail.

7.7. E-MAIL ADDRESS AND E-MAIL STRUCTURE

An E-mail address contains information about the e-mail box to which e-mail messages are delivered.

For example, an e-mail address such as ralph@gmail.com is comprised of a user name (ralph), an @ symbol, a domain name (Gmail), and an extension (.com).

E-mail Messages

E-mail messages comprise of two areas, the message header and the message body.

The header is organized into fields, for example, From, To, CC/BCC, Subject, Date and other data about the e-mail. The body contains the message and sometimes a signature towards the end.

To: The e-mail address and alternatively name of the message'

Recipient.

Cc: Carbon copy; for optional recipients who are not the primary intended recipient.

Bcc: Blind carbon copy; addresses added to the list but not recorded in the message information, so that they cannot be read by other recipients.

Subject: A brief synopsis of the topic of the message. Abbreviations are usually utilized as a part of the subject, including "RE:" for reply and "FW:" for forward.

7.8. E-MAIL ATTACHMENTS

An e-mail attachment is a computer file, such as a document, image, or audio clip, that is sent together with an e-mail message. One or more files can be attached to an e-mail message, and is a common method of sharing files between people. An e-mail client typically uses a paper clip symbol to indicate that a file is attached to an e-mail.

Attachment File Size Restrictions

It is important to note that different e-mail service providers may have different file size restrictions. Some Webmail providers will allow you to send a large e-mail message, but there is no guarantee that the recipient who uses a different e-mail service provider will receive the e-mail. Because of this the attachment size limit of the recipient does matter, as your e-mail will be rejected if your file is over the limit. The following shows the limit of attachment according to email providers.

1. Gmail and yahoo have a file limit of 25 MBs.
2. Outlook has a file limit of 20 MBS

Please not that even with the above restrictions, we can always find a way of sending large files like how we shall see in the subsequent modules.

Restricted Attachment File Extensions

Do not attach executable files to your e-mail messages, as they might be blocked by e-mail providers or the antivirus software installed on your recipients' computer.

For example, Gmail will not allow you to send or receive executable files (for example, files ending in .exe). In addition, Gmail does not allow these types of files even if they are sent in a zipped format.

7.9. FRAUDULENT AND UNSOLICITED E-MAILS

E-mail has proved to be a convenient and powerful communications tool.

Unfortunately, it has also provided scammers and other malicious individuals with an easy means for attracting potential victims.

A common scam is combining e-mail and bogus web sites to trick victims into revealing sensitive information.

Recognizing E-mail Scams

Unsolicited commercial e-mail, or “spam,” can be the starting point for many email scams. Before the advent of e-mail, a scammer had to contact each potential victim individually by post, fax, telephone, or through direct personal contact.

Many scams that spam support have existed for a long time. A common list includes:

- “You have won the lottery!”
- Easy money
- “Free” goods
- Diet and health pills.

7.10. PHISHING E-MAILS

Phishing e-mails are crafted to look as if they have been sent from a legitimate organization. These e-mails attempt to fool you into visiting a bogus web site to either download malware (viruses and other software intended to compromise your computer) or reveal sensitive personal information.

For instance, an e-mail can be designed to look like it is from a major bank. It might have an alarming subject line, such as “Issue with Your Account.” These messages usually suggest that there has been an issue with your account details and that you must submit a form to resolve the problem. As some believe these emails to be legitimate, they will click on the link and follow the instructions, resulting in sensitive information being passed on to phishers.

You can protect yourself from phishing e-mails by being wary of e-mails with dramatic subject lines, checking for grammar, and carefully examining the URL you are being directed to. You should also be aware that it is unusual for a legitimate institution, such as a bank, to ask for confidential information in this way. If in doubt, contact the institution directly yourself to validate the request.