

Corporate Email User Habits

A Study by The Radicati Group, Inc. and Mirapoint, Inc.

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1.0 Introduction

Without question, email is a critical business communication tool that many companies would find hard to live without; yet email can also pose a number of risks. Most businesses have dealt with external threats such as spam and viruses, but internal threats have remained largely unaddressed.

This study was designed to better understand how employees use their corporate email accounts and how businesses are protecting themselves from legal issues, loss of intellectual property, and productivity loss.

Would you believe that much of corporate email is not business related? Are employees using email to share music files? Does offensive email find its way into corporate mailboxes? Do employees send sensitive company information to people they shouldn't? How many companies publish email policies or filter outbound messages?

The answers to these questions and others lie in the following pages, all based on a survey of 363 corporate email users.

2.0 Survey Sample

Our survey of 363 corporate email users was conducted in August and September of 2005. Survey demographics are shown in the table and figures below.

All of the survey respondents are *corporate* email users, representing a wide variety of business sizes.

Survey Sample Size		
	#	%
Total Corporate Respondents	363	
Small Businesses (1-100 Employees)	117	32%
Medium Businesses (101-1,000 Employees)	125	34%
Large Businesses (1,001-10,000 Employees)	65	18%
Very Large Businesses (10,000+ Employees)	35	10%

Table 1: Survey Sample Size

Respondents were well distributed by the size of the businesses they represented, as shown in Figure 1, below.

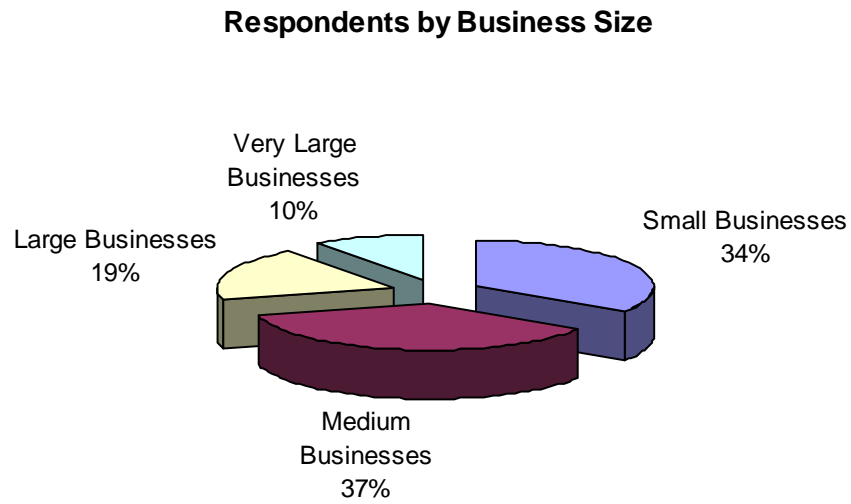


Figure 1: Demographics – Respondents by Business Size

Regionally, 95% of respondents indicated they are located in North America.

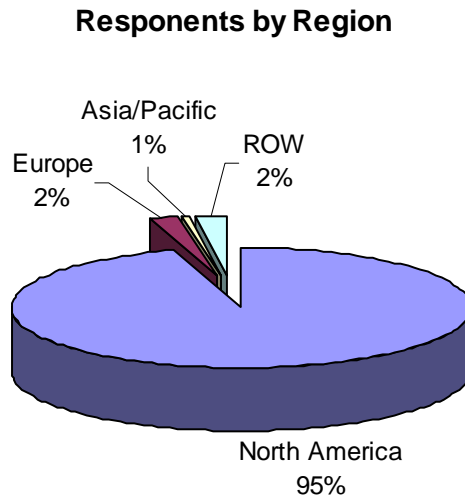


Figure 2: Demographics – Respondents by Region

Respondents represented a wide variety of job functions, as shown in Figure 3 on the following page.

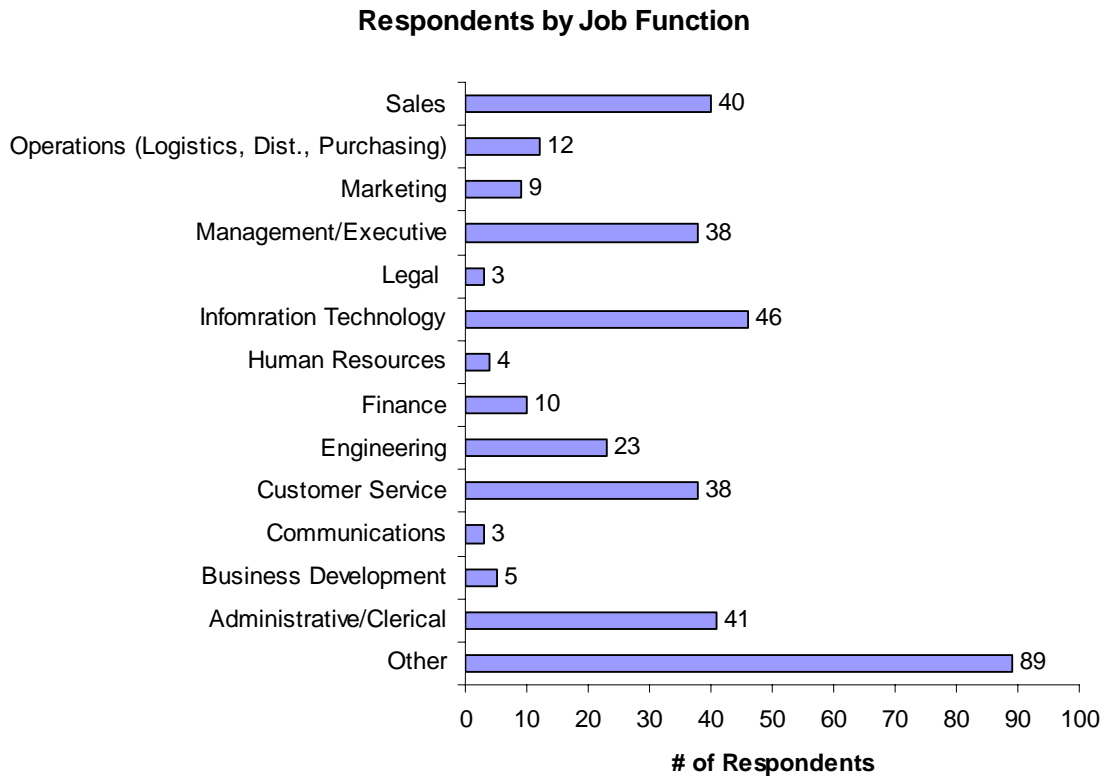


Figure 3: Demographics – Respondents by Job Function

3.0 Misuse of Corporate Email

Email is a valuable business tool, but is often used for non-professional purposes. We asked our pool of anonymous respondents to tell us about their email habits, reflecting only on their *corporate* email account.

We found that many respondents use their corporate email account for personal use. In fact, the average user told us that 23% of the messages in their corporate mailbox are personal in nature.

- Note: This does not include spam messages. From an April 2005 survey, we found that approximately 33% of corporate email is spam. This means that more than half of corporate email messages (23% personal + 33% spam = 56%) are not work related.

What Percentage of Email in Your Corporate Email Account is Personal?
Average Response - 23%

Table 2: Personal Email

One way employees misuse email is by forwarding jokes, photos, video clips, and other time-wasting messages to co-workers. Our results show that most employees do send these types of messages to one another. In fact, only 28% of respondents claim to “never” send personal forwards to co-workers (see Figure 4).

Do You Forward Personal Email (Jokes, Video Clips, Funny Photos, etc.) for Co-Workers?

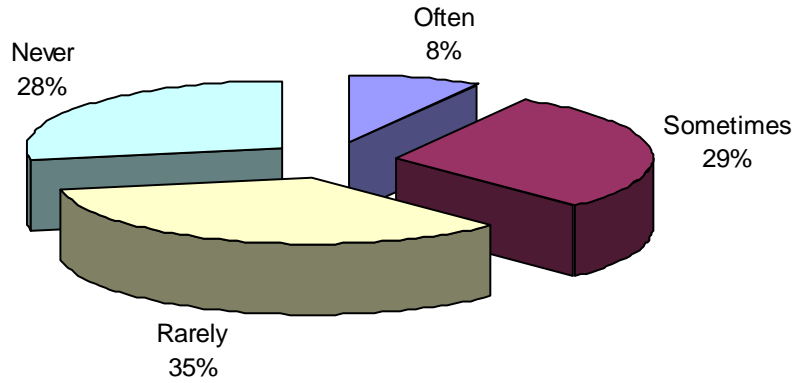


Figure 4: Personal Email Forwarding Habits

Another way employees can misuse email is by sharing music files. Not only does this break copyright laws, but it also consumes valuable company storage and bandwidth, since music files are relatively large.

As shown in Figure 5, below, 12% of corporate email users admit to sharing a music file over their company's email network.

Have You Shared a Music File via Corporate Email?

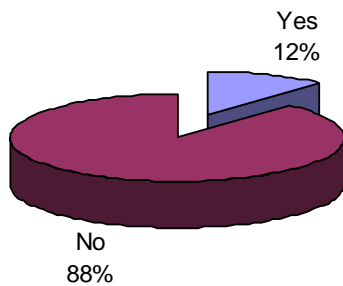


Figure 5: Music File Sharing via Corporate Email

Perhaps the most significant misuse of corporate email is the practice of leaking sensitive company information to unauthorized people outside of the company. 6% of the employees we surveyed admit to emailing company information to someone they shouldn't have.

Have You Ever Emailed Company Information (that Might be Confidential) to Someone You Shouldn't Have?

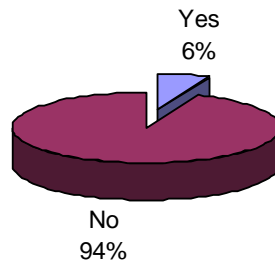


Figure 6: Loss of Proprietary Information via Email

4.0 Offensive Email

This section covers incoming email that is “offensive.” Since users have little control of the email that arrives in their inbox, it is usually up to a messaging administrator to install filters that can identify offensive email.

As shown in Figure 7, below, 70% of respondents have received an offensive message at their corporate email account.

- Note: This question includes messages from all types of senders, whether they be co-workers, friends, acquaintances, or spammers.

Have You Ever Received an Email that Offended You or Made You Uncomfortable?

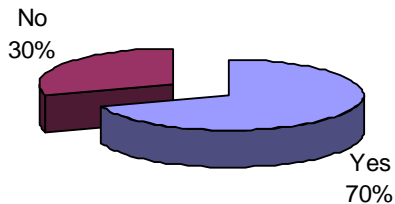


Figure 7: Offensive Email

Next, we asked users if they've ever received an email from a co-worker or business associate that contained coarse language. Aside from the fact that improper language is unprofessional, it can pose legal risks to the organization as well.

42% of respondents indicated they have received an email from a co-worker or business associate that contained offensive language.

Have You Ever Received an Email from a Co-Worker or Business Associate that Contained Offensive Language?

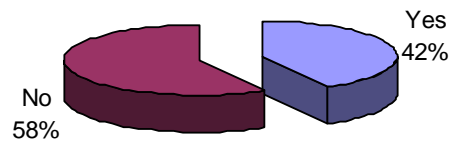


Figure 8: Offensive Language from Colleagues

5.0 Use of Personal Email Accounts

97% of respondents indicated they have a personal email account (i.e. AOL, MSN Hotmail, Yahoo! Mail, etc.) in addition to their corporate email account. The next series of questions were designed to understand if and how employees are using these personal email accounts for business purposes.

Interestingly, 25% of respondents indicated that they regularly forward company email messages to personal accounts. With messages stored outside of the company firewalls, businesses lose the ability to monitor where these messages are sent, how long they are kept, and how the information contained in the messages is used.

Do You Regularly Forward Company Email to a Personal Account?

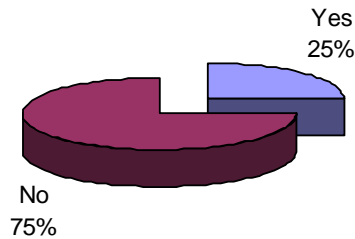


Figure 9: Do You Forward Company Email to a Personal Account?

Aside from simply forwarding company data to a personal email account, users may also send business messages from personal accounts. There are a number of reasons an employee would do this, some innocent and some potentially harmful:

- If a corporate email server is down, an employee may use a personal email account to carry on business.
- On the other hand, a user might send email from a personal account to avoid leaving a paper trail on the corporate email server because these messages cannot be governed by the company.

As shown in Figure 10, below, 62% of respondents send business email from a personal email account.

Do You Send Business Email from Your Personal Email Account?

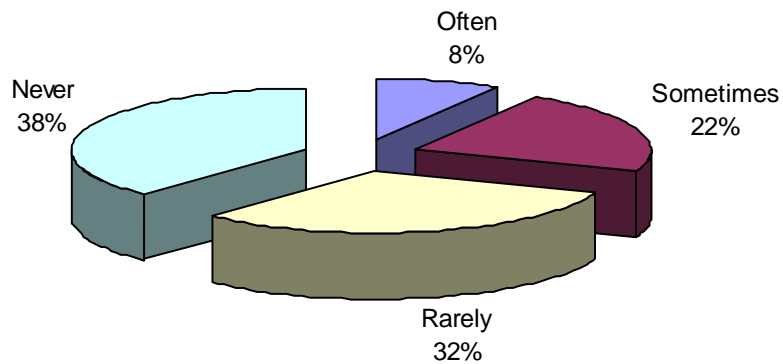


Figure 10: Do You Send Company Email from a Personal Account?

6.0 Corporate Email Policies

Businesses can protect themselves from many of the threats covered in this survey by publishing well defined email policies and filtering outbound messages. We asked respondents if their company has taken either of these actions.

Only 50% of the companies surveyed have published policies on corporate email use.

- 19% of respondents don't know if their company has published email policies, which means the company either hasn't set policies or hasn't done a good job making its email policies known.

Does Your Company Publish Official Use Policies for Email?

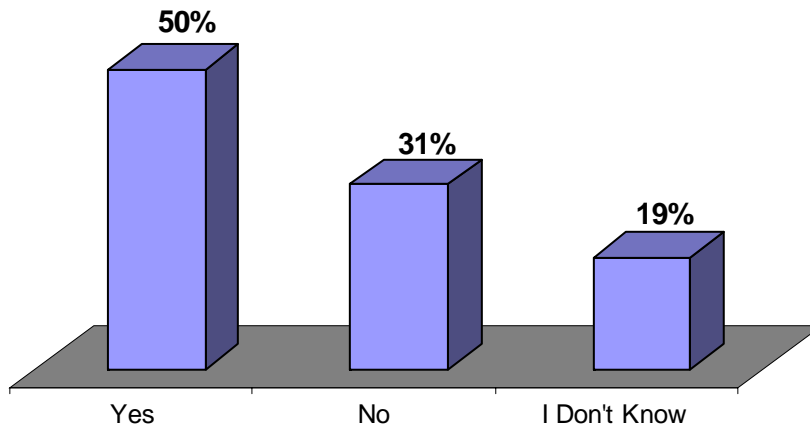
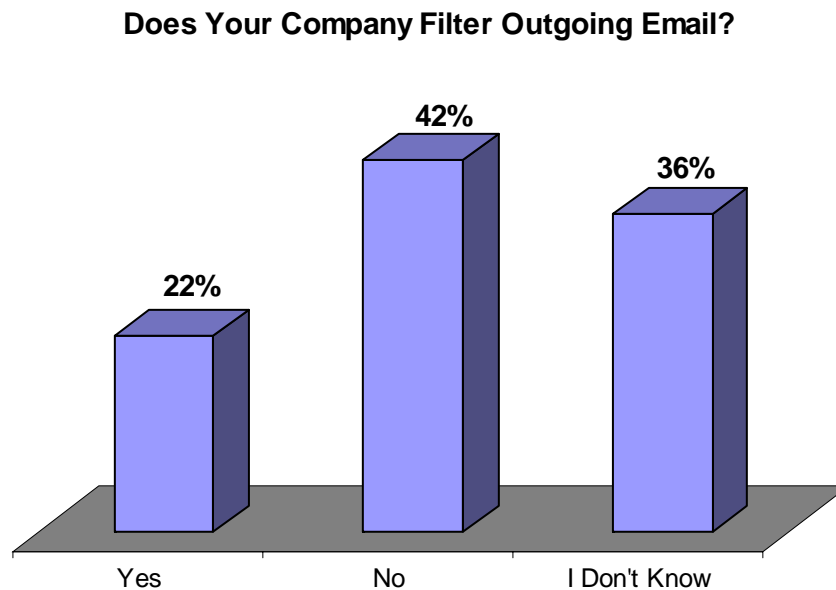


Figure 11: Corporate Email Policies

Most companies now scan incoming email for viruses and spam, but outgoing email remained largely unfiltered. In fact, only 22% of respondents indicated that their company filters outgoing email.

- Note: 36% of respondents don't know if their outgoing email is filtered or not.



7.0 Conclusion

Based on these results, it is obvious that businesses need to do a better job addressing internal email concerns, such as:

- *Productivity Loss* – 72% of employees forward jokes and other time-wasting material to colleagues. In fact, 23% of all corporate messages are personal.
- *Storage and Bandwidth Loss* – 12% of employees have shared bulky music files over their corporate network.
- *Loss of Proprietary Information* – 6% of respondents have emailed sensitive company information to someone they shouldn't have. While 6% may not sound

like much—it only takes one email to leak critical trade secrets. For a 10,000 user organization, 6% translates to 600 employees leaking intellectual property.

- In addition, 75% of employees regularly forward company email to their personal email account.
- *Legal Concerns* – 70% of corporate email users are receiving email they consider offensive. 42% have received messages with foul language from a colleague.

While spam and viruses have captured the attention of businesses for the past few years, these internal email threats have remained largely unaddressed. Only half of the businesses we surveyed have published an official email policy, and only 22% filter outbound messages.

Based on these results and increasing awareness, we expect internal email policies and security to be a major theme for the next few years. Email security vendors, can lead the push towards better internal email security, as outbound email filtering and monitoring becomes part of the feature set of email security appliances.

Technology is only part of the answer, however. Businesses will also need to do a better job setting and communicating email policies. Email has become too important of an application for businesses to ignore these internal concerns.

Appendix A – Original Survey Form

1. Aside from spam, what percentage of email in your corporate email account is NOT work-related? _____%
2. Do you regularly forward company email to a personal email account?
 - a. ___Yes
 - b. ___No
 - c. ___N/A – I don't have a personal email account
3. Do you send business email from your personal email account?
 - a. ___Often
 - b. ___Sometimes
 - c. ___Rarely
 - d. ___Never
 - e. ___N/A – I don't have a personal email account
4. Do you forward personal email (jokes, video clips, funny photos, etc.) to co-workers?
 - a. ___Often
 - b. ___Sometimes
 - c. ___Rarely
 - d. ___Never
 - e. ___N/A – I don't have a personal email account
5. Have you ever emailed company information (that might be confidential) to someone that you shouldn't have?
 - a. ___Yes
 - b. ___No
6. Have you ever received an email that offended you or made you uncomfortable (including spam)?
 - a. ___Yes
 - b. ___No
7. Have you ever received an email from a co-worker or business associate that contained offensive language?
 - a. ___Yes
 - b. ___No

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8. Have you ever shared a music file via your company's email network
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

9. Does your company publish official-use policies for email?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I Don't Know

10. Does your company filter your outgoing email
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I Don't Know

11. Where are you located
 - a. North America
 - b. Europe
 - c. Asia/Pacific
 - d. Other

12. Approximately how many employees does your organization employ? _____

13. What is your Job Function?
 - a. Administrative/Clerical
 - b. Business Development
 - c. Communications
 - d. Customer Service
 - e. Engineering
 - f. Finance
 - g. Human Resources
 - h. Information Technology (IT)
 - i. Legal
 - j. Management/Executive
 - k. Marketing
 - l. Operations (Logistics, Dist., Purchasing)
 - m. Sales
 - n. Other