Angry Senders Beware

When Marcus Wood hit Send, little did he know that the e-mail he was sending to work colleagues would go global and make headlines around the world. In it, Wood – who is the boss of a recruitment company in Australia – used offensive language to accuse his employees of not being good enough. According to Wood, they were playing games while they should have been at their desks, they didn’t wear the correct attire in the workplace and they took too many days off sick.

The furious boss gave his workers an ultimatum: if they didn’t improve their performance in three months, they would be fired. The tables were soon turned on Wood, however. His employees got their revenge by putting the e-mail on Twitter. Their tweets were shared globally – journalists picked up on the story – and news of Wood’s angry message appeared in papers from Australia to the UK and beyond. The “worst work e-mail ever”, as some called it, had gone viral. After his e-mail had become famous, a repentant Wood apologised, and said: “It seems I am becoming an online sensation for how not to communicate – and in hindsight I agree!”

But Marcus Wood isn’t the first to have sent such a harsh and threatening e-mail, and he probably won’t be the last. Since e-mail correspondence became the communication tool of choice in offices worldwide, both employers and employees have been sending virtual messages they later wished they hadn’t. Take Jim Dale, for example. This commander in the US Army made the mistake of slightly mistyping an e-mail address. An honest error, but one which resulted in a 15-year-old British schoolgirl receiving e-mails containing top secret information about the US military.

And then there is Richard Phillips. In an e-mail, this successful lawyer demanded five euros from his secretary to pay for dry-cleaning after she had accidentally spilled ketchup on his suit. Four days later when he still hadn’t received the money, Phillips, who is believed to have earned 200,000 euros a year, sent another e-mail asking for the cash immediately. But the reason for his secretary’s silence was because she was out of the office looking after her ill mother. On her return, she couldn’t believe what she was reading, and forwarded the e-mails to her colleagues. Embarrassed by what he had done, Phillips resigned from his position at the London law firm.

What should furious bosses and angry workers do before they e-mail their colleagues? They should take a deep breath, calm down and think before they send. “Write your e-mail a couple of hours before you send it,” advises Lily Herman, an expert in e-mail etiquette. She says that this allows you to change your message when you are likely to be less angry. This won’t put your hard-earned reputation at risk from a not-so-carefully worded e-mail.

And careless employees? Well, it wouldn’t do any harm to re-read the e-mail to check for spelling, punctuation and grammar. And just make sure you send your message to the right person!

attire: vestimenta
days off sick: dies de baixa mèdica / días de baja médica
performance: rendiment / rendimiento
to turn the tables on (someone): canviar la situació d’(algú) / volverse las tornas contra (alguien)
in hindsight: a posteriori
hard-earned guanyat amb esforç / ganado con esfuerzo
PART 1: Reading comprehension

Choose the best answer according to the text. Only ONE answer is correct. 
[3 points: 0.375 points for each correct answer. Wrong answers will be penalized by deducting 0.125 points. There is no penalty for unanswered questions.]

1. Marcus Wood thinks that his workers
   a) are always ill.
   b) use bad language in the office.
   c) need to improve their performance.
   d) should leave their jobs in three months.

2. Wood’s employees got their revenge
   a) by sending the e-mail to journalists.
   b) by asking Wood to apologise.
   c) by calling it the “World’s worst e-mail”.
   d) through social media.

3. How did Wood feel when his e-mail became famous?
   a) surprised
   b) disappointed
   c) angry
   d) apologetic

4. What was unusual about the e-mails sent to a British schoolgirl?
   a) The sender regretted sending them.
   b) They all contained very important information.
   c) There were a lot of them.
   d) They were sent by someone with an important job.

5. Richard Phillips asked for money from his secretary
   a) because he thought she should pay for his dry-cleaning.
   b) because he had a dirty suit.
   c) because he had taken some of her clothes to the dry-cleaners.
   d) to give to an ill family member.

6. Richard Phillips’ secretary
   a) ignored his e-mails.
   b) wrote back to him immediately.
   c) didn’t believe him.
   d) shared the e-mails with others.

7. What did Phillips do when everyone found out about his e-mails?
   a) He forwarded some other e-mails to his colleagues.
   b) He told his colleagues that he couldn’t believe he had sent the e-mails.
   c) He quit his job because of what he had done.
   d) He got a job at a different law firm.

8. The author’s purpose was to
   a) tell some funny stories.
   b) discourage people from writing e-mails.
   c) give some advice.
   d) warn people about social media.
PART 2: Writing

Choose ONE topic. Your answer should be 125-150 words in length. There is no specific penalty for exceeding 150 words in length. Extra points are not given for exceeding 150 words. [4 points]
1. **Write an essay** on the advantages and disadvantages of e-mail usage in the workplace.
2. Do you think it’s fair to post an e-mail that you have received on social media? Why / Why not?
ANGRY SENDERS BEWARE

Answers

1. c
2. d
3. d
4. b
5. a
6. d
7. c
8. c