



**Internal and External
Communication Policy
and
Email Etiquette**

~ 2023 ~

Introduction

At Fair Observer, a non-profit California corporation [hereafter FO°], we pride ourselves on being a diverse and dynamic multimedia platform with a team spread across three continents and more than 2,000 contributors from over 90 countries.

We recognize that our success hinges not only on our creative output but also on our ability to communicate effectively and foster a culture of respect and collaboration.

To ensure that our communication practices align with our organizational values, we have developed this Communication and Email Policy.

This policy applies to all employees, whether working remotely or in-office, and at all levels of the organization.

It is designed to promote clear and professional communication while addressing the unique challenges posed by our diverse team and cultural differences.

By adhering to this policy, we can enhance productivity, minimize conflicts, and safeguard our collective reputation.

FO°'s success is built on our ability to communicate effectively and maintain high standards of email etiquette. This policy is applicable to all employees, interns, volunteers, contractors and writers, regardless of their geographical location or role within the organization.

We understand that in a multimedia platform with a diverse and scattered team, cultural differences, and three generations, complications and misunderstandings may arise, potentially leading to conflicts or reputational damage.

However, by establishing clear guidelines for communication and email usage, we aim to foster a harmonious work environment that respects diversity while promoting effective collaboration. This policy serves as a foundation for cultivating a culture of mutual understanding, professionalism, and productive communication across our global team.

Communication Policy

To ensure effective communication within our diverse and scattered team, we have identified the following primary communication channels at FO° and have the following instructions for our team.

Email

Email remains the primary mode of official communication within the organization. It is essential for sharing important information, project updates, and formal documentation. We encourage employees to use email for non-urgent matters that require a written record.

Google Meet

Google Meet is our preferred platform for conducting virtual meetings and collaborative discussions. It allows for face-to-face interactions, screen sharing, and real-time collaboration. We recommend scheduling meetings in advance to accommodate different time zones and cultural sensitivities.

Zoom

Zoom is utilized for special events that require recording, such as webinars, training sessions, or large-scale presentations. When hosting events on Zoom, it is important to provide clear instructions, accommodate different time zones, and consider cultural sensitivities when planning the agenda.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp serves as an efficient communication tool for day-to-day operations, enabling quick exchanges, team updates, and informal discussions. However, it is important to be mindful of cultural differences and to use WhatsApp primarily for time-sensitive matters that require immediate attention.

Telephone

In certain specific cases where a discussion can be more effective verbally, the telephone can be useful. It is important to respect cultural sensitivities and time zones when making or receiving phone calls. We encourage the use of telephone communication for urgent matters or situations that need immediate clarification.

At FO°, we value collaboration and respect within our team. While we do not have a strict chain of command, each individual has their designated function and related responsibilities within the organization. We follow established procedures and encourage everyone to adhere to them or propose improvements through open dialogue and teamwork.

By utilizing these communication channels effectively and considering cultural sensitivities and time zones, we can streamline our communication processes, enhance collaboration, and create a cohesive work environment that respects diversity and ensures efficient operations.

Email Etiquette

To promote professional and effective email communication within our organization, we kindly request all employees to adhere to the following guidelines:

Use clear and concise language

When composing emails, use clear and straightforward language to ensure your message is easily understood. Avoid long, convoluted sentences or technical jargon that may cause confusion. Remember to proofread your emails before sending to minimize errors and maintain professionalism.

Be respectful and considerate

Treat all recipients with respect and courtesy in your email communications. Avoid using offensive or derogatory language and refrain from engaging in personal attacks or discriminatory remarks. Maintain a professional tone throughout your emails, even during disagreements or challenging discussions.

Avoid excessive capitalization, jargon or slang

Capitalize words only when necessary, such as proper nouns or acronyms. Overuse of capitalization may come across as shouting or aggressive. Avoid excessive jargon or technical terms that all recipients may not understand. Similarly, refrain from using slang or informal language that could be misinterpreted or considered unprofessional.

Use a professional email signature

Include a professional email signature at the end of your emails. Your signature should typically include your full name, job title, and contact information. Consider including relevant links to your organization's website or social media profiles, if applicable. Ensure your email signature adheres to any specific branding or formatting guidelines established by the organization.

Respond to emails promptly, even if it's just to acknowledge receipt

Promptly acknowledge emails, even if you are unable to provide a full response immediately. Send a brief reply to acknowledge receipt and indicate when the recipient can expect a more detailed response. This helps to maintain open lines of communication and sets expectations for follow-up. Consider that if you are not the primary responder of the email, you do not have to acknowledge the reception.

By adhering to these email etiquette guidelines, we can foster clear and professional communication, minimize misunderstandings, and promote a positive and respectful work environment. Remember that email is a reflection of our professionalism and contributes to our overall reputation as an organization.

Cultural Sensitivity

At FO°, we value the diversity of our team and recognize the importance of cultural sensitivity in our communication. We encourage all employees to be mindful of cultural differences and to adapt their communication styles accordingly. Some cultural norms may differ across regions, such as preferred modes of address, nonverbal communication cues, or expectations of response time. By being aware of these differences, we can foster inclusive and respectful communication. Here are some ways to bridge cultural differences:

Seek understanding: Take the time to learn about different cultures and their communication norms. Educate yourself on cultural customs, traditions, and values.

Practice active listening: When engaging in cross-cultural communication, be attentive and open-minded. Listen actively and seek clarification to ensure mutual understanding.

Be patient and respectful: Recognize that misunderstandings may occur due to cultural differences. Remain patient, respectful, and willing to learn from one another.

Language Considerations

With our diverse team, it is essential to address any language barriers that may exist. To promote effective communication, we encourage the use of clear and simple language, especially for written communication. Here are some considerations:

Keep language simple and concise: Use plain language that all team members easily understand. Avoid complex sentence structures, technical jargon, or excessive use of industry-specific terminology.

Seek clarification when needed: If you are uncertain about the meaning of a message or encounter language difficulties, don't hesitate to ask for clarification. Encourage open dialogue and provide support to those who may require language assistance.

Provide language support resources: If necessary, provide language resources or guidelines for seeking language assistance within the organization. This may include access to translation services, language courses, or language-specific dictionaries, or style guides.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Maintaining confidentiality and protecting sensitive information is of utmost importance at FO°. We expect all employees to exercise caution when discussing confidential matters and to adhere to our data protection policies. Here are some key points to consider:

Handle sensitive information with care: Ensure that confidential information is shared only with authorized individuals on a need-to-know basis. Avoid discussing confidential matters in public spaces or over unsecured communication channels.

Use secure communication methods: When transmitting sensitive information, use secure platforms or encryption methods to protect data integrity and confidentiality.

Report breaches or incidents: If you suspect or become aware of any breaches of confidentiality or data protection, promptly report them to the designated authority within the organization. Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of such incidents.

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts may arise within our diverse and geographically scattered team due to cultural differences or generational divides. We encourage open dialogue, empathy, and understanding when addressing conflicts. To promote a harmonious work environment, here are some guidelines:

Open and respectful communication: Encourage team members to express their concerns or differences of opinion in a respectful manner. Active listening, empathy, and open-mindedness are essential during conflict resolution.

Seek common ground: Look for shared objectives and interests to find common ground and build understanding. Encourage compromise and collaboration to resolve conflicts.

Available resources: Provide information on available conflict resolution resources within the organization, such as HR or designated mediators. Encourage employees to seek assistance when conflicts are difficult to resolve independently.

Reputational Damage

Every employee's communication reflects on FO° and can impact its reputation. It is essential to maintain professionalism, demonstrate respectful behavior, and avoid offensive or discriminatory language. Here are some key points:

Professional conduct

Conduct yourself in a professional manner in all written and verbal communications. Treat colleagues, clients, and stakeholders with respect and consideration.

Avoid offensive language or behavior

Refrain from using offensive, discriminatory, or inflammatory language. Be mindful of cultural sensitivities and avoid engaging in discussions or activities that may be perceived as disrespectful or harmful.

Think before you post

When using social media or other public communication platforms, remember that your actions and words reflect on the organization. Use discretion and avoid sharing or commenting on controversial or sensitive topics that may compromise our reputation.

Training and Support

To help employees develop effective communication skills, we offer training sessions and resources. This includes cross-cultural communication, conflict resolution, and other relevant areas.

Ongoing support is available, and we encourage employees to seek guidance when needed.

Policy Enforcement and Updates

Violations of the communication and email policy may result in consequences, ranging from informal reminders to disciplinary action, depending on the severity and frequency of the offense. We reserve the right to enforce the policy as deemed necessary. Please note that the policy may be revised periodically to adapt to changing needs and circumstances. Any updates or revisions will be communicated to all employees.

Remember, this framework provides a starting point for creating your communication and email policy. It's important to tailor it to your organization's specific requirements, taking into account your team's dynamics and any legal or industry-specific considerations. Legal consultation may be advised to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations in your jurisdiction.

FO° Communication and Email Policy Summary

1. Use clear, simple and concise language in all communications, especially in writing.
2. Be respectful and considerate towards colleagues, avoiding offensive or discriminatory language.
3. Avoid excessive capitalization, jargon, or slang that may hinder effective communication.
4. Include a professional email signature with your full name, job title, and contact information.
5. Respond promptly to emails, even if it's just to acknowledge receipt.
6. Be mindful of cultural differences and adapt your communication style accordingly.
7. Seek clarification when language barriers or difficulties arise and provide language support resources if necessary.
8. Maintain confidentiality and protect sensitive information according to organization policies.
9. Address conflicts with open dialogue and empathy, and seek common ground for resolution.
10. Remember that your communication reflects on the organization and can impact its reputation, so maintain professionalism at all times.
11. Take advantage of training and support resources to improve communication skills.
12. Understand the consequences of policy violations, which may range from reminders to disciplinary actions.
13. Seek legal consultation to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations.
14. The policy may be revised periodically to adapt to changing needs and circumstances.

This summary serves as a reminder for all employees, volunteers, interns, and contractors of FO° to promote effective communication, respect diversity and protect the organization's reputation.