



# tipsheet

January 2008



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## Effective Instant Messaging In the Business Environment

Instant messaging (IM) is becoming increasingly prevalent in the workplace. Be sure to understand when, why, and how to use this communication tool. Keep in mind that you are working in a business environment and not just chatting with your friends.

### 10 Tips for Using IM at Work:

- 1. Understand your company's IM policy.** Your company may have a policy that outlines the appropriate use of this tool at work including whether or not you should communicate with customers and business partners using IM. Some companies save and monitor this information. Remember, old messages can be used against you in the event of a legal investigation.
- 2. Be aware of security risks and don't communicate sensitive and/or confidential information.** Both personal and company information can be intercepted. Also files sent through instant messaging can present security risks. Don't open up unknown files.
- 3. Don't use IM for communications when you need a formal record.** While many companies monitor instant messaging, don't rely on this back-up. Use a more formal medium such as email or a letter for any communications when you want to keep a written trail.
- 4. Keep your business contacts separate from family and friends.** You do not want to send a message to a colleague about the cute thing your dog, Roxie, did last weekend.
- 5. Follow the "keep it simple" principle.** When using IM, get to the point quickly and use this medium briefly. If the conversation gets complicated, continue with a physical meeting or a phone call. IM lacks key non-verbal cues that a physical conversation provides, such as hand and facial gestures or tone of voice. These non-verbal indicators can help you navigate a complex situation.
- 6. Use a professional user name.** *GoodLookin28* is not an appropriate user name.
- 7. Monitor your status and double check if your colleagues are available to chat.** Whether you are away or at your desk, keep your IM status up to date so your contacts know when you are available. Your colleagues may forget to update their status, so before launching into discussion, ask if your contact is available.
- 8. Be careful about the tone of your IM communications.** While IM is a casual way to communicate with colleagues, watch what you write. You are at work. Poor grammar and spelling may reflect badly. Be respectful and don't be too casual. Don't type anything that you would not put into an email or letter.
- 9. Be careful about acronym usage.** Know your audience; some acronyms are inappropriate for work. Some of your colleagues may not understand some acronyms.
- 10. Say "goodbye."** This closing lets your contact know the conversation is over.

### Common IM Acronyms

B/C	Because	GR8	Great	SOTMG	Short on time, must go
BRB	Be right back	HTH	Hope this helps	TBH	To be honest
CB	Coffee Break	IMO	In my opinion	TC	Take care
COB	Close of business	JK	Just kidding	TPTB	The powers that be
CX	Cancelled	LOL	Lots of laughs	TTYL	Talk to you later
CYM	Check your mail	NP	No problem	TYVM	Thank you very much
GA	Go ahead	SLAP	Sounds Like A Plan	WFM	Works for me
GFTD	Gone for the day	SMEM	Send me an e-mail	WTG	Way to go

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