

PRESS RELEASE**1 IN 3 BRITISH WORKERS MISTAKENLY
OFFENDED BY WORK EMAILS**

- **1 in 4 workers improves email efficiency since the recession**

27 July 2009, London: 1 in 3 Britons who use email at work admit to regularly becoming offended or upset in error as a result of misunderstanding or speed-reading emails from colleagues, according to research by GMX, www.gmx.co.uk, the free email service for more than 11 million active users. The survey of 1900 UK adults found that offence from work email is common in the British workplace. The most regular cause for confusion is misinterpreting a sender's language or term of phrase, and both genders appear to suffer to the same degree. In total, 41 per cent of workers have received an email from a colleague that has used an offensive tone, intentionally or otherwise, over the past year. Furthermore, 71 per cent of workers admit to frequently becoming upset by having to wait for replies to emails they have sent. The study also reveals that changes in the economic climate have led 1 in 4 workers to modify their work email practices.

The GMX 'Email and Work' study¹ finds that whilst email is highly valued as a way to communicate with colleagues and associates, the psychological effect of misunderstandings and offence from work emails remains a problem. Over 40 per cent of workers surveyed have received an email from a colleague whose tone caused them negative emotions (such as upset, hurt or anger) over the past year. A key finding of the study is that much of the upset is unnecessary. 33 per cent of workers admit to regularly being offended or upset mistakenly as a result of misunderstanding work emails sent to them.

The most common cause of unintentional offence in work emails is the misinterpretation of unfamiliar language or phrases used by the sender. Misjudging

¹ 1958 UK adults surveyed by Tickbox.net via electronic feedback form

the sender's tone was the second most common, followed by scan-reading emails too quickly. Other reasons for employees to take offence from email include one-line replies, rude typos, and receiving irrelevant or overly detailed messages.

The study suggests that an impersonal writing style, commonly adopted in work emails, and time pressure when checking work email are both key drivers for the problem. Both male and female workers appear to suffer to the same degree as well. Interestingly, mistaken offence from email communication is an issue that appears to decline with age, with 52 per cent of workers aged 25-34 affected compared to only 39 per cent of those between 45-54 years of age.

Eva Heil, Managing Director, GMX, said, "Whilst keeping on top of a bulging inbox is a common pressure for many workers, the research shows that unnecessary stress and upset caused by misinterpreting emails can be just as problematic. As well as managing our email efficiently, it can pay dividends to learn to interpret our work emails more closely".

Graham Jones, Internet Psychologist, said, "The problem with email, compared with face to face communication or telephone calls, is that we have no tone of voice or body language to help us interpret the message. Take time to think about a message just received, rather than just bashing out a reply which you later regret once you've had time to interpret what the sender was trying to say".

Many workers now expect to receive emails that contain intentionally negative content. Some 17 per cent of workers say it is common to be reprimanded by a colleague over email. Remarkably, 1 in 10 men (11 per cent) now think it is acceptable to be sacked over email.

The time taken for colleagues to reply to an email is also a major source of stress and offence for many users. Over 70 per cent of those surveyed frequently suffer negative emotions as a result of having to wait for replies. The average worker becomes offended after waiting longer than three days, and 1 in 3 workers will be

offended after just 48 hours. 1 in 10 workers (12 per cent) expect a reply within the same day.

However, the challenging economy appears to be leading British workers to speed-up their overall use of email. In response to the recession, 1 in 4 has made an effort to enhance their processing of work emails, most commonly by speeding up their replies. Whilst some may be pleased to receive replies more swiftly, it is likely that greater haste in replying to work emails will increase the potential for misunderstandings and unnecessary offence, which 1 in 3 workers already encounters.

Interestingly, the recession has not led UK workers to question the language or tone they use in their own emails. Only 5 per cent of users have adopted a friendlier tone when emailing colleagues since the recession began, and two thirds (67 per cent) see no need to modify how their emails are perceived in the office.

In addressing how best to write work emails, Jones advises, "Far too often people try to make their emails too formal and that makes it difficult for the receiver to really interpret what is being said. If you write an email as though you were talking to that person, you will be much more likely to succeed".

Heil added, "Whilst many corporate email users perceive only benefit in maximising speed, this could well be a 'false economy'. All parties have much to gain from investing time in sensitive drafting and interpretation of work emails".

With over 11 million active users, GMX draws on over a decade of free email expertise and is well placed to offer a reliable, secure service. Besides great looks, great performance and state-of-the-art functionality, GMX.co.uk offers the widest selection of first-choice addresses such as myname@gmx.co.uk.

Free email has grown up, find it at GMX. The new free email service can be seen at www.gmx.co.uk

About GMX

GMX is a specialized freemail provider with more than 10 years experience and more than 11 million users. With its reliable and powerful webmail system, GMX provides a comfortable email solution for private usage. Its features and convenience rival those of traditional client-based software that require installation on your computer. GMX guarantees optimum performance as well as high mail security and customer privacy with data centres located in Europe and the United States.

GMX Internet Services Inc. (Global Mail Exchange) is a wholly owned subsidiary of United Internet Group, a publicly listed company (ISIN DE0005089031) with a market cap of around 2 billion GBP and some 4,000 employees, and a pioneer of communication via the Internet.

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