

E-mail signatures: put your best foot forward

Technology offers many avenues for creativity, and e-mail is no exception. However, the bottom line is *effective* communication with customers. Sometimes creativity may get in the way.

Recipients of an e-mail may have vision impairment. Using colored or cursive text or very small fonts may make it difficult for a customer to read your message.

Acronyms may also hinder the effectiveness of a message. Here's a tip for avoiding acronyms: Build your signature block with brand new co-workers or customers in mind and spell out words instead of using acronyms.

Bandwidth is another factor. Did you know the average e-mail with a colorful background or "flying" text takes up roughly three times more network space (bandwidth)? Multiply this by hundreds of e-mails per day and thousands of employees, and it's easy to see that bandwidth matters.

Use the following guide to build your e-mail signature block to clearly communicate with customers *and* put your best foot forward.

Name	Make it bold; color is okay, but use dark colors only and non-cursive text
Title	Maximum one line; list your title, but not every role you fulfill
Section, division, agency	Maximum three lines; you are not required to list all levels of the organization; use discretion and limit acronyms; "DAS" is allowed
Address	Generally, omit your address unless your role requires it; it's on your Web site
Phone Numbers	This is the DAS format: (503) 378-4481, ext. 123; area code belongs in parenthesis; do not use dots; abbreviate the word extension to "ext." Cell phone: Include only if your role demands it, otherwise, rely on section staff to contact you by cell as needed; (listing too many contact numbers gives the impression you think you're indispensable)
Fax	Unless this a key tool in your position, omit it; it's on your Web site
E-mail address	Omit
Web URL	http://oregon.gov/das ; all lowercase; at the division or minisite level, there is no need for a final slash or "shtml" (always test this first)
Quotes and sayings	Omit
Confidentiality statement	Optional (based on your role); insert one line between the bottom of your signature block and the first line of the confidentiality statement
Spell check	Make certain all words are spelled and used correctly. Examples: help desk, hot line, Web site, e-mail
Font selection	The following Sans Serif fonts are best for screen reading: Arial, Tahoma, Verdana Select a moderate size font such as 10 – 11 points; too small makes it difficult to read; too large makes it appear you are shouting