JUST THE FAX
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If you send or receive facsimile (FAX) copies, you have probably experienced situations where a fax/phone line is busy, copies are extensive and take a lot of paper and printer ink, or do not pertain to you at all and end up getting thrown into the trash without being read. None of these instances are productive and in many cases can be very annoying and costly in terms of time and resources.

As with any other form of communication, there are certain dos and don'ts to abide by when using a fax machine to transmit messages. Failing to adhere to the following simple guidelines can cause frustration, anger, and a breakdown in the relationships between you and your customers or others to whom you send messages.

- *Be considerate of your receiver.* If you plan to send a multipage document to your customer, telephone in advance to make sure that it is okay and a good time to send it. This is especially true if you will be using a business number during the workday or if there is only one line for the telephone and fax machine. It is frustrating and irritating to customers when a fax is tied up because large documents are being transmitted. If you must send a large document, try to do so before or after working hours (e.g. before or after 9 A.M. to 5 P.M.). Also, keep in mind geographic time differences. Following these tips can also help maintain good relationships with coworkers who may depend on the fax machine to conduct business with their customers.

- *Limit graphics.* Graphic images that are not needed to clarify written text waste the receiver's printer cartridge ink, tie up the machine unduly, and can irritate your receiver. Therefore, delete any unnecessary graphics, including your corporate logo on a cover sheet if it is heavily colored and requires a lot of ink to print. (If appropriate, create a special outline image of your logo for your fax cover sheets.)

- *Limit correspondence recipients.* As with e-mail and memorandums, limit the recipients of your messages. If they do not have a need to know, do not send them messages. Check your broadcast mailing list (a list of people who will receive all messages, often programmed into a computer) to ensure that it is limited to people who "have a need to know." This is also important from the standpoint of confidentiality. If the information you are sending is proprietary or sensitive in any way, think about who will receive it. Do not forget that unless the document is going directly to someone's computer fax modem, it may be lying in a stack of other incoming messages and accessible by people other than your intended recipient.

For additional information of effective use of technology, especially with customers, see Lucas, R.W., *Customer Service: Skills for Success*, McGraw-Hill, New York, NY.

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