

## New study: This is the one e-mail mistake that's unforgivable (don't let it happen to you)

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No one likes having their tone misunderstood when it could mean the difference between a promotion or a public-relations disaster. It's not a worry we outgrow in our careers. Whether you're 22 and starting your first job or 65 and ready to leave it, everyone's concerned about how they send emails.

That's what Fundera [found](#) when it surveyed 1,000 Americans across generations about their work email usage. It turns out, according to the survey, that we're willing to grant some leniency to certain situations. But here are the critical mistakes Fundera found that we *won't* forgive in emails:

### **Memes make you untrustworthy**

As a millennial who identifies as a GIF-emoting bot, I was surprised to learn that so many of my fellow millennials penalize the use of memes. As more modern workplaces turn to instant messaging platforms like Slack, the [rules around work language](#) are stretching to include GIFs and informal punctuation.

But according to this survey, the majority of U.S. workers are still sensitive to having our "jk jk" (that's "just kidding" for non-millennials) misunderstood. Employees who used memes in workplace communications were seen as less professional, less trustworthy, less serious, and less intelligent by respondents. On a five-point scale, where 1 was very inappropriate and 5 was model-behavior appropriate, emojis and acronyms ranked 2.1 and memes ranked 1.9. All-caps emails were seen as the most unforgivable, inappropriate mistake by respondents.

But even if you can't LOL now, you can later in your career. Fundera found that we will loosen up about our work communication as we rise through the ranks. Participants who worked in upper management were the most likely group to include all the no-no's of acronyms, emojis, memes, and all-caps emails, and they were the group least likely to find this informal language inappropriate.

Lesson learned. When you're the boss, you set the tone in corporate emails and can send all the all-caps, LOL JK's that you wish.

### **No heart-eyes emojis**

A smiley-face emoji was found to be largely acceptable by respondents. Heart-eyes, less so. Emojis with hearts, like the kissy-face and the heart-shaped eyes, were seen to be the least appropriate emojis by respondents. We are apparently willing to show praise, but not intense emotions like love and affection, in a corporate setting.

Of course, emoji policing varied from industry to industry. Participants in the arts and entertainment fields were the most free with their emoji use in emails, while participants in government, public administration, and telecommunications jobs were the most restrictive with their emoji usage.

### **Above all: We will forgive wrong attachments, but not typos**

One more reason to double check before you hit send: Minor mistakes add up. Sending out an email with misspellings was seen as less acceptable than sending one with a wrong attachment, according to participants. According to Fundera, more than 1 in 5 people said it was not at all acceptable to send out emails with typos. Cognitive psychologists have [found](#) that may be because we see grammar errors as a sign of a person's conscientiousness, intelligence, and trustworthiness.

At least, you can pass off a wrong attachment as a technical error. The typo's all on you.

So, before you send off that email to a client you don't know — or the executive who's about to interview you — think twice before riffing with a meme or GIF or emoji.

Above all, double check for typos.