



<<_CompanyName_>>

<<_Address1_>>

<<_Address2_>>

<<_City_>>, <<_StateProv_>> <<_PostalCode_>>

<<_Website_>>

CHAT AND INSTANT MESSAGING

[COMPANY] has adopted Instant Messaging and Chat etiquette rules for the following three reasons:

- Professionalism: [COMPANY] employees must act as professionals and must use proper email language and techniques to convey a professional image.
- Efficiency: All employees should create emails that are well written and concise.
- Protection from liability: [COMPANY] employee must be aware of email risks that can contribute to the legal liabilities of [COMPANY].

Best Practices

Before choosing Instant Messaging (IM) as a means of business communication, consider the content. IM works best for quick questions, updates, and schedule changes. For complicated or critical messages, send an E-mail, pick up the phone, or meet face-to-face with the party or parties involved.

When using IM, follow these [COMPANY] guidelines (best practices):

Be Brief

Keep messages very concise. As a general rule, IM messages should be no more than a sentence or two. Save longer conversations for meetings and conference calls.

Be Kind

Never deliver bad news or major announcements by IM; the format will seem to trivialize the message.

Don't Use IM as a Substitute for Serious Communications

Don't use IM to negotiate contracts, place orders, or to make important assignments. Put those things in writing, preferably with a fax or a letter or conduct face-to-face meetings. Direct the chat to e-mail (or even to the phone) or suggest setting up teleconference (including web conferencing) if it appears to be a substantial issue that needs to be documented or intended for multiple recipients.

Use Caution

Never include sensitive or confidential information in a message. It's too easy for someone to cut and paste the text into an E-mail or another document that might be passed on without management approval.

It is [COMPANY]'s policy to ban messages that could publicly embarrass your company or open it up to a lawsuit, including those that:

- Discuss confidential personnel or specific financial matters
- Conduct negotiations
- Ridicule or spread rumors about colleagues or competitors
- Include sexually explicit comments or material
- Make or forward racist, sexist, or tasteless jokes
- Threaten anyone, even vaguely or in jest
- Contain political material of any kind

Respect People's Time

Begin every IM by asking the other user whether you're interrupting them. When someone IM's you, learn to say no when you're busy.

Be Professional

Limit the use of potentially confusing acronyms and slang and pick an appropriate screen name/ ID. Also limit your use of emoticons. IM communications are still business communications, and should be treated with the same amount of decorum and professionalism as a written letter. People will say things in IM that they would never say in a written letter or in a telephone conversation. Also, never Use another person's account to send instant messages

Personal Use

[COMPANY] employees can use IM to quickly touch base with spouses or kids, but employees are prohibited from engaging in lengthy personal discussions or hang out in chat rooms. Change phrase – “hang out”

POLICY OPTION 1

Employees of [COMPANY] are allowed to chat via instant messaging during working hours as long as the chat activity is related to job activity.

As an employee, you must make it clear that the views that expressed in your chat sessions are yours alone and do not necessarily represent the views of your employer. In addition, please adhere to the following chat guidelines:

- Do not reveal confidential and proprietary information.
- Ensure that chatting does not interfere with work requirements.

POLICY OPTION 2

Employees are not permitted to use the company's information technology resources for chat or instant messaging unless approved for a work purpose by management.

POLICY OPTION 3

Employees are not permitted to use the company's information technology resources for chat or instant messaging unless approved for a work purpose by management. If there is an urgent need to utilize chat or instant messaging for personal reasons, it should be done only with the approval of management and if possible, should be performed during work breaks so as to not interfere with company-related work.

Retention of Instant Messenger Correspondence

[COMPANY] Instant Messenger General Correspondence may be saved with logging function of Instant Messenger, or copied into a file and saved. Instant Messenger conversations that are Administrative or Fiscal in nature should be copied into an email message and sent to the appropriate email retention address.

Acknowledging Receipt of Chat and Instant Messaging

I have received my copy of the [COMPANY] Chat and Instant Messaging Policy and I have read and I understand the information contained here in.

I further acknowledge my understanding that my employment with [COMPANY] may be terminated at any time with or without cause.

Note: The preceding sentence should be included only in states where termination at will is permitted and where the employer desires this status.

Date

Employee's Signature

Name [Please Print]