Always mind your Netiquette

There's a whole culture that has cropped up around the use of e-mail and a "right" way of using it. It involves "Netiquette," or good Net manners.

One place everyone should visit as soon as they get online is the delightfully concise and understandable Netiquette Home Page at Florida Atlantic University (www.fau.edu/rinaldi/netiquette.html). The creation of Arlene Rin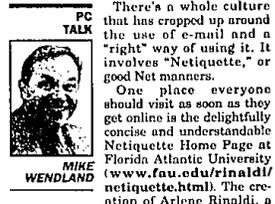aldi, a Senior Computer Programmer/Analyst at the University, it's a great place to get quick pointers about how to use e-mail and the Net in a responsible manner.

As you start using e-mail, you'll realize that its greatest benefit also causes its biggest frustration. I'm talking about the ease of use. It is so easy to type a few lines and zap them off. Sometimes we're replying to something someone else has written, other times we're initiating the contact.

But beware of the problem of "send-itus," pushing the send key too fast. It's so easy in the first rush of anger to dash out things that, had we first counted to 10 or otherwise deliberated on, would have been phrased with more tact. Re-read what you've just composed. Realize that the receiver of your digital correspondence can't see your facial expressions or hear your voice.

All that appears on the screen is text. Often, text alone gives an overly harsh impression. That's why a sort of secondary language has evolved on the Net. For example, to make sure humor is recognized as humor, users will send what's been called an "emoticon" or a symbol created by typing a crude version of a smiley face using a colon, dash and the close parenthesis key :-)

I've been on the receiving end of thousands of e-mailings over the years from viewers of my NBC News Channel television reports on the Net. I have seen the best and worst of e-mail and heard enough horror stories from Internet access providers to make you shudder. Based on my e-mail experience (I get about 250 messages a day), I have come up with some important do's and don'ts that, if followed, will make everyone's life online a little easier.

These are my 10 rules for effective e-mail:

1) Always include an electronic "signature" in your e-mailings. Most e-mail programs let you create one and then have it "attach" automatically at the end of your message. Mine includes my full name, e-mail address, World Wide Web page, the real "snail mail" address where I receive paper correspondence and my telephone number. Give some thought before you attach your street address and phone number. There are weirdos out there in cyberspace and you may not want them to know where you live.

2) Answer your e-mail. It's rude not to reply, especially when it's so easy. Reply when you read it. Don't leave it lying around, cluttering up your electronic "in"

box. E-mail can pile up just like paper mail. So deal with it when you receive it.

3) Delete your e-mail from your server. When people send you e-mail it really doesn't go to you. It goes to the server, or the big computer that gives you Net access. Your e-mail program reads your mail from your "in" file on the access provider's server. If you don't do something about it, that file gets bigger and bigger as you keep getting mail. The mountain of mail needlessly adds to the server's workload. Most good electronic mail programs have a section called options or preferences where you setup the way you'll handle mail. Make sure you check the "delete mail from server" box or activate such an option.

4) Set up an address book. Almost every e-mail program allows you to set up a mailbox that stores e-mail addresses. This saves you a lot of time and typing and avoids bounced mail from mistyped addressing. To add a name you usually just highlight the e-mail address that appears on the top of the mail form and then, from the menu, click "add recipients name" or something similar. To send that person mail, most programs have an address book link on the menu bar that lets you just click to display a list of your favorite Net friends.

5) Realize that e-mail may not be private. It's not that anyone is necessarily reading your e-mail over your shoulder, though in some workplaces that indeed is being done. It's the nature of computers to make backup copies so data can be restored when computers crash. What you write can potentially be seen by someone other than the person you intended to see it. Thus, to save embarrassment, don't write anything that you wouldn't say openly. A couple of years ago, when Bryant Gumble was still with NBC, he learned that lesson the hard way. Gumble wrote what he thought was a confidential e-mail memo to a boss that contained a very

unflattering portrayal of an on-the-air Today Show colleague. Somehow, it was lifted off the computer and widely disseminated, much to Gumble's chagrin.

6) Do not send messages in all uppercase. This is really bad form. Besides being difficult to read, it's considered the same as SHOUTING!

7) Don't send useless carbon copies. It's so easy to send copies of your mail to others. Unless it is directly relevant to someone else and you have their permission, resist clicking that cc button on your e-mail program. Also be sure to take into consideration the feelings of the original party you are writing. Some people are offended by cc'ing.

8) Never send unsolicited e-mail that can be construed as advertising. This is called spamming and as bad as unsolicited sales telephone calls at home during dinner hour.

9) Don't attach files to your e-mail unless you know they are welcome. Always ask before attaching a file. Some people are very paranoid about receiving files over the Internet. For one reason, they may clog up an already-full hard drive. For another, they could contain a virus or a mutated program that damages a computer's system.

10) Conversely, don't open unsolicited files you receive over the Net. Unless you know what it is and who sent it, drag it into the trash. Viruses are all too common these days and no matter how intriguing the name of the file, it's just not worth taking a chance of infecting your computer with a virus.

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"As the number of unemployed declined, the number of workers with jobs grew by 33,000 last month setting a new high water mark for employment in Michigan at 4,699,000," Rothwell noted.

"October's employment upsurge surpassed the previous high of 4,678,000 set just five months ago in May."

Rothwell also noted that Michigan's labor force continued to expand in October, climbing to 4,891,000, and ties the record high set earlier this year in February.

"For the second straight month, we had a sizable increase in our work force as 29,000 workers entered the state's job market in October, pushing the two-month total to 45,000," he said.

"Our low unemployment rate is like a magnet, drawing in workers, and for employers in the state who are facing worker shortages, an expanding labor force is good news."

Over the October 1996 levels, Michigan's work force has grown by 50,000 and employment has risen by 90,000.

Manufacturing gains

The manufacturing sector lead the way with job growth in October, according to state's monthly survey of employer payroll levels.

The number of wage and salary jobs increased by 4,000 last month, climbing to 4,421,000. Manufacturing grew by 4,000 jobs, including 1,000 jobs in the auto industry and another 1,000 in the non-durable goods sector, largely among food processors.

Other sectors reporting job gains in October were retail trade (+3,000), wholesale trade (+1,000), services (+1,000) and construction (+1,000).

Government was only sector with job losses, as the sector's job total fell by 7,000. Rothwell said the loss probably resulted from seasonal adjust-

▪ **"Michigan's unemployment rate continues to hover in the low 4 percent range, edging down to 3.9 percent last month ... The state's jobless rate has ranged from 3.7 percent to 4.0 percent since May."**

Doug Rothwell
Michigan Jobs Commission

ments to the estimates.

"This year job growth among schools at the local government level was concentrated in September," he pointed out. "Usually, the growth is spread out over September and October. However, with less than normal October job growth in government, the seasonal adjustment resulted in job losses for the sector."

Below national rate

While the national rate dropped in October to 4.7 percent from 4.9 percent in September, the drop was not large enough to fall below the Michigan rate. As a result, the state's jobless rate has now been below the national rate for 31 straight months.

Earnings increase

Increased production in the auto industry boosted average hours and earnings levels in the state's manufacturing and auto industries.

Average weekly hours worked by production workers in manufacturing climbed by three- tenths to 44.5 hours, while earnings climbed by $22.50 per week.

Among auto production workers, average hours on the job rose by half an hour to 47.1 hours per week and weekly earnings jumped by $64.10.

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another vice president will oversee all company-owned restaurants. Townsend joined the company in 1976 as an hourly employee.

John Vincent of Ann Arbor has been promoted to partner for the Chrysler international account, from account supervisor, at the Detroit office of Bozell World-

wide. As partner on the Africa/Middle East/South America account team, Vincent works on strategic planning, account management and creative development for Chrysler advertising in the Latin America region. Prior to joining Bozell in 1993, Vincent worked at Blixt Associates in Ann Arbor.