

ISH

These are the things you should never, ever put in an email

Jan. 19, 2018



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The author of a viral Babe.net story detailing Aziz Ansari's allegedly coercive behavior slung a personal attack at HLN host Ashleigh Banfield

Email

Workplace

Cool it, Babe.

The author of [a viral Babe.net story](#) detailing Aziz Ansari's allegedly coercive behavior on a date last year slung a personal attack this week at HLN host Ashleigh Banfield, who had earlier called the accuser's allegations "appalling" and argued they amounted to little more than a "bad date."



"I hope the ~500 RTs on the single news write-up made that burgundy lipstick bad highlights second-wave feminist has-been feel really relevant for a little while," read part of reporter Katie Way's emailed response to an invite to discuss her story on HLN, according to [Business Insider](#). Way, blasting Banfield for attacking the victim "in one of the most vulnerable moments of her life," went on to claim she would "remember this for the rest of my career." "I'm 22 and so far, not too shabby!" she wrote. "And I will laugh the day you fold."

Banfield, in response, read a snippet on air — then tore in. “If you truly believe in feminism, the last thing you should do is attack someone in an ad hominem way for her age,” she thundered. “As journalists ... we do not attack for people for their age, or their highlights or their lipstick. It is the most hypocritical thing a woman who says she supports the woman’s movement could ever do.”

Also read: [What people really think when you use these email sign-offs](#)

To be fair, Babe.net proclaims on its [“Manifesto” page](#) that the site is “for girls who don’t give a f–k.” But for people who do, here are experts’ guidelines on what you should never, ever put in a work email:

Anything you wouldn’t want the world to see. As journalist Olivia Nuzzi once tweeted: “Dance like no one is watching; email like it may one day be read aloud in a deposition.” “Everything you send is going to have consequences,” social media entrepreneur Natalie Zfat told Moneyish, “so you want to be extra thoughtful (and) exercise restraint and judgment every time you hit ‘send’ on an email.” After all, that recipient could forward your message to anyone else, points out business communications expert and “The Communication Clinic” author Barbara Pachter.



Olivia Nuzzi
@Olivianuzzi

Dance like no one is watching; email like it may one day be read aloud in a deposition.

3:18 PM - Dec 13, 2014

148 5,225 5,674

Personal gripes. Beef is best resolved in person, said Pachter: “You look bad if you’re attacking people, and it can escalate really easily — you’re just going back and forth sending nasty notes; nothing ever gets resolved,” she said. If you must send an email, she added, “you can describe the person’s behavior ... and come up with additional behavior that would have been (less likely to lead to more conflict).”

Sensitive topics. When trying to address a difficult issue with a coworker situated in your area, just go talk to them face to face, Pachter said. “They can see your face, they can see the smile on your face, they can see that you’re concerned,” she said. “Email has none of that ... There’s no visual; they can’t see you; they can’t hear (your tone).”

Also read: [How to recover from the horror of sending an email you shouldn’t have](#)

Bad news. Firing or resignation via email is “like breaking up with somebody over text,” said Pachter. “An old fashioned conversation is still the best way to share with someone that they’re no longer going to be a part of the company or vice versa,” Zfat added. “That’s still the best way to do that, even though we have all of these other options for doing so.” Similarly, bad company news should come in person from a senior executive to avoid seeming cold or uncaring, said Dianna Booher, author of “Communicate Like a Leader.”

Sarcasm. “When you’re face to face, the body language mitigates the biting of the sarcasm — a smile, a pleasant facial expression,” Booher said. “But in email, you don’t have that body language; you don’t have that inflection; you don’t have the pleasant tone. And it just comes across as cynical.”

Anything that makes you seem impulsive. Steer clear of negativity, swearing and caps lock, Zfat said. “It can make the recipient certainly question your character,” she said, and “if it gets shared with HR or the company, (it) could certainly make your employer question your judgment and restraint.”

Confidential information like passwords, social security numbers, credit card info and other sensitive details. “I think most people know that, but from time to time I’m surprised with someone emailing me one of those things,” Zfat said.

Simple reprimands. Sending an email with mild criticism — think habitual lateness or laziness in meetings — can unnecessarily overblow the issue in the employee’s mind, Booher said. “Once you put something like that in an email, people tend to think you’re documenting this (to send to HR) ... They become suspicious, like this is some big deal, and it’s not.” If it were a big deal, she added, “you would be documenting it officially and letting them know you’re sending it to HR.”

Also read: [How to write the perfect 'leave me alone' out-of-office email](#)

Apologies or confessions. “Oftentimes in an apology, people are going to include very personal details of what happened,” Zfat said, “and if those are not details you’re prepared for someone to have a record of, you don’t want to type them into an email.” The same goes for confessions, she added: Getting something off your chest or clearing the air is better done in person, where the listener won’t have a written, shareable record of your transgressions.

Phrases that show a lack of confidence. Undermining lines like “I’m sorry to bother you,” “Just wanted to check in,” “Sorry to be a pest” or “Does that make sense?” are all turn-offs, said Zfat. “They make you wonder if the person that you’re interacting with is even sure of themselves,” she said, “so how could that make you sure that you want to talk to them?”

Job application materials for another company. “From a visibility standpoint, anyone could walk by your office (or) your desk and see it on your screen,” Zfat said; meanwhile, your company could also be screening your emails. “That might not appear ethical or moral, but it happens,” she said.

Also read: [This is exactly how to send that awkward goodbye email telling your colleagues you got a better gig](#)

An overly casual tone peppered with words like “bro,” “dude” or “xo.” Judge this on a case-by-case basis depending on your relationship with the person, your industry and the topic at hand, Zfat said, “but generally, a casual tone is something that I think is meant to make people feel comfortable but actually has the inverse effect.”

Gossip, which only reflects poorly on the gossiper, said Zfat. “I think most people know that in their gut,” she said. “Even if they continue to participate in the gossip, they think, ‘Man, am I next? Is that person going to talk badly about me in a month when I might do something they don’t like?’”

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