



13 annoying communication habits that must end

By David Spark

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Last year I wrote a list of [16 annoying communications that must end in 2011](#). It was one of my most popular articles of the year. Given that my crankiness is in demand, I decided to put together a new list of annoying communications for 2012.

1. Shortening someone's name right after you've been introduced

Almost everyone who has a long first name, for which there are many shortened versions, must deal with this. Call a person by their name and no other version. If a person introduces themselves as "Elizabeth," call her that. You may want to call her "Liz" but that's not what she wants. Don't do it.

What's far more irritating is when the name shortening happens immediately after an introduction.

"My name is Robert."

"Hi Rob."

"Hi Shmuck."

2. Not remembering someone's name right after you've been introduced

I'm monstrously guilty of this as I can immediately forget someone's name the instant they tell it to me. Others who are guilty of this will declare, "I'm so bad at remembering names." Nice try. Announcing your fallibility is not an excuse. Unless you're being introduced to the entire choir, be in the moment and remember people's names.

If you need to, use some tricks such as associate that person with someone else you know with the same name. If it's a name you've never heard before, repeat it back to make sure you're pronouncing it correctly.

3. Tagging objects as people in Facebook photos

This was funny the first time, but not anymore—especially now that Facebook puts thumbnails of your five most recent photos at the top of your profile. If you don't want people thinking you're a bowl of spaghetti or the hooded assassin in a New Yorker cartoon, untag yourself.

4. Tagging people in a Facebook article to get them to read it

I'm more than happy to accept a personal email or a Facebook message, but to tag me in an article on Facebook just to get me to read it is obnoxious. The Facebook wall is an individual's public expression; it's not designed for you to promote your crap.

This was a major problem with MySpace as people would post photos of whatever they were selling on their friends' walls. The site became a useless marketplace for digital graffiti and we've seen what's happened to it.

5. Opening a panel discussion by allowing the panelists to first talk about themselves

This irritates me to no end, and it's an incredibly lazy move by the moderator. If you have four panelists, and you give them five minutes each to talk about their business "just to set the stage," you've wasted 20 minutes on information no one wants to hear.

The audience has a program with speaker bios that they can read on their own. The moderator should give a one-line introduction to each speaker, and then begin the session. Unfortunately, that's just one way that most panel discussions suck. To make your panel session not suck, download and read my article, ["More Schmooze, Less Snooze: How to Deliver 'The Most Talked About' Panel Session."](#)

6. Asking a blogger, "Can you blog something for me?"

This is thankfully not as bad as it used to be, but I still get these completely inappropriate requests. Blogging is a job. There may not be direct income from it, but it can be used to build a brand and create relationships. Making this request is asking, "Can I intrude in on your personal brand? Would you promote something you know little to nothing about? Would you do some work for me for free?"

It's often a thoughtless request with the hope of getting free press.

The most egregious case of this I've ever received is spelled out in this two-part story, ["Hey PR, Bloggers Are Not Tools to Be Used."](#)

When this type of request *is* OK is when someone who you know and have a relationship with asks you to retweet something on Twitter or to "like" something on Facebook. It's a sign of support, and assuming it doesn't infringe the brand you're trying to create, takes little time.

7. String people along

Whether dating or in business, there's nothing more annoying and rude than giving someone hope by stringing them along with an "I'm so busy, call me next month" response. I don't care how important you think you are, no one is so busy they can't respond even if they don't know the current status. It could be as simple as "I have no information for you now, and it's not looking promising, but you're welcome to follow up in a month if you want."

This only works if you actually connect with the person on the phone or in person. If you send a lot of emails or leave phone messages and get no response, take the hint. The recipient is not required to email or call back to tell you nothing is happening.

8. Attaching videos and uncompressed photos to emails

Most of us 45 and under don't make this mistake. It's the fault of our parents and grandparents who just learned how to attach a file to an email.

"Did you get the wedding video? I attached it."

It's our responsibility to show the older generations how to use YouTube, Kodak Gallery, or any of the hundreds of video and photo sharing services.

9. Not understanding what Bcc is

With every email we send, we see the To:, Cc: and Bcc: fields. After at least 15 years of experience writing emails, we should all know the difference. Sadly, at least once a year, we receive an email with 50 people in the Cc: field. Inevitably someone will hit "Reply to All" in a response just to the sender. Then someone else will hit "Reply to All" and tell everyone to stop hitting "Reply to All." What fun.

For more, read ["Social Media 'Gurus' and Bloggers Are Egotistical Jerks."](#)

10. Sharing without consumption

This is the behavior of liking, sharing, or retweeting a piece of content without reading, listening or watching it. It's often done as a favor to a friend (e.g., "Would you retweet something for me?"). More often it's a means to game online popularity to build your social media profile. We can now see actual results with social reputation services such as [Klout](#) and [Kred](#).

These services unfortunately award the content *sharer* rather than the content *creator*. For example, if someone tweets this post without my Twitter handle ([@dspark](#)), and they're retweeted, their Klout score increases, but mine doesn't. Therefore, the "klout" goes to the person who shared the content, not the person who created it. This happens all the time.

Companies looking to hire people with large audiences use these services as benchmarks. One friend applied for a job that required him to have a Klout score of at least 30.

For an egregious case of sharing without consumption, read ["Here's What's Wrong With Social Media: Sharing Without Consumption"](#) and ["Why Sharing Online Content Might Be Too Easy."](#)

11. Cross posting all tweets to Facebook

Does anyone enjoy this? Thankfully Facebook doesn't reward this lazy type of posting. Most of these reposted tweets will not show up in your newsfeed. People

who turn the Twitter app on in Facebook end up clogging their profile page. In the end, it only reflects poorly on the user.

12. Wishing "Happy Birthday" on Facebook

I know I'm going to get a lot of heat for this, but in all the years people have said the phrase, "It's the least I could do," this truly is—outside of doing nothing at all—"the *least* you can do." Nothing says, "I barely care," then to type "Happy Birthday" on someone's profile page.

If you do truly want to wish someone a happy birthday, do something else, *anything* else than just typing "Happy Birthday."

It's great that Facebook reminds us when people have birthdays. Use that as a chance to reconnect with the person with a positive message. Better yet, send a personal video message through Facebook. For more, read ["I Just Sent 555 Personalized Video Holiday Greeting Cards—How I Did It."](#)

13. Facebook pages that require you to hit the "Like" button just to see the content on the page

This is really obnoxious, and it's a method of gatekeeping content. The fan page is requiring me to make a commitment before I can see the content. This goes hand-in-hand with having a splash screen with a giant arrow that says, "Click our 'like' button."

It's not the best way to treat and talk to your audience.

"We want to capture you so we can send more ad messages to you. Problem is we also believe you're an idiot, so we have to tell you what icon to click."

Now it's your turn to complain. There's got to be more things that annoy you. What have I missed?

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