SAMPLE NO. 3

Writing replies

Here we're talking about what happens when we hit the REPLY button.

Most common blunders

- Not appending the message you're replying to.
- Failing to answer the question you've been asked.
- Replying with a long, complex explanation of something the recipient doesn't need in writing.
- Writing in a way that conveys impatience.
- Structuring detailed information in a way that's difficult to skim.

ORIGINAL EMAIL

SUBJECT: Re: Scanning contracts turnaround time

Karen:

Normal turnaround for scanning contracts is 2 days of receipt here in Operations. Ops stamps the lead sheet with the date of arrival and sets the documents up for scanning. After scanning, the key fields are manually entered into the document properties, and the files are placed in owner's folder on the server. The mailroom courier picks up the scanned hardcopies for return to their owners by 12 noon the next day. The courier delivers the documents to the area designated on the Lead Sheet.

Starting 3/19, Ops is logging all contracts received from business units with Date received, Business unit, Signing date(s), Batch number, Quantity, Date scanned.

Any questions, please contact me.

For all replies

Consider the phone. *When an email reply will be lengthy or complex, consider saving time by calling instead of writing: Do you* need *a record? Does your colleague* need *a written reply?*

Append the previous message. *Set your email default for Replies to append the previous message. Doing so orients the reader: with just a glance at what she wrote to you, she recalls what she said or requested—no confusion for her; less writing time for you.*

REVISION

SUBJECT: Re: Scanning contracts turnaround time

Karen:

Three quick points on this subject — first, the answer to your question, and then some information on our process that other managers have said they found helpful.

1) Your question
Normal turnaround for scanning contracts is within two days of receipt here in Operations.

2) Our process
Here's a quick review of our normal process:

- Ops stamps the lead sheet with the date of arrival and sets the documents up for scanning.
- For each scanned contract, key fields are manually entered into the document properties, and the files are placed in the owner's folder on the server.
- The mailroom courier picks up the scanned hardcopies for return to their owners and delivers them by 12 noon the next day to the area designated on the Lead Sheet.

3) Logging procedure
To facilitate tracking, starting 3/19 Ops will log all contracts received from business units. We will log:

- Date received
- Business unit
- Signing date(s)
- Batch number
- Quantity
- Date scanned

Hope this helps. If you have any questions, please contact me.

If your reply will be complex, include a word on what's coming and how it's structured.

Control your **tone.** *Be professional and courteous — never impatient or disrespectful. When you're in a service role, the manner of your writing should communicate* **service.**

Structure the details of your information for easy scanning: Use **headlines** *to telegraph your topics. Use* **bullets** *to separate details.*

Remember: When readers can see at a glance the nature of the information, they can make their own choice about whether to study the details.

Re-using content. Whenever an email documents standard features of your services, processes, procedures, business requirements, etc., save a copy of the message to a folder you create for that purpose. Next time a customer asks this question, it will be easy to draft a courteous and complete response.