

21 OFFICE SITUATIONS

&

HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM



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Chapter.
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1. What to do when a Senior does not respond?

A typical workday brings with it tens of items – some easy, some not so easy.

There are things we look forward to, and then there are things we would like to defer and delay – even avoid if possible.

Likewise for the counterpart.

What if there is a mismatch? *The thing you look forward to is something that the counterpart would like to avoid.*

If there is a possibility of a face-to-face, your work should be easy – you can request, urge, or even demand a reply.

But what if the counterpart is in another branch or city?

What if he does not want to reply – the reason could be anything?

What if he is 3 grades your senior?

There is a way out for you still - other than going to your boss. And it is easier than it seems.

An Example

Some years back, one late afternoon, I had gone across to my colleague Arun's desk for light talk.

Arun, a manager in a financial firm, looked agitated and, while talking to me, pointed to an email that he was drafting and remarked –

“The bugger (counterpart) is just sitting on the issue for the last three weeks. I have sent him two reminders, called him, have cc'd to Prashant (Arun's boss) and Ravi (counterpart's boss), but still it doesn't bother him.”

The issue was something that Arun was coordinating for the entire department – including my unit – and so I was aware of the same.

I asked Arun to give me a minute, made some changes to the email, and then asked him to send. Arun smiled when he saw what I had done.

I had just changed the subject of the email –

from – Re: Re: XYZ Issue
to – XYZ Issue – *23 days Delay!*

The reply came in under 15 minutes! Prashant (Arun's boss) also then tore into the counterpart's reply for the delay.

(Six months later, Arun spoke of the episode with amusement at my farewell.)

This – number of days of delay, as a suffix in the email subject – is very effective in getting a revert from a reticent counterpart.

Consider some variants of the same:

'FD Online' – MIS Report not generated – *3 weeks since Go-live*
1 Temp Staff – Recruitment – *35 Days!*
Home Insurance Policy # 45897 – Not Received – *45 Days*

A subject like this puts pressure on the counterpart to act and to revert. The counterpart knows that others (cc'd on the email) are watching – and forming an opinion. He is thus forced to revert.

A Note of Caution:

This method is good for putting pressure on like-grade colleagues. Don't use it when writing to seniors (2-3 grades your senior), where the senior himself is responsible for the delay, as that would look impolite.

For that use the following.

What to do when a Senior does not respond?

Now, seniors (Vice Presidents, etc.) are busy and have to ignore miniscule items, including follow-through emails from juniors.

No offence, but your issue is just not on their priority list. You can continue to send reminders – it won't affect them. At other times, oblivious to the senior, you could be facing an emergency and require a revert – max in an hour, if not in minutes.

Rather than approaching your boss every time for help and intervention in such cases, you need to deal with the situation yourself.

For start, you know the 'effect' of non-revert or delay. It is this that you need to communicate to the senior.

But how? Your reminder and follow-through emails are just not getting opened by the senior.

Again, the answer is the email subject line. Convey – the effect of non-revert or delay – as a suffix in the email subject.

An Example

At that time, I was working in Demat Operations in my bank.

One day, we received a request from a corporate client seeking a revision in the fee schedule, applicable to its Demat account.

(A demat account is an account wherein you hold your shares, bonds, etc. in electronic form.)

I spoke to the Head of Sales (a Vice President) and sent the request (client letter) to him.

I then waited. But the revert did not come.

I called. Head of Sales assured he would get back to me.

I waited a couple of days. Again no revert.

The corporate client had good billing. The revision it sought was significant. To add to the issue, its group companies also had accounts with us. This was possibly the reason why the Head of Sales was taking time.

But for me, an Operations officer, it was just another transaction. And – nearing month-end – any further delay was going to affect my work.

Exasperated, I sent a reminder with a revised subject, something like under–

Oscorp Ltd – Await Fee – *Month-end billing of all Clients on hold*

This subject had the desired effect.

Head of Sales got back irritated: “Yes, I know. Will revert by evening.”

In the evening, the decision came through as promised.

And therein lies the key.

When you have a senior who isn't responding, convey the effect of non-revert or delay as a suffix in the email subject.

As long as the criticality or urgency is in the *content* of the email, a senior has a valid reason – busy, overlooked, etc.

But a subject like this removes all barriers. The senior doesn't have to even open the email, and yet the subject – even in a Blackberry inbox – unmistakably conveys, the issue will worsen if the senior does not revert soon.

The above subject, coupled with a cc to your boss, will ensure you get a prompt revert from any senior.

Consider some variants of the same –

Galaxy Ltd – Await reply to Regulatory query – *Reply to RBI on hold*
Reliable Ltd – Await advice on Agreement – *Client called thrice*
Jiten Bhai claim – misplaced Nomination – *wants to meet CEO*
Mark Ltd – Rs.5 lakh Approval – *Cheque Return deadline 20 minutes*

(In case the subject is becoming long, you can move the third part – the effect of non-revert or delay – to the first part of the subject.)

As an added benefit, subjects like these prompt your boss to get involved and take over the baton from you – you don't have to specifically go and seek your boss's intervention.

Last Word

When you need an urgent revert, you will have something inherent in the issue, screaming urgency. You just need to bring it to the fore – in the subject line.

What Readers Say

“I am impressed with the insights Anil has brought forth, on typical situations at the work place and ways to handle them.”

- Paul Abraham, COO, IndusInd Bank

“Thank you for bringing out the great handheld book. This is helping me immensely in my new role at a senior level. This is now become a daily habit of reading each chapter every day even though I have read it several times. Every time I read, I get a new perspective. Thanks again!”

- Rohit Manohar, Head of Ops, Karvy Computershare

“I received the book yesterday. Thank you so much for sharing this gem of a book. I just couldn't keep it down from the moment I started reading this. This book should be part of every organization's internal library and must be promoted extensively. In fact I started using some of the concepts from today morning itself with miraculous results and speed. Will recommend it strongly at my bank once I am through with it. Once again let me put it on record - This book is a professional game changer and will be a ready reckoner with me for life.”

- Anish Mascrene, National Training Manager, Yes Bank

“Sir, I read Chapter 3: How to get Okay in a minute? I must tell you that your valuable advice i.e. ‘reduce your Boss’ role to a simple ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, is giving me great results. The examples have helped me implement: How to convert a 15-minute issue, into a 1-minute decision-task for the boss. Thank you so much for this!!”

- Rahul Khanna, on Amazon.in

“I recently got this book from my boss. Have been reading the same, it is very practical and a book that helps!”

- Ankita Ahluwalia, VP, Client Servicing Group, IndusInd Bank

At work, each day brings with it a fresh set of challenges.

We put in long and hard hours to address them and to master them.

But are these one-of-a-kind situations really different?

A detached look will reveal - while the specifics of a situation will change from one to the next, at their core they all raise the same set of demands on us.

- How to escalate an Issue?
- What to do when 'A' says 'B' will do, 'B' says 'A' should do?
- How to deal with a Senior who doesn't respond?
- How to ensure Due Diligence at work?
- How to reduce Meetings and Conference Calls?
- How to manage a Big team?
- How to get a 5 in Appraisal?

How do you respond to these innate challenges?

Could there be another, better way of handling these situations?

For the first time comes a book that attempts to address these and many such on-the-ground situations faced by managers and officers.

ANIL KARAMCHANDANI, an experienced manager, uses his 15+ years of experience, to show – some with anecdotes, some with examples – how to master these situations.

The book has 21 articles, none of which should take you more than 10 minutes to read and implement. As an aside, they will ease the pressure off any boss, while helping to sharpen the execution skills within a team.

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