

# **Getting Your E-mail House In Order**

By Mike Dooley, Systems Administrator, NSDCAR  
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There are a few, relatively simple steps for the techno-savvy REALTOR® to employ to gain a market advantage and smooth out the daily roller-coaster of e-mail management. I've broken the process down into these steps to provide you, the NSDCAR member, with a working "recipe" for setting up a manageable e-mail organization in your home, office, or even a mobile computing environment.

## **Branding and name recognition – the domain name is king!**

Get your own domain name, and get it now! For those of you who read Saul Klein and Mike Barnett's Internet Crusade literature, this is old news. Saul and Mike offer email hosting services to REALTORS®, and most inexpensive hosting companies can accommodate your own domain name for email purposes. This is VERY important. Think long and hard before registering your domain name; what's cute and trendy today may be extremely annoying tomorrow. Think back to the last talking toy you bought for your child or grandchild... the first hour was fascinating, but by noon on Christmas day, you were ready to hide every battery in the house or break the voice-box on that talking Teddy Bear whilst the kid wasn't looking, yes? Well, the same goes for domain names... they're going to be around for awhile, and you should take care to use one that will stand the test of time. Your own name, of course, is the safest bet. MikeJones.com, or JoeSmithSellsRealEstate.com would last quite awhile, unless Mike enters the Witness Protection Program, or Joe Smith decides to sell automobiles instead of houses. Come to think of it, most autos today would qualify as real estate, wouldn't they?

## **Method to the madness... use multiple email addresses in your domain to manage various tasks.**

Once your domain is purchased, and set up on an email host company's server, you can usually set up a number of e-mail addresses within your domain. Some companies charge extra for each additional box, and others grant up to five or so boxes free, and then charge for any additional ones. Why so many addresses? Because you won't want to send out prospecting email and have all responses landing in the "Inbox" that you use for daily correspondence. By using different e-mail addresses for different purposes, you can control, count, or process things much more efficiently, and not lose track of mail that's targeted to a specific recipient group or prospect list. Also, when you do want to respond to a piece of spam e-mail, (and you know they're gonna sell your e-mail address to 50 other companies), you can have an address reserved for just such a purpose. No rocket surgery here!

## **Purchase, use, and UPDATE a good anti-virus and spam-filtering product!**

So, you've got a domain name, a hosted email account, and five or so mailboxes all set up for your use. Now, before you've ever sent a single piece of electronic mail, those boxes are filling up with garbage, viruses, unsolicited sales pitches, and smarmy greetings from some questionable sources. How the heck did they find me? It's not a problem without solution, but the solution is usually reasonably priced, and widely available. There are a plethora of service offerings available that will hold, scan, and de-spam your email, then forward it to you upon approval. Or, you can run "client-side" solutions that filter your email on its way into your Inbox, and prevent the unwanted or infected stuff. Talk to your peers, or call your local Association's computer team, then choose a product, learn it, use it, and set it up to automatically keep itself updated. It will pay for itself with the very first virus invasion you avoid. What could be worse than your entire prospect list receiving e-mail from you that contains a nasty virus?

## **Best practices... what are they, and where do I learn about them?**

Do an Internet search on the word “netiquette”, then read and absorb the results (along with a generous grain of salt, in many cases). This is the term coined to encompass acceptable behavior, appropriate grammar, and compatible practices when communicating via e-mail. Learn how your inflection can be expressed in e-mail, either positively or negatively. The spoken word is accompanied by huge amounts of non-verbal information, conveyed in the form of hand gestures, facial expressions, and body posture. The simple raising of a single eyebrow can convey a huge amount of meaning to the underlying spoken words. Sarcasm and humor in written form does not convey the Puckish grin that accompanies the joke; the recipient may perceive your attempt at humor as a serious insult or, worse, an actual violation of rights or law. Be careful out there, and watch out for the walking pincushions that are poised to take just about ANYTHING in the wrong context. Most of them can be safely ignored... it’s their attorneys you gotta worry about, eh?

## **So, I’ve been there, I’ve done that... What now?**

Well, now comes the fun part! Get out there and start using your e-mail on a daily basis. Try to learn at least one new function in your favorite e-mail software, every day. There are myriad menu items and little icons that you’ve been ignoring for years, now. Stop ignoring them, use your “help” files to read about them, think about how they apply to what you’re doing, and then go for it! Use a test document or e-mail and try a few things. The discovery of a new, handy tool to make your life easier is lots of fun, and very rewarding! While you’re at it, check with your Association’s Education Director and your local community college... there are lots of classes and seminars taking place that help you get started with e-mail marketing, promoting your “brand” on the Internet, using search engines to find information effectively, and much, much more. If you’re intimidated by technology, tell yourself that this is just a device, it certainly isn’t smarter than any REALTOR®, and you CAN master it, with a little effort. Technology is your friend, even when it beeps and says, “Quit or Retry?”