

Negotiating by e-mail

Section A

Look at the following statements. Compare them with the text and decide if they are true or false. Circle T if you think the statement is True and F if you believe it is false.

1. T/F E-mail causes most problems during negotiations.
2. T/F Negotiations are easier when they involve more personal forms of contact.
3. T/F E-mails should be written with care, otherwise they might confuse the recipient.
4. T/F The only advantage of e-mail is that it makes it easier to keep an accurate record of correspondence.
5. T/F Mediation on the phone has far greater advantages than e-mail

Section B

Look at the following list of words and find synonyms in the text.

1. typed
2. pressed
3. divisions
4. dangerous
5. equipped
6. simulated
7. exchange
8. trap
9. terrible
10. shortcoming

Section C

What do the following words refer to?

1. 'it' (line 4)
2. 'it' (line 18)
3. 'ones' (line 24)
4. 'it' (line 41)
5. 'its' (line 44)

Section D

Link the following statements so that they make the same point as the text. Do not use 'but'

1. E-mails can seem ruder than they are intended to be.
It's a good idea to reflect before sending them.
2. E-mails can easily offend recipients.
They are an excellent way of keeping records.
3. E-mails can have a strong emotional impact.
It's a good idea to limit the content to information.
4. On-line mediation is not as swift as mediation on the phone.
On-line mediation is ore flexible and costs less than the phone.
5. Electronic negotiations work well when they are preceded by phone calls.
Providing photographs and personal information helps on-line negotiations.

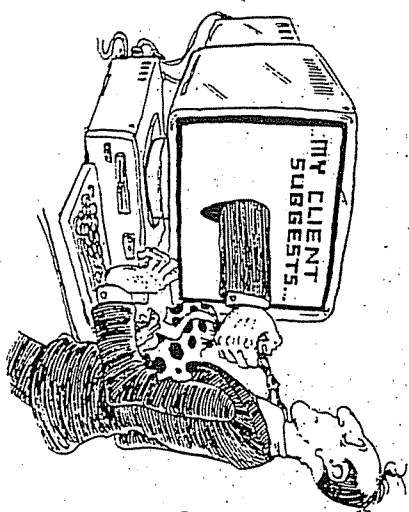
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WHO has not banged out an angry reply to an apparently brusque e-mail message, hit the send button—and then regretted it? Surely no technology has led to

the negotiators began by swapping photographs and personal details, or when they already knew each other.

Why is e-mail such a snare? Heidi Roizen, a Silicon Valley veteran who now works for Softbank Venture Capital, thinks that part of the problem is that "most peo-

ple are lousy typists—and they don't think about the fact that an e-mail lasts forever." She has two rare advantages: she is an English major, and a 90-words-a-minute typist. She finds the durability of e-mail is one of its main advantages—it allows her to keep track of her dealings with the eight



different companies on whose boards she sits: "It's instant record-keeping." But she scrupulously follows two rules to avoid misunderstanding: "Re-read each piece of mail before you send it, from the point of view of the recipient; and when in doubt, leave it overnight." As every Victorian letter-writer learnt, a night's sleep is the best filter to apply to a furious note.

John Kay, a British economist, goes further. After having to calm a succession of weeping secretaries, he instituted a rule at London Economics, a consultancy that he founded, that e-mails should contain only information and never emotion.

Yet despite its pitfalls, e-mail is increasingly likely to be used for negotiation. Richard Hill, an IT manager and mediator with Hill & Associates in Geneva, worked with the University of Massachusetts on the establishment of an electronic mediation service called the Online Ombuds Office. He argues that mediation by telephone is generally simpler and faster: a three-minute telephone call contains far more information than a typical brisk e-mail. But, because online mediation can be done at a time that is convenient for the parties involved, it tends to be less costly, just think a moment before you hit that send button, though.

E-mail is not invariably a bad way to negotiate, but the research suggests that it needs to be used carefully. Together with Leigh Thompson of the Kellogg Graduate Business School at Northwestern University, and several other academics, Mr Morris studied mock negotiations that used only e-mail and compared them with ones preceded by a brief getting-to-know-you telephone call. The second type went more smoothly. Other experiments found that electronic negotiations were easier when