

I'm John Sturtevant, and this is Say What?! A weekly podcast with quick tips to help you communicate clearly at work, at home, and everywhere else you go.

Welcome to Say What?! Episode 7

This week, the third episode in our new series: Ten Quick Tips for Terrific Email

Today is Quick Tip #8 – Say goodbye to your attachments

Last Wednesday, I received an email from a Proposal Manager who I'll call Sam.

Sam works for a company in Boston, he and I have exchanged a few emails about a Request for Proposal he'd sent a month or so ago.

But this particular email I received from Sam last week was different from his others.

It basically just said “Please read the attached updated requirements.”

Well, my first thought was, “HMMMM. This looks like this might be SPAM from Sam.

But, I saw it was sent from his email address.

My second thought was. Oh, but maybe someone hacked Sam’s email and this is a virus.

And so my third thought was DELETE! DELETE! DELETE!

But I didn’t.

After thinking it over, and trusting my computer’s security software, I opened the Word file Sam had attached.

It was a one-page document with about three paragraphs.

And I wondered: “Why didn’t Sam just send these few short paragraphs in his email?”

Is Sam so busy, he doesn't have time to cut & paste? Could he be a thoughtless, uncaring, and inconsiderate person?

Do I even want to work with this sort of Sam?

Now, I like to see the best in people, so I imagine Sam is actually a nice guy. And I expect when I eventually meet him, we'll get along great.

If poor Sam had just included those three little paragraphs in his email, and said so long to his attachment, it would have eliminated all my doubt and concern.

And my impression of Sam would be more Dudley Do-right than Snidely Whiplash.

But, if you can't resist the urge to tie up your emails with attachments, here are a few suggestions for you to make your attachments much more appealing.

First, ask the recipient if it's ok for you to send an attachment.

You could say something like “I’d like to send you a few photos of the new brochure cover options, is it ok to send them as attachments?”

Oh, and don’t forget to actually attach the photos to the email you send. I’ve made that mistake a few times.

And make sure those brochure cover photos are the right ones. It’s easy to send the wrong files when we often name files in similar ways.

So you might give the files a name that’s specific to your recipient. For example “SamsBrochureCover1”

Also consider file size and format. Large attachments or uncompressed photos can take a long time for your recipient to download.

And since so many of us use our phones or iPads throughout the day, and don’t have unlimited data plans, we might just avoid downloading a large file.

You can compress files or reduce their size to make them easier to receive.

So check the file size before you attach it.

On a Windows computer, go to Windows Explorer, and view details. On a Mac, click the file once, then hold the Command and I keys. A window will pop up showing details about the file, including its size.

You can reduce file size several ways, depending on what you're sending.

For images, you can change the photo dimension to a smaller size.

For example, if you're using a Mac and want to reduce the size of a jpeg image, just double click the photo to open it. The jpeg will open in the Preview app. Then in the Tools menu, choose Adjust Size to make the image smaller.

On a Windows PC, click the image, click Open, then in the Image group, click the Resize option.

If you're sending a PDF, you can use Adobe Acrobat to reduce the file size. Or extract certain pages with the information you want your reader to see.

And don't send an attachment that needs to be viewed in a specific application, like say, Photoshop, or Adobe Illustrator.

Instead, use a universal file type like PDF or JPG.

And the format of your document can change for different operating systems, and people don't have the same fonts on their computer.

So a PowerPoint slide might look great on my Mac, but be hard to decipher on your HP laptop.

Include only attachments that are specific to your email. If you told your client you will send those brochure cover photos, don't also include the revised production schedule.

If you need to send a different files to the same person, consider sending the attachments in multiple emails.

While attachments are an easy way to share files quickly, a better way to share large files is to use a service like Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive, or Dropbox.

So, rather than sharing the file itself as an attachment, you can share a link that let's your recipient access the file remotely.

You can also upload files to your company's intranet or shared drive, and send links to that.

When I send documents to a client, for example a proposal, or course material for one of my workshops, I upload the file to my website, and send a link to that.

Another benefit to that is that I can password protect the file, so not everyone can see it.

I can't do that if I send the material as an attachment instead.

So this week, as you churn through all your emails, consider setting your attachments free.

Who knows? You just might like being the hero instead of the villain.

That's Say What?! for this week. Thanks for listening!

The music on today's episode is from guitarist Robbie Sturtevant. His band, The Quins, are one of the hottest new groups coming out of Boston. Check them out at <https://www.thequinsband.com/> and on Facebook and Instagram @thequins.