

Fingers in Gear, Brain in Neutral – The ‘Send’ Safety Net

Sometimes the Send button can backfire. Have you ever sent a mail to the wrong person by mistake? Have you ever sent an email and then realised a second too late that you forgot an important point, or could have worded things more carefully, or even misspelled something obvious, like your own name?

Luckily, in Outlook you can set up a safety net for the Send button. You may find that it saves you a lot of potential embarrassment. Delayed send is a simple idea: When you hit Send, Outlook automatically retains the message in your Outbox folder for a short length of time (for instance, one minute) before sending. Most times you won't notice the delay. And if you hit Send and then realise you made a mistake, you can go to your Outbox, open up the message, modify it, and then re-send it – and the recipients never see the mistake.

Here's how you set up delayed send in Outlook 2007:

1. Go to Tools>Rules and Alerts.
2. Click New Rule.
3. Select Check messages after sending and then click Next.
4. Click Next again. When Outlook confirms that you want this rule to apply to every message you send, click Yes.
5. Check the checkbox next to defer delivery by a number of minutes:
6. Click on “a number of” and choose how many minutes you want mail to be delayed. I find that 1 minute works very well.
7. Click Finish.
8. If your mail server is Microsoft Exchange, Outlook will tell you that this is a client-side rule, which is fine; click OK.
9. Click OK to close the Rules and Alerts window.

And now the safety net is in place! Try it – send a mail message, then go to the Outbox. Your message will wait patiently in the Outbox until the delay is over, and then away it goes. During the delay, you can double-click the message at any time to stop it from being sent, so you can make modifications and hit Send again. (Hitting Send again will reset the delay, so that you get another minute to rethink your changes.)

Note that Outlook needs to be running in order to actually send the message, so you should leave Outlook open until the message leaves the Outbox. If you're in the habit of dashing off a quick mail and then immediately closing your laptop or powering down your computer, you'll want to set up an exception to the delayed-send rule, which leads me to...

The exception to the rule

It's important to remember that this delayed-send rule will apply to every message you send. There may be times when you don't want the delay in place. For instance, you may want to send mail immediately. Or, you may want to delay the delivery of a single message for longer than the rule specifies. (The delayed-send rule will override any delay-delivery settings you put on a single message, so it could cause messages to be sent sooner than you want.) If you want to be able to send mails

without triggering the rule, you can set up category that exempts mail from the delayed-send rule. Here's how to do that:

1. Go back to Tools>Rules and Alerts.
2. Select the delayed-send rule that you just created and click Change Rule > Edit Rule Settings.
3. Click Next, and click Yes for the "apply to every message" prompt.
4. Click Next again.
5. Under "Are there any exceptions," check the checkbox next to except if assigned to category category.
6. Click on the "category" link. You'll be taken to the Color Categories window.
7. Click New to create a new category.
8. Name it "Urgent" (or whatever you prefer) and click OK. (Note that some people who receive your messages marked in this manner may see the category attached to your message; it's best to choose a category name that you don't mind other people reading.)
9. You should now see the "Urgent" category checked:
10. Click OK. You should now see that the rule will only apply to messages that don't have the "Urgent" category:
11. Click Finish.

Then you can do the following to mark an individual mail as urgent before sending it:

1. Under the Home tab, click the dialog launcher for the Options chunk:
2. Click on the Categories button and choose "Urgent."
3. Click Close.

When you click Send, the message will send immediately.

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Sending our invoices via email has improved our cash flow by reducing our debtor days by 25% whilst also dramatically cutting the cost of sending every invoice by £1.28, saving us £100/month.

Last year, after having suffered one too many Belfast postal strikes, we began to look into ways that we could continue to send out our invoices independent of the Royal Mail.

Being a computer company, we looked to see what technology was at hand and discovered that we could simply email our invoices from our SAGE line 50 accounts

package. At that stage, circa 2007, it was version 12.0 and up until that point we had always printed and posted our invoices.

Initial Considerations When Setting Up e-Invoicing

There were four immediate issues:

1. Would our customers accept their invoices via email?
2. If so, who should we send it to?
3. Does the invoice come across clearly enough in an email?
4. Can we repeat regular invoices?

Surprisingly enough, we thought it may be too radical a step, when we emailed our customers to discuss what we were planning we were met with: 'Great idea', 'No problem, lots of our suppliers already send us email invoices', 'Oh that sounds novel, go ahead'. In fact, out of 80 regular customers, only two asked to continue receiving invoices through the post.

Encouraged by our customers' response we asked 'Who should we send these invoices to?' In most cases it was the same accounts contact that we had always dealt with but in some cases we were asked to send to another colleague or a specially set-up email address <mailto:accounts@customer.co.uk> .

Having established who to send our e-Invoice to we then turned our attention as to how it appeared in our customers' INBOX. Primarily that was because we used pre-printer letterhead with our logo, registered address and VAT details. That meant we then had to replicate those details in our e-Invoice, no straightforward task as it entailed us getting to grips with SAGE's Report Designer. If you've ever had to use it you'll know what I mean.

After a few attempts I think we managed to get it right for our needs and it was greatly enhanced by being able to send it as a PDF, which meant that it could be easily read and unable to be changed after sending. See what I mean by having a look for yourself.

Finally, SAGE has the facility to run 'repeating invoices', which greatly cuts down on the work in producing consistent monthly, quarterly and annual invoices.

Business Benefits We Have Gained From e-Invoicing

Our invoices now go out quicker and more regularly than before, unaffected by postal strikes, which means our cash flow is not adversely impacted. In fact, being able to invoice quicker and easier has now improved our cash flow as producing invoices takes much less time, are less laborious and are now not the job that was previously put off until the end of the month.

The cost of sending a single invoice has come down from:

- a. Price of headed notepaper, ink and envelope = £0.05
- b. Price of 2nd class stamp = £0.23
- c. Saving in time producing an e-Invoice 3 mins @ £20/hour = £1.00

Total = £1.28/invoice - this means, based on 80 invoices, we're saving approximately £100/month in material costs and time.

Finally, being able to send invoices via email now means that it is far easier/quicker to re-send any missing or copy invoices via email than by fax or post. Having experienced the benefits for the past 18 months we have found that, in terms of payback, the set-up paid for itself within the first 6 months and we would wholeheartedly recommend this solution to our clients.

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