CREATING THE RIGHT OUT OF OFFICE MESSAGE

Introduction

Many companies have an Out of Office template which employees are obliged to use. This often tends to be a generic message which ensures consistency and probably reflects the corporate branding, values and ethos. It does not, however, take into consideration personal circumstances or individual client relationships.

The example below is very useful because it can be adapted to suit every occasion. However, it is not very personal. How would you feel if you received this?

> Dear Sender
>
> Thank you for your message.
>
> Please note that I am currently out of office until xxxxx due to: [ ] customer meetings with limited email access [ ] attending internal meetings / training with no email access [ ] working in a different time zone or somewhere else with limited email access [ ] vacation without email access [ ] public holiday [ ] illness [ ] being offline this afternoon.
>
> In urgent cases please contact my colleague xxxxxx.
>
> Messages are answered with a delay.
>
> Best regards

If you can personalise your message to make it relevant to you and those you communicate regularly with, you are guaranteed to get a better reaction. The challenge is to get the language, style and tone right!

Language

There is no excuse for making language errors when writing Out of Office messages these days. Use your computer software to make sure you have spelt everything correctly and there are no grammar mistakes. Below are some of the key areas where people make mistakes.

Task 1

Choose the correct prepositions (from the dropdown menu) to complete these extracts from out of office messages:

by	in	on	until	from	between	for

1. I will be travelling on business …………. 12th and 16th March.

2. You can reach me …………. the following phone number: +44 (0) 7986 452315.

3. If you need urgent assistance, please contact my colleague Anya …………. the Sales Dept.

4. I will be on parental leave …………. the next six weeks.

5. I am currently on sick leave so there may be a delay in responding to your mails. A member of the team will get back to you …………. the end of the day.

6. The office is closed for the summer. We will re-open …………. the beginning of September.

7. Please note I will be out of the office …………. next Thursday.

Task 2

1. *Find the mistakes in the Out of Office message below. (There are at least five mistakes in each example).*

Example 1

> Hello
>
> I am currently out of the office until January 10th, please allow delay in your responses.
>
> Please, expect my answers when I am back.
>
> - For Technical issues please contact xxxxx
>
> - For none urgent requests, I will respond you when I am back.
>
> Thank you

Example 2

> Dear sir and madam
>
> I'm not in the office this day. I will be back on the next week.
>
> In urgent cases please contact my college xxxx
>
> Kind regards

2. Now write your own improved version of the examples above.

Example 1

Example 2

Task 3

Put the words in the following sentences in the correct order to produce an Out of Office message:

Message 1

Thanks / email / your / for /. I'll / out / be / office / of / the / Sept. 3-8. If / need / I'm / you / away / assistance / while, / contact / please / Jane / for marketing /, or / Jones / questions / Bob Miller / for / questions / accounting.

Message 2

Thank / you / message / your / for. / today / I / am / the / out / of / office, / no / email / with / access. / be / I / will Feb. 16 / returning. / If / immediate / need / before / assistance / you / then, / you / reach / on / may / me / 07958646521.

<div style="border:1px solid gray; height:250px;"></div>

Message 3

Thank / you / for / email / your. / currently / I am / office / out of the / and / not / checking / I am / email. / I / return/ not / will / until Aug. 26. / If / an / urgent / this is / matter, / contact / at / please / James Johnson james. johnson@yahoo.com. */, I will / respond / Otherwise / as possible / to / my return / your email /as soon after. /*

<div style="border:1px solid gray; height:200px;"></div>

Style

It is important to write in a style which reflects your corporate culture and the relationship you have with the reader. Before you write your Out of Office message, decide if it needs to be formal, neutral or informal. The biggest mistake people make is to mix the different styles within one message. This can make it look rather strange and inconsistent.

* It is possible to have a different version for internal and external contacts by changing the settings on your email server.

Task 1

Discussion

Look at the following examples of real Out of Office messages. Are they formal or informal? Which situations would they be suitable for? Which one do you prefer and why?

Example 1

> Dear Sir or Madam,
>
> I am not in the office until 03.12.2021 and I have limited access to my emails. In urgent cases please contact my colleague X.
>
> Please note that your email will not be forwarded.

Example 2

> Hello
>
> Thank you for your email. I am currently on annual leave. I will be back on Monday 10th January. Please expect some delay in my response. If urgent, please text me on xxxxxxxx.

Example 3

> I am on my annual leave returning on Monday 10th. For any urgent issues, please WhatsApp me.
>
> Thank you.

Task 2

Match these formal business words and phrases with their less formal equivalents:

Formal	Informal
respond	question
require	help
query	because of
advise	tell
assistance	need
due to	answer

Tone

What do we mean when we talk about 'tone'?

Task 1

Discussion

Look at these real examples of Out of Office Messages. How do they make you feel when you read them?

Example 1

Hi!

Please be advised that I am out of the office due to my day off and national public holidays till 9 January inclusive.

Example 2

I will be out of the office from 20th December to 10th January (vacation) with no access to my email.

I will get back to you on my return.

Model template you can adapt for your own use

Below are some templates covering the most common reasons for being away from your desk:

Model Template 1

Your Greeting

I will be out of the office starting **(Starting Date)** to **(End Date)** returning **(Date of Return)**.

If you need immediate assistance during my absence, please contact **(Contacts Name)** at **(Contacts)**

Warm regards

Your name

Model Template 2

Your Greeting

Thank you for your message. I am currently out of the office, with no email access. I will be returning on **(Date of Return)**.

If you need immediate assistance before then, you may reach me on my mobile – **(Mobile Number)**.

Kind regards

Your name

Model Template 3

Your Greeting

Thank you for your email. Your message is important to **(us/me)** and **(I/we)** will respond as soon as possible.

Thank You!

Your Name

Model Template 4

Thank you for your email. I will be out of the office from March 19 - 25 for a work conference.

If you require any assistance during my absence, please contact John James [email and phone number] if you have any questions or concerns while I am away.

Model Template 5

Thank you for getting in touch! I am out of the office for vacation from [start date] until [end date].

During this time, I will not be checking my email.

If you require immediate assistance or have a question, please feel free to contact my colleague Tom Asper at [email and phone number]. For all other matters, I will respond to messages as soon as I can upon my return.

Thank you for your patience!

Model Template 6

Hello

Thank you for getting in touch. Due to the birth of my [son or daughter], I will be away on paternity /maternity / parental leave from [start date] until [end date].

During this time, all of my accounts and clients will be handled by the very talented Amelia Harkins. She can be reached at [email and phone] during regular office hours. Thank you for your understanding during this exciting time.

Best wishes,

[Your Name]

LANGUAGE MATTERS

Model Template 7

Hello

Thank you for your email. I am currently out of the office on medical leave from [start date] until [end date]. During this time, I will not be checking messages or responding to emails.

If you need assistance or have a question, please contact my colleague Amy Ryan [email and phone] with all concerns during this time. I thank you for your understanding and patience as I recover.

Warm regards

Your Name