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# The Best Gmail Features **YOU AREN'T USING**



If you've never explored Gmail Labs, you're missing out on some of the most interesting Gmail features. Gmail Labs can be found in Settings, under the "Labs" tab. Here you'll find a list of experimental features that aren't part of Gmail by default. A new lab experiment is added every once in a while, so even if you have tried labs before, be sure to check again to see what's new!

### MARK AS READ

When you want to save yourself a couple of extra clicks, "Mark as Read" is the feature for you. Back in the day, Gmail used to have a "Mark as Read" button right above the inbox. Then, they moved it, making users click the "More" button to get to "Mark as Read." The change was slightly inconvenient to say the least. Now, when you

enable the "Mark as Read" button, it's restored to the top of the inbox, making it as easy as it should be to mark messages as read.

### UNDO SEND

If you've ever noticed a critical typo immediately after hitting "send" or you've experienced a moment of message regret, "Undo Send" can be a life saver. While the concept of "Undo Send" is often considered the Holy Grail of email features, Gmail's version is really just a time-delayed second chance. While it's still incredibly useful, once a message hits the recipient's inbox, there's no practical way to retrieve it. Once you have "Undo Send" enabled, go into Settings, and then the "General" tab. Here you can select a cancellation period of 5, 10, 20, or 30 seconds — just enough time to glance through a message one last time.

# IT'S NOT OPTIONAL

## THE VALUE OF CARING ABOUT YOUR WORK

Last month, I attended Building Science Summer Camp — the annual meeting I attend to discuss building science with other professionals in the field. It's something I greatly enjoy. This year's summer camp shed a whole new light on the value of caring.

One of the presentations — in my opinion, the most interesting one of all three days — discussed contractors, builders, and carpenters who just don't care. Their work always suffers for it. Not right away, mind you. But, when someone working on a building doesn't care about their work, you can see the effects two or three years later when the building starts to fail. Sometimes, the results of their "lack of caring" were so glaring they bordered on downright insulting.

After the presentation, I spoke to my peers at summer camp about their own experiences with individuals or companies who just didn't care. I heard stories about business people who didn't return calls, those wouldn't communicate clearly, and some who weren't professional, even when on the job. It's obvious that a lot of folks really don't care about their work.

As a result, my peers often stay busy fixing the other guys' mistakes. Occasionally, they even wind up testifying against them in court. I wonder if those other guys will care about the work they did — or didn't do — when that happens?

I've encountered the results of someone who doesn't care about their work in my own field. Recently, I was hired on to review a building previously surveyed by another consultant. After taking a look at the report this guy had turned in, it was clear he just didn't care!

His report consisted of 50 pages, and 98 percent of it was "computer generated



content" of graphs that his instruments generated automatically. The report contained a mere two paragraphs of his own notes, but lacked any conclusions or opinions — which is what his client was paying for in the first place!

This guy was fully qualified to investigate single-family homes, but was clearly out of his element in a commercial building. Seemingly more concerned with getting a paycheck over doing a good job, he made no attempt to treat the situation like it deserved to be treated.

Even though this guy doesn't work for me and I don't own the building, I always take stories like this personally and get frustrated — sometimes even angry when stuff like this happens. I was raised to care! My parents stressed the importance of caring at an early age, and that value is still with me today.

When I do surveys for my clients, I follow a specific scope of work. We agree to it

beforehand, and it is developed specifically for the situation that's occurring. When I write a report, I make sure every detail of that scope of work is being reviewed. No stone gets left unturned.

If, by chance, I also see an issue outside of my scope that could contribute to the concerns, I don't ignore it just because "It's not my job." I include it in my report so that my client has all the knowledge they need to make their next move. I don't neglect any part of my job.

I don't understand how anybody goes through life giving just 50 percent on anything. It takes 100 percent to do a good job. I strive to give that every time I take on any work — because I care!

*Train West*

# 3 Time-Management TIPS FOR YOUR TEAM

*As a business owner or executive, you can depend on your assistant to block off time for you when you need to focus on work. Unfortunately, you can't afford to give everyone on your team an assistant of their own. So, what happens when they need to focus?*



**The whole point is to make it easier for your team to finish their work, even if they don't have an executive assistant to minimize their distractions.**

To some extent, it's up to each team member to manage their time effectively, but company culture plays a bigger role than you might think. If the prevailing culture is that people can talk to each other whenever they want, your team may be missing out on a lot of productive hours as a result.

There are a few ways you can go about changing this. First, you can implement quiet hours where certain individuals or teams can work without interruption. That means they're allowed to ignore the phones, turn off their chats, and close their email inboxes for some uninterrupted focus time. If the whole team uses a shared calendar, team members can block off time on their calendars themselves, and you can emphasize how important it is to respect those requests for time to focus.

Another approach is to be more structured in how meetings happen, especially if a proposed meeting would involve more than just a few team members. Define what level of discussion justifies a meeting, and encourage your team to stick to the guidelines you set as a group. Most importantly, you want to make sure meetings aren't going on too long and wasting everyone's time. Enforce the requirement that a meeting owner comes to the meeting with a clear and developed agenda, as well as a strict timetable for getting the discussion done.

Lastly, don't be afraid to experiment with how teams are situated in the office. Cubicles aren't perfect, but a great thing about them is the way they allow people to hunker down and focus without the distractions of an open office setting.

The whole point is to make it easier for your team to finish their work, even if they don't have an executive assistant to minimize their distractions. Fortunately, you can change the culture, starting at the top, to encourage productivity from everyone.

## Paula Jo Shelley:

Property Manager for ZRS Management



In my position, I oversee the community and operations for 120 units in the Houston area. I am responsible for leasing, completing inspections, and responding to disasters. Through my years of experience, I have developed extensive knowledge in my field. However, I am not very familiar with the finer details of air quality or mold situations — which made a mold outbreak a few years ago a real challenge.

It was the first time we'd had a situation with mold, and it was very overwhelming. Being uncertain of the cause, I didn't know how to explain the situation to the residents or what could be done to prevent it from happening again. Thankfully, another gentleman in the industry recommended Travis West and Building Air Quality to us.

Travis was very welcoming. He didn't make me feel foolish for not knowing what he was talking about in regard to indoor air quality. With Travis' help, we have learned more about indoor air quality and have adjusted our maintenance and inspection routines to include the lessons he taught us. We've had fewer issues this year than last, and I'm confident Travis will continue to be a great resource.

Recently, we brought Travis back in to retest a unit where spores had returned to the upholstery. We needed to figure out what was causing the problem. Travis identified the air-conditioning unit as the contributor. When put at a certain temperature, the A/C was carrying unnecessary condensation, encouraging the growth of mold. With Travis' help, we were able to deal with the problem and help the resident use their A/C unit in a safer fashion.

Dealing with mold is never fun, but Travis has brought a lot of comfort to it. He always explains what is going on in ways that both our residents and I can understand. Always friendly and always on time, Travis can be counted on to answer questions quickly and to provide assistance and information to help us further. I have referred Travis to other colleagues in the past and am confident I will continue to do so as needed in the future.

# HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS 101

## STEPS FOR PROTECTING YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

September is the peak of hurricane season. As we've seen in years past, hurricanes are becoming more frequent and more destructive during each season. While your business is probably well-prepared if a hurricane does occur, it is incredibly important that you create a personal hurricane preparedness plan for the sake of your home, your loved ones, and yourself. Here are some tips for getting started:

### Have a Plan

The first step in handling any emergency is to have a plan already established. Start by contacting your local emergency-management agency to identify hurricane evacuation routes and safe places to stay in your area. You should also prepare a disaster kit with flashlights, extra batteries, a first-aid kit, cash, and other important information you can grab quickly in the event you need to evacuate fast.

Next, determine how you will get in touch with your loved ones if you're not in the same place initially or if you get separated. Is everybody signed up to receive emergency notifications? How will you communicate if cell phones, landlines, or the internet don't work? Where should everyone meet in an emergency? How can you let your family know you're safe if you are unable to reach that meeting place?

Once you've created your emergency plan, practice it with your family so you're all ready to act when an emergency strikes.

### Prepare Your Home

Whether you are required to evacuate your home or you end up in an area that doesn't receive an evacuation notice, you want to make sure your home has the best possible chance for surviving a hurricane with the least amount of damage. You can do this by:

- Trimming branches or removing damaged trees from around your property to lessen the chance of them falling in high winds.
- Retrofitting the roof, windows, doors, and garage doors of your home to keep them secure during a hurricane.



- Preventing water damage by checking that your rain gutters and downspouts are secure and clear of any debris.

If you live in an area that doesn't have to evacuate and decide to stay in your home, make sure you have enough supplies. Keep a store of food and fresh water in case the power goes out or you're unable to leave your home for a few days. You should also consider purchasing a portable generator or installing a backup generator in the event the power goes out.

For a wealth of valuable knowledge and resources when preparing for a hurricane, visit [www.ready.gov/hurricanes](http://www.ready.gov/hurricanes).



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