

A Sign of the Times: An Analysis of Organizational Members' Email Signatures

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Drawing from genre theory in organizational communication (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992), this study examines the content and function of email signatures used by organizational members. Email signatures are appended at the end of email messages and contain information about the sender such as his or her title, postal address, and phone number. One hundred and ninety-three email signatures were collected and analyzed in this study. A content analysis revealed demographic and occupational differences in signature content and suggests the potential impression management function of signatures. Based on the results from the content analysis, the evolution of the memo genre in email messages and implications of new communication technologies for contemporary organizational life are discussed.

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Introduction

Electronic mail has become a pervasive tool for communication among organizational members (Ducheneaut & Watts, 2005; Weber, 2004). Sending and receiving email messages is the number one reason for using the Internet (Fox & Fallows, 2003; Rainie & Horrigan, 2005), and more than 57 million Americans have access to email at work (Fallows, 2002). One report indicates that email has eclipsed the telephone as a preferred method for business-related communication (Nowak, 2003). Respondents in Nowak's study cited response flexibility, the ability to communicate with multiple parties simultaneously, and the creation of a paper trail as the key benefits of email.

A trend in organizational email use is to append a "signature" to the end of messages. Email signatures contain contact and personal information about the

sender of a message, such as the sender's title, telephone number, and postal address (Chen, Hu, & Sproat, 1999). The following is an example of an email signature:

P. Thomas
SouthTown Group
555 Lexington Place
Somewhere, ZZ 55555
(555) 555-6654

A great deal of speculation exists about the communicative functions of signatures. Barnes (2003), for example, argues that using a signature can "help make you a more effective online communicator and can help readers better understand who you are" (p. 123). Further, signatures have been described in trade publications as a means to "reinforce your organization's identity" (Abernathy, 1999, p. 19), as "an opportunity to share something powerful" (Krotz, n.d.), a method to "reveal what the sender is about" (Fishman & Overholt, 2001, p. 149), and simply as "evidence to one's professionalism" (Feiertag, 2003, p. 16). Although these claims have yet to be tested empirically, they underscore the potential importance of email signatures in communication among organizational members.

Given the number of email messages sent by organizational members during a typical day—presumably with a signature attached—and recent claims about the communicative functions of signatures, this is a communication phenomenon about which we need to know more. The purpose of the present study was to examine the content and communicative functions served by organizational member email signatures. Genre theory, as it has been applied to the study of communication and media in organizations (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992; Yates, Orlikowski, & Okamura, 1999), was used as a framework to guide this analysis. From this perspective, signatures are considered an artifact that has arisen out of the socio-historical context of organizations and, as such, articulate contemporary organizational life.

Examining signature files offers two key benefits. First, a study of signatures provides insights into the ways in which new communication technologies are used in contemporary organizations. Signatures offer a window through which we can better understand the ways technologies such as email are used to communicate identity information and manage impressions. Second, because signatures are a feature unique to email messages, an analysis of their content and functions provides a better understanding of the evolving organizational memo genre and, ultimately, contemporary organizational life. Bringing genre theory together with more traditional notions of impression management through the text of email signatures allows us a glimpse into both micro and macro communication trends in contemporary organizations. We next review research on genre in communication media and the impression management function of new communication technologies to develop research questions.

Media Genre and Mediated Impression Management

Herbert Blumer (1979) opined that, “the preponderant portion of social action in a human society, particularly in a settled society, exists in the form of recurrent patterns of joint action” (p. 136). Genre is one such pattern of joint action involving both situation and motive. In the case of email signatures, situation refers to professional standards or organizational demands for signatures. Motive refers to a signee’s perception of exigence, or the felt need to manage a professional impression in a particular way. Genre theory encompasses both text and context, such that email signatures arise out of *this* kairotic moment. Kairos is generally translated from the Greek as “timing” (Miller, 1992), but specifically addresses the efficacy of speech based on its timing within a particular socio-politico-cultural moment (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001). For this reason, email signatures are representations of people’s collective experience in organizational life (Miller, 1984; Miller & Shepard, 2004). As Campbell and Jamieson (1978) state, “the existence of the recurrent provides insight into the human condition” (p. 27). Since signatures are a relatively new phenomenon in email correspondence, genre theory provides a productive avenue for understanding the motives and situations that lead to the use of signatures and, ultimately, the conditions of organizational life articulated by the genre.

Yates and Orlikowski (1992) define genre as it applies to organizational communication as “typified communicative action invoked in response to a recurrent situation” (p. 301). Genre is a socially constructed arrangement for accomplishing a general class of interaction in organizations. As the physical means for communication, Orlikowski and Yates explain that media are distinct from, but related to, genre. Communication media can play a role in both the recurrent situation and form of a genre. In the context of organizational communication, contemporary email messages are in some ways related to the memo genre. Email messages contain some of the substance and form of memos like the to/from header and the use of direct and non-colloquial language. The threaded nature of email, however, deviates from the memo form. Traditional memos typically contain a single, one-sided message. Yet email messages are often nested along with previous messages and may be accompanied by attachments. This nested or threaded feature of email creates something like a conversational exchange between participants, making one person or group’s question/statement and the other’s response visible simultaneously.

During the evolution of a genre, adaptations may occur as the genre is elaborated to new situations and contexts. Adaptations function to modify the genre and meet changes in the environment (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992; Yates, et al., 1999). The use of email signatures is one recent adaptation in the genre of organizational email messages. In form, signatures appear to be similar to a virtual business card appended to the end of standard email communication. Given the reduced social cues (such as vocal and visual cues) in email, signatures may play an especially important role in explicitly communicating information about the sender’s identity. Signatures offer potential insights about the identity of senders through providing

a variety of information ranging from their status in an organization to their educational background. Recipients of email signatures can classify senders based on their signatures (e.g., industry focus, availability, level of education, etc.).

Yet genre does more than suggest that the fitting close to an email message is to provide a signature. Genre tells us how something functions rhetorically. In other words, it is hardly remarkable to state that the inclusion of a name, address, and phone number at the end of an email falls under the genre "signature." It is, however, valuable to understand what the signature actually does for either the signee or his/her organization of employment.

To date, there has been a fair amount of discussion in trade publications about the communicative function of email signatures (Abernathy, 1999; Feiertag, 2000, 2003; Fishman & Overholt, 2001; Krotz, n.d.). Signatures convey identity information and as such provide an opportunity for strategic self-presentation. For example, in a recent debate in *Fortune* magazine over the appropriateness of including information about one's advanced degrees (Fisher, 2004a, 2004b), one individual in the article noted that: "I cannot imagine a bigger business gaffe than to put 'MBA' after one's signature...It sends a signal of low self-esteem" (2004b, p. 60).

The potential impression management function of email and other communication technologies has received attention in previous research (Gardner, Martinko, & Peluchette, 1996; McKenna & Bargh, 2000; O'Sullivan, 1996, 2000). O'Sullivan's (2000) impression management model describes the ways in which communication media may be used as tools for self-presentation in personal relationships. In testing the model, he found evidence that communication media are strategically selected and used to manage self-presentation goals. Participants in his study preferred mediated channels such as email or the telephone when their self-presentation was threatened with embarrassing and unattractive information, but preferred face-to-face communication when their presentation was affirmed.

Although O'Sullivan (2000) focused on the use of media more broadly, there is some evidence from other research to suggest that individuals may use features like signatures for impression management purposes. Sherblom (1988) examined the act of including a redundant signature—or typing one's name at the conclusion of one's email messages—in the context of organizational communication. He found that messages sent upward through the organization were signed more frequently than those sent downward or horizontally through the organization's hierarchy. This difference was attributed to the development of an electronic paralanguage reflecting the hierarchy of the organization.

Given their widespread use by organizational members and potential communicative implications, scholarly research on email signatures is essential. The following two research questions were proposed to examine the content and potential functions of email signatures used by organizational members. To examine signature content, the following question was addressed: What types of information are typically included in organizational member's email signatures? To better understand the function of signatures as they relate to communicating identity information, a second question was

investigated regarding systematic differences in signature content: Do the types and amount of information in email signature differ across (a) different types of organizations, (b) a member's position in his or her organization, and/or (c) a member's tenure?

Method

Respondents and Procedure

The sample recruited for this study was intended to represent those individuals who use an email signature in messages originating from their professional email accounts. The data were collected in 2002. A snowball sampling procedure was used to recruit respondents. Students in communication courses at a large university in the southwestern United States earned extra credit for recruiting one organizational member to respond to a brief email questionnaire. Students were sent two email messages. The first message identified the purpose of the study, explained the requirements for participating in the study and instructed students to forward the second email message to an organizational member. It should be noted that students were instructed to recruit only those organizational members who, at the time of the study, worked full-time and used email at work. The second email, forwarded by students to the organizational member, explained the purpose of the study, provided an example of an email signature, and contained eight questions (described in the following section). Although defining and providing an example of a signature may have created the potential to prime some respondents, it seems highly unlikely that organizational members would take the time and effort to amend their signature simply for the purpose of this study. Respondents returned the completed email questionnaire directly to the researchers and included their email signature.

Three hundred and thirty-six students contacted the researchers to participate in the study. From these students, 266 questionnaires were returned by organizational members for a response rate of 73%. However, only 193 (72.5% of the completed questionnaires) contained an email signature. Because this study is concerned with the content of email signatures, only those 193 questionnaires containing a signature were used in the analyses. Respondents were from approximately 150 different organizations, representing an array of publicly-traded, private, governmental, and non-profit institutions. Approximately 65% of respondents were male, and the median age of respondents at the time of the study was 45 years (interquartile range = 28 to 50). Over two-thirds (68%) of those who identified their education level reported earning at least a bachelor's degree. The median tenure of respondents was four years (interquartile range = 2 to 13), and the median amount of time since respondents began using an email signature was three years (interquartile range = 1 to 5). Finally, 17% of respondents indicated that they were required by their organization to use an email signature.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire asked participants to identify their current organization, position in that organization (administrative/clerical, non-management professional, middle

management, upper management), and tenure (in years). Participants were also asked to indicate whether or not they were required to use an email signature, the length of time since they began using a signature, and to complete three items addressing demographics (i.e., age, gender, and highest level of education completed). Finally, each respondent was asked to include a copy of his or her email signature.

Content Analyses

To address the questions posed at the outset of this study, the email signatures and organization types were first content analyzed. The information included in the signatures was examined by the second author and a coder, working independently, to determine the presence or absence of 17 types of information (see Table 1). The 17 types of information are based on a review of the common features of signatures conducted by computer scientists (Chen, et al., 1999) and a cursory examination of the sample by the first author. In conducting the content analysis, the same subset of 20% of the signatures ($n = 40$) was coded to determine intercoder reliability. Intercoder agreement for the subset of signatures was acceptable (93%). Disagreements were resolved by the coders and the remaining questionnaires were divided equally and independently coded.

To develop categories of organization types, responses to the item addressing the participant's current organization were thematically analyzed. The authors independently reviewed 30 different questionnaires to generate categories of general

Table 1 Frequency of information included in email signatures

Information type	Frequency	Percentage of valid responses
Personal name	185	95.9
Phone- work/voice mail	162	83.9
Organization name	153	79.7
Professional title	127	65.8
Fax	100	51.8
Email address	72	37.3
Postal address	71	36.8
Phone- mobile	23	11.9
Legal information	23	11.9
Web address	22	11.4
Phone- organization	18	9.3
Education	12	6.3
Quote- personal	10	5.2
Quote- about the organization	9	4.7
Miscellaneous text	7	3.6
Image	2	1
Phone- home	2	1

Note: Valid responses refer to the percentage of participants returning a signature who included a particular type of information.

organization types. The categories were then discussed and compared, resulting in 17 classes of organizations. To determine intercoder reliability the same subset of the data was coded into the 17 categories. Intercoder agreement for the subset of data was acceptable (83%). Disagreements were resolved and the remaining questionnaires were divided equally and independently coded.

After all coding had been completed, the 17 categories were further collapsed into 11 classes of organization types by the first author. When feasible, categories with fewer than 10 respondents were combined with other, similar categories and the resulting classes were re-named. This was done to allow for more thorough analyses of possible differences in signature content across organization types. The 11 categories of organization types are listed in Table 2.

Results

Question 1: Information Included in Signatures

To examine the content of signatures, both the types and amount of information included were examined. In regard to the types of information, Table 1 provides the frequency in which each of the 17 classes of information was included in the respondent's signatures. In general, more than half of the respondents included at least one of the following types of information in their signature: their name, work telephone number, organization's name, professional title, and fax number. Email and postal addresses were included in more than one-third of the signatures examined in this study.

General organizational phone numbers, organizational and personal quotes, home phone numbers, and images were included considerably less frequently. These

Table 2 Email signature use across organization types

Organization type	Frequency	Percentage of valid responses
Education	32	17
Financial/legal	26	13.8
High tech/IT	21	11.2
General sales/service	17	9
General consulting	17	9
Engineering	15	8
Media/marketing	13	6.9
Public sector	12	6.4
Energy/oil	9	4.8
Medical	8	4.3
Other	18	9.6
Total	188	100

Note: Valid responses refer to the percentage of all participants who returned an email signature.

Table 3 Total information included in email signatures

Number of different pieces of information per signature	Frequency	Percentage of valid responses
One	6	3.1
Two	6	3.1
Three	18	9.3
Four	28	14.5
Five	56	29
Six	36	18.7
Seven	28	14.5
Eight	13	6.7
Nine	2	1

Note: Valid responses refer to the percentage of participants returning a signature who included a particular type of information.

components were included in less than 10% of the signatures. The two images that were included were primarily constructed of ASCII text. Organizational quotes touted organizational slogans (e.g., “Passion and precision in communications”), highlighted recent awards earned by the organization, or announced upcoming events. Personal quotes reflected individual beliefs and values, which may or may not have been consistent with the values of the organization.

In regard to the total amount of information included, the signatures analyzed in this study contained from one to nine types of information (see Table 3). A mean of just over five different types of information ($SD = 1.68$) was included in the signatures, and over 75% of the participants included six or fewer types of information. Almost 70% of participants included each of the three most frequently cited types of information (personal name, phone-work, organizational name), while only 28% included all five of the most frequently cited types of information (personal name, phone-work, organizational name, title, fax).

Question 2: Occupational Differences in the Content of Email Signatures

To gain a better understanding of the potential functions of signatures, differences in the types and amount of information included were examined depending on the participant's organization type, tenure, and position. In regard to the type of information included in signatures, there were several differences in the content of signatures across different types of organizations. The inclusion of a professional title, $\chi^2(10, N = 188) = 39.27, p < .01$, education, $\chi^2(10, N = 187) = 71.66, p < .01$, postal address, $\chi^2(10, N = 188) = 29.84, p < .01$, and legal information, $\chi^2(10, N = 188) = 24.82, p < .01$, were significantly different across the 11 types of organizations. Those in the medical field were more likely to include information about their education. Respondents in education, the public sector, sales, and high-tech organizations were more likely to include their professional title indicating their organizational role.

Table 4 Differences in the information included in signatures across organization types

Organization type	Information type															
	Name	Title	Org. Name	Edu	Ph. work	Ph. org	Ph. mobile	Ph. home	Fax	Post. add	Web add	Quote org	Quote pers	Legal info	Image	Misc
Education	32	26	26	3	26	0	3	0	16	13	7	2	2	0	2	2
Financial/legal	24	8	22	0	22	3	3	0	17	18	4	1	0	7	0	0
High tech/IT	20	16	18	1	19	3	5	0	11	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
General consulting	17	9	14	2	17	2	1	0	14	5	0	1	0	5	0	0
Public sector	12	12	11	0	11	3	2	1	5	2	3	0	1	0	0	2
Medical	8	7	7	6	7	0	0	0	5	4	0	1	1	0	0	0
Media/marketing	13	8	8	0	13	3	1	0	6	8	2	2	0	0	0	0
Engineering	13	6	12	0	11	1	0	0	6	6	1	0	1	4	0	0
General sales/service	15	13	9	0	11	3	5	0	5	3	1	1	3	1	0	0
Energy/oil	18	6	6	0	9	0	2	0	5	4	0	0	0	1	0	1
Other	9	12	15	0	15	0	1	1	9	4	4	1	1	3	0	0
Total	181	123	148	12	161	18	23	2	99	69	22	9	9	22	2	6

Note: Scores presented in this table are frequency counts. Title = professional title; Edu = education; Ph. work = work telephone number; Ph. org = organizational telephone number; Ph. home = home telephone number; Post add = postal address; Web add = web address; Quote org = quote about the organization; Quote pers = personal quote; Legal info = legal information; Misc = miscellaneous

Finally, participants in financial/legal professional, consulting, and engineering organizations were more likely to include a legal disclaimer in their signature. The distribution of information included in signatures across organization types is available in Table 4.

To examine differences in the content of signatures based on tenure, participants were placed into one of three groups based on a three-way split of the tenure data. Participants in the *low tenure* group ($n = 66$) reported working two years or less in their current organization. Participants in the *moderate tenure* group ($n = 62$) reported working between two-and-a-half and six years, and participants in the *high tenure* group ($n = 63$) reported working more than six years in their current organization. These three categories represent commonly accepted critical points for organizational membership; most turnover occurs within the first few years of employment and six years is a turning point in both academic and law firms as tenure or partnership is earned. The analysis of signature content based on tenure revealed only one statistically significant difference involving information about the member's education, $\chi^2(2, N = 191) = 7.36, p = .03$. Participants in the moderate tenure group were more likely to include information about their education level in their signature. No differences were found in the content of signatures across the respondent's position in his or her organization.

Finally, no differences were detected in the total amount of information included in signatures depending on any of the occupational variables. ANOVAs were conducted for each of these variables and the differences in the amount of information included by organization type, $F(10, 187) = 1.29, p = .24, \eta^2 = .07$, tenure, $F(2, 189) = .07, p = .93, \eta^2 = .001$, and position, $F(3, 186) = .24, p = .87, \eta^2 = .003$, were not statistically significant.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine email signatures used by contemporary organizational members. Genre theory in organizational communication (Yates & Olikowski, 1992) was used as a guiding framework to assess the content and communicative functions of signatures. As was mentioned before, the emergence of a genre entails a kairotic moment (Miller, 1984; Miller & Shepard, 2004). Accordingly, signatures offer insights into the collective experience of organizational life. In the following paragraphs, the findings and implications of the study are considered and directions for future research are suggested.

The results of this study offer insights into the communicative function of signatures. As has been suggested (Abernathy, 1999; Barnes, 2003; Feiertag, 2000, 2003; Fishman & Overholt, 2001; Krotz, n.d.), signatures appear to be a tool for impression management. Differences were found in the use of a professional title, one's education, postal address, and legal information across the 11 types of organizations. The inclusion of information about the sender's education also differed depending on his or her tenure. Respondents included information in their signature

salient to their specific professional experience. Those in the medical field, for example, were more likely than others to include information about their education. Those in education and the public sector were more likely to include a title in their signature. In these instances, signatures may be used to convey a sense of authority or status. Doctors may include information about their education to help reinforce the legitimacy of their messages by making it explicit that the message is from a certified "M.D." Those in the public sector may include their professional title to communicate professional prestige. In an industry of elected officials, where *what* you are is often more relevant than *who* you are, a title underscores one's importance. Fishman and Overholt (2001) succinctly sum up this potential of signatures, noting that "in the egalitarian world of cyberspace, nobody knows whether you're a dog or CEO. The sig file tells where you stand" (p. 149).

At a broader level, signatures offer a window to better understand the implications of new communication technologies in contemporary organizational life. Signatures represent an electronic identity that is a co-product of one's work environment and the constraints/opportunities of email. Such an identity may be related to strictly online identities (Jones, 1997; Turkle, 1995), but is also distinct in that it must be amenable to one's co-present interactions. In an organizational setting, one's signature is subject to the constraint that it must be compatible with one's legal identity.

The exigent circumstances motivating the development and adoption of signatures provide insights into the collective experience of organizational members (Miller, 1984; Miller & Shepherd, 2004). In the current climate as work organizations eclipse virtually all other aspects of social life and often prevent people from making meaningful connections with others (Deetz, 1995), perhaps the motive for providing a signature is to feel less isolated. Additionally, in our kairotic moment of alternative work arrangements where individuals may never meet their colleagues face-to-face in a traditional office (Ellison, 1999; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001), signatures might be motivated by a need for connection to other "real" people as opposed to the dumb terminal in one's home office. The inclusion of a signature may provide a sense of stable identity and connection in a complex and disconnected time.

Signatures may also be a product of competing tensions between accountability and concerns with privacy (Gumpert & Drucker, 2001; Winsek, 2002). Following the recent scandals in the U.S. involving Enron, Tyco, and WorldCom, it seems likely that signatures might be a response to a perceived need for accountability and responsibility (Conrad, 2003; Jaques, 2003). In other words, standing by what you say by attaching your name and other identifying information means taking responsibility for your words and actions. Yet, signatures also omit much of the information that individuates people. Signatures tell receivers who a sender is, how he or she can be reached, and even the sender's rank in the organization, but detailed information about the sender's beliefs, attitudes, and values are largely concealed. As such, signatures are opaque. Signatures offer a general introduction for the sender while concealing that information that makes the sender unique.

The findings from this study also offer insights into the memo genre as it has evolved and been adapted in organizational email messages. The inclusion of a signature appears to add formality and structure, and thus distinguishes the memo genre in organizational email from previous instantiations of the genre. Signatures add structure through anchoring email messages with a relatively standardized set of information about a sender's identity. Beyond simply signing one's name as in traditional organizational memos, email messages conclude with a bevy of information ranging from the sender's title (and thus potential status level) to a means for contacting him or her. This information provides a formal introduction of sorts, making explicit the sender's standing in the world and where he or she is typically located. Additionally, the extra lines included in email signatures more distinctly bookend the actual message than simply signing one's name. In these ways, email signatures add structure and a measure of formality that distinguish email messages in the broader memo genre.

There appears to be an informal standard for the amount and types of information included in signatures. Respondent's signatures included a mean of just over five pieces of information, with 60% of all signatures containing five or fewer. Over three-quarters of the signatures contained either a personal name, work telephone number, or the name of the respondent's organization; more than half of the signatures included the respondent's title or fax number. Together, these five types of information account for 73% of the total information contained in the signatures analyzed in this study. The relative uniformity of the signatures in the sample suggests the emergence of a normative signature and provides evidence of maturation of the email memo genre (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992).

In addition to interpreting the significant results, it is also important to consider those instances where no differences were found. There were no differences in the total amount of information included in signatures based on any of the three occupational variables. This outcome may be related to two sometimes overlapping issues: normative templates and limits of the technology. In an effort to manage impressions at the macro level, organizations may provide employees with an "appropriate" template for their signature. Ultimately, that template serves as an employee's guide and few deviate from this assigned standard. Additionally, limits of the technology may explain this result. For instance, one popular email package, *Lotus Notes*, limits the number of characters in a signature (including spaces) to 250. The likely effect of this limitation is that people must prioritize "crucial" contact information like name, title, email address, and phone number over more personally distinct information like a quote or favorite musing. There were also no differences in the content of signatures based on the respondent's position in their organization. This outcome may be an artifact of the classification system for organizational position used in this study; respondents self-reported their position based on one of four relatively generic hierarchical categories.

This study is not without limitations. One limitation is that the study assumed that respondents had a single, stable signature. It is possible that some respondents have multiple signatures or amend their signature depending on the situation and

message recipient. As such, this study does not explore the dynamic nature of signatures in communicating identity information. Despite this limitation, the study does provide a solid foundation for such research. A second limitation is that the data collection procedure did not make it possible to estimate the prevalence of signature use. Students were instructed to solicit only those individuals who use a signature; as such, it was not possible to make claims about the proportion of organizational members using or not using a signature.

The results of this study—along with growing concerns over communication competence in computer-mediated contexts (see Bunz, 2003; Spitzberg, 2006)—make future research on email signatures in organizational communication important. It is critical to examine the impact signatures (and variations of signatures) have on receivers' perceptions of the sender and the message. Given the emergence of a normative signature, future research should assess the consequences of violations of the norm for the length and content of signatures. It also seems possible that the inclusion of a particular piece of information, such as one's title or education, could influence a receiver's perceptions of the sender's competence and the message. For example, the same request from an individual with a prestigious title may be perceived as more direct and less of a face-threat than if the sender's title were excluded from the message. Finally, future scholarship should explore the use of multiple signatures or amendments made to one's signature based on the message recipient. Exploring these issues will provide insights into the dynamic nature of identity management in computer-mediated interaction in organizations.

In closing, although they are only one small part of email messages, signatures have important communicative implications. Beyond functioning to manage impressions and communicate identity information, signatures offer a window into contemporary organizational life. Through continued research on artifacts like signatures it will be possible to better understand the use and implications of email and other communication technologies in organizations.

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