

(U) Ask Zelda!: Hijacked Distribution List

FROM: "Zelda," Dispenser of Advice on Workplace Issues

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(U) The below article is unclassified in its entirety.



Dear Zelda,

I'd like your advice on proper e-mail etiquette as it relates to distribution lists (DL). Several years ago, I created an e-mail DL for a group of people across the NSA enterprise who have a specific work role. My intention behind creating this DL was to be able to disseminate information specific to the interests of the individuals in this work role. Unfortunately, in recent months, e-mails containing information not germane to the interests of the individuals in this work role have been sent to the DL. I have stepped in to emphasize the goals of this DL and have politely requested that topics that do not apply to the specific work role in question not be sent to this DL. However, it appears that my words are not being fully heeded. What other recourses do I have in order to keep my DL focused on the purposes it was created for?

Signed, Disconcerted Distribution List Owner

Dear D.Lo,

Ah, yes. How frustrating it is when you create something good and envision it evolving in a certain way, only to see it "corrupted" and turned into something you never meant it to be. Going down the wrong path, covered in tattoos and piercings, hanging out with the wrong crowd, changing its major from finance to video game design*... What's a parent--er, list owner--to do?

Fortunately, a distribution list is easier to get back on track than a wayward child. Here are some suggestions.

- You can work with **ITSC** to create a restricted list that only certain people can send messages to. If others in this work role have something of interest for the group, they will need to send it to one of these key people to forward to the entire distro. However, this solution will not allow back-and-forth interaction between the members of that distro, if you want to encourage discussion of a specific topic.
- If you do want everyone to be able to respond, one other thing you can do as a continual reminder is to create a new signature block for yourself that reinforces the correct use of the alias, and use it whenever you post to this distribution list. This would not be a *signature* block, per se, but a way to include a standard phrase or paragraph in emails without re-typing it each time. You can insert this message either at the top or bottom of each email you send to the alias.
- If the inappropriate content you mentioned is being circulated by someone replying (via reply-all) to a legitimate message, make sure to put the DL address in the Bcc line of the email when you send stuff out. That way, any inappropriate replies will go to the original poster (you) alone.

- Although harsh, you can always remove the "repeat offenders" from the list. They will still be able to post, but won't receive any emails (unless people reply-all to their posts).
- As a last resort, you can decommission the list and create a new one; but don't tell anyone what it's called. Always put your DL address in the Bcc line. This will require people to send you any information to disseminate to the group. As a result, you may become known as the bountiful dispenser of useful information. 😊

Edda

(U) Notes:

* (U) Not that there's anything wrong with tattoos and/or piercings... And I mean no disrespect to anyone with a degree in video game design. In fact, most employers today would probably prefer that to the "traditional" subject I majored in!
