

Tip of the Week – Emails Not Sending

During the week I had a call from a client who had had some internet problems when he rang me for an earlier call. This problem was caused by the ethernet connection at the back of his computer not working. This was easy to diagnose: there is a light next to the ethernet connection which flashes when there is an active ethernet connection. This light did not flash.

The cable connecting the computer to the modem was working: I checked this by attaching his modem to my computer at home and the whole thing just worked, so it was obvious that the problem was in the ethernet connection on the back of the computer.

This was a problem because this connection is part of the motherboard, and this suggested that the motherboard was in the process of dying. It was not worth buying a new computer just yet (the old one was at least six years old) but that was probably just around the corner.

What we did was use his wireless internet connection to connect to the internet. This worked quite well: the internet pages loaded quickly and emails came in at high speed. The only problem was that emails would not go: they just lay there and sogged (like old rice bubbles) in the outbox. I could see all his new emails when connected using his ISP's webmail, I could send emails when connected using webmail but I could not send emails when using his email program.

There was only one thing to do: call technical support. The response was easy: because you are no longer connected to the server using the ISP's internet connection you cannot send emails using that server. The way to send emails is to use the SMTP (Simple Mail Transport Protocol) of the ISP whose wireless connection. After setting this one up all emails went in a flood straight to their destination like homing pigeons.

This is the only ISP that I know of which uses this sort of security. It does make for a more secure connection, so it means that nobody can send emails pretending to be you if they are not connected to this particular ISP (and even then I expect that they cannot impersonate you because they will not be using your connection). It has the drawback that you cannot send emails using a WiFi connection if you are travelling.

Doing It With Styles

Sometimes things come in twos and threes and I have no trouble talking about them because there appears to be a pattern and, where there is a pattern, other people are likely to need the same information.

This week has seen nothing like that pattern. My main task this week was to help a new client create a better-looking Word document. Word is the main word processing program, and it is used by almost everybody. This, of course, does not mean that everybody who uses Word knows how to use it.

My client fell into that group.

Looking at the printed document it was easy to see that there were many places where the format of text had just been altered using the various font commands: commands like typeface, size, weight (bold or normal), italic and underline. This produced a real hodgepodge of a mess and, worse, it meant that the Table of Contents had to be generated manually.

There is a better way to format Word documents and that is to use styles. Many people do not know that styles are there or how to use them. My client was one of these people. The standard styles are shown in a group on the Home tab of Word 2007 and Word 2010. The style used for most paragraphs in any document is called *Normal*. This is the style which first appears when you create most new documents, although this can be changed if you know how.

Most people change the typeface and size in the first paragraph to what they think is best, but they would be better off changing the style. Changing a style is easy: just right-click on the style name in the list of styles then select *Modify*. This allows you to change all the attributes for the selected style. These attributes include:

- The font: typeface, size, weight and style.
- The paragraph: spacing before and after each paragraph, whether text is left aligned, centred, right aligned or justified, whether there is any special treatment for the first line of the paragraph.
- The style to be used for the next paragraph: for example you can specify that, after a *Heading 1* paragraph the next paragraph should be a *Heading 2*.
- Tabs, borders and various other attributes.
- Whether or not the changes you make apply only in this document or in all new documents based on this style.

For example, the *Normal* style in this document is:

- Typeface: Georgia
- Size: 11 point
- Paragraph: justified, single spacing, 6 point after (the spacing after each paragraph). It is usual either to have spacing before or after a paragraph or to indent the first line of a paragraph so that there is no doubt where a paragraph starts and ends.

My Client's Document

My client's document had all the wrong settings. The main text was not uniform in the either the font or the paragraph settings so I asked him what he wanted for a standard paragraph. As so often happens he was not sure just what he wanted so I set up the Normal style with what appeared to be the most common settings for his text and informed him that, once all his text was in the one style it was very easy to change the style to suit his needs.

Again, as so often happens, he did not understand just how this worked so I showed him. I started by setting three paragraphs to the Normal style then changed the style and he realised at once what was happening when all the paragraphs changed as the style definition was changed. Once he had had an inkling of how styles worked it was easier to continue and show him how to make changes.

We went through his document, with help from his manually-created *Table of Contents*, and changed all the relevant paragraphs to Normal style. Then it was a matter of selecting all the chapter headings and setting them to *Heading 1*. This style was changed so that chapters started on a new page by changing a setting under *Paragraph* in the style for *Heading 1*.

Again, using the manual *TOC* all the relevant paragraphs were changed to either *Heading 2* or *Heading 3* style. This meant that the whole document was styled using styles rather than just changing each of the paragraphs to what appeared to be the correct format. By the time I was finished my client was able to see the way some of his paragraphs, in the old printed version, did not actually have the same details.

Now came the next task: check to see that there were no blank pages. This was easy to do as we just changed to view to show a number of pages at once. This was done using the slider at the bottom of the screen to reduce the size of each page.

We then saw that the page before a *Heading 1* style was completely blank. After checking, we found that the last item on the page before the blank page was a *Page Break*. I had to show my client just how to see hidden text (like a *Page Break*) using the backward "P" (printer's paragraph mark) on the *Home* tab. He was amazed at the little things that we could see: spaces, tabs and paragraph marks being the most obvious.

He was also surprised at the number of tabs that we could see, mostly at the beginning of his paragraphs. We then removed all the double spaces and all the page breaks from his document and it was starting to become well-formatted.

It was then time to create the Table of Contents. This was a job which had taken him a long time when done manually, and he was convinced that it would take me just as long. Just to play with him I told him that I could do it in under a minute, and even bet him five cents that I could do that.

He took the bet, feeling that he was on a sure winner, so I took about thirty seconds to create a *Table of Contents* using the heading styles which we had spent so much time organising. He was amazed that all this power was available and he did not know about it.

We then printed the document to check that all was well, and found that the styles had been created well and that the document look much better than his old version.

Using Search & Replace

There are many things that you can do very quickly in Word. You can easily replace two spaces with one if you find that there are places in your document where there is too much space between words. The problem with this approach is obvious if you think about it: if you have used spaces to align tabular data then your table will immediately start to look funny. There are two ways to make tables align correctly: either use tables (with or without borders) or use tabs to align your tabular data.

If you want to find tab marks (which are often hard to find until you think that there are too many spaces in a section) you will search for “^t” (without the quote marks). This shows you where these pesky tab marks are so that you can remove them.

If the tab marks are at the beginning of a paragraph you can do a much better job using styles to indent the start of a paragraph. If you are trying to indent the whole paragraph you can, again, do a much better and more professional job with your standard style. Just create a new style and make the left margin (and perhaps the right margin as well) indented by a small amount.

These sorts of changes made using styles are easier to control, and do not result in tabs all through a paragraph because you have changed from 12 point Times New Roman to 11 point Georgia in the paragraph which you had spent so much time formatting manually.

Again, this shows the benefit of using styles rather than manual corrections.

Using Styles in Older Versions of Word

Older versions of Word, versions like Word XP and Word 2003, also have styles but the way to access them is different. Perhaps the easiest way to use styles in these older versions of Word is to format the styles (using the *Format » Styles* command in the menu) with a shortcut key. This means that you will need to remember the shortcut key for each style, but this is easier than going to the menu whenever you need to change a style.

Further Information

Nothing this week.