

Dealing with E-Mail Issues

The Problem

As we have all experienced, there may be times an expected E-Mail does not reach the intended mailbox.

***** Note - If you don't want to read this complete document and want to go directly to a simple "cheat sheet" of instructions, [click right here](#).**

This can be extremely frustrating for both the user and the IT individual trying to assist. Some reasons why an E-Mail may not make it to its destination are listed below.

- It was never sent.
- It might have been sent to the wrong E-Mail address:
 - The sender made a mistake.
 - The sender's recent contact list might have the wrong E-Mail address for the recipient:
 - The sender made a mistake on a previously sent E-Mail and entered the wrong E-Mail address.
 - The sender's E-Mail client thought it knew better and substituted a name from their global address. As an example, on several occasions Outlook has replaced the name Julie Williams with JulieAnne Williamson since both have had E-Mail sent from the Outlook client in the past.
- Routing between the sender's E-Mail server and the recipient broke down somewhere along the route. This could happen for a number of reasons including:
 - An electrical issue.
 - A faulty router either on the sender's end, the GT end, or within the same building.
 - As the message travelled along the internet, that particular leg might have gone down and it did not get re-routed on an alternate path.
- The SPAM filter captured it and has not been released.
- Problems exist with the sender's E-Mail server.
- Problems exist with recipients E-Mail server.

The above list is not exhaustive but it illustrates the complexity behind just one E-Mail problem.

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The Solution

When an E-Mail issue is reported, the GTRC/OSP IT group researches it within the network environment of the Research Administration Building (RAB) and in some cases within the Georgia Tech network with the help of GTRI and the Office of Information Technology (OIT). While the IT group is limited in the depth and breadth of our investigations, there are some things the team can do:

- Check firewall logs to determine whether a given message entered the building perimeter.
- Check mail server logs to determine if the message reached the E-Mail server.
- Have GTRI check router logs within a specific range of time to see if the message passed through into the campus E-Mail servers.
- Work with the sender's technical people so that they too, can perform similar checks.

Researching issues such as this takes the involvement of several people from multiple organizations. In order to maximize the ability to successfully discover the cause of an E-Mail problem, the sender as well as the recipient of the message can help IT by taking the following steps:

Sender Steps:

If the sender of a lost message is not a part of GTRC/OSP, that person should contact **their** IT department first. The GTRC/OSP IT group has no way of researching the path of an E-Mail outside the walls of the RAB.

If the sender of a message receives an E-Mail back stating that the recipient did not receive the E-Mail (bounce back message) please send that E-Mail as **an attachment** to helpdesk@gtrc.gatech.edu.

If e-mailing the "bounce back" message is not possible for any reason, please print out the E-Mail message and give to the IT department.

Sometimes the problem is intermittent. The sender is encouraged to attempt to send the E-Mail again while waiting for a response from the GTRC/OSP IT group. If it's successfully sent and received, please inform the IT team. It is recommended that the sender wait at least thirty minutes before attempting to resend the E-Mail.

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Recipient Steps:

If the recipient is a part of GTRC/OSP and once a confirmation that the E-Mail(s) was/were not delivered, the recipient of the message should report the missing E-Mail right away.

If the recipient is not a part of GTRC/OSP, once a confirmation that the E-Mail(s) was/were not delivered, the recipient of the message should contact **their** IT department and at least make them aware that there may be an issue.

The more information the IT group has on a given problem, be it E-Mail or otherwise, the better the group can serve you as our customer.

Cheat Sheet

The sender of the E-Mail should:

- Contact the IT department.
 - a. For GTRC/OSP staff: If a “bounced e-mail” message is received, send it as an attachment to helpdesk@gtrc.gatech.edu (do not forward), If you cannot attach the E-Mail, please print out the E-Mail message and give to the IT department.
 - b. For outside Organizations: Contact your IT department.
- Attempt to send the E-Mail again a few more times. Report the results to the IT team.

The recipient of the E-Mail should:

- Report the expected, yet missing, E-Mail message to your IT department.
- Ask the sender to contact their IT department as well.