

Top Tip

Designing an email signature

Ref. 08.04.11



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▶ The Problem

"I want to create a professional looking email signature for every mailbox user in my organization. It must be personalized with the user's name, email address, DDI and other contact details, and include our company logo."

▶ The Solution

Creating personalised signatures

Unlike Microsoft Outlook, Exclaimer Mail Utilities allows you to centrally control exactly what your organization's signature block looks like. Applying signatures to email messages in this way helps to ensure consistency and that it conforms with your organization's brand image.

A signature block is a section of text towards the bottom of an email that usually contains the salutation, contact information and something that gives the signature personality. For example, you might have your organization's tag line or other brand imagery in the signature block.

Signatures are used to let the recipient(s) know exactly who they are communicating with, letting them know they are actually dealing with a real person and not just an electronically generated message.

It is important for a signature block to express a personality. However, it has to be the right type of personality, one that reflects your organization's brand image, which is exactly what the recipient would expect. It has to be professional without being boring, expressive without being inappropriate. If you are at all unsure of how to make your signature reflect your organization's brand image you should consult your Marketing Department.

An email is usually broken down into a number of sections. These include Original Email Above Reply Separator, Reply Separator and Original Email Below Reply Separator. Dividing the email up in this way enables you to insert your disclaimers, signatures and branding wherever you want in the email message.

For example, you may want your Signature Block to appear as a column to the right of the Message Block or you may want the Legal Block to be only applied once so that it is not duplicated in message conversation replies.

How an email is broken down:

{ Original Email Above Reply Separator }

When creating or replying to an email message this is where the content of your message will appear.

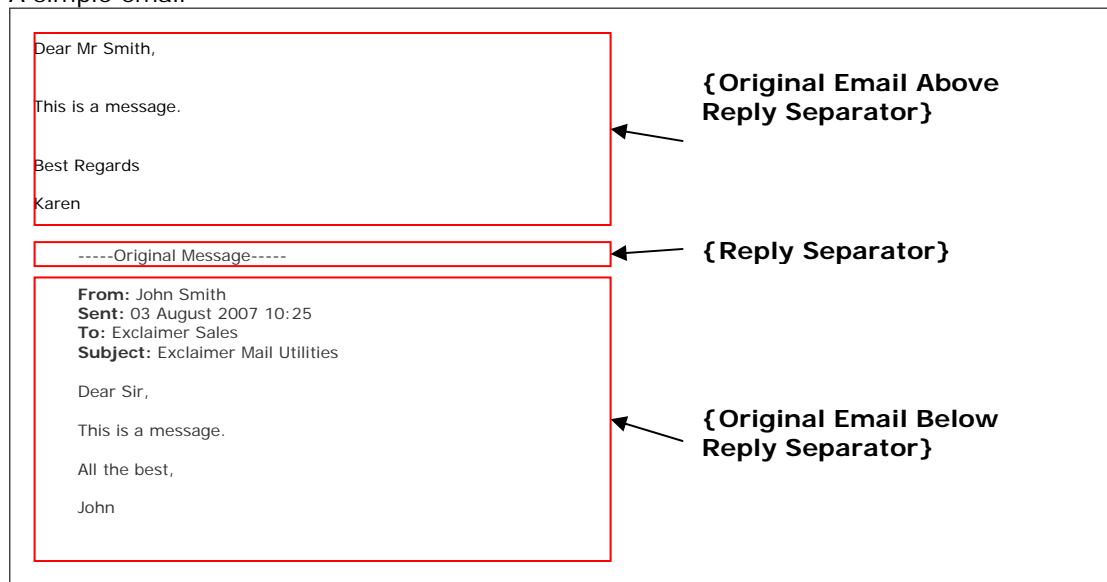
{ Reply Separator }

This item separates each reply in a message conversation.

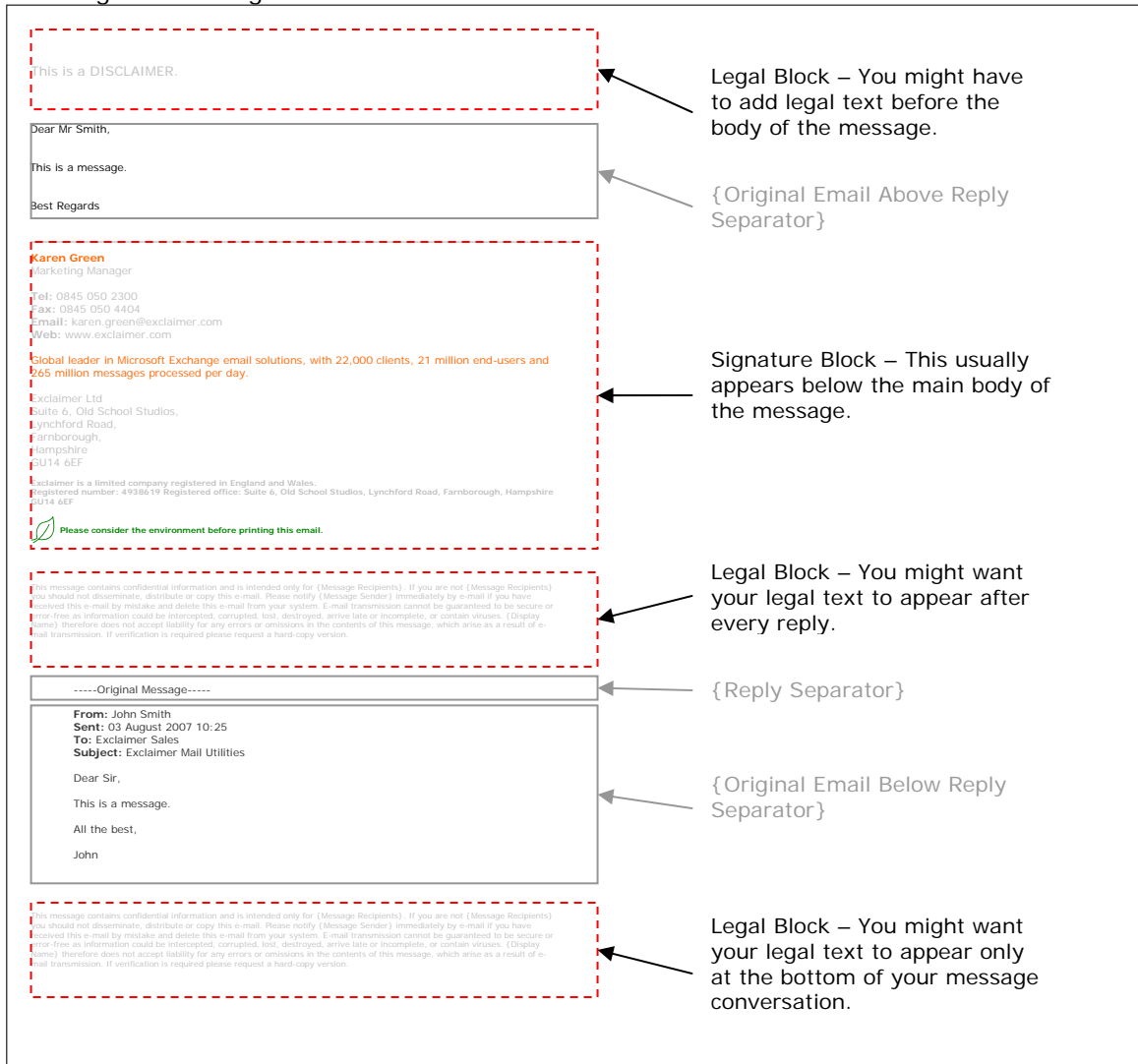
{ Original Email Below Reply Separator }

When replying to an email message this is where the original message you are replying to will appear.

A simple email



A more complex email with disclaimer, signature and branding added using Exclaimer Mail Utilities



The Original Email Below Reply Separator block can be placed wherever you like, however, it is recommended that you place it either just before or just after the legal block. It is best practice to place your signature directly underneath your message block. This helps the recipient to identify exactly who wrote each individual part of a message conversation.

Note – a message conversation is a message that has been replied to once or more.

A signature block does not usually contain any legally required text. However, this is not to say that you can't include it should you need to.

To make the job of producing signatures for all your users easier Exclaimer Mail Utilities allows you to insert information directly from your Active Directory. These dynamic fields make it possible to personalize signatures

without the need to create a different signature for each individual user. Exclaimer Mail Utilities simply generates it automatically for you based on the AD fields you have selected to include.

As well as Active Directory fields you can also use User Defined dynamic fields to insert information into your signature. This takes information that you have previously defined. For example, Exclaimer Mail Utilities has a selection of User Defined fields that include Company Name, Company Logo, Company Address, Registered Number and Registered Address. These fields allow you to centrally control specific pieces of information that are not usually stored in the AD.

Example signature:

Dear Mr Smith,

This is a message.

Best Regards


Karen Green
Marketing Manager

Tel: 0845 050 2300
Fax: 0845 050 4404
Email: karen.green@exclaimer.com
Web: www.exclaimer.com

Global leader in Microsoft Exchange email solutions, with 22,000 clients, 21 million end-users and 265 million messages processed per day.

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Exclaimer is a limited company registered in England and Wales.
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 Please consider the environment before printing this email.

This message contains confidential information and is intended only for (Message Recipients). If you are not (Message Recipients) you should not disseminate, distribute or copy this e-mail. Please notify (Message Sender) immediately by e-mail if you have received this e-mail by mistake and delete this e-mail from your system. E-mail transmission cannot be guaranteed to be secure or error free as information could be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or incomplete, or contain viruses. (Display Name) therefore does not accept liability for any errors or omissions in the contents of this message, which arise as a result of e-mail transmission. If verification is required please request a hard-copy version.

-----Original Message-----
From: John Smith
Sent: 03 August 2007 10:25
To: Exclaimer Sales
Subject: Exclaimer Mail Utilities

Dear Sir,

This is a message.

Signatures form an integral part of your email message expressing the personality of your organization's brand. This guide aims to help you get to grips with creating your own dynamic email signature block.

Before you start

1. If you haven't already done so, install **Exclaimer Mail Utilities 4.5** or later.

You can download the latest release version from our website at <http://www.exclaimer.com/downloads>

Please note that you can also create your own email signature blocks using older versions of Exclaimer Mail Utilities. However, this guide has been designed for use with Exclaimer Mail Utilities 4.5x.

What you might need

It is best to collect all the information you might need before you start creating your signature block. This could include your organization's logo, brand guidelines and a brief of any legal text you might want to include in the email messages your organization sends.

Note – it is important to check what local legislation applies to your organization to ensure your emails comply.

Checklist:

1. Logos in the correct size and file format for the web (It is considered best practice to use small image files in the emails you send over the Internet).
2. Color references (in web-safe RGB Hexadecimal if you have them).
3. Example of headed letter paper.
4. Brand guidelines (if you have them).

Once you have all you need you can get started on designing your signature block.

The elements

When creating a signature it's important to consider it in relation to all the parts of your email message. When constructing your signature block you need to consider:

Layout

This dictates where each item in your email message goes. You must decide exactly where you want your signature placed so that it fits in with the other items in your email template.

Images

They give the email a focal point and can enhance the overall design. Make sure that if you are using any images in your signature, that they don't overpower any other images like your organization's logo.

Fonts

They help to set the tone of the email whether it is light hearted or serious and styles the textual content. The font you use in your signature should be the same that you use in the rest of your email template.

Color

Used to help divide up the email so that each part is easily identifiable and helps to communicate your corporate identity. Again, any colors you use should complement those you are already using in the email template or have been chosen based on your corporate colors.

Each of these elements form a vital part of making a complete and professional looking email signature block.

IMPORTANT! – See the *Designing your own email template* Top Tip guide for more information on layout, images, fonts and colors. The guide also explains some of the effects each of these design elements have on the appearance of your email messages.

What you should include

What should a signature block contain?

- First Name
- Last Name
- Job Title
- Telephone Number
- Fax Number
- Email Address
- Website Address
- Promotional Text*
- Company Strapline*
- Company Logo*
- Legally required text*
- Company Name*
- Company Address*

* Optional fields

Note – Promotional text can include tag lines, advertising and special offers. For example, 'Global leader in Microsoft Exchange email solutions, with 22,000 clients, 21 million end-users and 265 million messages processed per day.'

Active Directory and User Defined fields

Almost all of the information that you should include in your signature block can be found in your Active Directory or as a User Defined field in Exclaimer Mail Utilities.

This can make creating and updating your signature block very simple indeed. For example, you may have inserted your company's tag line as a User Defined field which would allow you to update the tag line from outside of the email template that your signature block has been designed in. This also helps to minimise the possibility of introducing human error into the email template itself.

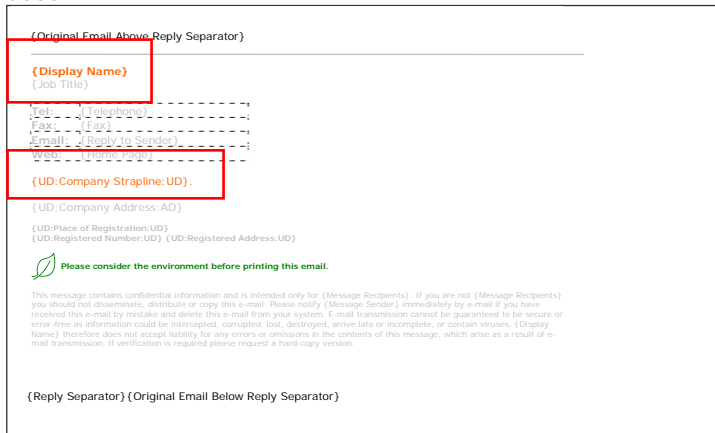
Exclaimer Mail Utilities allows you to insert information from your Active Directory and Exclaimer Mail Utilities' User Defined Fields into your signature block.

If you use {fields} in your email templates the information from these fields will automatically populate any email you send with data from your Active Directory or Exclaimer Mail Utilities' User Defined Fields when it is sent.

Both AD and User Defined fields are particularly useful when you have lots information that you want to update quickly without having to edit your email templates. For example, if you have used a User Defined Field for inserting your company address in your email templates and your business moves offices you only have to change the address in one place and Exclaimer Mail Utilities updates wherever the {UD:Company Address:UD} appears.

You can also insert fields from your Active Directory so any of the information in your AD can be used in the email templates you design. For example, inserting the {Reply to Sender} link field will insert the email address of the person who is sending the message as a 'mailto:' hyperlink.

Email template showing which AD and UD fields have been used:



Example email message with content from AD and UD fields inserted:

Dear Mr Smith,

This is a message.

Best Regards


Karen Green
Marketing Manager

Tel: 0845 050 2300
Fax: 0845 050 4404
Email: karen.green@exclaimer.com
Web: www.exclaimer.com

Global leader in Microsoft Exchange email solutions, with 22,000 clients, 21 million end-users and 265 million messages processed per day.

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 Please consider the environment before printing this email.

This message contains confidential information and is intended only for (Message Recipients). If you are not (Message Recipients) you should not disseminate, distribute or copy this e-mail. Please notify (Message Sender) immediately by e-mail if you have received this e-mail by mistake and delete this e-mail from your system. E-mail transmission cannot be guaranteed to be secure or error-free as information could be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or incomplete, or contain viruses. (Display Name) therefore does not accept liability for any errors or omissions in the contents of this message, which arise as a result of e-mail transmission. If verification is required please request a hard-copy version.

-----Original Message-----
From: John Smith
Sent: 03 August 2007 10:25
To: Exclaimer Sales
Subject: Exclaimer Mail Utilities

Dear Sir,

This is a message.

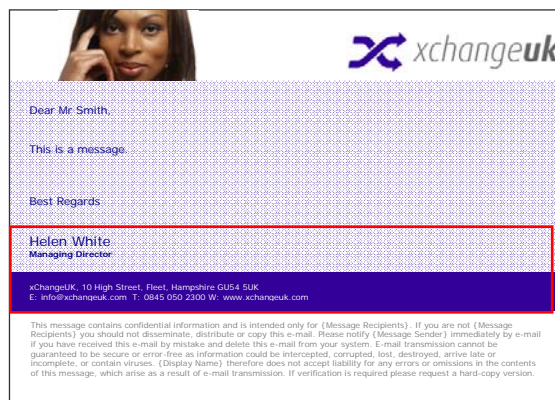
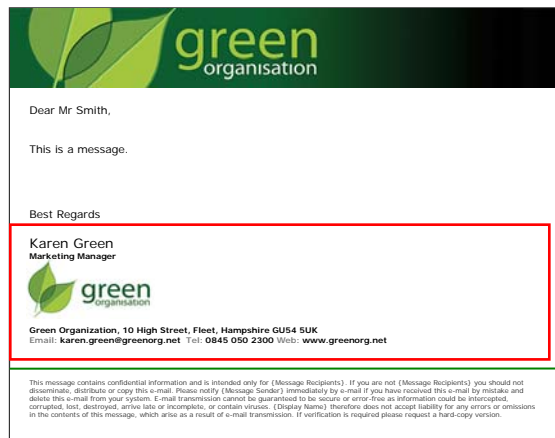
Putting it all together

Putting all this advice into practice can appear to be rather daunting. To help you get to grips with creating a signature block in your email template we have designed a few examples so you can see what is possible using Exclaimer Mail Utilities. You can even use these as a basis for creating your own email templates.

You can access these templates from the Templates section of Exclaimer Mail Utilities.

If you don't have it already go to <http://www.exclaimer.com/downloads> to download the latest version of Exclaimer Mail Utilities and have a go for yourself.

Examples:





Tips and Tricks

Formatting HTML, RTF and Plain Text email

You can choose to design HTML, RTF and Plain Text email messages differently, giving you more control over the look and style of every email type your organization sends.

You can do this using the {Only in HTML}, {Only in RTF} and {Only in Text} fields. You simply construct the formatting and text that you want to appear in each email type and Exclaimer Mail Utilities will generate your organization's email messages accordingly.

Hint

Using User Defined Fields can be particularly useful as the building blocks of your email template. For example, you could use a UDF for laying out the email signature. This could then be edited from outside the main email template helping to guard against errors being introduced into the email template when all you want to do is simply amend the signature or disclaimer.

Avoiding blank AD fields appearing in email messages

To avoid empty AD fields appearing in your Exclaimer Mail Utilities formatted email signature you must add an Exclaimer IF statement to the HTML source code where the field appears. For example, you want to include a mobile telephone number field in your organization's email messages from your AD users. Some of your AD users don't have a work mobile telephone number but you don't want the field to appear blank in the email message.

The solution:

In the WYSIWYG Disclaimer Editor -
`{if({Mobile Number})} Mobile: {Mobile Number} {endif}`

This IF statement will remove the text ('Mobile:') and field value from the email message if the AD field Mobile is blank.

Replacing blank AD fields with other fields in email messages

To avoid empty fields when you actually want fields to appear you can use an Exclaimer IF ELSE statement. For example, this will allow you to insert an alternative field if the one you are IF testing isn't present. If a mobile phone number field isn't present your alternative could be the office telephone number.

In the WYSIWYG editor -
`{if({Mobile Number})} Mobile: {Mobile Number} {else} Tel: {Telephone} {endif}`

This statement will use the telephone text heading and field if the Mobile Number field is blank.

More Useful Tips

You can find more top tips and other useful information in the Exclaimer Knowledge Base Forum at <http://forums.exclaimer.com/forums/21/ShowForum.aspx>.

For more information go to <http://www.exclaimer.com> or contact:

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