

# No good deed goes unpunished, part 2

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 [devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20061019-02](http://devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20061019-02)

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Sometimes you're better off keeping your fool mouth shut. When I reply to a question on an internal discussion list, often with a clarifying question rather than an answer, it will occasionally happen that the person I replied to will send a response directly to me rather than including the discussion list. This is bad for a few reasons.

- I was just trying to help you ask a better question. I didn't sign up to be responsible for the answer. I have an actual job whose description does not include "Solving your personal problems."
- Sending the response directly to me means that others on the discussion list miss out on the answer. (Assuming I even know the answer.) It also prevents the answer from going into the discussion list archives.
- Sending the response directly to me means that if I happen to go on vacation or am otherwise unavailable, you won't get an answer to your question. Other people on the discussion list can't chip in with their advice since you didn't include them on the reply.
- Sending the response directly to me creates an implied obligation on me to reply. I didn't sign up for that.

When somebody does this, I typically forward the message back to the discussion list with a message like "I wish they'd fix that Exchange Server bug where the discussion list keeps getting deleted from the 'To' line." This is a little joke that I use to avoid directly accusing the person of removing the discussion list from the 'To' line intentionally.

I used to write some variation of "It's that annoying Outlook bug again..." but Jensen Harris asked me to stop because they were actually getting bug reports filed into the Outlook defect tracking database that went, "Outlook is deleting discussion lists from the To line when people reply. Raymond says so, so it must be true." The poor Outlook folks had to keep explaining to the people who submitted these bug reports, "No, Raymond was making a joke (at your expense)." To take the heat off the Outlook team, I switched to blaming Exchange Server. I have no idea if the Exchange Server team has their own collection of analogous bugs. They haven't asked me to change my joke, so maybe it's not a problem for them.

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