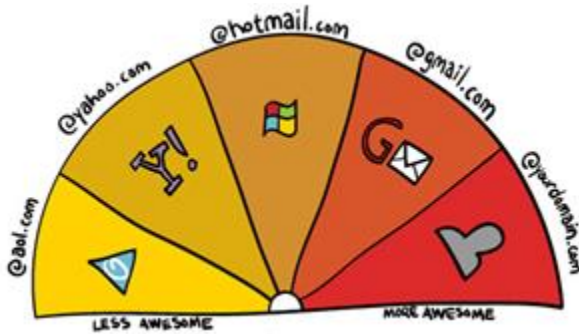


WHAT DOES YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS SAY ABOUT YOU?



Whether you know it or not, some people judge you the moment they see what comes after the "@" in your messages.

For instance, if you have an AOL account, then you probably have the same e-mail address you had in 1997. You also might be 70. Fair or not, if you send an e-mail from an AOL account, the recipient is likely to expect it to be spam, or a forward of some pictures of kittens.

A Hotmail account isn't much different than an AOL account. Hotmail was huge in the Web's earlier days but has lost favor among the internet elite. We'll pause here to point out that Hotmail remains the world's most popular e-mail provider, with more than 360 million accounts. Writer Andrea Bartz points out a potentially surprising subset of Hotmail users: "Hipsters use Hotmail the same way they wear their scruffy skateboarding shoes from high school. It's like a silly cat sweater. Ironic on a hipster, awkward and anachronistic on a middle-aged housewife."

Many folks in our incredibly nonscientific polling said they have Yahoo accounts, which they only use as an address to provide on sites they expect to flood them with spam. But, to be sure, Yahoo has stayed more aggressive with its updates, spam filtering and the like than some of its competitors. And it's continued to grow -- it has 273 million users -- while services such as AOL floundered. We'll call this one a no-decision. But be aware that there are those out there who will judge you for Yahoo.

Gmail has about 193 million users, is free, boasts tons of storage, has a strong chat feature and acts as a portal to many of Google's other services. Ehrlich said that a Gmail user "most likely knows their way around a computer" and "when the internet stops working, actually tries rebooting the router before calling a family member for help."

Owning your own domain name pretty much puts you at the top of the e-savvy stack. No one will think you're a rube when they get your e-mail. They may, however, think you're self-centered, or possibly an egomaniac. Not that you care.

What about school and work email accounts?

If you insist on using your work e-mail for all your personal messages, then people may make two assumptions about you: 1) You spend too much time at work, and 2) You want everyone to be impressed by your @whitehouse.gov e-mail account.

And if you're more than a few years out of school, dump the university account. If you're still using @harvard.edu 20 years after graduation, you'll just be the digital equivalent of the middle-aged guy still trying to squeeze into his old high school jacket.

FIND THE WORD(S) IN THE TEXT THAT BEST FITS THE GIVEN DEFINITIONS:

Person receiving a message: _____

Claim with pride: _____

Top, best of: _____

Naïve, unsophisticated person: _____

Old or out of date: _____

A guess; hypothesis: _____

Struggle; have difficulty: _____

Get rid of; discard: _____