# Case Study

Case Study Incident Analysis: Client Included in Supplier Communication



## Key Issue

A supplier bill request email was mistakenly sent with the **client's email ID included in the "To" field**, instead of being sent only to the supplier.

This happened because the team reused an earlier email template where the client's email ID was already present. Due to urgency after discussions with the onshore team, the email was sent quickly without rechecking the recipients. The same mistake was repeated in subsequent months, as the issue went unnoticed during both preparation and onshore review stages.

Additionally, Outlook's auto-suggestion feature contributed to the risk, as multiple contacts with similar names were displayed, increasing the chance of selecting an incorrect recipient.

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## Impact

- **Direct Confidentiality Exposure:** Since the client was in the “To” field, the client directly received supplier-facing communication that should have remained internal.
- **Legal and Compliance Risk:** The incident resulted in a formal legal notice, highlighting weaknesses in email and data-handling controls.
- **Reputational Damage:** Client confidence was impacted due to perceived lack of process control.
- **High Business Risk from Minor Error:** Although such mistakes are rare, the financial and reputational consequences can be significant.

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**Solution**

To avoid such errors in the future, the following corrective and preventive measures were implemented:

- **Strict Email Protocol**
  - Clients must **never be included in the "To" or "CC" fields** of supplier emails.
  - Mandatory final check of recipients before sending any external email.
- **Separate Email IDs**
  - Maintain **two dedicated email accounts**:
    - One for supplier communication
    - One for customer/client communication
  - This segregation significantly reduces the risk of mixing recipients.
- **Enhanced Review Responsibility**
  - Onshore reviewers and operations teams must be copied on all external emails.
  - Reviewers must verify **both email content and recipient list** before approval.
- **Training and Awareness**
  - Educate juniors on Outlook auto-fill and similar-name risks.
  - Instruct teams to manually verify full email addresses instead of relying on auto-suggestions.
- **Process Discipline**
  - Do not reuse email templates without clearing previous recipients.
  - Avoid sending emails in urgency without a mandatory recipient verification step.

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## Summary

This case demonstrates that even a small oversight—adding a client in the **“To” field** of a supplier email—can lead to serious legal, reputational, and business risks. The issue was process-related rather than intentional misconduct.

By enforcing clear email segregation, strengthening review controls, and training junior staff on technical and process risks, the likelihood of such errors can be significantly reduced. This case serves as an important learning for maintaining confidentiality and professionalism in client-facing operations.

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