

Evite's Epic Impact

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If you have access to email or text messaging, then chances are pretty high that you've received an Evite. Created twenty years ago, the company serves about 100 million customers who issue close to *20,000 electronic invitations per hour* – recently reaching their two-billionth milestone. FB has also ramped up their approach, along with many other online invitation services like Constant Contact, Plogg, and The Knot. It should be no surprise that these mechanisms' best intentions to bring us together might be contributing to greater disconnect.

We're overwhelmed by fill-in-the-blank invitations that arrive via every form of social media. Invitations have veered away from their original purpose, instead becoming tools for fundraising, political and profitable gains. These methods have great merits, including outreach and efficiency, but it is becoming nearly impossible to keep up.

Event planners, caterers, venues and sponsoring organizations find it increasingly difficult to get a firm headcount until the last minute – if at all. Hosts are often left scrambling to re-organize seating arrangements and order print materials. Budgets and meeting spaces are strained or, even worse, lovely meals are wasted by inconsiderate no-shows.

Recently, I offered my home for a good friend's celebration of a milestone. Invitations were mailed, hours were spent cleaning, decorating, creating special party favors, purchasing and preparing food. Unfortunately, nearly two dozen guests cancelled a day or so before, with some sending regrets even during the reception. Way too late.

Technology's barrage of online invitations has fostered systemic indifference to honest gestures of friendship. We need to counter that by being more attentive, grateful and dependable:

- **Respond promptly** – A “maybe” should not be used as a placeholder while deciding whether or not a better option might come along.
- **Keep your promise** - Once the invitation is accepted, respect other hungry guests by showing up on time, especially if it is a sit-down dinner.
- **Be gracious** – Unless there is a restraining order against an acquaintance, don't ask for a look-see at the guest list. Never share your invitation with others (they might not have been included). Get along with everyone – your hosts deserve it.

Invitations are a *gift* – of time, money and hard work. Let's start 2019 with a sincere commitment to thoughtfully respecting the kindhearted favor of hospitality whenever it is extended to us – even if through Evite.