How To Write Professional Emails

Email has become the most common form of communication in the business world - and the most commonly abused. There's one problem: most of us are *drowning* in emails. According to a technology market research study published by the Radicati Group, the average person using email for business receives and sends over 100 emails a day (average of 122 in 2017, expected to continue to show growth to 126 by 2019). The study makes it clear that email use is not going anywhere and will only continue to climb.

You can read more about the Radicati Group study at
www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Email-Statistics-Report-2015-2019-Executive-Summary.pdf

Because of the volume of emails we send and receive, and because emails are often misinterpreted, being able to write a polished, professional email clearly and concisely is now a *critical skill*. Writing emails that are short and to-the-point will reduce the time you spend on emails and make you more productive. That said, writing clearly is a skill. Like all skills, you have to work at it. To begin with, it may take you just as long to write short emails as it took you to write long emails.

On top of that, emails are all too easily misunderstood. Too often email messages appear to the recipient to snap, growl or bark; being *concise* does not mean you need to be *rude*. A recent study found 64% of people have sent or received an email that caused unintended anger or confusion.

As the French philosopher **Blaise Pascal** once said:

"*If I had more time, I would have written you a shorter letter.*"

Written by: **Mary Arnold**, *CMCA, AMS, National Director of Training and Community Association Management Support*

Email Structure

The key to keeping your emails short is using a standard structure. As well as keeping your emails short, following a standard structure also helps you write quickly. Below is a template that you can follow for every email you write.

Greeting/Salutation

The greeting is the first line of the email. Addressing the recipient by name is preferred. Use the person's title (Mr. Mrs. Ms. or Dr.) with their last name, followed by a comma or colon. Also, you can also precede the salutation with "Dear..." or "Hello...".

A Compliment or Pleasantry

Follow your greeting with a compliment or pleasantry. "It was good to meet you at the benefit!" If you're writing to someone you know, "I hope this email finds you well." You never have anything to lose by adding a pleasantry.

The Reason for your Email

In this section you say "I am emailing to ask about..." or "I wondered if you could provide more information regarding..."

Call to Action / Body

After you've explained your reason for emailing, don't assume the recipient will know what to do. Provide specific instructions. This will encourage the recipient to take the correct course of action.

Closing Message

Before you sign off, include a closing message. A closing message has a dual purpose of reiterating your call to action, and of making the recipient feel good. For example, "Thank you for your help." "Let me know if you have any questions."

Salutation and Signature

Choosing a proper salutation will depend on your level of familiarity with the recipient. Examples include Sincerely Yours, Cordially, Respectfully, Best Regards, All the Best, etc. followed by your signature. Like the salutation, the signature of a formal email can be the same as the signature to a letter. However, unlike the salutation, there are more options for a closing. Do you need to clutter the signature block with a clever quote and artwork? Probably not.

An email's **structure** *is a reflection of the person who wrote it.*

Emailing With Purpose

Whenever you sit down to write an email you should know why you're sending the email and what you need from the recipient. Knowing these before hitting send shows respect for the person you are emailing.

Subject Matters

The subject line should be short, but accurate. The recipient may need to refer to the email weeks after they receive it. Finding a specific email is hard enough when you know what you're looking for, and a subject line of "Hey" or "quick question" doesn't help anyone.

Re: Re: Re: FWD: Re:

Clean up the clutter, don't let the "Re:"s and "FWD:"s pile up too much and hide your subject line.

A Strong Opener

Get to the point as quick as possible. If you must include a lot of detail, save it for the body of the email. The recipient shouldn't be wondering what the email is about halfway through your email. Get to the main point quickly, and then include the specifics of why you're emailing.

This Isn't Hollywood

Readers don't want to wait around to know what you're emailing about. This is the wrong time to build suspense.

First Impressions

If you are emailing someone for the first time, a short introduction is the way to go. Keep your intro brief, as if you were meeting them face to face. If you might have contacted them before but don't remember, acknowledge it, as re-introducing yourself can come off rude.

Still Isn't Hollywood

Only disclose relevant information about yourself in your introduction. Save the origin story for another time.

*Is an email even the **right call**? Maybe a phone conversation is more appropriate.*

Writing The Actual Message

Try and get your point accross without rambling. If it's too fluffed up, the reader may glance over and miss important details. Try to break the message up into organized paragraphs by top to make it more logical and digestible.

Insert a line break between each paragraph. This greatly helps readability for long emails. Indenting is typically not necessary, and is sometimes lost during the email transfer anyway.

Don't use slang or "textspeak" abbreviations (hmu, gtg, etc.).

DON'T USE ALL CAPS. don't use all lower case. Use proper punctuation.

Avoid informal writing unless you are writing to someone you know very well already. Even then, informal writing tends to be much more vague, so be mindful when using informal language.

Be mindful of your words, sentences, and paragraphs. ~~Refrain from utilizing lengthy and obtuse verbiage when terse words are acceptable~~ Short and easy words are better. Short sentences and paragraphs are usually better too, as it makes for easy comprehension and topics are easier to find when re-reading.

The more formal the email, the fewer contractions you should use. Keep in mind that at the end of the day a readable and fluid email is better than a "technically grammatically correct" email.

Unlike a business meeting, you shouldn't be trying to cram everything in. Emails by and large should be short and sweet.

*Don't be **wordy**.*

General Quick Tips

When all is said and done, common sense when writing emails goes a long ways. Taking a small breather to reread an email can go a long way to making sure the tone your email has is appropriate for the sitation.

Flow

Writing an email employs a strange mix of written and spoken flow. Too stiff and your email will come off as cold and uncaring, while too casual will come off disrespectful or as if you don't take the matter seriously.

This

Starting an email with the word "this" is begging for the recipient to be irritated or confused.

Please/Thank You

Saying please and thank you in your email goes a long way. And mean it! Even if it is their job to help you.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to see the world through the eyes of other people. Empathy plays a huge part in writing good emails, since you take the recipient's point of view into consideration. Asking yourself how you would interpret the email if you received it is a great start.

Proofread

Proofread your emails! A well-thought out email is much better than a quick reply that has no substance or confuses the person you are sending it to. Don't be afraid to hol on to an important email for a while before sending it, you never know what you might catch after you let it sit. You might think you're too busy, but they might interpret it as carelessness.

*Be **brief**, but be **polite**.*

Contact us

Email: info@realmanage.com | Web: www.realmanage.com | Phone: 866-403-1588

RealManage

POWERED BY CiraConnect