



Your Emails Define You
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A client recently reminded me of the importance of words. Once said or written, they can never be taken back. Words make a deep, long lasting impression.

Admit it: you shoot off hundreds of emails and texts each day, giving little thought to the actual meaning that the recipient may derive. Your goal is to get your point across quickly.

An estimated 95 percent of all business communication is conducted electronically.

What do your messages say about you? That you're a top level professional with whom the recipient wants to do business, or that you're too busy to communicate clearly and effectively?

A 2015 study, Business Communications are "Always On," conducted by uSamp Research found that, "A whopping 95 percent of those surveyed say they use business communication tools instead of in-person meetings as follows: email (48 percent), mobile (20 percent), desk phones (10 percent), text (8 percent) and web meetings (8 percent)."

Another study found that 64 percent of professionals reported to have been confused or even angered by the emails they've received.

How you communicate defines you. What and how you say something electronically creates a permanent record and impression on others. It tells people who you are, if and how much you care, what's important to you and how well educated or savvy you are. Emails can build or break relationships along with careers.

90 percent of the hundreds of '360 Feedback Surveys' I've conducted have stated the need for improved email communication, citing issues as: too many, too lengthy, too cryptic, unprofessional or even demeaning.

Here are my Top '7' Tips on how you can avoid these common and often bothersome errors to set yourself above the rest.

Respond. The top complaint I hear is that people do not respond to emails. This leaves the sender wondering if their email was received, read, or will be acted upon. It is both a time waster and irritating for the sender to be in the position to have to circle back to unanswered emails. A simple "Got it. I'll get back to you by 2:00 this afternoon." communicates your professionalism.

Watch those cc's! Think before you cc everyone. Ask yourself why each individual needs this information. Knowing that you're not bombarding them with unnecessary information, recipients

will look forward to and actually read your emails. When cc's are necessary, avoid unwanted group responses through the use of bcc or ask that they respond directly to you.

Get to the point, now. 28 percent of workers report that scrolling down too far to read an email is the most annoying thing about receiving them in the first place. If you have a lot to communicate consider: 1) an in-person meeting, 2) a phone call, or, 3) writing the entire message out and deleting all unnecessary information prior to sending.

Cryptic responses insult. Your email had a few questions for the recipient. The recipient's response: 'Yep'. A cryptic responses like this is time consuming for all parties. You're confused so have to email back. Instead, take an extra four seconds to be more specific on what you are saying 'Yep' to, or highlight your answers in a different color to each question.

Enhance the subject line. Let the subject tell the story. Stick to the story. When the conversation changes through back and forth emails, change the subject line or start a new chain. Have only one subject per email to avoid confusion or lost information.

Respect and delight. Emails should never be disrespectful or demeaning, ever. If you have an ax to grind, pick up the phone. Respect the recipient enough to make your email worth reading. Make them happy to have received this information, invitation, or request.

Create a signature. As you communicate with professionals whom you'll never meet in person, your email signature is important. It will tell the recipient who you are and why they should pay attention to what you have to say. An effective signature will contain all pertinent information as your full (not just first) name, phone number, title, company, logo and all contact information.

A May 2016 Huffington Post article titled U.S. Workers Spend 6.3 Hours a Day Checking Email reports that 40 percent of workers would prefer to receive fewer emails. The study shares that email as the primary form of business communication is here to stay and will increase substantially in coming years.

There has never been a better time for you to strengthen and enhance your email communication with the above tips. You want recipients to look forward to hearing from you, not get that feeling of dread each time they see your name amongst the hundreds of incoming messages.

I challenge you to make one change today that will result in your emails being more eagerly received, read, and acted upon.

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