# The Art of the Business Email

You probably send and receive dozens of emails each day.  If you're like most people, you give very little thought to writing them.  But increasingly, email is a primary form of communication with clients and co-workers.  Your email makes an important impression—positive or negative—every time you hit the send button.

If you want to make business email work to your advantage, put the following ideas into action.

## 1.  Keep it simple.

Email is meant to speed up communication, not slow it down.  A business email is not the place to write a dissertation.  You don't want people to groan when they open one of your lengthy emails; they'll be more likely to delete your words than to read them.

Limit your emails to the most important points, making them as clear and concise as possible.  Make it a goal to create an email that can easily be read by all recipients, whether they are using computers, BlackBerries, or cell phones.  For business emails, shorter is definitely better.

## 2.  Keep it professional.

It seems like common sense to maintain a professional appearance in your business email.  But the rapid-fire nature of email makes it easy for people to forget.   Here are a few things to avoid:

- **Unusual fonts**, particularly calligraphy/script fonts and comic-type fonts
- **Emoticons**, like smiley faces
- **Text message style language**, such as LOL, BTW, THX

- **Joke forwarding** or other non-business-related forwards
- **Spelling and grammar errors**
- **Using business email for personal activity**

It's in your best interest to keep business email as professional as possible. Remember that your emails actually belong to the company—and they can access them and read them at any time. If you wouldn't be willing to share an email with the whole company, don't send it.

### 3. Keep it clear.

Make it easy for your reader by marking the most important points in bold. Especially when you are asking that person to take action, it can help to have the key question marked in a bold font. It's instantly visible, and they'll remember it.

If you have a longer email, use bullets or numbering when needed. This is particularly useful when you are replying to the points of a previous email. It also helps your reader formulate a faster response.

Ideally, people should be able to scan your email and know what is needed of them within seconds. Anything you can do to guide them and make your points more clear is a benefit.

### 4. Keep it prompt.

Business emails shouldn't languish in your inbox for days at a time. Even if you're planning to check on a fact or write a response when you have more time, it is best to offer a quick reply letting that person know when you'll get back to them. You want your reader to know what action you will take and when.

In addition, if you have a timeline or deadline to meet, then let your reader know. It helps keep communication prompt when your expectations are clear.

5. **Keep it smart.**

Because email happens so quickly, very few people take the time to re-read what they have written. Be smart by making sure that you do. You may catch more errors than you think.

There are many potential pitfalls. You might have addressed the email to the wrong person because the computer "guessed" for you. You could have forgotten to add an attachment. There may be spelling errors. Double-checking is the smart way to prevent those careless mistakes.

There is an art to creating good business emails. These guidelines can help you develop emails that are more readable and more likely to get a response. And that's definitely good for business.

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