

The Message Behind the Words

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See, I believe that business emails are a little like a *first impression*. Within seconds the reader may prematurely judge you, your professional expertise, and your business' ability to produce results; just by the way your email is presented in both written content and overall tone.

Now granted, one may not always engage in business correspondence in which *first impressions* are of great concern. But it may be something to consider if we want to strengthen the connection between our individual professionalism and the rate to which we can gain potential clients through email correspondence. By taking a little extra time to ensure the quality of our business correspondence is in alignment with our own professional standards, we can go a long way to improving the positive impact left to the reader.

Therefore, here are three tips to keep in mind when emailing your family, friends, business associates, or others you have not yet worked with:

1. **Decide the relationship you have with the anticipated reader before you send out the email.** If the reader is a close family member or friend, your email may reflect a light-hearted, friendly tone familiar to the both of you. If however, the reader is a co-worker, it may be best to keep the shared information brief while adding your telephone extension number in case further direct contact is necessary. My experience has shown me that whenever further discussion is necessary between co-workers, the telephone is the best way to communicate. Lastly, if the reader is someone you don't know but are hoping to gain business from, be sure to put your best foot forward. Be precise, yet polite. Let the tone of your email be friendly while your message remains professional, and above all...ensure all words are correctly spelled. This is your first time to make a good impression, so be sure that it works to your advantage.
2. **Accept that errors and typos may and will happen** - When an error or typo in your correspondence takes place accidentally, fear not...you, like all of us, are human, and in being human, we can relate to each other. Whenever an error has taken place, do what you can to graciously accept the error for what it is and make the necessary adjustments or modifications as seen fit. Try to look at it as an opportunity to heighten your professional grace so that others can see how well you work through unexpected situations. This

ability you have to shine, may grant you more opportunities in the future. After all, many people appreciate working with those who can resolve situations in a timely and gracious fashion.

3. **Stay focused on the key message.** Regardless as to whom your reader may be, it is important to stay focused on the key message. To help do this, ensure that your subject line written at the top of your email reflects the current message of the email being forwarded. Pay special attention to those emails where replies take place. If the current message is still reflective of the initial subject line...no worries. If however, the current message has changed, be sure to change the subject line. This can help speed up returning correspondence. But remember...direct telephone calls, if possible, are still a great option.

Have you ever written or replied to an email so quickly that once reviewed later on you realize it had a number of typos in it, and you immediately felt as though your computer's spell check has let you down, yet again? Well I have, and at the time, I will admit, I was a little embarrassed, especially when I did spend much time and energy creating and reviewing the document beforehand.

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