

Communication Culture | Part two of three on Email Success

EMAIL CONTENT SMARTS

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DID YOU MAXIMIZE YOUR OPEN RATE with a smart subject line since our focus on it last time around?

Now that you are paying attention to the sizzle that attracts, let's look at "the steak" or the content of the body of your email.

Email Content has:

A beginning where you state and summarize the content to follow

A middle where you present your facts to support the argument, content or action you are writing about

An end where your last comment might ask for or confirm further action steps

To do this it's useful to know where you are going in the content. What is your purpose? Who are you talking to? What language will engage your reader, and MOST importantly-where are you going with your message?

'Hookiness' must continue in the BODY of the mail as you only have 2-7 seconds to grab your reader. Knowing how you want to conclude will help you to structure your email from the start to keep readers engaged.

Email is fun, fast and cheap

Don't be tempted to match these features of technology with content that is too casual or insufficiently thought out. Worse, unwarranted emoticons (smileys), short forms (tc, take care) and excessive punctuation may slip in. These are the side effects of all our texting and instant messaging on other devices. While they do soften the harshness of electronic communication and shorten typing time, imagine your readers' response in a business or new relationship context?

Both the content and the look create an impression of you. Do you have important information to convey? Do you know your subject well? Are you credible, or to be trusted?

Do keep in mind two points. 1. There is likely to be another reader. 2. Email is viewed as a legal document. Observing courtesy and good writing rules, with a few unique modifications for Email is wise.

Power Tips to Punch up Your Message

Provide a summary.

- A line or two right at the top allows readers to assess the content's value and the time they need to devote to your message.

Brief is best.

- Email is not designed to transmit heavy content-not in the body of the actual email or in attachments.
- If there's more than 2-3 paragraphs, attach your message as a document. Offer links to heavy graphic files (photo albums).
- Respect both your readers' personal and computer 'download time'. If you make it easy to grasp your message, your reader is more likely to accept or act on its content.

Use proper language.

- Correct spelling, grammar and punctuation increases clarity and decreases misunderstandings.
- Write in full sentences to be taken seriously.
- Paragraphs promote clarity and lay out the logic for your reader.
- Avoid vocabulary that is trendy, slang, acronyms or beyond what might be clear or shared in common.

Use familiar structure.

- Expected structure lets the reader skim confidently for points of interest and a decision to read more fully later.

VIP: More than 75% of business is now transacted in Email. To have your message opened and received well, provide value, clarity and brevity in your content. You'll leap over the barriers of a rushed world of words, read on tiny screens, on tight schedules and through serious cultural filters.

Next week: Your signature!

Helena helps executives, consultants and business owners to define their message so that it makes them money and gets them the results they want in print, in person and online. Invite me on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook @ HelenaKaufman. <http://helenakaufman.com> www.theafronews.ca

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