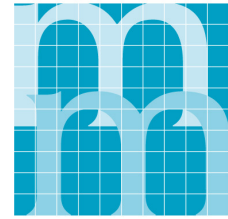


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## 15 Tips for More Effective Email Communication

by Margaret Cain



M squared Corporate  
Communications

### Watch Your Email Manners!

Email has introduced a whole new etiquette to the world of business communications. Yes, it's more informal than a letter, but the niceties still need to be observed to build good relationships with clients and associates. The daily hike up Email Mountain makes it hard to get it right every time, but here are a few dos and don'ts for your more sensitive emails...

1. Think about the subject line – make it short, snappy and descriptive. Be prepared to change it during the correspondence to reflect the evolving conversation and help the recipient.
2. Always address your correspondent by name. Whether you use 'Dear Jill', Hello Jill', 'Hi Jill' or simply 'Jill' will depend on your relationship and the business culture.
3. An email sent is an email out of your control. Would you say it to the person's face? No? Then don't say it in an email. You'll avoid the mistake one of my clients made: her head was so full of her boss's unreasonable behaviour that she vented her emotions in an email accidentally addressed to him, rather than to her friend. Oops!
4. So, always take time to calm down before you send. In a difficult situation, it's better to save your response as a draft for 24 hours – and then review it – than destroy working relationships in the instant it takes to press the 'send' button.
5. In the same way, when receiving email, it's true that a timely *acknowledgement* is courteous, but you don't have to give an immediate *answer*. Be assertive: you have a perfect right to send a fuller reply only when you've had time to reflect.
6. Printing out an email in a different typeface helps you to see it with a fresh eye. Errors will leap off the page if you set it aside for a few minutes, too.
7. Always complete the address line *last* to avoid sending out your unpolished draft.
8. Double-check any attachments, by opening before sending, to ensure they are the ones you intended.
9. Keep use of the 'Cc' and 'Reply All' options to a minimum. You'll be valued for not

contributing to the email deluge.

10. Don't use the 'blind copy' option to copy in a third-party unbeknown to the main recipient. If they find out, you will look very devious.
11. Conversely, do use the 'blind copy' option when sending out an email to a long mailing-list. This courtesy helps protect both your correspondents' privacy and their email systems, as some viruses seek out long address lists.
12. Delivery-receipts or read-receipts can be useful time-savers. However, overuse them and it looks as if you're checking up on your correspondents. Use only if you must have confirmation that important information has reached its destination.
13. Use the 'high priority' option very rarely, if ever – remember the story of the boy who cried wolf.
14. Jokes, heart-rending pleas to help sick children enter the Guinness Book of Records, urban legends, chain letters...with an estimated 97 billion emails a year (and rising) zigzagging across the airwaves, why add to the clutter?
15. Above all, spreading viruses is the ultimate bad manners! Do everything you can to install protective software and keep it up to date.

It's worth taking care with email. As well as the risk of damaging hard-won business relationships, email can now be admissible as evidence in court, as many senders are finding to their cost.

In fact, do you need to send that email at all? Why not go on an 'email fast' for a day and pick up the phone instead!

### **About the author**

Margaret Cain of M squared Corporate Communications helps businesses and not-for-profit organisations to get their message across to clients, partners and employees, in print, over the web and in the media.

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