Business Email Messaging Tips and Etiquette

Emails are used for: requests and fact/data sharing. Not for getting your needs met.

USING ALL CAPS IS CONSIDERED SCREAMING – when you need to emphasize importance, use the *italics* or underscore features instead.

Subject lines should be concise and refer to the purpose of your message.
> NOTE: emails with lower case subject lines are more likely to be opened.

Copy only the people who need to know

Avoid the 'reply all' button, especially when you are part of a large distribution list.
> Unnecessary clutter in inboxes is a distraction and time waster.

Emails that require no action on your part need no reply at all.

When thanking someone 'reply' to that individual only.

When 3 back and forth messages occur, stop emailing and have an in-person conversation

Use an email signature – include all of your contact information, including way to connect via social media. End the message with your first name. Your full name will be in the signature body. EXCEPTIONS: when sending to someone you frequently email; or, replying to a back and forth exchange, it isn't necessary to use your entire signature each time. Do include your mobile number for their easy access.

Include more white space.. Typing one large block of copy is the equivalent of rambling and others will think you can't separate your thoughts. They also conclude that you'll speak in a rambling manner as well making them less likely to want to meet with you.. Emails need white space so the reader can easily tell when the topic changes. Using too much text at once is a turn off to the reader.

Be succinct and clear – make a maximum of 3 points per email. Remember that 65+% of emails are now opened on mobile devices.
> *Focus on shortening your sentences*. One sentence should contain 10-12 words.
> *Each sentence should make a clear statement*. It should add to the statement that went before. A good paragraph is a series of clear, linked statements.
> *Make each point a separate paragraph* – this makes your email easier to follow and reply to.
> *Do not use big words.* If your average word is more than five letters long, re-write. The use of small words compels you to think about what you're writing. Even difficult ideas can be broken down into small words.
> *Never use words whose meanings you are not sure of*. Misuse of words leads others to doubt your credibility.
> *Avoid using company abbreviations, lingo, foreign language terms, etc.*
> *Avoid the abstract*. Always go for the concrete. Be specific. Make no assumptions.

Customers want the bottom line upfront, especially if they're upset.
> *Answer their questions quickly and with the fewest number of words possible.*
> *No justifications or lengthy explanations are necessary.*
> *Never use a defensive tone or assign blame.*
> *Always accept responsibility and offer a resolution*

Always check for accuracy before sending:
> *Watch out for homophones:* the most common misused words are:
>> it's, its; their, they're, there; two, to, too; affect, effect; were, we're, where
> *Use spelling and grammar check* – if the grammar and spelling are sloppy, your reader will assume you and your research are sloppy and they won't take you seriously. NOTE: there are so many tricky Proper English rule twists it's impossible for software to find every error. Be diligent.
> *Use no more than 2 exclamation points per 1000 words*
> *Use 3 or more you/your words for every I/we word used*
> *You need a capital for:* the beginning of a sentence, proper nouns, titles (both people and written works)
> *Double check dates, times, facts, figures and dollar amounts for accuracy before sending*
> *If you reference an attachment, make sure it is attached*
> *If you include a link make sure it functions - send a test email to your personal account first*

Examples of homophones and their correct use:
Would the two of you like to join the group too?
Their house is over there, I'd introduce you but they're on vacation.
It's about time everyone understand its importance!
You're lucky that you got your things out of the house before the flood.
We're only visiting places where we never were before.
In order to affect change, you need to understand the effect not changing will have on the team.
If you want greater results than you've ever seen before, then you need to change behaviors.

Avoid sending the following types of emails:

The email to no one - I recently was copied on an email addressed to 8 people. The message said, "Can someone please make sure this gets done?" Yet, the email did not say which person should take the action. In essence, it was addressed to no one and everyone at the same time. As you can guess, everyone assumed that someone else was going to do the task, and it didn't get done at all.

The spam email - People can find enough random stuff to surf on the Internet, they don't need your topics, as well. Passing along random articles, gossip, and websites only clutters up others' inboxes.

The conversation email - If your email message cannot be conveyed in less than 2-3 short paragraphs then it shouldn't be an email. It is probably better handled as a direct conversation.

The ping-pong email - If your email is going to require more than 2–3 back-and-forth responses, it is better to talk to the person, or use a survey, than play email ping pong.

The bad news email - Never deliver criticism or bad news via email. These should always be delivered in person. Even constructive criticism can easily be taken out of context or be misunderstood. If you reach voice mail for the person, say something like: 'I'm sorry to miss you, the reason for this call is to inform you of a change in plans. It would be best to discuss this one-on-one, please return the call today if possible.' If you don't hear from them and reach voice mail a second time, leave a more specific message, Example: 'I hate that we are having trouble connecting. A follow-up email will be sent with more specifics, but your scheduled service appointment will need to be moved to the following week.'
Then send the email, keep it short and to the point, no lengthy explanation or justifications.

The 'you're fired' email – I can't believe this needs to be included. Sadly, I now personally know three people who were informed of their termination via email. The people who sent those emails should never have been entrusted with leading a team.

The urgent email – email is the new snail mail. People are not sitting at their desks awaiting your message. If something is truly urgent, email is not the medium you should use, instead meet with, call or text them.

The 'it's all about me and what I need' email – A client recently sent me an email stating that he was not able to make our 11am call the next day. That was it, no apology for messing with my day. No choices for alternate meeting times. The message I received loud and clear was that he doesn't respect me or my time. I had to reply and ask him to let me know his availability, which is ridiculous because he's the one who cancelled.

The 'I'm really hiding and getting my needs met' email – many people 'hide' in emails, dodging responsibility; using it as a tool to prove how others haven't responded, etc. Or, when a client changes direction and notifies you via email, you reply via email with some version of 'that's not what you said the last time we talked…..' Pick up the phone instead and attempt to work through any misunderstanding; fall on the sword and 'own' how you may have messed up or not been clear.