Email Etiquette:

Write More Effective Emails At Work

Reference ebook

By Dr Clare Lynch

Doris&Bertie
words people trust

Lecture 3: Cultural considerations

According to linguist John Hinds, there are two ways of writing - and both are culturally determined. Writer-responsible culture and reader-responsible culture.

If you're writing within a British, American or Australian business culture, keep things short, simple, direct and to the point - even if it feels like you're being patronising.

In such cultures, being overly formal, flowery or complex in your emails isn't going to make you sound more professional - the opposite, in fact.

Cultural differences when writing

Writer-responsible culture	Reader-responsible culture
UK USA Australia Germany	Chinese Japanese Korean Thai South American French Southern European
Writer's job to make her meaning clear **Clear Concise Simple Direct and explicit**	*Reader's job to discern meaning* **Wordy Flowery Indirect and implicit**

Lecture reference

More on the cultural considerations of written English:

https://www.dorisandbertie.com/goodcopybadcopy/2016/10/07/culture-shapes-way-write/

Lecture 4: SCRAP – How to structure your email

S Situation
C Complication
R Resolution
A Action
P Politeness

EXAMPLE

S Hi Clare, The City Lit just got in touch with me about running their weekly copywriting course next term.

C However, it's not suitable for me since (a) I'm not a trainer and (b) I'm not in London.

R Since you meet both criteria, I thought you might fancy it. Or, if not, perhaps you know someone who would?

A Please let me know if you or anyone you know would be interested – and I'll pass your email on

P If not, sorry to bother you – and no need to reply.

Best wishes, Tom

Lecture 5: The rule of one

- Stick to one request/action per email
- Use separate emails for separate topics
- Limit yourself to one idea per sentence
- Keep sentences short – 15 to 20 words maximum
- One idea per heading, subheading or subject line

Lecture 6: Email layout tips

Those of you who wish to apply to present your work at the conference must apply by 21 October 2017. The conference panel will make the final selection of applicants by the 25 October and those applicants will be notified shortly after this date. Those of you who do not get a reply by 30 October can assume their application has been unsuccessful. Please see the company intranet page for application guidelines and for our shortlist of in-demand workshop topics. Applicants will be notified whether their proposal has been accepted.

Because there are only a limited number of conference places available, we recommend you book your place as soon as possible. The application form is available on the company intranet site. If you are a recent hire and have not been onboarded yet, please talk to your HR representative about your application request as you may need to supply additional information. Closing date for registrations for Pre-Conference Workshops on 23 October and the Conference on 24 and 25 October 2017.

A light breakfast will be available from 7am until 9am. Tea and coffee will also be served in the morning. A full-service buffet lunch will be provided in the Wilkin's room from 1pm until 3pm. There will be a wide variety of foods available including vegetarian and vegan options. If you have any other dietary requirements, could you please itemise them in the relevant field of the online application form.

If you wish to attend the evening formal dinner, please apply on the appropriate page of the company intranet page under '2018 Conference'. Tickets for this event cost £350 and are very limited. The menu choices are available on the company intranet page and we would ask that you submit your choices by the 21 October. If you have any other dietary requirements, could you please itemise them in the relevant field of the online application form.

Want to host a workshop?

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Book your place now!

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Food and dietary requirements

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- Breakfast 7am–9am in the Wilkin's room
- Mid-morning break 11am–11:20am Sutherland room
- Lunch 1pm–2pm Wilkin's room
- Afternoon break 3:30pm–3:50pm
- Evening drinks 5:30pm–7pm Enterprise bar
- Formal Dinner 7:30pm–10:30pm Grand Hall

Formal Conference Dinner

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If you have any other dietary requirements, could you please itemise them in the relevant field of the online application form.

Ways to make your email easier to read

- Short sentences
- One-sentence paragraphs
- Bullet points
- Headings and sub-headings

Lecture 9: What you should never say in an email

Six things you should never put in an email

- Anything written in anger
- Negative comments about others
- 'TMI' - personal stuff
- Offensive and unprofessional language
- Private or confidential information
- Humour

Before you hit 'send'!

- **The court test** – never say anything in an email that you wouldn't be happy to hear read out in court.
- **The grandmother test** – never say anything in an email that you wouldn't say in front of your grandmother.

Lecture 10: When to email and when not to

When to send that email

- Providing helpful resources such as procedures or step-by-step guides
- Documenting what was agreed, decisions that were made, or actions to be taken

When to talk face-to-face

- Giving feedback
- Delivering a difficult message
- Discussing complex issues
- Debating or negotiating
- Talking about personal stuff
- Apologising

When to pick up the phone

- When you want a quick answer or a simple piece of information
- If the matter is urgent
- Interviews are often better done over the phone

Rule of thumb

If the idea of having a conversation makes you feel uncomfortable, that's exactly when you should have the talk – either on the phone or in person.

Lecture 11: Replying to email

Tips for being an empathetic emailer

- Respect work-life balance – especially if your company talks about the importance of diversity and inclusion
- Acknowledge receipt of others' emails
- Can't provide an answer straight away? Let them know when you can get back to them
- Need your reader's help? Give them a deadline (politely!)
- No response to your email needed? Let them know!
- Be present in the room – don't put your smartphone before real-live human beings

Lecture reference

Email response time research:

http://www.toistersolutions.com/blog/2015/4/13/get-ready-to-respond-to-customer-email-within-one-hour

https://viterbi.usc.edu/news/news/2015/why-hasn-t.htm

Lecture 14: Email greetings

Notes

- English and American business culture is relatively relaxed
- It wouldn't be unusual for a graduate trainee to address the CEO by her given name and vice versa
- In general, if you're emailing a colleague, a client, a supplier or even approaching someone cold like a hiring manager, it's usual to address them by their given name
- If you're emailing James Jones, then Dear Mr Jones might come across as too formal. Dear James or Hi James is better
- If you're not sure of your recipient's marital status - or how she prefers to be called, address her as Ms rather than Miss or Mrs

Dear Mr Jones — Formal
Dear James
Hello James
Hi James
Hey James ✗
Hiya — Informal
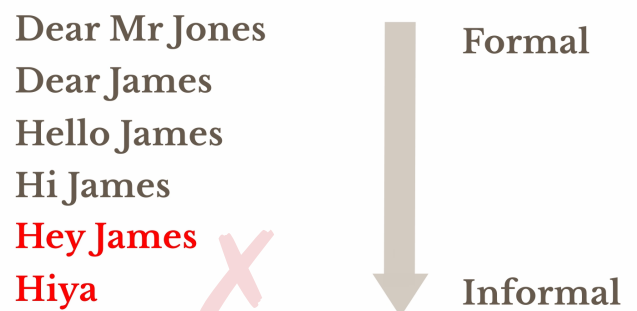
Lecture 15: Signoffs and signatures

Signoffs

The 'Best' group ✔

"Best wishes"

"All the best"

"Best"

The 'Regards' group ✔

"Regards"

"Kind regards"

"Warm regards"

"Best regards"

Could be construed as rude

"Thanks"

"Thanks in advance"

A little too formal

"Yours sincerely"

Avoid abbreviations ✘

ATB

Rgds

Thx

Avoid colloquialisms ✘

Cheers!

Cheers mate!

Signatures

Do include ✔

Job title

Phone number

Address

Don't include ✘

Every social-media profile you have

Cheesy quotations

Lecture reference

Signoff response research:

https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/email-sign-offs-put-best-thanks-to-shame

Creative responses:

http://blog.boomerangapp.com/2017/01/how-to-end-an-email-email-sign-offs/

Lecture 15: Subject lines

How to write a good subject line

- Don't ignore it!
- Aim for under six words
- Avoid vague words like
  - 'Hello'
  - 'Update'
  - 'Meeting'
- Make them information rich
  - 'Compensation strategy meeting: 27 Sep 2017'
  - 'Comms strategy report'
- Front-load keywords
  - 'Project Zeus: Update' not 'Update on Project Zeus'
- Ask for an action
  - 'New ad campaign - send your feedback'
  - 'Board meeting: reply by 2pm Friday'
  - 'New ad campaign: FYI'
- Update it if the topic changes
- DON'T SHOUT!!

Lecture 19: When to flag urgent emails

Why not to flag

- Overuse may irritate your colleagues
- Danger people will start to tune out and ignore it
- If something's urgent or important, say so in your subject line

Rule of thumb

Only use the high priority flag when you need someone to take an action to avert an imminent disaster such as huge financial losses, law suits or reputational scandals.

Lecture 20: 'To', 'Cc', 'Bcc', 'Reply all'

The 'To' Field

When to use the 'To' field

People directly affected by your email, such as when:

- you're asking them a question
- you want them to do something
- you're replying to their message
- they're named in your greeting

The 'Cc' Field

When to use the 'Cc' field

Use this field when you're not expecting the recipient to take any action in response to your email.

When NOT to use 'Cc'

- Informal escalation
- Powerplays
- Back-covering
- Delivering news that affects the recipient

Rule of thumb

A good rule of thumb is to announce your use of the Cc to the email's main recipient – for example, by saying something like: 'I'm cc'ing my colleague Dave, who'll be handling the design for the project'

The 'Bcc' Field

When to use the 'Bcc' field

When people shouldn't be able to see the email addresses of all the other recipient – put your own address in the 'To' field to keep everyone's email secret.

When you want to copy someone in on a sensitive message. (See dangers of using 'Bcc')

When you want to Bcc your own manager or your HR team to keep them in the loop without alarming the employee. (See dangers of using 'Bcc')

Dangers of using 'Bcc'

- Recipient may respond with 'Reply all' – forward the original message to the third party after you've sent it instead.

Rule of thumb

If sending a Bcc makes you feel a bit guilty, sneaky or mean, don't do it!

Lecture 21: Sending attachments

Attachments – best practice

- Attach it before you begin writing the email
- Mention that you've attached it in the body of the email
- Keep file size under 5MB
- Zip it or use a file transfer service if the file is above 5MB
- Watch your format. Use universal file types like .PDF, .RTF, and .JPG.
- Group attachments in separate emails

Lecture 22: Out-of-office messages

How to write a helpful out-of-office message

- Be specific with dates
- Checking in? Mention, but manage expectations
- Provide your contact details if you're happy to be contacted
- Put them in touch with a colleague
- Keep it professional!

Remember . . .

. . .to turn your automatic reply off as soon as you get back to the office!

Lecture 22: Proofing and polishing

How to avoid cringe-worthy email errors

- Fill in the 'To' field last
- Cut and paste from Word
- Check their name – always!
- Check subject line, dates, times, hyperlinks and attachments separately
- Use automatic spellcheck
- Print it out – and enlist a colleague's help

Email Etiquette: 7-step checklist for effective emails

By Dr Clare Lynch

Step ONE

Ask yourself: 'Is email the best channel?'

Apply the 'queasiness' test: Are you emailing because the idea of doing it in person makes you feel uncomfortable? If so, email might not be the best approach.

Step TWO

Add attachments Do this first. Keep them under 5MB.

Step THREE

Craft your message

Remember the Rule of 1: include only one idea, request or action in the message.

Consider using the SCRAP structure:

- Situation
- Resolution
- Politeness
- Complication
- Action

Apply the reputation test: Would you say this to your grandma? Would you be happy for this message to be read out in court?

Step FOUR

Add some white space

What would the text look like on a smartphone screen? Could you introduce:

- paragraph returns
- bullet points
- headings

Step FIVE

Write your subject line Think: keywords.

Step SIX

Proofread Pay particular attention to:

- recipient's name
- dates
- hyperlinks
- subject line
- times

Step SEVEN

Insert addresses

'**To' field**: recipients you're seeking an action from

'**Cc'**: as an FYI. Check your motives: would others consider it bullying?

'**Bcc'**: use with caution

Dr Clare Lynch

Clare Lynch is Doris and Bertie's chief business writing expert. As a trainer and writing coach, she has been described as inspiring, engaging and entertaining.

In the 1990s she worked at the *Financial Times* and has since helped a wide range of firms communicate better with their investors, customers and employees.

Clare is also a director at Cambridge Language Education and Research Associates (CLERA), which provides English language training and consultancy to governments, universities, the private sector and schools, both in the UK and overseas

Clare has a PhD from the University of Cambridge and teaches writing skills at the University's Language Centre. She has also taught writing at the Judge Business School (Cambridge University's business school), UBS, RBS, the European Commission, TowerBrook Capital Partners, the Prince's Trust, Cause4 and Ofcom.

tel: +44 (0)208 127 1477
email: clare@dorisandbertie.com
web: www.dorisandbertie.com
blog: www.goodcopybadcopy.co.uk
twitter: DorisandBertie
linkedin: www.linkedin.com/in/clarelynch

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