

WRITING A CONVINCING EMAIL

PAGE 1



How many e-mails do you write each day? What advice would you give for writing effective e-mails? **Read this e-mail from Mary who wants her boss to approve an in-house gym.**

To: Jim **Subject:** The Health Impact of In-House Employee Fitness Programs

Jim,

As you know, employee absenteeism is generally recognized as an ongoing problem with a steep financial impact, both in our company and in other companies in our industries.

According to a recently published government report, group physical fitness is extremely important even though very few companies actually demonstrate a commitment to it! Many firms identify physical fitness as an undervalued competitive asset, but don't have a plan for improvement in this area, even though physical fitness is strongly linked to corporate and individual economic and personal success. I feel that if we do not address the issue of physical fitness as it enhances workplace productivity, we will be left behind.

An in-house gym will reduce absenteeism because then people will want to come to work rather than stay at home and they won't get sick so much. Therefore, we should consider allocating money for the installation of a gym at our headquarters facility.

Your support for this project would be greatly appreciated.

Mary

What is your impression of the e-mail? Do you think Jim would read the whole e-mail? Would he know that Mary wanted him to agree to pay for the installation of a gym? Do you think he would approve the in-house gym? Would he know what the next step is? Why / Why not?

You are going to read an article that gives six pieces of advice about how to write effective e-mails. Rearrange the words below to make the headings for each piece of advice. Then read the article and match the headings to the advice.

subject the benefit in a put line

argument each evidence with bolster

conclusion your writing by start

in mind a specific have decision

structure "digestible chunks" into your argument supporting

conclusion "call to action" as a repeat your

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How to Write a Convincing E-mail

E-mails are the most common document in the business world. Unfortunately, many e-mails are so poorly written

that recipients must struggle to figure out why they're reading the e-mail and what they're supposed to do about it.

Here's a foolproof method to write e-mails that get the job done – just follow this simple, six-step system.

1

The goal of an e-mail is always to get the recipient(s) to make a decision of some kind. Otherwise, why bother writing it?

Therefore, before you write anything, ask yourself: exactly what decision do I

want the recipient to make? As with all business writing, vagueness is the opposite of useful. The clearer the goal, the more convincing your e-mail will be.

2

Your conclusion is a statement of the decision that you want the recipient to make, based upon the contents of your e-mail.

In school, they probably taught you to start with an introduction and end with a conclusion. Wrong.



Nobody in the business world has time to wander through the development of an idea. If you don't tell them

the reason for the e-mail immediately, chances are they'll just move on.

3

Once you've stated your conclusion, marshall the arguments that support your conclusion (i.e. the decision you want made). To make your arguments "digestible," break them into small "chunks," and present each point with a similar format and sentence structure.

4

Everyone has an opinion. Unless you provide facts that back up your arguments, your e-mail becomes one giant opinion and therefore, in the eyes of the recipient, it'll probably seem like just your point of view.

5

At the end of the e-mail, restate the conclusion in a way that provides the recipient with the next

step that they must take, assuming the recipient now agrees with your conclusion, based upon the force of your arguments and evidence. Keep it simple and specific.

6

Your subject line (aka "title") is the most important part of an e-mail, which is why you write it last, after you've written down both your conclusion and the arguments and evidence that supports that conclusion.

Ideally, a subject line should accomplish two important tasks: 1) interest the recipient enough so that the e-mail gets opened and read, and 2) imply the conclusion that you want the recipient to accept. In most cases, the best way to accomplish both tasks is to encapsulate a benefit (or benefits) that will result from the decision that you'd like the recipient to make.

Discussion Do you agree with the advice given? Is there anything you disagree with? Why? Were you taught to start with an introduction and finish with the conclusion? If you receive an e-mail that does not give the reason for writing immediately, do you stop reading it? Do you usually break down your argument into "digestible chunks" and support them with evidence? In your conclusion, do you normally make it clear what action you want the reader to take? Do you include a benefit in the subject line?

What changes would you make to the email on page 1 according to the advice you have just read.

Now read the writer's version of the e-mail and discuss whether you think it would achieve its objectives.

To: Jim **Subject:** How we can reduce absenteeism

Jim,

I want you to approve the installation of an in-house gym. This will:

- Reduce absenteeism. According to a National Health Institute survey of 1,000 firms,

companies with in-house gyms experience 20% less absenteeism than those who lack such facilities.

- Increase productivity. We have 50% more absenteeism than other firms in our industry, so reducing that number by 20% will automatically increase our productivity by 10%.

If you respond to this e-mail with your approval, I'll get the process started.

Mary

Vocabulary focus Find synonyms in the article for the following words. They appear in the same order.

1 continuing

2 given too low a value

3 deal with

4 badly

5 never-failing

6 a lack of clarity as a result of not being clearly stated or expressed

Practice Now use the words from the article to complete these sentences:

1 He invested his money so _____ that he lost everything.

2 Negotiations with the unions are _____.

3 David's contribution to the company is _____ - he contributes more than people think.

4 Many investments are sold as _____, but it is not normally the case.

5 The CEO said we need to _____ the issue of cost cutting.

6 _____ is the main problem in writing effective e-mails.

Language focus Write an e-mail to your boss asking them to approve a team-building weekend for your department following the advice given in the article.

To:

Subject: