

Title:

How to Communicate Clearly and Professionally Online

Word Count:

427

Summary:

Communicating online clearly and professionally can help any business succeed by playing close attention to detail and conveying its story properly

Keywords:

writing, editing, punctuation, grammar, communication

Article Body:

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Some people enjoy writing. Some, like me, are even driven to write. Others hate it. They hate words. They hate writing them down, and they hate typing them. Some people even hate reading them. Regardless, the written word is a necessary part of our daily lives, particularly in a world that has become less face-to-face and more virtual. We communicate not only through the Web but through our e-mail communications, instant messengers and online chat. As a result, the words and images we use must be carefully chosen to not only convey our meaning but our tone as well.

Here are some tips to help you put your best foot forward in your online communications:

- "Internet speak" (LOL, b4, np, ty, etc.) is fine for casual communications with friends, but it should not be used on your company Web site or in any other professional communications. Words should not have to be deciphered to be understood.
- Always use appropriate punctuation and grammar - these tried and true rules will never go out of style. Need a refresher course? Pick up a resource guide the next time you visit Amazon.com or your local bookstore. I like Punctuation Simplified and Applied by Geraldine Woods (Webster's New World, 2006).
- For those who didn't get the memo yet, PLEASE don't use ALL CAPS to convey a message. This is akin to shouting in the online world.
- Befriend the "spell check" tool and buy a good dictionary and thesaurus.

Spelling errors create the perception that a person is too busy to proofread his own work or to pay attention to little details.

- To present content that is easily understood, write in clear, simple language. The benchmark is to write for an audience of 10th graders.
- When possible, add descriptive modifiers (i.e., adjectives) to convey degree and tone. Compare these two ideas: 1) "With our experience, our Web design team can create Web pages quickly." 2) With more than 50 years of combined Web design experience, our creative team can develop an attractive, functional page design within 72 hours." Sentence 2 shares the same idea, but is much clearer.
- Always proofread and edit your work to be sure it is error free and easily understood. For larger projects with a long-term impact, like Web copy, consider hiring a professional writer or editor to be sure your story gets told in a way that adequately shares the value of your company with others.

By following these basic guidelines, you can ensure that you communicate clearly and professionally with your customers and prospective clients.