

Email Frustrations (Yup, They're Still Around)

By Nancy Friedman, The Telephone Doctor

Dhe American economy has always bo you ever wonder why your email doesn't get answered? Here are some of the public's frustrations on email. One of them may be why you didn't get an answer. There are probably more; however, these seem to float to the top more often.

Messages that are too long - As in voice mail, we know that the more succinct the message, the better it's received. And now, when we all can get our emails not only on our office computers, but on our phones and our iPads, it's critically important for our emails to be short, sweet, and to the point. Long messages get zapped just as long voice mails used to.

- Suggestion: If you do have a long email to send, mention that right in the subject line. This way the recipient A) knows it in advance and B) can save it for when he has time.

Poor spelling and bad grammar - Inexcusable! And also the wrong use of words. Dare we go into your/you're or there/their/they're? And to/too and two; it's and its or hear and here? Spell check will help the spelling; however, it will not catch the wrong tense. Only you can do that. Most of your clients are well educated, and receiving an email (or letter) with poor English will detract from the message. Tsk-tsk. Surely one word misspelled may not kill the deal. But several could.

- Suggestion: Use your spell check and when in doubt – leave it out! Or use another word.

Wrong subject line - If you reuse part of an email for someone else and the topic in the body of the message changes, change the subject line. This drives most folks nutty. And it's also bad for locating a message when you need it. Wrong subject lines are a waste of time to the person receiving the email. And in some cases will really hurt the case.

- Suggestion: Take the little bit of extra time it takes to correct the subject line to match the message when it changes. Double check it to be sure you have it correct.

ALL CAPS - Conventional wisdom says all caps should never be used. I disagree with this, partially because there are times when I believe you should use all caps. Such as:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ORDER. YOU MADE OUR DAY!

Then go back to your normal font. Telling someone they did a great job can also be in all caps as well.

ROB, CONGRATS ON YOUR RECENT ACHIEVEMENT.

Or even telling someone you love them is OK to use caps. And certainly a HAPPY BIRTHDAY would be ok in all caps. What we don't want is to send an entire email in all caps.

- Suggestion: Use caps cautiously, carefully, and kindly.

Not using names - Names are important and most people like their names. And they like it spelled right. Saying Dear Nancy or Hi Nancy prior to the message is much better than just starting the email out with no name. And a plain "Hi," while better than nothing, isn't as effective.

When we see our clients or friends in person we normally say, "Hello Bob" or "Hi Judy." So remember to use people's names in your salutation.

- Suggestion: Double check every email before you hit send to be sure names are used and are correctly spelled. Misspelled names are a sure fire "no, no." They'll spend more time thinking you misspelled their name than reading the email.

Use short paragraphs - When sending out information, it's much better to use bullets or numbers rather than make long paragraphs. Remember, emails get to ur phone and it's no fun to get a loooooong email on a cell phone. Shorten it up.

- Suggestion: Make your email visually interesting.

Extra tips we all need:

Beware of FORWARDING messages and sending old information that may not be appropriate at this time.

Beware of sending the wrong email to the wrong person. Or hitting "Reply to All" when we shouldn't have done that. Gulp, gulp. Not fun! And yes I've done it. Why? Because I didn't take the time to double check. It's that simple.

Beware of tone of voice, no emotion, no smiling messages; it's so very important to use effective words.

Beware of weak, wimpy words in your emails. What are some weak, wimpy words? Which sounds better to you?

Hi Nancy. Just a note to let you know we received the lovely gift.

OR

Hi Nancy. A special note to let you know we received the lovely gift.

Reprinted with permission from Telephone Doctor, Inc. Based in St. Louis, Telephone Doctor is a customer service training company offering DVD courses, web-based training, keynote presentations, and on-site workshops. Contact them at www.telephonedoctor.com.