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Developing Online Credibility by Benny Magnuson

The Internet has changed the way the world does business. Today you can sell goods and services to someone across the world as easily as if they were across the street. Taking advantage of automation means we can take orders, deliver products and are paid all while we sleep.

While the Internet offers business people many tools, perhaps the most important is the ability to communicate quickly and easily. While this ability offers huge advantages, it carries some dangers as well.

People like to buy from people they trust. Since the Web limits us primarily to the written word, how we use those words will either build up or tear down our credibility.

Without a voice for our customers and prospects to hear, or a face to show expression, how can we make sure that what we intend to say is what is heard?

Here are five keys to building credibility in your written communications.

1. Avoid misspellings. In today's world this should be obvious. Yet, look at your incoming email for the next few days. You may be surprised. Use your spell checker but don't trust it completely. No spell checker I know of will pick up the mistake when you innocently type "there" instead of "their".
2. Avoid using slang. Remember, the Internet is global. An innocent comment in America may be a massive insult in Sri Lanka. Plus, slang is often specific to one country, or even a region of a country, which means your overseas readers won't understand the point you are making.
3. Send all marketing email to yourself first. If possible, look at email sales letters in several email programs. Be

sure to include AOL among them if possible since their email viewer is different than any other. Also be sure to click every link in your outgoing marketing email. Few things are more embarrassing, and bad for business, than an order link that doesn't work.

4. Use proper case and punctuation. Many emails only contain words in lowercase letters. Always remember that all caps is universally understood as shouting. Use bold or italic for emphasis instead. If you are using plain text email, use *stars* or \$dollar signs\$ for emphasis.

5. Think before you strike. Email makes it so easy, in the heat of the moment, to dash off that oh so snappy reply. If you reply in anger, leave the message in your "drafts" folder for 24 hours. Look at it after you have calmed down. Then decide to send it or not.

The immediacy of the Internet, especially email, lets us hold conversations in fragments. That may be okay if it's an old college friend. In business communications, we must sound our best. Take an extra minute to polish up your email and sound like the pro that you are.

-----Hot Tip-----

Each new day presents us with the opportunity to live as though we've never lived before. Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow is promissory. Live today. That's all you've got.
- Babatunde A Fajimi

-----Hot Tip-----

Ezine Management

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