

Email Etiquette And What It Says About You

By Susanna K. Hutcheson

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People used to have etiquette and class. They used to be considerate and at least make an attempt to be kind. But today it's difficult to even get someone to reply to your email!

What does it say to me when a person doesn't answer my email? It says I don't matter. It says they think they're too important to reply or that what I had to say or ask was of no importance.

Do you know what I do with that person? Lots of things. But one thing I don't do --- I DON'T DO BUSINESS with that person.

Let me give you an example.

A while back I had a client with close to a \$1 million budget for radio air time. I emailed a woman who was in charge of selling time for a certain chain of stations and I got a receipt for the email through my tracing service.

I saw that the email was opened so I expected a reply.

I didn't get a reply. Not one. I called her and she said she didn't get my email. Well, I knew she had and that she was lying. But I sent it again and called her immediately. Yes, she said she got it and would reply that day.

To this day I have not received a reply. What happened to the \$1 million? I spent it with other stations who cared enough to respond to my emails. And I told all my

colleagues about the woman. Not answering my email cost this woman and her company a large portion of \$1 million! It also cost her the business of those I had contacted about her.

See, the thing is, when you don't answer your emails from legitimate business people you tell a lot about yourself. And it's not good. No one is too important or too busy to not reply quickly to an email. All legitimate emails should be answered within eight working hours. But you should endeavor to answer priority emails within 4 hours. Priority emails are emails from existing customers and business partners.

Now there are some people who are time wasters. I get email from people wanting to get my advice and not pay for it or who want to get something from me without giving anything in return. I often just type off a quick note saying that my fee is \$200 per hour and if they want to buy my time they can contact me.

In fact, I have a template for that because I get so many deadbeats contacting me each day.

But if a legitimate business person contacts me with a valid concern, question or whatever, I reply as quickly and fully as I can.

People who don't answer their emails show that they're not too bright. Because in the long run it costs them. People write them off. They talk bad about them in newsgroups and on bulletin boards. They have ill will toward them and give them a poor reference whenever their name comes up in any conversation.

So Susanna's first rule of the road when it comes to email etiquette is **ANSWER ALL OF YOUR LEGIMATE EMAILS AS QUICKLY AND FULLY AS YOU CAN. PERIOD!**

WHAT ARE THE ETIQUETTE RULES?

According to the experts the following are critical rules of email.

There are many etiquette guides and many different etiquette rules. Some rules will differ according to the nature of your business and the corporate culture. Below we list what we consider as the 32 most important email etiquette rules that apply to nearly all companies.

THE 32 MOST IMPORTANT EMAIL ETIQUETTE TIPS:

1. Be concise and to the point
2. Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions
3. Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation
4. Make it personal
5. Use templates for frequently used responses
6. Answer swiftly
7. Do not attach unnecessary files
8. Use proper structure & layout
9. Do not overuse the high priority option
10. Do not write in CAPITALS
11. Don't leave out the message thread
12. Add disclaimers to your emails
13. Read the email before you send it
14. Do not overuse Reply to All
15. Mailings use the bcc: field or do a mail merge
16. Take care with abbreviations and emoticons
17. Be careful with formatting
18. Take care with rich text and HTML messages
19. Do not forward chain letters
20. Do not request delivery and read receipts
21. Do not ask to recall a message.
22. Do not copy a message or attachment without permission
23. Do not use email to discuss confidential information
24. Use a meaningful subject
25. Use active instead of passive
26. Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT
27. Avoid long sentences
28. Don't send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks
29. Don't forward virus hoaxes and chain letters
30. Keep your language gender neutral
31. Don't reply to spam
32. Use cc: field sparingly

I would like to add one more very important rule that's not exactly a rule but more of a very important suggestion.

I just about failed to get one of my very best clients because my spam filter was too aggressive. For some reason the filter didn't allow his email through. Only when he sent a third email did I accidentally see it. I tossed that email program and got one over which I had more control.

The moral is, use an email filter or spam program which allows you to be in control. You need to see anything that might be important. It could prove very costly and embarrassing to you not to see important mail.

In future newsletters I'll discuss some of the other

rules of email etiquette. But I would like to suggest to you that you become very conscious of each of your email replies and that you care enough to make some response to every legitimate email even if it's only to say you got the email and will send a personal reply within eight hours. Then be sure and do so!

Remember, you're judged on the Internet by your words AND your lack of words.

Now to be sure, you have to be judicious with your email. You have to watch what comes into your in box and you can't waste time on unnecessary mail. Spam and other types of unsolicited email are major problems to us all. So each of us can be excused if we are careful about our email.

But when we fail to give legitimate email the courtesy it deserves and when we fail to honor the sender with the sort of reply he or she deserves, we're showing that person that we're not the sort of person they should waste "their" time with.

So take the time to use some email etiquette. Follow the above rules carefully and answer those emails. You never know when one of them could lead to a million dollar deal.

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