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**EMAIL FOULUPS**

**By Bob McElwain**

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Sure, you know how to handle email. You're probably flooded with the stuff and deal with it as effectively as you can. But is this good enough?

Maybe, but I sure get a lot of email that completely ignores well established rules. And even defies common sense. Here are my pet peeves.

**Line Length:**

A line of 80 characters is about twice as hard to read as one of 65. My reader window is set to accommodate 65 character lines. Send me 80, and 15 or more will wrap to a second line. Ugly. And hard to read.

Send 60 character lines, 65 maximum, as do most newsletters. All you need to do is hit Enter at about 60 while typing.

**Courier**

Use it. Forget all other fonts. This is what most expect. When you use the font you love, it's a struggle for me to read it because it is not what I expected or am used to.

**HTML**

Forget it. Many are now trashing HTML, much favored by pornographers. While I don't automatically trash it, it's got to be important else I will. People can send Java and Active X

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in HTML. Reports I have not confirmed, suggest these will become joyful tools for those wanting to do mischief.

Do The Views Above Reflect The Norm?

It's doubtful. But I'm not alone in any one of them. So if you break these rules, you are bound to annoy some. Remembering the importance of generating every single possible hit, can you afford this risk? Many obviously believe they can, for the above are commonly violated in the email I receive.

There's more to all this than mentioned above. If you are

serious about your business and want to be certain your messages are first rate, visit my site. Click on Library in the navigation bar to the left. Then, under Topics, select Email Handling. You'll find lots of good information here, and the views of others.

Three Unbreakable Rules

Ignore the following at your peril. You can lose lots and lots of potential customers in doing so.

Answer Promptly

What good is a reply a week later? Heck, the sender has likely forgotten the question. And even that they asked it.

There's no exception here. Email needs to be answered within a few hours of receipt. If you're working a day job, handle the heavy stuff in the evening. But check for important messages in the morning as well. Otherwise, check every two to three hours. If you haven't the time, outsource the task. That is, hire someone to handle your email for you. It simply has to happen.

Answer Completely

Many replies are incomplete, so you have to respond again to clarify your question. Often the answer does not relate to the question. Intolerable.

Take whatever time is required to be sure you understand the question. Then answer it completely. But go further. Include

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related information that may be needed given your answer. For example, if you suggest using a Windows' tool, add how to do so.

### Answer With Grace And Style

Be pro. Talk nicely. Use simple language. Say enough, but not more than is needed. Above all, watch your manners. This matters most when dealing with someone who is angry.

Remember there is no such thing as a dumb question. But we've all seen and heard loads of dumb answers. Be sure yours do not fall into this category. It's just plain bad business.

If you have been careless with your email, and have been breaking any of the above rules, begin following them now. It can do wonders for your bottom line.

### Simple Rules That Matter

As spam is an ever increasing problem for most, be sure your message stands out clearly.

> Use your name in the From field, followed by your email address in angle brackets. Bob Jones

> Be sure the first three words in the Subject field get right to the point. Often the full subject is not visible.

> Address your message to a name. If you don't know it, visit the site. If the recipient does not see their name, they may not even open the message.

> Get to the point in the first line of the message. Even a busy reader who doesn't recognize the name or doesn't find the subject revealing, may read the first line. But that's as far as he or she is going to go, unless you have grabbed attention.

### Sig Files

If you're not using signature files, start now. They can draw visitors like crazy. In fact create several. Append the one most appropriate to the end of the current message. Both Pegasus and Eudora do a fine job in this.

### Writing Skills

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If you are weak in this area, you have only two choices. Outsource the task (which can be expensive) or figure a way to handle it. Content of an email message may matter more than that on your site, for it's personally directed.

What works for many is to create boilerplate. Answers to commonly asked questions prepared ahead of time. Create a complete answer acceptable for each question you have seen repeatedly. Include more information than most will need. That is, try to anticipate all possible twists people may add to the question. Ask a friend to edit for you. Or pay a pro.

Then tuck it away into a .TXT file, to be copied as needed in a reply. Or use a program such as ClipMate. It greatly simplifies this task.

You may need to add or edit a bit to get your prepared text to really fit the way the question was asked. But with practice, this is not difficult. One approach is to give a simple, brief answer to the question asked. Then add, "I've

appended further information."

### Put Email To Work For You Now

Email is a revolutionary tool. A grand leap ahead in communications. But "communicate" has two sides to it. You need to accurately state your message. And the person who receives it needs to understand it. Quickly and easily. Else there is no communication, and no point in having sent it in the first place.

While some big outfits can afford to ignore email, a small business can not. Handling email effectively is fundamental to online success. Few succeed without embracing this need. The potential value of a single hit is simply too great. You can't afford to toss even one opportunity aside.

Bob McElwain, author of "Your Path To Success" and "Secrets To A Really Successful Website." For info, see Get ANSWERS. Subscribe to "STAT News" now! <mailto:join-stat@lyris.dundee.net>

### **Email Tips**

**By Regina Stevens**

## Email Tips by Regina Stevens

Have you ever received an email and every recipients email address was in the body of the message? I bet you have. Isn't it annoying? Well try the two tips below. They will help decrease some of your junk email too.

When forwarding messages, cut (Ctrl + C) and paste (Ctrl + V) the body of the message into a new email.

The next tip is when you send out multiple emails, type the email addresses in the bcc: field (blind carbon copy) instead of the To: field. This will hide all of your email addresses so that others won't see the addresses. You never know who will see the addresses if you don't do this tip. A friend of a friend could be a spammer - it happens all the time.

Regina Stevens is the owner of Keep It Simple Websites (<http://keepitsimplewebsites.com>). Her articles are written for people who are new at using the Internet and email.



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