WRITE EMAILS THAT GET A RESPONSE

But you know what? Sometimes, the fact that someone hasn't replied to your email yet is at least partly your own fault. You wrote an email that was, frankly, more difficult to deal with than it should have been, so it fell to the back of the line. And at this point, the reality is that they might never get to it.

So how do you write an email that gets a fast response? In a nutshell, you want to make it as easy as possible for the recipient to read, understand and act on your message. After all, if your email is crafted for ease of handling, you're the one that gets answered quickly rather than drifting to the bottom of the slush pile. Helping your recipient helps you.

Here are some top rules for writing effective emails that will get you a fast reply:

Make the subject line descriptive and clear. Don't just click reply to a previous thread or a meeting request and enter something unrelated in the body. And if you're in the midst of a long email thread and find that the subject has changed substantially from where you started, re-title the email. It can be easy to lose track of the actual "ask" if the subject line is misleading.

Keep the recipients to the bare minimum. Don't cry wolf by including lots of irrelevant people on your email threads. Eventually, folks will start to tune out email from you if you get the reputation for sending everything to everyone, all the time.

Put the bottom line up front. This is probably the most important rule of them all: Don't waste recipients' time with a long preamble they'll have to wade through to get to the "ask." Start with the important bits at the top of the message, and save the context for later. That way they can read on for the details, but at least they know what you want within moments of opening the email.

Don't bury or co-mingle your "asks." In addition to putting the "ask" right up front, make it clear what you want by putting each request in its own paragraph, ideally at the start of the paragraph. Often emails ask for three or four things, and the writer buries these requests deep in a long paragraph. Break them out into their own 'graphs, and even consider putting the key ideas in bold. If you don't do this, don't be surprised if someone only responds to your first questions or request because they didn't see the others, and you'll need to send a follow-up to get the rest.

Proofread it. Everyone in the professional world is a writer in the sense that we all need to use the written word to communicate. Take the time to re-read your email before you pull the trigger -- you'd be surprised how often what makes sense in your head is borderline gibberish when it lands on the screen. A little proofing will make your prose easier to parse and, consequently, easier to respond to. If the reader has to guess what you meant, they will generally move on and deal with other email that is easier to understand. And guess what happens to yours?

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JOURNALIST RESOURCES

AP Stylebook

Strunk & White's Elements of Style

Daily Writing Tips

GrammerGirl

Writer's Guide

Photojournalism Basics