

I've been thinking...



Effective (and Defective) E-Mails March 2016

I've been thinking about effective (and defective) e-mails.

This morning I reread a helpful blog from Well Said's CEO, Darlene Price. Her subject line, "[STAND OUT IN THE INBOX: Writing Emails That Get Results](#)," delivered on its promise, which is nothing new for Darlene.

The first of five best practices suggested by the communication coach: "Make the subject line clear, specific, and actionable." I second her motion and move to amend it by adding, "Know when to use the same subject line received and when to use a new one."

When an exchange becomes a conversation, using the same subject is generally helpful until the matter is concluded.

However, new conversations beg fresh subject lines. Lazily starting a new thread under an old subject line can be confusing and frustrating. For example, replying with the "Friday Night" subject line from a previous e-mail when requesting a conference call for Tuesday afternoon could create problems.

Though, in her standout e-mail, she doesn't mention using recipients' names, Darlene always uses my name in e-mails she sends my way. In an earlier blog to her subscribers, she hit the sweet spot:

In today's fast-paced technology-driven culture, the human touch is often left by the wayside. Though our tools of communication have changed, our need for meaningful human interaction remains constant. We all want to feel important, valued and remembered. We all want to hear 'the sweetest and most important sound' spoken by others--our own name.

Of course, in extended pithy back-and-forth conversations, it could be awkward or unnatural to include a salutation in each e-mail. But a fresh exchange always benefits from the personal touch of a "Good morning, Bill." "Hi, Sally," or "You are right, Anne."

Tucked into her last standout e-mail practice, Darlene adds a quick reminder: "Before you click 'Send,' proofread the email." Too often emails are riddled with poor grammar, sloppy punctuation, or missing words.

And as much as I appreciate hot key, it has been guilty of inserting different words than I intended. Like when I sent an e-mail to a woman whose father, one of my mentors, had taken ill. I meant to say, "Your father is precious to me." Hot key substituted, "Your father is precocious to me."

Before I close, a word about stock closings. E-mail-signature features allow us the option of including standard closings along with our names and contact information. I've elected

to pass on this option. I can't imagine one good closing that is appropriate for every e-mail.

My son, a rabid Seahawks fan, includes "Go Hawks" in his e-mail signature. While this works for many of his communications, it seemed a bit odd when he sent: "Hi dad, sorry that grandma passed away. Go Hawks."

At the very least, if you elect to use a canned closing, ask if it needs to be adjusted before launching it into the ethers. "Jim, I was sad to learn that you were laid off. Have a good one. Mark," begs for amending before sending

Finally, it seldom hurts to end by using the recipient's name one more time. I have a friend and colleague who always ends our phone calls with, "Thanks for calling, Mark." His daughters do the same. Yep, Darlene is right about the sound of our name.

Using the recipient's name in the salutation and just before the signature makes for unbeatable bookends to most any e-mail.

What do you think?

Mark Neuenschwander aka Noosh

P.S. A minute ago, I intended to conclude an e-mail with "Grateful, Mark." My Mac translated my bumbling fingers: "Grated, Mark." Needless to say I am grateful I caught the mistake before greeted or grated the recipient.

What do you think?



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