

EMAIL TIPS FOR MORE LIKEABLE LIVING

From Tim Sanders, author of *The Likeability Factor*

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Face it—we can turn email into our greatest liability instead of our best tool. We fire off nasty grams and duck for cover. We irritate people in our life with emails they don't want to receive from us. As I say in my lectures, being emotionally attractive is mostly about what you DON'T do – not what you do to 'get people to like you'. Here's a short list of five things not to do with email.

1. Don't use email to give bad news.

At Yahoo!, I always told my folks, "Email is for saying yes and for exchanging information. If you want to say no, criticize or get into an emotionally charged issue, pick up the phone or do it in person". Email fails to communicate your intentions, so it usually looks pretty insensitive. Research says that 93% of our intentions are either seen or heard in voice tone. If you insist on letting email do your dirty work, you are likely to have a lot of unnecessary relationship issues. If you don't have time to talk to people in these conditions, you need better time management skills.

2. Don't copy over someone's head.

If you are trying to get your way with a coworker, you might be tempted to copy the boss or an executive on your request to "turn up the heat". You might think that you are being strategic by doing so. Wrong! The boss usually deletes the email without reading it (one study suggests that happens about 75% of the time). Your coworker will resent it almost every time. You position yourself as a tattletale when you copy "dad" to get your way.

3. Don't reply to all.

For a few years, I had a line in my outgoing email to ask people to "join my SORTA campaign. SORTA stands for Stamp Out Reply To All. It is Neanderthal". People that reply to all irritate others without knowing it. If you are the boss that does this to broadcast over email, it is perceived as arrogant. It is the equivalent to using the overhead phone system to announce your response to a voice mail. If you need to reply to more than one person, take the time to just copy the names of the people that actually need to be copied. If you've ever received an email about a potential meeting tomorrow at 10:30am and then received two dozen reply to alls ("Works for me!" "How About 10:00am), then you know this irritation.

4. Don't address your emails until after you've reviewed them.

Have you ever noticed that you get in a rhythm sometimes when you are writing an emotional response to someone and before you know it, you've hit the send button? You wish you could take it back, but it is too late. You've fallen prey to the rhythm of the nasty gram. The best way to protect yourself from this habit is to stop putting a person's email address in the TO line as your first action in email writing. Leave it blank. Fill out the subject and the body. If you think there are any emotions on your part or theirs, read it a second time. Only after you are comfortable with it, then you put in the email address. If you are replying to a note, then hit reply and immediately delete their email address in the TO line. Write the note, think about it and then put their address back in. If you follow my advice, the next time you write-out-your-anger and hit the send button as a reflex, you'll be blessed with an error message (no recipient listed). It just may save your bacon.

5. Don't send emails to coworkers or employees at odd hours.

When someone receives a work related note from you at 1:00am, they are also receiving a subtle message that work is 24/7 to you. The more influential you are in the organization, the more your odd-hours emails create a workaholic culture. When your employee receives an email on Sunday morning about a client crisis, they can't usually solve it on the spot – yet their weekend is now interrupted with this thought. You might say, "I couldn't sleep" or "I wrote these on the plane on the way home". Just wait until regular hours to send the notes and you'll respect other's time and personal space. This is especially true when it comes to sending someone work emails over the holidays or when they are on vacation.