

>>**THIS WEEK'S TOPIC:**

Composing An Effective Email <<

Email Tips for Circle K Officers

Whether personal or business, the ability to compose efficient and effective emails is extremely useful – both in terms of productivity and responsiveness. We are all busy, and we have all received long, ambiguous and rambling emails. Ironically, most of us have also been guilty of writing such verbose emails while requesting for someone else's time.

In the world of CKI where email communication is very important and is the main method of interaction used among clubs and between the different levels of the organization, it is important that we know how to compose an email that will be read and responded to. This week's resource includes several email etiquette tips to take into consideration, so your recipients act on your message.

1) Write a meaningful subject line

People who get a lot of email scan the subject line in order to decide whether to open, forward, file, or trash a message. If your subject line is vague - or even worse, if it is left blank - you have missed your first opportunity to inform or persuade your reader. Remember - your message is not the only one in your recipient's mailbox. Before you hit "send," take a moment to write a subject line that accurately describes the content.

2) Identify yourself, if necessary

If you are e-mailing someone who does not know you (or e-mailing someone whom you met only briefly), introduce yourself. Keep your introduction short and to the point, but do include any relevant information that will help the person remember who you are.

3) Keep it simple

Since reading from a screen is more difficult than reading from paper, the structure and lay out is very important for e-mail messages. Use short paragraphs and blank lines between each paragraph. When making points, number them or mark each point as separate to keep the overview.

4) Do not write in CAPITALS

WRITING IN CAPITALS IS CONSIDERED SHOUTING. This is poor email etiquette. It can be highly annoying, and might trigger an unwanted response in the form of a flame mail. Therefore, try not to send any email text in capitals. Instead, opt for highlighting important information (names, dates, places, deadlines, requirements etc) in bold or italics (not both) or even in color to catch your reader's attention. Most people tend to skim long emails for important information only and this makes it easier for readers to notice key information.

5) Distinguish between formal and informal situations

When you are writing to a friend or a close colleague, it is okay to use “smilies” :-), abbreviations (IIRC for “if I recall correctly”, LOL for “laughing out loud,” etc.) and nonstandard punctuation and spelling (like that found in instant messaging or chat rooms). These linguistic shortcuts are generally signs of friendly intimacy, like sharing cold pizza with a family friend. If you tried to share that same cold pizza with a first date, or a visiting dignitary, you would give the impression that you did not really care about the meeting. Similarly, do not use informal language when your reader expects a more formal approach. Always know the situation, and write accordingly.

6) Read the email before you send it

Many people do not read their emails before sending them out, as can be seen from the many spelling and grammar mistakes contained in emails. Apart from this, reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.

Take the time to make your message look professional. An e-mail represents you, your message, your point of view, your ethics and your very integrity in your physical absence - what the recipient receives says a lot about you.

While your spell checker will not catch every mistake, at the very least it will catch a few typos. If you are sending a message that will be read by dozens of people, take an extra minute or two before you hit “send”. Show a draft to a close associate, in order to see whether it actually makes sense.

7) Add recipients last

How many times have you accidentally hit send before you finished typing or attached the document you meant to send? Adding the email's recipient(s) last, will save you from having to send a follow-up message saying, “I'm sorry, here's the rest of that email.”

8) Protect people's privacy

Use BCC instead of CC when sending sensitive information to large groups (for example, a professor sending a bulk message to students who are in danger of failing a class). The name of everyone in the CC list goes out with the message, but the names of people on the BCC list (“Blind Carbon Copy”) are hidden. Put your email address in the “To” box if your mail editor does not like the blank space.