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# Hit SEND With Confidence You're Building - Not Destroying - Your Brand

WomensMedia Contributor

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The ability to take vast amounts of information, synthesize it, and shape it into a clear message sets you apart as a leader.

## By Dianna Booher

Email is how you show up in today's workplace. When used correctly, email can increase your impact, spread your influence, and boost your productivity. But handled poorly, email can wreck your reputation in a matter of minutes.



Your email should open with a succinct summary message. ICLIPART

## Email Mistakes Successful Leaders Avoid

### Trivial Pursuits

“You’re known by the company you keep” has become a well-known cliché. Lesser known, but much more likely in the workplace, you’re labeled by the information you send. As you pass information up the chain and on to your peers, do you understand how to sift the significant from the trivial? Almost everyone struggles with an overflowing inbox. Are you adding to their clutter? Or do people

automatically have confidence when they see your name as sender that your email contains worthwhile information?

## **Weaponry Versus Productivity**


Email cannot be both a productivity tool and a weapon. That is, email should not be sent to humiliate, coerce, or pressure. No doubt, you recognize these hidden-agenda tactics:

- Reminding someone about upcoming project deadlines, including details about someone's past delays, with copies to their boss, executive staff, and other department heads
- Sending along a list of donors to your pet cause to the entire team, asking everyone to review the list to make sure their name is on the list if they've donated

While such emails may motivate some to action, they will demoralize others—and certainly stain your reputation for cooperation and camaraderie.

## **Inability to Summarize Succinctly**

Your email should open with a succinct summary message. Far too often, writers try to “build their case” first with background information before working their way into the real message. Wrong move for several reasons: 1) Readers may never get to your real message. 2) Background information that comes before the message often confuses and leads the reader off course. 3) The reader may arrive at a totally different conclusion than what you intend.

The ability to take vast amounts of information, synthesize it, and shape it into a clear message sets you apart as a leader. 

## **“So What?” Emails**

The worst mistake writers make is zapping off so-what emails. At the end of such emails, readers scratch their head and ask, “So what do you want me to do?” Most likely, such a document will initiate three or four follow-on interactions to explain

what the initial email failed to say. As you write, always think “So what action next?” and then state it explicitly.

## Email Strategies Confident Leaders Practice

### Concentrating on Core Work

As a confident communicator, do not fear to shut down your email for several hours so you can concentrate on high-priority projects. Instead of permitting constant interruptions by incoming messages, check your email only 2-3 times a day. That routine keeps you responsive, yet focused on high-priority work.

### Controlling REPLY ALL Clutter

Use the “REPLY ALL” feature for the exception, not the rule. That is, with whatever you’re sending out, ask only those with meaningful replies to respond. For example, as a writer you might make a request like this:

“ Please review the attached copy for the annual meeting. If you have something to add, delete, or modify, please REPLY ALL only if it applies to everyone. If the change is simply a typo or something minor, please reply directly to me. If you have no changes, *no action is necessary*.

Without such explicit direction, you (and your entire team) will likely get 19 meaningless responses (such as “Fine.” “Looks good.” “Nothing to add.”) caused by the writer’s failure to control the flow.

### Using Appropriate Tools for the Tasks

If you’re still using email for tasks such as communicating with your team on a major project over a long period of time, you have an inefficient tool. Likewise, are you still trying to schedule meetings with email rather than a calendar program?

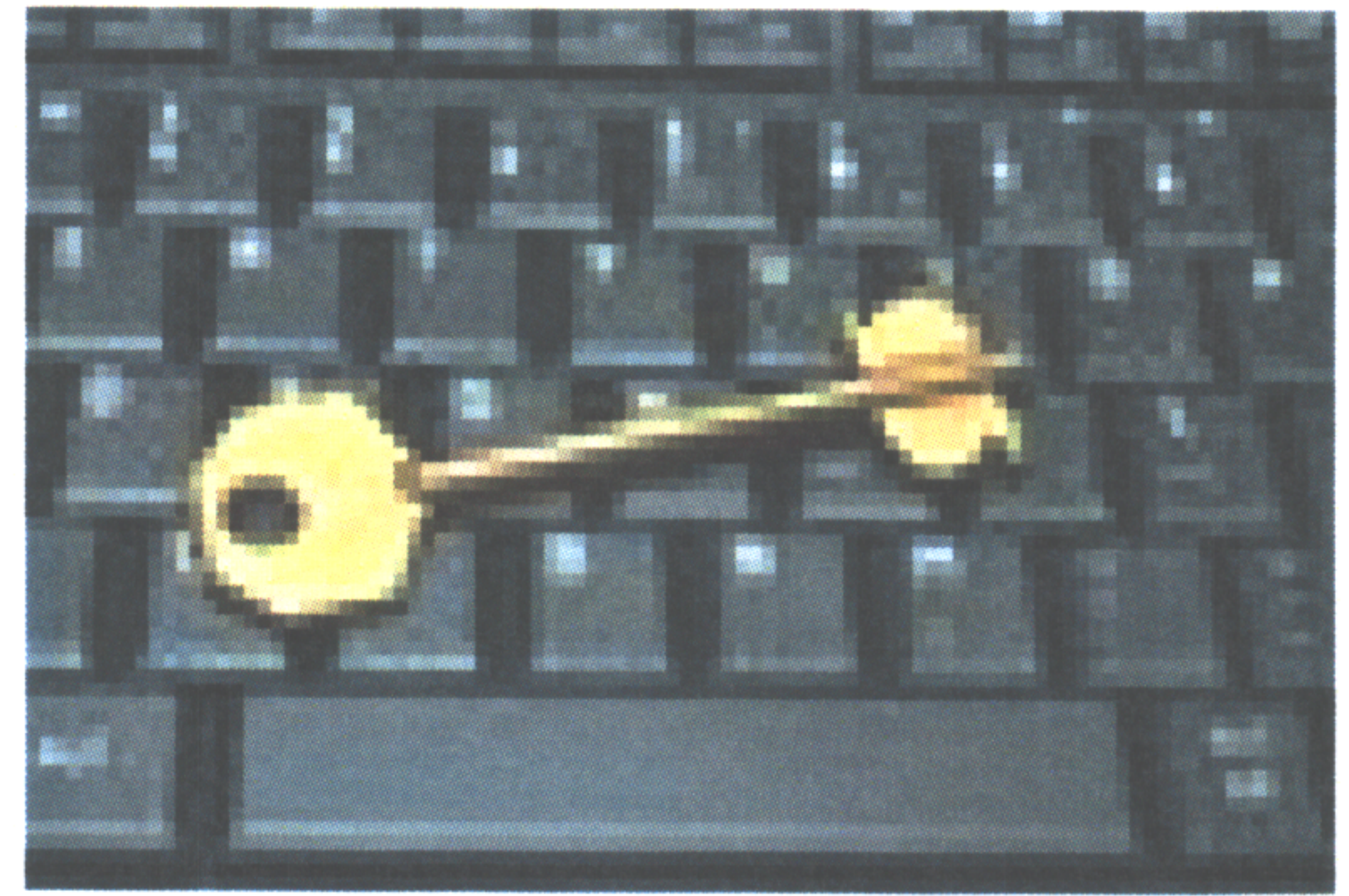
Inappropriate tools create the wrong impression about your skills—in the same way as referring to 8-track tapes for your entertainment. Update your tools and approach to the job.

## Organizing Information Consistently

How fast do you respond to a boss's or team member's request for information? If the delay results from disorganization, that's the snapshot others have of your thinking skills.

Instead of the "I have it here somewhere; just let me pull it up" reply, *know* where you have the information. Your filing system and titles

for folders and documents should be consistent for quick access. The "genre concept" works well with titles like this: Amazon> Movies> Action Thrillers > Superman. Go from largest category to specific.



Control keyboard clutter. ICLIPART

To search is to delay. To delay is to disappoint. To disappoint is to damage credibility.

To repeat: Your email is how you show up in today's workplace. Update your habits so you can communicate with confidence and credibility.

*Dianna Booher is the bestselling author of 48 books. Her newest is [Faster, Fewer, Better Emails](#). She helps organizations communicate clearly. Follow her at [BooherResearch.com](#) and [@DiannaBooher](#).*

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