

## Can You Identify Thought Leaders by Their Emails?

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**Leaders practice productive email habits. Here are the results of the University of Northern Colorado & Booher Research Survey of 30 industries about writing faster, fewer, better emails.**

Today's post is by Dianna Booher, author of *Faster, Fewer, Better Emails* [<https://amzn.to/2GEGjKj>] (CLICK HERE [<https://amzn.to/2GEGjKj>] to get your copy).

Although you may not be able to tell a book by its cover, you can definitely tell thought leaders by their emails and their communication habits.

First, the content of their email: Their emails begin with a succinct summary of a clear message targeting specific readers. None of this "I know what I want to say, but I just can't say it." They know what they want to say it, and they say it—clearly, concisely, and directly.

After the summary, the email states very clearly what action should follow—either what action they're recommending to the reader or what action they plan to take next based on the message they just delivered. Readers will never get to the bottom of their email with this reaction, "So what?" The so-what is logically laid out as a next step—never implied or assumed.

If details are necessary to "make the case," these thoughtful writers generally follow up their summary and action statements with elaboration on the "why" and "how." They may elaborate on why they're making a change in procedures and how things will work in the future, why a specific study was completed and how it was done, or how a mistake happened and why it has caused confusion among customers.

Although such details aren't typically essential to a reader's understanding the message or action, providing the background or the reasoning builds confidence in a leader's competence. It also demonstrates goodwill toward readers in that the writer (leader) trusts

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In my three decades of consulting with top performers in Fortune 500 organizations, thought leaders guard their productive time. They use email to increase their productivity. Self-sabotaging practices are not part of their daily routine.

In a recent study conducted by the University of Northern Colorado's Social Research Lab and Booher Research, respondents from more than 30 industries shared their common email communication habits, covering a number of issues: responsiveness, security, hours spent handling email, irritants in email, and so forth.

The biggest irritant: volume. Thirty-one percent reported that more than a third of the emails they receive are unnecessary. They defined "unnecessary" as either "irrelevant" (not of interest to them, meaning they were cc'd unnecessarily) or "redundant" (they received the same information from multiple people).

This overwhelming, but unnecessary volume is the culprit for the next most startling response on the survey: 42 percent said they spend three or more hours daily on email. Unless someone's job is handling all email, that leaves far too little time to focus on core work projects.

A final self-sabotaging practice reported by more than half of the survey takers was leaving their email inbox open all day—or checking their inbox at least hourly: Distractions, distractions, distractions, pop onto their screen like popcorn to interrupt their thinking. As if that isn't distraction enough, these workers often open the email, read it—and then leave the email in their box to deal with later, using their inbox as if it were a to-do box. That compounds the distraction and clutter for hours and days.

Thought leaders know and do better.

They know that productive email practices make the difference in giving them time to think strategically, to reflect deeply, and to produce high-impact work. So they tackle their email volume with the same specificity as their core work:

They handle email only 2-3 times a day: early morning, either before or after lunch, and at the end of the day. And when they open an email, they either decide, do, delete, delegate, or delay (pulling the email out of their inbox and into a file or over onto their electronic calendar on the day they plan to handle it).

They acknowledge receipt of email so people don't continue sending them reminders and follow-ups. They unsubscribe (rather than just delete) from distribution lists no longer of interest. Their filters screen, and organize, emails into folders for priority reading. They use CC and BCC appropriately, so they're not creating their own clutter with meaningless replies as well as filling up their colleagues' inboxes unnecessarily.

They stop using email for tasks that other software handles more efficiently (such as scheduling tools and project management programs).

In short, thought leaders protect their time for substantive work. And when they communicate, they make their interactions count and their words matter.

*Dianna Booher's latest book is **Faster, Fewer, Better Emails: Manage the Volume, Reduce the Stress, Love the Results** [<https://amzn.to/2GEGjKj>]. (CLICK HERE [<https://amzn.to/2GEGjKj>] to get your copy). Dianna helps organizations communicate clearly and leaders to expand their influence by a strong executive presence. National Media such as Good Morning America, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and Forbes, have featured her work on communication.*

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