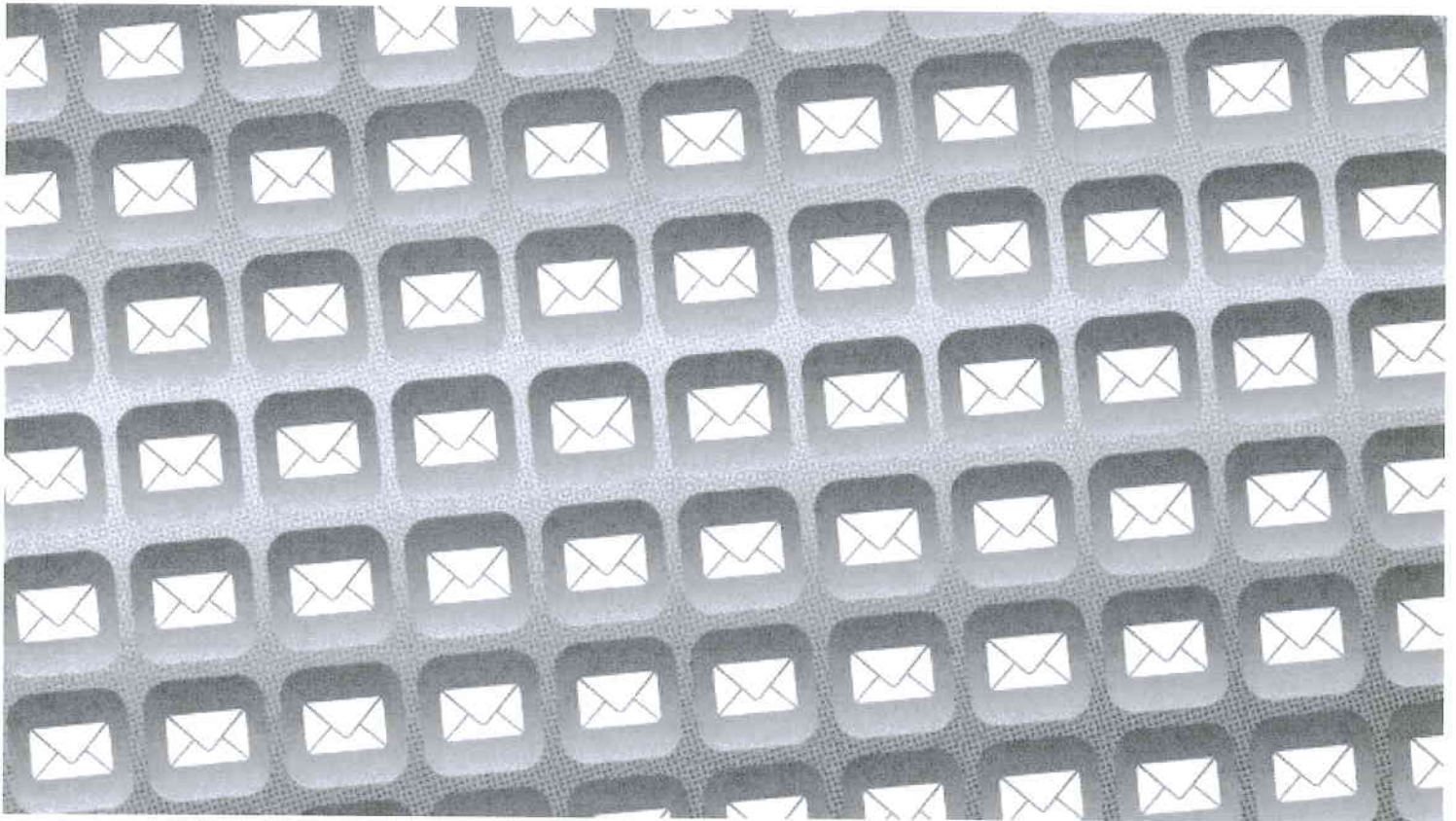


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We get an average of 120 emails every day. Here's how to make your messages stand out and actually get a response.



[IMAGE: VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS]



BY STEPHANIE VOZZA

3 MINUTE READ

Emails are so easy to send, but they're also easy to ignore. With more than 120 messages landing in the average office worker's inbox each day, making sure yours gets read and gets a response can be tricky. To increase your chances of getting of a reply, here are nine tricks you can try:

1. ASK FOR A RESPONSE IN YOUR SUBJECT LINE

It sounds simple, but sometimes all you need to do is ask for a response. If an email needs a reply, alert the person in the subject line, suggests St. Louis-based professional organizer Janine Adams. “The one thing that gets me to reply to an email is when the person puts ‘–RESPONSE NEEDED’ at the end of the subject line,” she says. “It’s very effective.”

2. CHANGE THE SUBJECT LINE WHEN THE TOPIC CHANGES

The topic can change, especially during a long back and forth thread, making the original subject line inappropriate. “People tune out and stop reading when their need to know has been satisfied, thinking the email replies no longer apply to them,” says Dianna Booher, author of *What More Can I Say? Why Communication Fails and What to Do About It*. “So they miss important details and action. By updating the subject line on that thread, you re-engage all readers.”

3. DON'T SKIP THE GREETING

When the email starts without addressing the recipient by name, they could easily assume it was sent en masse and doesn't require a response, says Peggy Duncan, author of *The Time Management Memory Jogger: Create Time for the Life You Want*. “Also, your email could easily be perceived as a demand as opposed to a request,” she says. “And adding a greeting is simply more polite.”

4. START YOUR MESSAGE WITH A CLEAR REQUEST

Don't bury the purpose of your email; start it by describing the response you want and your deadline, says New York-based professional organizer Lisa Zaslow.

Emails written at a third-grade reading level with simpler words and fewer words per sentence were considered optimal.

“For example: ‘Please let me know by the end of the day if you can meet for lunch on the 21st,’” she says.

5. STAY IN THE SWEET SPOT WHEN IT COMES TO LENGTH

To boost your response rate by half, keep your email between 50 and 125 words, according to a study by email-marketing platform Boomerang. Response rates declined slowly from 50% for 125-word messages to about 44% for 500-word messages. After that, it stayed flat until about 2,000 words and declined dramatically.

6. USE THIRD-GRADE LANGUAGE

The reading grade level of your emails has a dramatic impact on response rates, finds the Boomerang study. Emails written at a third-grade reading level with simpler words and fewer words per sentence were considered optimal, providing a 36% boost in responses over emails written at a college reading level and a 17% higher response rate than emails written even at a high school reading level. If you want to check your readability level, you can use a website such as ReadabilityScore.com.

7. USE EMOTION

The Boomerang study found that using a moderate amount of positive or negative emotion words—such as great, wonderful, delighted, pleased, bad, hate, furious, and terrible—increased an email's response rate by 10% to 15% over emails that were neutral or strongly emotional.

If you are sending a complaint, for example, Boomerang CEO Alex Moore says it's better to say, "I had an awful experience at your store today. The clerk was very rude. Please do something to make it right," instead of "Your store experience sucks. Your clerk is a douchebag. Piss off and I hope you die in agony."

8. USE RICH TEXT

Use bold and color to highlight the response you'd like to get, suggests Zaslow. "This may not show up depending on the compatibility of different email programs, but it's worth trying," she says.

Duncan agrees, adding that you can use bullet points to increase readability, and use a different color text to draw attention to deadlines.

9. BE STRATEGIC ABOUT WHEN YOU SEND YOUR MESSAGE

Send it in the morning. According to a study of 500,000 emails by email tracking software provider Yesware, emails sent between 6 a.m. and 7 a.m. get the highest rates, about 45%. Fewer emails are sent during these time slots, lowering competition.

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