



# Business Emailing Best Practices

COMM 390 - Bowker

# Key Concepts

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- Be clear, precise and professional
- Keep to one subject per email
- Use proper punctuation and grammar



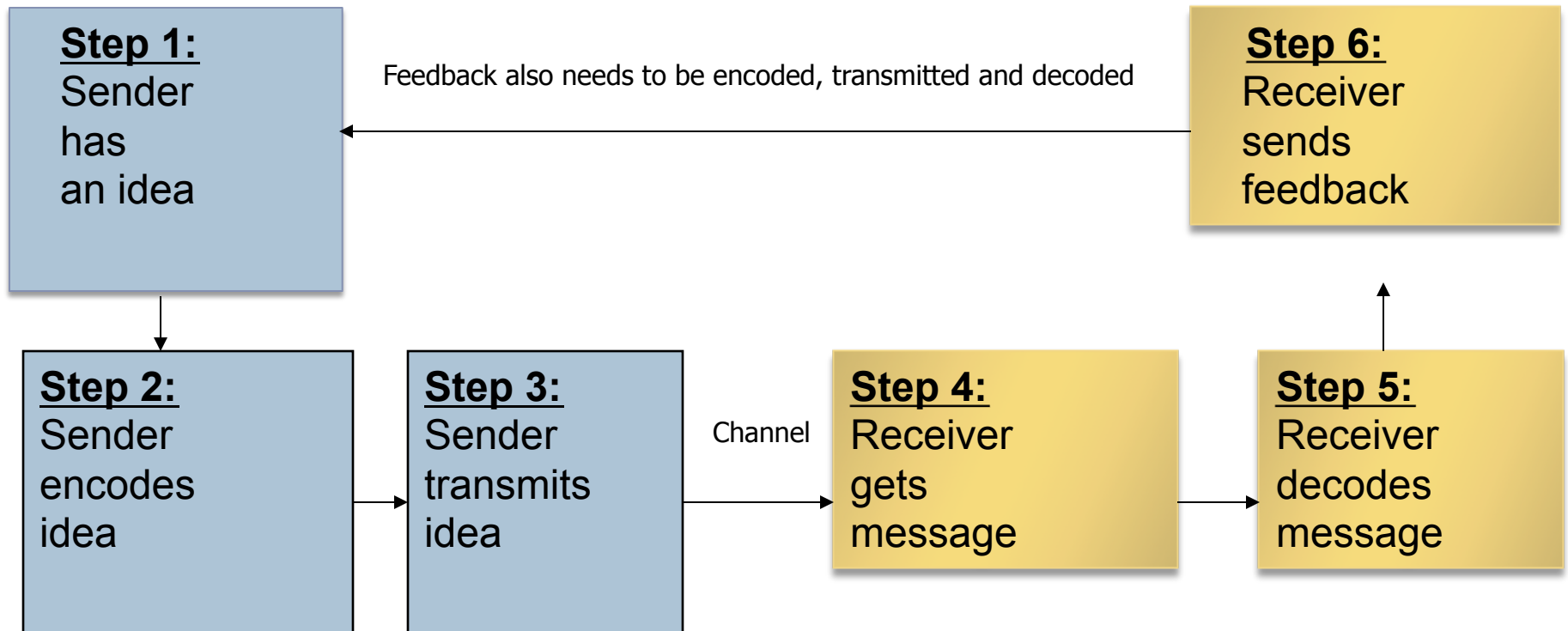
“When you’re managing as much change as corporations globally must deal with today, the ability to communicate and communicate effectively is so important that it ought to be a core capability in a business school curriculum.”

Richard Anderson, CEO of Delta Airlines

- ▶ Excerpted from *The New York Times Online*, April 25, 2009



# The Communication Process



# Effective Communication

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- ▶ 1) Timeliness—I receive the information I need when I need it (79 percent)
- ▶ 2) Consistency—The message matches what I see going on day-to-day (72 percent)
- ▶ 3) Openness—I know this person is also willing to listen (70 percent)
- ▶ 4) Expertise—This person knows what they are talking about (66 percent)
- ▶ 5) Reputation—Others say this person is trustworthy (26 percent).

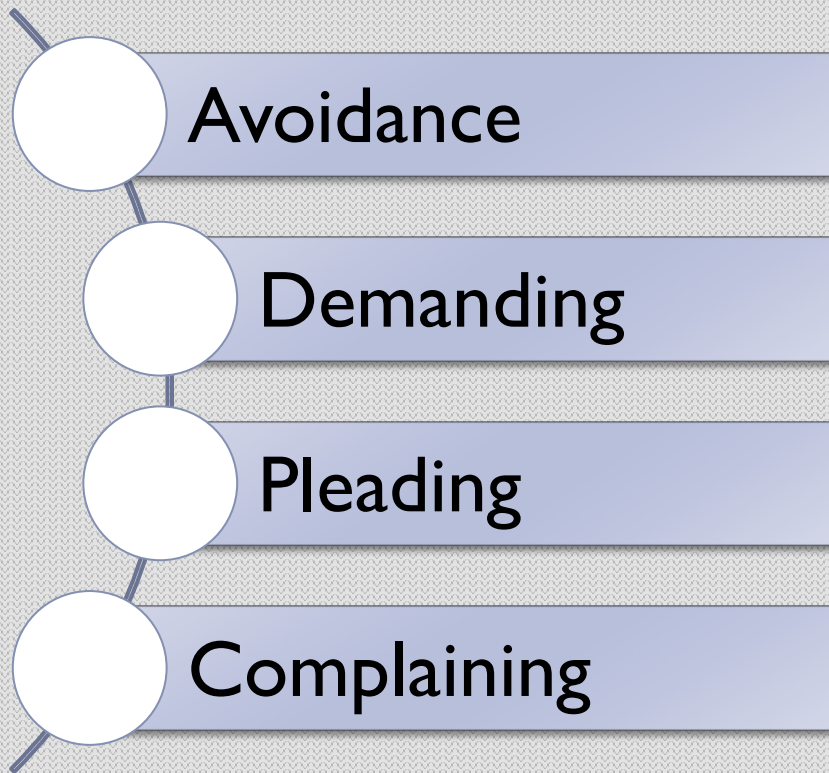
CW Bulletin: What 25,000 Employees Globally Say about Communication Effectiveness

By Katherine Woodall, ABC, APR, and Charlie Watts

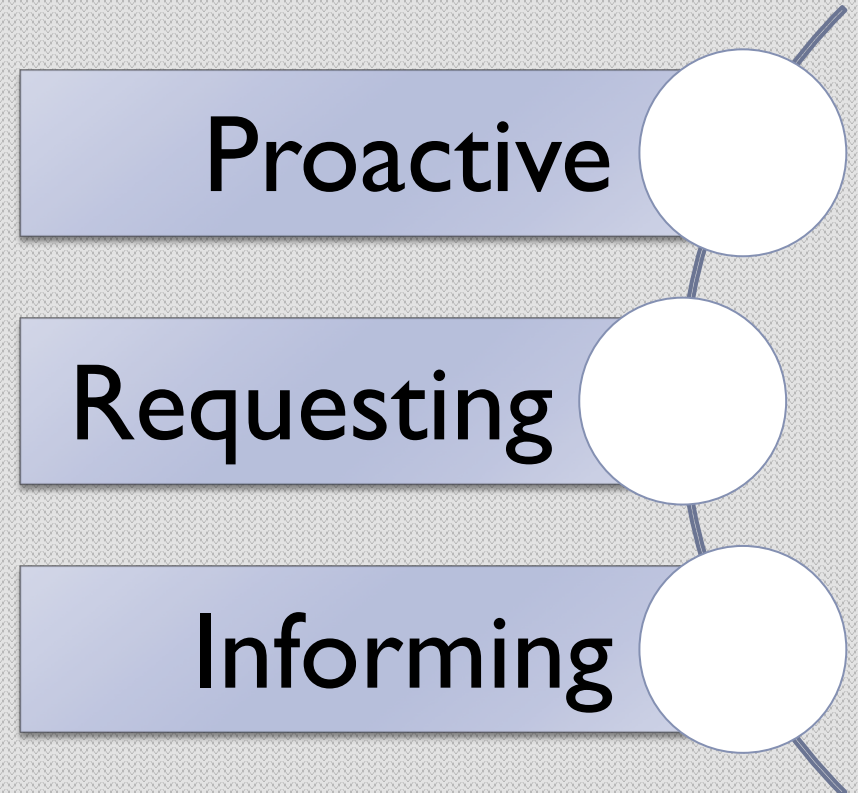
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# Communication – Outside the Organization



Undesired



Desired & in control

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# The Mechanics

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# Subject Line

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1. Be specific.
2. Be as short as possible.
3. Include all relevant information.
4. It's a title – usually use capital letters.

E.g. **Acme Project Committee Meeting – Tuesday at 4:00** or  
**City of Mesopotamia 4 Way Stop Review**

To "Heidi [REDACTED] com>.

[Add Cc](#) [Add Bcc](#)

Subject Clear and To the Point

[Attach a file](#) [Insert: Invitation](#)



# # of Subjects

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- ▶ Conventional wisdom says one subject per email.
- ▶ Especially if it refers to meeting details, a specific request or a call to action such as an rsvp.
- ▶ And especially if some parts will be difficult to answer.
- ▶ If you combine emails:
  - ▶ Number each point.
  - ▶ Make sure they refer to the same project or issue.



## Answer on Connect:

Write the Subject Line for the following emails situations:

- ▶ To the Steering Committee when the meeting has been changed from 2:00pm to 4:00pm Tuesday
- ▶ To your colleague who's boss has some data you need.
- ▶ To your boss letting him know you'll be late for work because you slept in then missed the bus.
- ▶ To the Project's Committee you sit on, sharing your update on your data analysis project.



# Clear & Concise Language

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Be professional:

- ▶ Be very clear. Short sentences – it will often be read fast.
- ▶ Err on the side of formality.
- ▶ Be courteous, it is easy to read an email wrong.
- ▶ If it is not clear enough – change it.

“I hope this finds you well....”

“Thank you for your quick response, however...”



# Proper Punctuation & Formatting

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Be professional:

- ▶ Be clear, using the proper punctuation helps.
- ▶ Be accurate, just as you would in your reports.
- ▶ Avoid all CAPS – unless it's an emergency.
- ▶ Highlight **important** information with **bold**, *italics* or underline



# Content

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- ▶ Answer all questions.
- ▶ Preempt questions by providing the necessary information.
- ▶ State the intent clearly and quickly, in the first paragraph.  
“I would like to find out...”

Heidi,

I'm just confirming that I'll be at your office tomorrow at noon. We'll be continuing work on the project plan. I'll have a powerpoint just like last time. Can I email you the slides in the morning for you to print before I get there? Can you tell me who will be there?

Best,

Elizabeth

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# Salutations - opening

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- ▶ Hello,
- ▶ Hello Everyone,
- ▶ Dear,
- ▶ Name,
- ▶ Hi,
- ▶ Nothing - if it's short and casual

*Hello!*

hello.



# Salutations - closing

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- ▶ Regards,
- ▶ Kind regards,
- ▶ Best regards,
- ▶ Best,
- ▶ All the best,
- ▶ Cheers,
- ▶ Thank you,
- ▶ Many thanks,
- ▶ Thanks,
- ▶ Sincerely,
- ▶ Yours sincerely, (very formal)
- ▶ ~~Yours truly~~, (never, it's intimate)

Best Regards



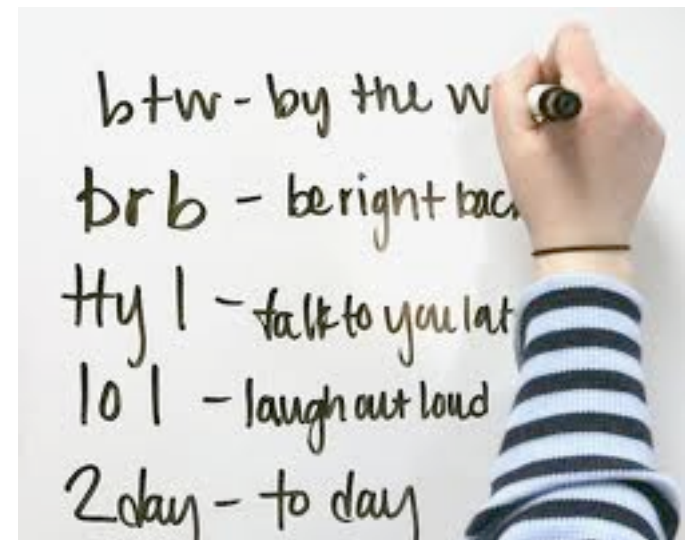
BYE



# Short Hand?

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- ▶ Always use full sentences and complete words.
- ▶ Rarely use:
  - ▶ !
  - ▶ FYI, BTW
  - ▶ Etc.
- ▶ Never use:
  - ▶ Emoticons
  - ▶ LOL, Thx





# Referencing

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- ▶ Be very specific: identify the meeting, the group, the document or the project by its proper name.
- ▶ A website: include the url
- ▶ Refer to the project # (internal or external)

“With respect to our phone conversation this morning...”

“In reference to my email of July 12...”



# Next Steps & Action Items

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- ▶ Specify the response you want.
- ▶ Provide a clear call to action.
- ▶ Indicate by when you need a response.
- ▶ If you have discussed something by phone – confirm the details in an email.

“Please call me before you go home tomorrow so we can set up a new meeting time that will work for everyone.”



## Answer on Connect:

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Write an email to someone who has answers you need for a report due in 7 days.

What do you need to know before you respond to this question?

“Please send me the data, hopefully before Friday, since the report is due on Monday.”

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## Answer on Connect:


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Thanks you

Why is it not usually appropriate to send an email simply saying, “Thank you.”?

Write a brief thank you email to a colleague who went out of her way to get the data you needed from her boss.

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# Thank yous

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- ▶ Take the time to say more than just thank you. Personalize your message and add something specific or don't bother.
- ▶ Thank you for your timely response. Enjoy the rest of your weekend.
- ▶ Thank you for passing on that information. It's going to help me do a much more thorough job!



# Attachments

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- ▶ Use an attachment if there is a necessary document they might not have handy.
- ▶ Use an attachment if the content of the email might be referenced in detail or should be saved (e.g. meeting notes)

“Pasted below and attached are the details....”

“I noticed in the Terms of Reference....”



# Contact Information

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- ▶ Include all relevant contact information and your full name at the bottom.
- ▶ Be mindful of repeats.
- ▶ Be sure your email address

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*Please note our offices have moved. We are now at 909 Pender Street.*

Jane Lai

Principal, Acme Services

778.892.1234

[jane@acmeservices.ca](mailto:jane@acmeservices.ca)

[www.acmeservices.ca](http://www.acmeservices.ca)

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# CC (Carbon Copy)

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- ▶ Use it carefully and have a reason for including someone.
- ▶ Those who require a high level of control, insist on it.
- ▶ Those who can't read all their emails hate it.
- ▶ If you omit someone by mistake – forward the original with an apology immediately.
- ▶ When referring to someone – consider including them.
- ▶ When to CC the boss....

“...I've CCed her here for your convenience.”





## Answer on Connect:

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List 5 instances in a business context when you might CC someone. List 5 when you wouldn't.



# Responding

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- ▶ A response is usually expected within 24 hours.
- ▶ Answer all the questions asked.
- ▶ Preempt their questions by providing relevant and necessary information.



## Answer on Connect:

- ▶ Someone has sent you an email with a number of queries:
  - ▶ What time is the meeting on Tuesday?
  - ▶ I'm trying to figure out if we should go ahead with Project 36. It's a big deal for us, it would really make a lot of things fall in to place, but we need the go ahead from your guys upstairs.
  - ▶ How much will the development costs be for Project 24?

Write a response.



# Privacy

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- ▶ Remember: everything you write will have a history
  - ▶ It can be published any where, including the whole email string online.
  - ▶ Can act as a commitment.
  - ▶ Can be traced back to you and the person you send it to.
- ▶ Never say anything bad about anyone, even if both parties are agreed that someone is a problem.
- ▶ Make a phone call if you aren't sure how your response will be interpreted or used.
- ▶ Avoid Bcc



# I'm looking for an internship

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- ▶ “I am currently starting to contact all my possible leads for jobs next summer and need some advice on how to write the initial email. I am curious about what is a good subject line? “Sam Needs A Job” does not seem so subtle.”
- ▶ The initial email will be brief:
  - ▶ outline your experience,
  - ▶ what you're looking for, and
  - ▶ could they offer some advice over coffee.
- ▶ In the coffee meeting:
  - ▶ tell them you're looking for work and do they have any advice, places to look, people you should talk to.
  - ▶ The subject line might be “coffee?”.





- ▶ LinkedIn is a great tool for *maintaining* business connections.
- ▶ When inviting someone to LinkedIn:
  - ▶ Make sure you know the person
  - ▶ It is best if they are a mentor or someone to whom you have something to offer (otherwise it is a weak connection)
- ▶ Be sure that anything you post on LinkedIn has value to your connections
- ▶ It is difficult to delete anything from LinkedIn, so be sure it is something you will want connected to you professionally long term



# Readings

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- ▶ Chapter 4, p. 65: **Working with Memos, Email, Letters and Instant Messages**
- ▶ Chapter 6, p. 153: **Writing Bad News Messages**



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End

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