



## Delivering Better Customer Service Via E-Mail

### *Nine Quick Tips*

By Craig Harrison



**M**ore than ever before, we are and will be using e-mail to communicate with customers, co-workers and others. There are many ways you can deliver great customer service through your use of e-mail. Consider the following:

1. **Descriptive subject lines make a difference to readers.** Here's why:
  - They orient the listener to what the e-mail contains
  - They give readers a heads-up if action is required, and by when!
  - They hasten the filing and retrieving of your e-mail for future reference

AVOID blank subject lines, or ones that say "no subject" or "re: "

Similarly, a subject line that says "follow up" or "about our discussion" runs the risk of confusing the reader with its vagueness.

***Don't waste readers' time. Use the subject line accurately.***

2. **Personalizing the messages through using the correct name, proper title and tasteful salutation.**

Mass marketers SPAM us with unsolicited e-mails sent blindly. Just as in real life, we respond to the personal touch. We do like to hear our own name. It's also nice in print.

3. **Making your e-mail as easy to read as possible; avoiding long paragraphs with multiple streams of thought.**

Readers appreciate visual cues.

They are subconsciously turned off by long paragraphs and multiple streams of thought within one paragraph that tax eyes and minds.

Make your text easily digestible for your readers.

For long e-mails consider a table of contents such as used by this e-zine, to preview what is to follow and encourage readers to go directly to that which interests them most.

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## Quick Tips 4-9

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### 4. Using numbered lists and bulleted lists to help the reader discern distinct pieces of information

- Any time you organize information it improves its retention.
- Numbered lists facilitating the recognition referencing of distinct pieces of information.
- Bulleted lists similarly make organizes distinct information for ease of reading and reference.

### 5. Using titles, subtitles and sections within long e-mails to help readers digest information

Subtitles help readers recognize they are in a new section of your thought train. They can descriptively set a context for what's to follow. Use them.

### 6. Consider using attachments or links to web pages for voluminous messages.

You have a great deal of information to impart. Make a text-only attachment or issue a URL and post the information to a website.

### 7. Avoid e-mails that tax recipients' systems.

Sending large sound files, graphics-laden e-mails bogs down users' e-mail programs and ties up their connections, often unnecessarily.

### 8. Make judicious use of your Signature file(s)

You can use your Signature file so as to be of service to the reader:

List your name, title, voice mail, toll free number, a URL for 24-hour assistance, user-group and newsgroup contacts etc. to give readers options and more control. That's a form of service!

### 9. Tone matters.

The language you use counts doubly since your tone of voice cannot be "heard" in e-mail.

Be polite, respectful and thoughtful in the language you use.

Messages can easily be misconstrued due to the lack of visual cues usually attendant to conversations: facial expressions, body gestures, tone of voice.



***Remember, you are imposing on your reader's time.  
Be as organized in your communication as possible, to respect their time.***

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