

## Meeting in the middle in your email writing

We have had some thoughtful discussions recently on the extent to which you need to adapt your email style when writing in Business English. A 'house style' often emerges or is actively promoted in a company. This email style could focus on being more direct or relaxed or, on the contrary more formal and polite.

When there is a mismatch in styles, you like to write in a formal, professional tone and your contact or customers likes to write in a very relaxed way, it can cause issues and irritations. Will 'they' think I am too cold if I keep to my normal professional style?

### **Meeting in the middle**

I think there are two principles to hold onto when writing effective emails, your own authentic voice and adaptability.

In my own email writing style I like to be professional and polite. I like to deploy the trusted **email sandwich**, in which I start the email with a polite greeting and finish with an expression asking, for example, if they have any questions? Crucially I try and use lots of different types of bread in my sandwich!

I work with a number of clients who email me in a much more direct, familiar and casual way. It is here that I look to be 'light on my feet' and adaptable. If I deployed my most formal version of the email sandwich - the recipient could question the warmth of our working

relationship. However, if I directly mirrored back their style I would feel a little like an email chameleon. My compromise is to keep to the principles of how I like to write emails, but warm up the tone by deploying semi-formal and not formal expressions.

**Example:**

*Hi Toby*

*Can you send me a new quote for 10 classes ASAP?*

*Cheers*

*Peter*

*Hi Peter,*

*Good to hear from you. Please find the quote attached. If you have any questions do let me know.*

*Best or Best regards*

*Toby*

You will note - I sometimes mix formality with semi-formality and start with 'Hi' and finish with 'Best regards'. If the relationship has warmed up significantly over time I would consider 'Best' with a client whose tone is very informal.

As a final point to consider. 'Less is more' is an important principle guiding email writing. We are all busy people who want to get to the point. However, a style of email writing has emerged which is super direct and dispenses with any of the niceties as 'email fluff'. I don't think there needs to be a trade-off. The time it takes to add one or two expressions opening or closing an email in a professional way is minimal. The danger is in being over-mechanical and in repeating expressions, such as 'I hope this email finds you well' over and over again.

Ultimately, we are living in challenging, stressful times and giving a little space to adding greetings or thanks to email communications really does feel worth it.

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