

TLP Five-Minute Read Over Coffee – Warming up your emails

You have a very good relationship with your customer/contact, developed over a number of years and you want to communicate with a little more warmth.

How might you reflect this in your emails?

I have done 100s of email writing workshops over the last 10 years and in that time I have really adapted some of my own principles - either because they were too rigid or sometimes too formal.

These principles have remained constant:

1) Mirroring back. This means reflecting back the tone of the customer or contact you are communicating with. However good your 'feeling' is for a customer, if they use 'Dear', for example, I would not switch to 'Hi'.

There is also a limit to how much I mirror back - I have my **Toby style** which is who I am and is sometimes a little bit more formal than some of my clients. So if I have a super direct client I try and meet them in the middle!

2) Start your email differently. Subject to the above - I recommend using 'Hi' when you communicate with a very good contact - it is warm but not too casual in email form.

3) Consider a warm and friendly opening sentence or going straight to the point. A little expression such as 'Thanks for your email' can make a big difference. I also like 'I hope your week is going well' in the right context. However, I use it with care - as this expression can drive some of my clients crazy. They simply don't get if I am asking a question about their week. The honest answer is that it does not need a reply.

4) Be careful in relaxing your style with phrasal verbs ('call off' - rather than 'cancel') or **idiomatic expressions** ('Give me a bell' - rather than 'could you call me'). They do relax your tone but they might also simply block understanding.

5) Use a few more feeling based expressions/expressions giving thanks.

- 'It felt good to finally finish the ...'
- 'Thank you for your insights yesterday...'

This is something really important for me in how I communicate.

6) Play with your punctuation. When I am writing a more relaxed email to a really good contact, I often use a dash – in place of a comma (,). 'Thanks for sending the email to xxx – did you get any feedback?' A small and geeky thing to highlight I admit.

7) Relax your closing statement a little. I really like 'Let me know if you have any questions'. I like ending this way because I think it highlights I remain responsive to my audience.

8) Something I did not think I would ever say - Consider using emoticons! This needs to be done carefully. But with a very good customer/contact, emoticons can add warmth and a little bit of playfulness to your communication style. As an older guy I am catching up a little on this!

In support of all of the above is the **principle that powerful communication is both simple and generous** to your audience. This means avoid long, complex sentences, big words and idiomatic expressions and always look to keep your tone respectful and professional. **Your mission is to help your audience understand you in the best way you can.**

Contact me - Toby at toby@tlp.lu, if you would like to find out more about the work I do.
