

Communicating reassurance in email writing (a year after Covid-19)

In the first wave of Covid-19 we ran a series of workshops on how to communicate reassurance to colleagues and contacts. There was a lot of shock and fear in the early months of the first lockdown. This was reflected in professional emails with sentences such as 'Stay safe' or 'I hope you and your family remain well in this difficult period'.

Where are we now?

People seem tired of direct and explicit references to Covid-19 in business emails. It somehow feels too much as the shock has been replaced with a weariness for many. I think we all still need reassurance as the challenges and profound impact on our daily lives continue. However, maybe this needs to be more subtly expressed. Please find five working principles to consider when writing professional emails in this current climate.

Principle 1: Little words matter

Rather than starting an email with a direct reference to the Covid-19 context, give more attention to the general tone of your professional emails. Expressions using warmer verbs can make a difference.

- I am pleased we could find a solution/way forward...
- I value your comments on this and will review the...
- I hope I can shed some light on the...
- I am happy to offer a discount of... in these circumstances.

Principle 2: The super calm and professional modal verb 'Would'

'Would' remains a calm and polite way to make a request or statement via email in complex times.

- We would like to reassure you that we will remain available for any questions you may have.
- We would like to highlight...
- We would like to emphasize...
- We would like to inform you that...

Principle 3: Giving thanks

However cheesy it sounds, making sure to give thanks, when thanks is due, can really help in this period.

- Thank you for your contribution to the meeting last week.
- I really appreciated your input into the project proposal.
- Thank you for calling earlier, it was good to speak to you in person.
- I am glad we were able to speak yesterday, it was good to clarify our next steps.
- It was good to meet you yesterday and I look forward to...

Principle 4: 'We' or 'I'

A small but important point when communicating reassurance to customers/contacts was the use of 'we' or 'I'. Sometimes it is more reassuring if you use 'we' and speak on behalf of your team/company. This gives your contacts the impression that you have the weight of your organisation behind you.

Sometimes it is more effective to use 'I' to highlight your personal commitment and the depth of your personal relationship with a contact. Make a judgement based on the nature of your relationship, there is no right or wrong approach here.

- We are committed to ensuring a high quality of service in these difficult times.
- I am committed to ensuring a high quality of service in these difficult times.
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Principle 5: Keeping it simple but with empathy

There is a style of email communication which prides itself on being super direct, just focusing on the facts, avoiding any 'waffle' (unnecessary expressions). It is about being a lean, mean email machine! The principle of 'less is more', saying things in a direct and uncluttered way is the foundation of good email writing. However, this should not mean avoiding any emotion. Simple statements communicating empathy can give warmth and reassurance alongside stating the facts.
