

# But how did the email make you feel?



By [Amanda Patterson](#)

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I have been thinking about why some emails are successful and others are not. There are emails that make you want to continue doing business with the sender and there are those that make you want to complain about the sender's company to anyone willing to listen to you.



## The basics

There is so much written about email etiquette and how to communicate effectively in emails. And it is true that these five things are all-important when writing emails:

1. Attention must be paid to spelling, [grammar](#) and punctuation.
2. An appropriate greeting and [sign-off](#) must be included.
3. Your [subject line](#) should be clear and pertinent.
4. You should include only the [most important information](#) and ask only one question.
5. The email should be brief.

## The feelings

But there is more to writing a successful email than that. Maya Angelou once said, 'I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.' This is true in all relationships, including those of a business nature. I know that I avoid doing business with people who leave a negative impression in my inbox.

## The fix

If you want people to respond to you, you need to consider the tone, composition, and content of your email. This will help you get a response, because people will feel good about the way you have communicated with them. Here is a list of seven tips to help you achieve this:

1. **Do not make excuses without proposing solutions.** It is frustrating for a reader to receive an email where you have failed to perform or to keep a promise. It is worse when you have no plan to fix the situation. Find ways to work with systems, instead of complaining about them. It is not a good idea to make somebody feel sorry for you, and do not say something simply because you think it is what they want to hear. Give people the correct information in an appropriate, polite manner.

2. **Do not say anything in writing that you would not say to your reader's face.** An email is not a protective barrier between you and the recipient. Behave impeccably. Do not gossip about your boss or your co-workers. Good business writers focus on spending their time and energy on work. Talking behind other people's backs will have a negative impact on you - especially if you put it in writing. Readers will wonder what you have to say about them. If you want to say something, say it directly to that person.

3. **Do find ways to learn from your mistakes.** Successful communicators know that they can learn and gain experience from any situation. Try to find a way to thank the reader, without gushing or sounding insincere, for the opportunity they have given you to find a solution to their problem.

4. **Complain in a constructive manner.** If you need to complain in an email, do it in a brief, courteous, and reasonable manner. Ask the reader to give you an explanation, or provide a solution. If you are responding to a complaint, try not to blame anyone else. Deal with the problem and move on.

5. **Do not discuss your personal life in a business email.** Your reader will feel as if you have violated your professional relationship. He or she will avoid dealing with you, or complain to your manager. Do not talk about yourself, your physical well-being, your financial problems, your pets, your politics, or your religion. Never boast. Good communicators only offer details about their qualifications and achievements if someone specifically asks them to do so.

6. **Do try to help.** If you create a positive tone when you communicate, and if you genuinely try to offer helpful solutions, others will trust you. They will be open to doing business with you in the future. Say nice things and congratulate others when they have achieved something. Do this in a professional and appropriate manner.

7. **Be polite.** Let things go. A rude email sent to you is not an excuse for you to behave the same way. Think twice before you criticise anybody in an email. Harsh words are even more hurtful when written in black and white. Think before you write and you will control the way others perceive you.

Never underestimate the way you make others feel. It is true that I will forget the specifics of what you wrote in your email in a week's time, but I will never forget how I felt about you and your company if you made a negative impression on me.

*If you want to improve your business writing, join us for [The Plain Language Programme](#).*

## ABOUT AMANDA PATTERSON

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