



Leadership Letter

E-Mail Etiquette That Even Emily Post Could Love

If co-workers roll their eyes when your name pops up in their e-mail in-box, perhaps you should review your e-mail etiquette.

- **Put your subject line to work.** Think of the subject line as a headline, something that tips the reader off about what follows. If you are writing about a project or customer, mention it by name in the subject line. Never send an e-mail like “Hey!” or “Update”. This tells the recipient nothing.
- **Get to the point.** The beauty of e-mail is that it is quick communication, so don’t waste your reader’s time with chitchat. If the purpose of your message is to send a message or convene a meeting, say so in the first line or two.
- **Don’t send gratuitous replies.** Good manners are always appropriate, but one-word reply e-mails like “thanks.” are just a waste of band width.
- **Just say no to “txt tlk.”** Business communications are not the place for smiley faces or catchy cell phone texting abbreviations like “GR8”. E-mails should conform to the same rules of good grammar concise writing as your memos or reports.
- **Sign off with “Yours truly.”** Most e-mail systems allow you to create a signature that is automatically included with every e-mail. Use it! Be sure that your signature includes your phone number so people can easily respond to you via more than one channel.



The beauty of e-mail is that it is quick communication.

-Adapted from “7 Deadly sins of E-mail,” by Tetsou, on the Tetsou Working the Web site.

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Leadership Commission Members

- Judy Carnahan-Webb, TX*
Susan Carrigan, OK
Steven Fairchild, VA
Sandra Hutson, Member-at-Large

Simple Ways to Increase Meeting Effectiveness

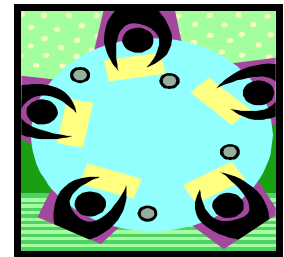
Make your meetings more useful by following these expert suggestions:

Revamp agendas. Instead of general agenda items, try circulating a list of concrete “desired outcomes” participants can prepare to address.. After the meeting, circulate an “outcomes record” that lists decisions reached along with related assignments and due dates.

Recheck rosters. Don’t just pull in warm bodies; make sure everyone on the attendance list really needs to be there.

Rotate leadership. Shake up regularly scheduled meetings by giving everyone an opportunity to run them.

Reduce time frames. Don’t default to meeting for an hour when 30-45 minutes will do the trick.



-Adapted from “*How to Make Meetings More than Just a Waste of Time,*” by Christine Elliot, for the Associated Press.

Take Notes on these Useful Speaking Tips

Note cards are a great tool to help you to keep your place when giving a presentation. If you are too reliant on them, though, they can be a detriment. Here is some advice to help you use them judiciously:

- **Just the facts.** Use note cards for factual information that **MUST** be correct---statistics, direct quotes, lists, and so on.
- **Notes, not novels.** Limit the amount of information on each card to a few words or key phrases. Use them to jog your memory, not to provide a word-for-word script.
- **Walk away.** Don’t be afraid to leave your notes on the lectern and walk around a bit, speaking from memory. This frees you to use your body language more effectively and connect with your audience.
- **Visual Aids.** You may also use charts and graphs to help you stay on track---sort of a note card you share with your audience.

-Adapted from “*4 Common Ways to Remember Material,*” by Lenny Lakowski, on Presentation Pointers.com

Don’t wing it!

Plan!

Governing Board Self-Assessment

At least once a year it is important to ask boards to do a self-evaluation. The following items adapted from the Virginia Association of Early Childhood Education policy manual may be helpful in constructing an instrument for your organization. Using a rating scale with columns marked “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree,” and “Need to Learn About,” consider including the following items in your board’s self-assessment instrument:

All board members are familiar with and support the mission statement.

The current mission statement is appropriate for our organization’s role for the next two years.

The board’s policy decisions, programs, and services reflect the organization’s mission.

The board has identified key indicators for tracking progress toward our organization’s strategic goals.

The board has ensured that financial controls are in place.

The board discusses thoroughly, the annual budget of our organization before approving it.

The board receives financial reports that enable members to make informed, prudent decisions.

The board requires an annual audit and considers all recommendations made in the independent auditor’s report.

The board has established appropriate financial policies.

The board regularly evaluates program and service effectiveness.

The board ensures that an effective advocacy information and response system exists between its leadership and its members.

The board understands who can serve as the official spokesperson for the organization.

Board members understand their role in advocacy activities.

The organization has an effective process to nominate and select new board members.

The board’s composition reflects the diversity of background, expertise, and other resources needed by the organization.

The organization provides new board members with orientation to board responsibilities, services, programs, and procedures.

The policies of length-of-board-service and rotation ensure a constant infusion of new board members.

Board meetings focus attention on long-term strategic issues rather than just short-term administrative matters.

Board members receive clear and succinct agendas and supporting written material sufficiently prior to board and committee meetings.

Board members review board materials and come prepared for informed meetings.

Board members have adequate opportunities to discuss issues and ask questions.

The board regularly reviews its policies, procedures, and bylaws.

All board members primarily represent the interests of the organization and the members, not any single, specific constituency.

Each committee and task force has a stated purpose and plan of work.

The current committee structure contributes to board productivity.

Committee assignments reflect the interests, experiences, and skills of board members and provide opportunities to develop leadership skills.

The board has an adequate amount of liability insurance to cover board members in the event of lawsuits filed against the organization or against individual board members.

Board members actively engage in fund development activities of the organization.

The board is involved in developing strategies for generating resources.

From this list of board self-assessment questions, the next step would be to develop an “Individual Board Member Self-evaluation” form. Keep your organization growing through annual board- and self-evaluations. Then, most importantly, analyze and act on evaluation results.

***Don't forget,
use the results !!!***

Good leaders develop through a never-ending process of self-study, education, and experience. (Manual on Military Leadership)

When Not to Coach Staff

Knowing when to step in and coach a staff person is a valuable skill for any director. The only thing more valuable is knowing when NOT to step in. Don't coach an employee if:

- **Training is incomplete.** Make sure employees are completely trained in the basics before you start trying to impart the finer points of the job.
- **Expectations are unclear.** Coaching is intended to help staff overcome the barriers that impede them from meeting expectations. If they do not know the expectations, they are not likely to recognize the barriers.
- **You are busy.** Don't try to coach on the fly. Make a note and do it when you have an appropriate amount of time.
- **You are angry.** It is difficult to be positive when angry. Cool off, and then coach.

-Adapted from "Employee Coaching: When to Step In," by John Reh, on the About Management Web site.



Know when not to step in.

A good leader can't get too far ahead of his followers. (Franklin D. Roosevelt)


**Southern Early
Childhood Association**

SECA
PO Box 55930
Little Rock, AR **72215-5930**

Phone: 1-800-305-7322
Fax: 1-501-227-5297

*Promoting Quality Care and Education for
Young Children and Their Families*

[Http://
www.southernearlychildhood.o](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org)

The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is a regional organization committed to promoting quality care and education for young children and their families. SECA is committed to providing leadership and support to individuals and groups by:

- *Enhancing the quality of young children's lives through early childhood care and education.*
- *Supporting families in their roles of caring for their children.*
- *Fostering the professional growth and status of individuals working with young children and their families.*
- *Increasing public understanding and support for policies and programs which ensure developmentally based services to young children and their families.*
- *Focusing on Southern issues concerning children and families*