How to Write an Email

Each and every person we interact with is deluged with email. The more effective you are at crafting an email, the more likely you are to get a solid response in a timely fashion. This small amount of extra effort can dramatically shorten the length of an "interaction cycle" and help you close problems and projects in a shorter amount of time.

Guidelines

- **Use keyword subject lines.** If you are replying to an old message with a totally different topic, change the subject line. This makes your new topic more apparent to the recipient and pulls it from an old email thread, where it is likely to be overlooked.

- **Ask your question first.** Then, elaborate on details. This forces you to be clear on the point of your email, right from the beginning. When following your natural, "auto-pilot" mode, the question usually emerges at the end. If that happens, cut and paste it to the beginning.

- **Bold the key sentence.** This sentence should be first. It will often be a question. This will increase the chances of a faster response.

- **One topic/issue per email.** This makes email processing easier for your recipient. It also prevents bottlenecks; if you are waiting on something before responding to Question A, there is no reason to be holding up Question B.

- **Use short paragraphs.** If the email is rather lengthy, put the key sentence of each paragraph first.

- **Remember: all email is public.** Emails can far too easily be forwarded to the wrong person or somehow made public. Also, emails exchanged from SOAR accounts are the property of SOAR Learning, Inc. They can be viewed by management and they can be incriminating. Never email anything you wouldn't want displayed on the Coca-Cola sign in Times Square. Use code words to exchange passwords. If you must express something that is unflattering, tell the flat truth, without inserting heated emotions.

NOTE: When processing email, my assistant summarizes long emails with the following three questions. They might be helpful for you:

1. What do they want?

2. What's my next decision/action?

3. Do I *need* to take action? (Am I responding to this simply because I think I should, or is it truly important to reply?)