

Email for Results

AUDIENCE

- Is this addressed to the people who need to know this information?
- Why do they need this information? What will they do with it?
- Will this information be welcome or unwelcome to this audience? Why?
- Will this information be expected or unexpected to this audience? Why?
- Is there anyone else who need to be in the loop? Why?
- How do you expect your reader(s) to feel? React? Do? Why?

TONE

- What is the overall tone of this email? How do you know?

- Is the tone appropriate? Why?

- Is the tone professional? How so?

- Is the tone appropriately informal or formal? How so?

- Is the tone polite or angry? How so?

- Have you written in the active voice?

- Does it contain any qualifying conjunctions (such as “but” or “however”)? How might you eliminate these?

- Does it contain any absolutes (such as “always” or “never”) How might you eliminate these?

- Would this message be better received over the phone or in person?

TIMING

- By when do you need your reader(s) to read this email? Why?
- What are the ramifications if this message is not read by then?
- What else might be your reader(s) be doing right now? How does that affect the timing?
- Is this the time when your reader will be most receptive to your message? How do you know?
- Might this message be better received/more promptly received over the phone or in person?

TENSION

- What is the nature of your personal relationship/history with your reader? Your professional relationship/history?

- How might this history impact or color how your reader perceives this message?

- In light of your relationship, might this message be better received over the phone or in person?

MAIN MESSAGE

- Does the subject line preview the content of the message?
- Does the main point of your message appear in the first paragraph? On the first screen?
- Do you have an appropriate opening that builds or maintains rapport?
- If this is a response, did you restate the problem as indicated by the reader?
- Did you quote or paraphrase the issue as indicated by the reader to signify your understanding?
- What is your understanding of how the reader would like the issue resolved? Do you have all the information needed to do this?
- What is the reader feeling? How can you acknowledge how the reader is feeling in your email?

- What is your role in the issue indicated? Have you acknowledged your responsibility?
- What are your next steps? Have you indicated them?
- Do you have an appropriate closing that builds or maintains rapport?

FORMAT

- Are your paragraphs short and concise?
- Is white space used to group ideas?
- Can information be presented in vertical lists, using bullets or numbers?
- Does this email require more than one page scroll to read?

FINAL CHECK

How would you feel if your supervisor read this? If your constituency read this? If this were on the front page of the New York Times?