Checklist for writing a professional email

Writing your first professional email can be daunting. It's a delicate balance between professionalism, politeness and - last but not least - purpose. We know this. But it can be hard to put into practice and even our most earnest attempts can end up reeking of naivete. So here is a 6-step checklist for writing a professional email.

The Greeting

- [ ] Always start your email with a greeting. If you're applying for a professional role, it may also be a good idea to include a family name and switch from 'Hi' to 'Dear' ("Dear Jared Smith"). If, however, you are writing to an information or administration-based account ("admin@citylawfirm.com"), it is best to write "to whom it may concern" or "Dear Sir/Madam".

- [ ] Hot tip: even when you're emailing a general admin account, call ahead to see if there's a specific contact you should CC or address the email to.

The Positive Note

- [ ] If you know the person you're emailing or have met them before, you could include a short message that begins the email on a positive note such as "I hope you have been well". It also aids to build a professional relationship on a slightly deeper level rather than solely asking them for a favor. The latter can come across as cold.

- [ ] If you do not know the person who you are emailing, you can skip this step. Alternatively, if you're returning an email, be sure to include a thank you. You could include something along the lines of "thank you for getting in touch". This will ensure that the receiver feels appreciated for taking the time and effort to send you an email (particularly if they have a very busy role).

The Purpose

- [ ] Always state your reason for emailing. Be sure to make this as clear and succinct as possible. People tend to skim through emails rather than read every line so you need to put a clear emphasis on deadlines (lol, see what I did there?). Consider attaching an appointment invite that recipients can add to their calendars where deadlines, appointments and other time-sensitive matters are concerned. You should also double check that you are emailing the right person for the enquiry you have.

The Wrap-up

- [ ] Before ending an email, it is polite to thank the reader for their time or add a polite closing remark. Some articles circulating the web state that HR in the law industry think that adding a thank you is too casual. I am sure there are many of us who disagree. Although it is difficult to know for sure what HR are after, the rest of the professional world would appreciate it. In an alternative, other closing remarks may include "I look forward to hearing from you" or "I hope to discuss this with you further".

The Sign-off

- [ ] Cheers are for bars. "Best/kind regards" or "sincerely" is much more appropriate. You could also include a fancy signature on your Office365 settings so that all your emails will have "Kind regards" at the end of them.

The Proof-read

- [ ] Double check spelling and grammar errors. Ensure you have the right email. Have you covered everything? Are the attachments working? Yes, all these things are much more important than meets the eye. You would't want to be resending an email to your boss because they can't open an email attachment they desperately need. If you have mastered these six steps, your email should sound pro

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