

*Writing Tip*



**Gail Tycer**

*Write less, say more and get results!*



**Tip#4: To Get Your Email Read,  
Start with a Strong Subject Line**

Take a moment to consider: What is it that makes you open an email immediately? For most email readers, it's either (1) who sent it; or (2) what it's about.

There may not be much you and I can do about being who we are, rather than our boss, our most important client, or the head of the company, but there is a great deal we can do about

the subject — specifically about the subject line. Here are some ways your subject line can help get your email read:

Always use a subject line. Simple, to-the-point, and short: 50 characters or fewer. Not only does this bring your reader up to speed quickly, but it helps to move you up in your reader's priority list. Your email may be competing with hundreds of others to be read at all, let alone promptly. A good subject line helps your email say, "read me now." If you are asking for action, or on a deadline, it may be helpful to include that in your subject line.

Use additional communication tools. Occasional phone calls, in-person conversations — can also help to move you up in your reader's priority list. All things being equal, we'll open the email from someone we have a friendly relationship with sooner than someone we don't know. That human relationship, the personal touch, can supplement what might otherwise be a virtually anonymous medium.

Limit your emails to those who really need the information. Resist the temptation to send that email to everyone on the list, even though it's so much easier just to hit the group send. And then ask yourself not only whether each person on the

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Email is opened and read immediately based on two criteria: (1) who sent it; or (2) what it's about. There may not be much you and I can do about being who we are, rather than the boss, the most important client, or the head of the company, but we can create a subject line strong enough to move your email up in the reader's priorities. Simple and short: 50 characters at most. Respect the reader's time. Consider the corporate culture. Build a positive relationship over time. Consistently deliver what you promise.

list needs to have this information, but overall, "Does this information need to be passed along at all?" If not, don't. Respect others' time.

Think about the corporate culture. Many readers feel that being "cc'd" means this email is more of an "fyi," and not that important for them to read. They may either not read it at all, or put off reading it until later. List the reader as a primary recipient if you want him or her to read your email. Also, keep in mind that a "Re:" will seem more important, and garner better readership than a "Fwd:".

Many email writers like to include (brief) content in the subject line: "Marketing meeting 2 p.m. Tuesday 4/20" and then provide additional details in the body of the email. The theory is similar to the old direct mail "hook" — give them the information quickly, the details in the supporting copy.

And then, make sure that your email delivers what the subject line promised. Make it short and concise. Help the reader "get it" at a glance — in the first three to five lines. Make it easy for your reader to do what you are asking him or her to do. Check your email frequently, and be easy to get back to

