

MAY-JUNE 2022

Communication Strategies and Best Practices



Written communication is an essential cornerstone of how we accomplish our work every day. We need to share information and ideas, collaborate on projects, express concerns, announce new programs or initiatives – all adding up to an average of 120 emails received by employees every day.

“Each email you send interrupts someone else’s workflow, so make them count with well-written, organized content and a clear call to action,” says Karen Macdonald, strategic writer and communications consultant, and founder of KDVM Communications, a Passkey Partner.

Start each communication with the recipient in mind, considering what they need to know to take the step you’re asking them to take. This includes adjusting the amount of background and detail you include, as well as the tone and language. Most of all, in each communication make it clear why it matters to the person reading it.

“The point of communication is to have an impact, to inspire someone else to do something, whether that’s reading your status report or even the email itself, or a more immediate need like approving a budget item or signing off on a loan,” says Karen. “Consider how many emails your recipient gets and cut through the clutter.”

Make sure your communications are organized, with similar information delivered together. Use bullets, even in emails, to format lists or large amounts of information. Avoid jargon and acronyms unless you’re absolutely certain the recipient understands them as well as you do. It’s fine to be friendly, says Karen, but always be professional.

“Your writing, whether an email, a report or a memo, is a reflection on your personal brand, and you want that reflection to be positive,” she says. “And keep in mind that even electronic communications last forever and that whatever you write can be forwarded to people well beyond your intended recipient.”

Foundational to effective writing are the basics of correct spelling and grammar. In general, make sure your subjects and verbs agree, and eliminate run-on sentences and sentence fragments. Most errors can be identified by running content through a spell- and grammar-check program, so it’s worth taking the time.

“Your writing is like a calling card and can influence someone’s perception of your intelligence, your competence or your commitment,” says Stephanie Barton, Vice President of Marketing and Strategic Account Management for FCCS. “For example, typos or grammatical errors might indicate sloppiness, or using the same word repeatedly may indicate a lack of imagination. Think about the image you want to convey in each of your written communications.”

“Your writing, whether an email, a report or a memo, is a reflection on your personal brand, and you want that reflection to be positive.”

— **KAREN MACDONALD**
FOUNDER, KDVM
COMMUNICATIONS

To hear more about what makes effective writing, listen to Karen Macdonald on the [FCCS Forward Thinking podcast](#). KDVM Communications is a Partner in the FCCS Passkey Program. For more information about Passkey or KDVM, visit fccsconsulting.com/passkey/home.

Top Tips for Effective Writing

- Start with the recipient in mind – why are you communicating with them, and what do they need to know to do what you’re asking them to do?
- Include your call to action in the subject line using simple prompts like “decision needed,” “status update,” or “for review” so your recipient is prepared before even opening your email. Repeat the request in your introduction and closing so they’re clear on what they need to do next.
- Always run a spell check and grammar check using embedded word processing tools or online tools like [grammarly.com](https://www.grammarly.com).
- For critical communications, ask a colleague to review and provide feedback.
- If you’re having trouble getting started, imagine what you would say if you were talking with the recipient. Consider what questions they’d ask and your responses and use this to plan your email or document.