

Why do most emails fail to achieve success?

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Why aren't my emails receiving a response?

You write an email, carefully craft it, and then press send. But then nothing happens!

A day goes by. Then a week. You wonder: Did they receive it? Did the email end up in the spam folder? Are they ignoring me? Should I send a follow-up email?

This happens all the time. And the annoying thing is that most people think the problem lies with the recipient – they're too busy, too rude, too disorganized.

Usually, the problem lies with the email itself.

What you can expect

This series is divided into practical, focused lessons. Each lesson builds upon the previous one, with practice exercises and quizzes to reinforce what you've learned. You can complete the entire series at once or study one lesson a day.

Once completed, you will be able to:

1. Organize your emails so they are clear and easy to understand.
2. Write email subject lines that entice readers to open them.
3. Use a tone of voice that is appropriate for different audiences and situations.
4. Handle difficult conversations professionally (rejections, complaints, bad news).
5. Write effective follow-up emails without feeling pressured.
6. Build a personal template library for common scenarios.

How people actually read emails

This is what happens when someone opens an email:

1. Glance at the title (0.5 seconds)
2. Read the first 2-3 lines quickly (2 seconds).
3. Make a decision: Read, skim, or skip (1 second)

Total time before making a decision: Approximately 3 seconds.

If your email doesn't pass this 3-second test, it will be pushed down to "later". And "later" often becomes "never".

What do people look for when reading emails?

1. Who is this email from? (Do I know them?)
2. What do they want? (Is it urgent? Is it important?)
3. How much effort will this take? (Can I handle this quickly?)

If any response is unclear, the email will be ignored.

Effort equation

This is a tough math problem:

1. Probability of response = Value of response ÷ Effort required
2. Value: Does the recipient care about this? Is there any benefit in responding?
3. Effort: How long will it take? How much thought will be needed? Will they need to search for information?

Most emails fail because:

1. The value is unclear (why should I care?).
2. Overexertion is too much (this requires a long answer).
3. The request is obscured (I don't even know what you want).

What helps emails get responses?

Emails that received responses shared the following characteristics:

1. **The purpose is clear** . Within 5 seconds, the reader knows why you're writing.
2. **The requirements are clear** . The requirements are stated explicitly, without any concealment.
3. **Minimal effort** . Easy to answer. Yes/no questions. Multiple choice. Specific options.
4. **Easy-to-read formatting** . Short paragraphs. Bullet points. Key information in bold.
5. **The right length** . Long enough to be useful, short enough to be easy to read.

What is overlooked

1. **The paragraph is too long** . Nobody wants to have to read dense paragraphs on their phone screen.

2. **The purpose is vague** . The phrase "Just wanted to ask how you are" makes no sense.
3. **The request is hidden** . The request is concealed in paragraph four.
4. **Too many requests** . Too many questions mean none of them are answered.
5. **This question requires considerable effort** . The question, "What do you think of our strategy?" would require a lengthy essay.
6. **Lack of context** . It's assumed they remember details they don't.

A quick example

Emails that are easily overlooked:

Hi John,

I hope you're well. I wanted to get in touch with you because I've been thinking about our conversation last quarter regarding potential collaboration between departments. As you know, there have been some recent developments that could change how we approach collaborative initiatives. I was wondering if you could spare some time in the coming weeks to discuss how we might proceed in exploring some of the ideas we mentioned earlier.

Please tell me your thoughts!

Email received a response:

Hi John,

Let's continue our Q3 conversation on the synergy between marketing and sales.

A quick question: Are you free for 30 minutes next week to discuss the lead transfer process? I have a specific proposal I'd like your feedback on.

I'm free on Tuesdays from 2-4 pm or Thursday mornings.

Same request. But the second email will receive a response.

Key points to remember

1. People only skim emails for 3 seconds before deciding whether to read or ignore them.
2. Responsiveness = Value ÷ Effort
3. Clear purpose, specific requirements, minimal effort = response
4. Long, vague text with unclear purpose and confusing requirements = ignored
5. Structure and clarity are more important than rhetoric.

1. Question 1:

What is the biggest reason why emails don't receive a response?

1. A. Everyone is too busy.
2. B. The email was sent at the wrong time.
3. C. The request is unclear or requires too much effort to answer.
4. D. The email was not polite enough.

EXPLAIN:

Unclear requests or emails that require a lot of effort to respond to are often ignored. Make your requests clear and easy to fulfill.

2. Question 2:

How do most people initially read emails?

1. A. They read every word carefully.
2. B. They skim through it for 5-10 seconds to decide if it's worth reading the whole thing.
3. C. They only read the first sentence.
4. D. They skipped the beginning and read straight to the signature.

EXPLAIN:

People often quickly scan emails – the subject line, the first few lines, the bold text – to decide if it's worth their time. Here's a structure for quickly scanning emails.

Submit your work

Training results

You have completed **0** questions.

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