



Virtual communication in business - e-mails, phone and fax.

1. In the first line of a first-time e-mail or fax, say who you are before you tell them what you want.
 2. Jargon and abbreviations don't travel well, virtually. For example, do you know how many interpretations there are of SME? Try <http://www.acronymfinder.com> to find out.
 3. Rather than trying to impress with long words - and maybe using them wrongly - read widely and build up your vocabulary and your knowledge of punctuation. Remember that if you communicate internationally the receiver may well have a very clear grasp of the English language - and they will not be impressed by your errors. You only get one chance to make a first impression with your writing.
 4. NEVER USE UPPER CASE in e-mail. It means that you're shouting - and too lazy to find the shift key!
 5. Use emoticons - smiley faces and such-like - very sparingly in business communication. Many people either don't understand them or find them irritating.
 6. Make good use of headings, paragraphs, bullets and numbered points. Reading slows down significantly when the document is on a screen. Short paragraphs - aim for a maximum of eight lines - help readers considerably.
 7. Misunderstandings occur in virtual communication because we have fewer visual clues to add emphasis and meaning to the message. In virtual communication, we often interpret the worst possible scenario from what we read or hear. Choose your words carefully.
 8. If you are upset by a virtual communication wait a while before you respond - it may look different second time around.
 9. Consider how you are heard by others and adjust your words, tone and timing so that the other person can hear us fully and respond more thoughtfully. This is especially true in virtual communication where even the slightest 'off tone' or the poorly chosen word, can offend the recipient. You may never have a second chance.
 10. Value the receiver's time as much as you do your own. Don't send unnecessary messages, and do get in to the habit of putting a priority code in the subject lines of e-mails and faxes. But don't mark everything urgent!
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