The Executive Guide to E-mail Correspondence: Including Model Letters for Every Situation

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Description
Review of The Executive Guide to E-mail Correspondence: Including Model Letters for Every Situation / The Executive Guide to E-mail Correspondence: Including Model Letters for Every Situation Baude, Dawn Michelle Career Press, 2006.

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Baude, Dawn Michelle

INTRODUCTION: In reviewing Dawn-Michelle Baude, The Executive Guide to E-Mail Correspondence, we thought it might be useful to present the review as though it were an e-mail communication written according to Baude’s advice. We think it one of the two or three best works we have read on electronic communication and wish to pass on some of the author’s tips.

E-MAIL IS DIFFERENT: First and foremost, according to Baude, e-mail is not simply a traditional form of correspondence delivered electronically. It is a new form requiring different modes of expression and formatting, particularly within a business environment where speed is critical.

USE PARAGRAPHS: White space, says the author, is as important as text. The eye must be able to scan quickly. Break up those blocky paragraphs.

USE LEAN PARAGRAPHS: Topic sentence, brief content, transition if any. One-sentence paragraphs are ok, even desirable.

USE HEADINGS: If the message is unavoidably complex, use headings so the reader can scan.
GET TO THE POINT: Many writers do not use useful e-mail headings; many readers ignore them. Your first sentences should tell the reader what the message is about, and list any actions or responses that you are requesting. If answering a previous request, give the answer first, then explain if necessary.

BE LESS FORMAL: Save complex salutations or closings, paragraph indents, rococo vocabulary or long sentences, for personal e-mails or better yet, snail mail. Less is definitely more in e-mail.

CONSIDER EMOTIONAL IMPACT: E-mail can seem cold and distant. Beware of being too blunt. Soften prose without diluting meaning.

CUT THE THREAD: Do not keep forwarding long chains of correspondence unless you are going to refer to their content. Snip.

ETHICS: No flaming or personal criticisms.

PROOFREAD AND CORRECT: As in conventional writing, clean prose shows a regard for the reader and inspires confidence. Occasional errors are ok.

CONCLUSION: Baude offers a wealth of examples, tips, and discussions of style, language and formatting. Anyone writing frequent e-mails could benefit from this work. It is, however, somewhat repetitive as are most publications aimed at busy audiences. While the examples take up a great deal of the text, they are frequently useful and might be employed in training scenarios.

Baude holds an MFA, a DES and a PhD in English, has been a Fulbright scholar, and teaches at the American University of Paris.

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