

# **Ten Tips to Get Busy People to Respond to Your Messages**

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Even your mundane messages are, by nature, attempts to persuade. Whether the message is internal or external to your organization, you are selling something. It might be a new product line, a solution to a problem, a new policy, your credibility as a professional, or your firm as the top supplier.

Here are ten proven tips to help you sell your messages, even in the face of competing messages. In other words, here are ten tips to get busy people to respond to your messages.

#### **1. Connect your message to your receiver's priorities.**

People sort incoming messages, consciously or unconsciously, in terms of their priorities or hot buttons. Identify the receiver's priorities and their points of frustration before you write or speak. Do formal or informal research, if necessary, to identify these points. Design your pages and presentations to make an obvious connection between the reader's priorities and your message or recommendation.

#### **2. Resist the temptation to impress.**

Long documents with sophisticated words and complicated sentences do not impress professionals. These things have the opposite effect: they annoy and frustrate. Think about this from your own perspective as a reader, and the point becomes obvious. Audience members want an intelligent presentation that answers their questions. Avoid frustrating them with technical details designed to impress rather than to inform. Get to the point and be done.

#### **3. Check your I/You ratio.**

Make sure you couch your message more in terms of "you" and the name of the customer (internal or external) than in terms of "I" or the name of your firm. To check yourself on this, simply count and make a ratio of "I" words versus "you" words. The higher the focus on "you," the more likely you are to catch and keep the receiver's attention.

#### **4. Use a subject line strategically.**

In e-mail, use the subject line to identify yourself, a specific subject, or benefits that are relevant to the reader. Think about a subject line that will distinguish your message from the avalanche of e-mails this person receives. Be clear, not cute. In memos, and even in formal letters, use a subject line to quickly clarify the subject matter of the message. It helps the reader make an immediate determination about the importance or urgency of the message.

#### **5. Provide an overview or skeleton of your message.**

Any document or talk, even a short one, provides chunks and pieces of information. Identifying your organizational structure is like providing the picture on the box top of a jigsaw puzzle. An overview makes it much easier for the receiver to see how the pieces fit together.

#### **6. Make your headings tell and sell the message.**

Instead of using a topical heading like Population in a document or slide, make the heading carry a conclusion: Population in Dangerous Decline. When possible, make the heading describe a benefit, and the message becomes compelling: Declining Population Presents Business Opportunity.

### **7. Strive for one.**

Discipline yourself to think in terms of one-page letters and one-screen e-mails. The shorter your message, the more likely it is the reader will attend to your message now, rather than place it aside or delete it.

### **8. Layer your material.**

When one page is genuinely insufficient for your message, consider a light, attractive introductory page which shows the reader how to find more details. These details can be in text that follows, in appendices, or in web links.

### **9. Appreciate the value of relationship.**

People pay attention to others whom they trust. Make a commitment to build trust before, during, and after the message. Chances are you've heard the adage, "People like to buy from people they trust." This statement describes how people feel about buying ideas or approving projects as well as how they feel about buying major services from competing vendors.

### **10. Be persistent.**

If you are having trouble getting someone to respond to a message, avoid an automatic assumption that they've rejected you or your message. Many things can prevent a person from responding as you'd expect. Strive to achieve a balance between persistence and politeness. Follow up on your message, using different channels. For example, follow an e-mail with a phone call. Follow a phone call with a letter or a personal note.

Build these proven tips into communication habits. With good habits, you can count on getting better responses to your messages, both inside and outside of your organization.

This article is adapted from *Secrets to Get Busy People to Respond to Your Messages* by Bonnie Budzowski. To learn more or to purchase your copy, visit [www.IncredibleMessages.com](http://www.IncredibleMessages.com) or contact Bonnie at [info@IncredibleMessages.com](mailto:info@IncredibleMessages.com).

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