Writing Impactful Emails

Email is the preferred method of communication for most of our volunteers. Although you may be using other platforms, emails will serve as the core of your communication with Service Unit volunteers.

Here are a few tips to making your Service Unit emails more impactful.

- Use an Informative Subject Line – Since your volunteers will recognize your SU email address, you don't have to use the subject line to grab their attention, so you can use it as a way to organize information
    - Call out urgency (ie "Need Your Camporee Input Before Friday" or "Skating Event RSVPs Due Tomorrow")
    - Use the Subject Line to organize information by date (ie "Service Unit Update January 2024" "Events Update 9.14.23") so volunteers can quickly search for the latest edition of regular information shares
    - Use a "call to action" when you need volunteers to respond to something (is "Renew Your Registration Now" or "RSVP for this month's Service Unit Meeting")
- Scheduling your emails
    - Frequency matters. Emailing your volunteers too often can make your communications feel like "white noise" and they may tune you out. Not emailing your volunteers often enough can make them feel like they are disconnected from the Service Unit.
    - Striking a balance between too much or too little can be a challenge; but once you've found that balance, let your volunteers know when they can expect regular communications (ie monthly or the week after the SU meeting, etc) so they know to look for it.
- Email content
    - Too much is too much; keep it short
    - Share only meaningful content
    - Be intentional about each email (ie Is it relevant? Is it timely? Should it be its own email?)
    - Be succinct (ie Share the critical information; trim away anything that isn't necessary)
    - If you are forwarding information, clean up the email (ie remove the extra email "receipt" information from the front of the email; bring the relevant information to the top of the email; update the subject line to remove "FW or RE")
- Organize information
    - For longer emails, use a "table of contents" to outline the contents quickly
    - Use bullet points and highlights to call out key information (but don't overuse these call outs, which can overwhelm the email)
    - Utilize attachments to shorten the body of the email
    - Put the content in some kind of order (ie by category, by date, etc)
    - Clarify audience when necessary (ie If the SU sends an emails to Scout families, indicate that in the first line – "Good afternoon, Girl Scout Families") so that your usual recipients know you are communicating with a wider audience

- Managing tone in an email
  - Tone can be hard to read in an email. Keep your emails professional and concise to avoid readers from picking up a tone that may not actually be there. Use these tips to help manage tone:
    - NEVER hit send while you are feeling angry or upset. If you must capture thoughts in the moment, do so in a Word document or on paper—where you will not be able to accidentally send it off. Return to the content later to be certain that the content is professional before sending.
    - Open and close your email with a pleasantry; after crafting the body of the email, go back and add an opening like "Good morning" or "I hope everyone is enjoying the fall weather" and close with something like "If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out" or "Have a great weekend."
    - Know when it's time to pick up the phone; while email is an incredible tool, when things are unclear, tone can take a turn very quickly. End the likelihood of adding unintended negative tone by picking up the phone and having a quick conversation as soon as you notice confusion on the part of your reader.
    - Avoid using ALL CAPS in an email because the recipient may read it as you shouting at them. Unless you are typing an acronym, calling out key words in a phrase, or intentionally calling out emotion (like enthusiasm or outrage), you should avoid using all caps.
    - Avoid inflammatory or negative language (ie Instead of saying 'this is a mandatory meeting,' you could try saying 'we encourage all troops to send a representative to this informative meeting.')
    - Avoid the overuse of exclamation points; overuse can turn excitement into anger or frustration—or make it seem like the writer is shouting.
    - Avoid the use of emojis in email text. They have different context for everyone and you can misrepresent yourself or throw unintentional tone into your message—without even realizing it.

Tip & Tricks

- Set up a Service Unit email account. Keeping SU communications out of your personal inbox is a great way to keep your communications organized – AND an easy way to hand off SU communications to another volunteer without having to acclimate volunteers to a new email address in their inbox.
- Avoiding "reply all" situations – When it is not necessary for your audience to reply all to an email, you can add your recipients in on the "BCC" line instead of the "To" or "CC" lines. Doing this will allow anyone in the BCC field to reply ONLY to the sender and anyone in the To or CC fields.
- Always proofread. Sharing typos, an incorrect date or time, or incomplete thoughts will end up costing you more time in corrections and clarifications. It is always worth your time to proofread your email before hitting send. (If possible, have another member of your SU Team proof the email as well to help catch anything you may have missed, anything that may not be clear, or any unintentional tone.)
- Avoid the overuse of color. While color can be helpful in calling out important information, too much color, multiple colors in the same email or light text on a dark colored field, can make it challenging for some readers to digest the information at all. It is easier on the reader to keep all font black and use bolded text to call out important information.
- Do not use quotes that may be confusing or misinterpreted by others. While it is common to see quotes in signature lines, be cautious about which quotes you choose. (ie Quotes from Juliette Low make perfect sense to end your SU communications, but may not make sense at the bottom of a work email since your reader may not know who Juliette Low is)