

How to Send the Perfect Holiday Email:

Why Generic is Worse Than Doing Nothing

The question used to be, “Is it appropriate to send holiday wishes with an email?” With the economy the way it is, and the need to build stronger relationships more important than ever, now it’s, “What can I say that will make a difference?”

Be meaningful — from their viewpoint

The most important thing to remember is this: *Make the message meaningful to the other person.* Sending a generic email saying “Wishing you a happy holiday from all of us at fill-in-the-blank” can actually backfire. Customers know this non-personal message has been copied to everyone in your database. It’s like mailing a pre-printed card that no human hand — or pen — ever touched. Meaningless!

How exactly do you make it meaningful? Select something from the relationship that you can mention and make it “professionally personal.” The goal is to make the other person feel good about themselves and your relationship. Mention how they’ve helped you or what they’ve supported about your product or idea. Talk about something they’ve accomplished that you’re sincerely proud of them for, something you accomplished together that made an impact on their company, something that touches them and reminds them that you have a successful relationship.

No business

Whatever you do, don’t be tempted to ask for future business in your holiday greeting. It’s in poor taste to pretend you’re sending a thank you when in fact, you’re creating a sales piece. The closest you can come is to say, “Looking forward to our paths crossing again soon.”



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Sound like yourself

It's easy to get caught up in the hype of the holiday and start "waxing philosophical". Make your message heartfelt, conversational and concise. Don't copy a message someone else wrote. If your company style is edgy, use that edginess in your holiday greeting too. There is no rule that says you have to be serious.

Don't sip and send

If you haven't yet started making your email holiday list and checking it twice, don't start it after a few glasses of egg nog. Drinking and sending email don't ever work well together and at holiday time with its party atmosphere, that can be easy to forget. So many of us become friends with our customers and after a few drinks, it's easy to forget that they aren't our best friends forever. It's much smarter to avoid getting carried away with your sentiments, and think of your email holiday writing just as you would any other business project.

Be political

Whether you choose Happy Holiday, Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah or Happy Kwanza, you're likely to offend someone. The smartest choice is the one that is most political and that is, Happy Holidays. Be cautious of including motivational quotes that might be offensive too. Keeping church (temple and mosque) separate from business is good business, even in a holiday message.

Consider another holiday

If you don't like these guidelines, send your message during another time of the year. December may be the typical time to send holiday greetings and that is exactly why it may not be the best time. Your customers aren't likely to be sitting at their desks checking off which of their vendors and suppliers sent cards. To stand out, send a meaningful New Year's greeting, a Happy February note, or even a Valentine's message. Sending an authentic message full of gratefulness and good wishes is perfect anytime of the year.

Sue Hershkowitz-Coore (SpeakerSue) is President and CEO of High Impact Presentations, a consultancy providing sales training in the areas of email etiquette, sales writing skills and presentation skills. Visit www.SpeakerSue.com, call Kristin at 480-575-9711, or email Kristin@SpeakerSue.com for speaking availability.

6 TIPS FOR WRITING GREAT HOLIDAY EMAIL MESSAGES

1. WRITE A MESSAGE THAT IS MEANINGFUL TO THEM

Your goal is to help them feel good about themselves, because of their relationship with you.

2. SKIP THE BUSINESS

Whatever you do, do not be tempted by the desire to ask for future business in your holiday greeting. It's in poor taste to pretend you're sending a thank you when in fact, you're sending a sales piece.

3. SOUND LIKE YOURSELF

Make your holiday message conversational and concise.

4. DON'T SIP AND SEND

Egg nog and email don't mix.

5. BE POLITICAL

Unless you are 100% confident of your recipient's holiday preference, use the politically correct: Happy Holidays! Remember, you can't judge by a last name anymore.

6. CONSIDER ANOTHER HOLIDAY

Do something different. Show gratefulness when your reader will appreciate it most.