

*** Introduction: Why write a book on e-mail?**

Electronic mail or "e-mail" (its common English abbreviation) is the most widely used application of Internet's technological platform in the world. It not only is a special tool for communication, work, study, research, and filing, but a sociological phenomenon in itself, given its growing influence on every aspect of the lives of people from all countries and cultures.

E-mail has added significant advantages to "traditional" mail (the written mail that existed prior to the advent of Internet, and is still in use): immediacy, ease of use, and economy. So significant are these advantages that e-mail has acquired crucial importance in all types of activities. However, the way in which e-mail has seeped into the life of companies and its employees is particularly interesting.

Companies have added this tool to their daily routine as a resource to improve productivity, and is just as important, or perhaps more, as telephones, desks, computers or files are, with almost no resistance from employees.

However, the process to learn to use e-mail has occurred without enough preparation. In some cases, training is provided on a specific program for e-mail (for example, "Outlook"). In others, there are "policies" for the use of e-mail but they are mainly concerned with the need for security and control of computer systems.

Few companies are systematically looking into the effectiveness and productivity of their written communications via e-mail, and the need to provide formal training to their employees on these matters.

We assume that knowing how to write implies knowing how to use language correctly, and that this is enough to communicate efficiently in writing. Sometimes we believe that if we write as we speak, we will be understood. But as we will see later on, it is more difficult to master written communication than verbal and non verbal communication.

For example, every day companies waste considerable amounts of time in sterile discussions via e-mail between employees on issues that could have been solved by telephone in a couple of minutes.

Likewise, we invest more and more time to read and follow up written messages, of which many unnecessary copies are received, that are very difficult to read because they lack linguistic thoroughness.

Although most e-mails certainly help us be more productive and save time, their increasing volume and their inefficiency has generated a situation that at times seems unmanageable.

Most of the unproductive habits in e-mail management are due to a lack of global perspective on the different issues related to written communication, above and beyond language use or the mastery of technological resources.

Therefore, the purpose of this book is to provide ideas and information about the key elements that make written communication effective:

- To understand how the recipients of our written messages act and what they value, so as to positively affect their perceptions and attitudes.

- To deal with each recipient in the most personalized way possible, taking into account the emotional impact that written words and the structure of e-mails have.
- To use good written communication practices, regarding the personal management of e-mails as a tool and a channel for communication.

These are the pillars on which I have written the text before you. It is not a book on writing, although I deal with many aspects related to it; it is not a book on technology either, although I will tackle some of its components because without it the idea to write the book would not have occurred.

My intention is to help companies improve their written communications, thus helping them make better use of time, be more productive, improve relations between employees, and improve their labor environment.

Besides the research carried out, the ideas contained in these pages were first presented in dozens of conferences and seminars, where I confirmed there was a need for them and for the practical and immediate usefulness of the ensuing recommendations.

I am very grateful to all of those from whom I have learned about these ideas: clients, partners, workmates, relatives and friends, who gave me the support required to write a book like this.

I am also very grateful to you, my reader, for allowing me to share with you these thoughts and opportunities to help you constantly improve your professional and personal life.

Finally, I would appreciate it very much if you could send me your comments on this book, and please receive my sincere thanks for your contribution.