



...that are real write-offs

By Mark Keith

**a** S AN EXECUTIVE-SEARCH professional [Editor's note: "headhunter"], I receive hundreds of emails from hotel professionals looking for their perfect job. Many of them go straight in the rubbish bin or, more often, the *Delete* folder. We've all sent, or received, dozens of CVs but, with the deluge of emails and text messaging these days, the art of successful communication is fast disappearing – together with the chance of getting your foot in the door for that "perfect" job.

The past 15 years have seen a communications revolution, but many in the industry will remember when the only option we had for fast-written communications was the telex machine. In those days, a hotel usually had one in the front office and/or in the same room as the photocopier.

Smart employees on the early shift would make sure they had a good read though the incoming telexes before they were retrieved. Although companies developed rudimentary code systems to communicate sensitive salary or transfer information, these were usually cracked within days.

Today, we have so many more choices for effective communication, and the old etiquette developed over centuries of writing with a pen – and later, a typewriter – on paper are no longer effective or applicable.

The most widely-used communications tool today is the email. An email is not a letter – it's not going to get delivered by a fellow on a bicycle – so there's no need to put the street address and lay out an email like a traditional letter.

I often receive emails which say: "Please see attached" – and the attachment turns out to be a letter laid out as if it were from a Victorian-era time warp. This formality is not necessary – it wastes the reader's time.

Write from the reader's viewpoint, and save him or her the hassle of having to open an attachment. If it's not necessary to provide a separate document, such as a report, a spreadsheet,

a *PowerPoint* presentation or a contract, then build the message into the body of the email. That way, the reader can quickly click on the message and read the text.

This is especially true if you're applying for a job. The following is an instant turnoff: "Please find attached my resume for your perusal." It almost guarantees that your email will go straight to the trash can – who uses words like "perusal"? It's pretentious rubbish and belongs in the history books.

People who regularly receive resumes usually don't get excited about the prospect of reading another, so don't expect them to wait while your attachment opens. The worst are those that utilise "artistic" layouts and contain loads of "clever" graphics which take forever to open.

Remember that using a resume to get a company interested in giving you a job is like fishing for trout with a filet steak on the end of the hook. In most cases, your resume will be used as a means to eliminate you. To be effective, it's far better to send an email to the decision maker, which reads simply: "For five years I have been running the [name of hotel], in Bangkok and I would like to explore a possible career move with your company."

That short sentence, containing less than 30 words, conveys everything a potential employer needs to know: what you do; how long you've been doing it; with whom; and where – and arouses curiosity. Based on this, an employer can gauge

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whether or not there could be a potential career fit. If you've done your research, and such a well-crafted sentence lands on the screen of the CEO of a company about to open a similar type of hotel in Bangkok, you're going to get a response – either a request for more information or a phone call.

Believe it or not, I receive countless emails that don't include the senders' contact details; some even say: *"Please call me any time"*, expecting me to go searching for their number. That's probably not my top priority at the time, so I relegate the task.

Make it easy for your reader, and sign off with the following details:

- ☐ *Name*
- ☐ *Job Title*
- ☐ *Company*
- ☐ *Direct telephone number*
- ☐ *Mobile number*
- ☐ *Website*

Mobile phones, voice mail and phone etiquette also present challenges. World time zones are the first hazard when calling internationally. Before making a call, check the time at the destination – there's nothing worse than getting a trivial call at 3AM. Oh, yes there is, and that's when the first thing they say is: *"What time is it there?"*

If you get through to someone's voice mail and want to get a call back, leave a clear message, along the lines of: *"For the past five years, I have been running the [name of hotel] in Bangkok and I would like to explore the possibility of a career move with your company. My name is ... mobile telephone number is ..."*

Don't start with your name. Ever had a message from someone with a common first name, and that's all they leave? *"Hi, this is Peter, please call me back."*

Always assume the recipient has 100 contacts with the same first name as you, and leave your full name clearly. Even when you know the person has your number, still leave it.

### **Business etiquette**

With the proliferation of new communications technology, there are a few things worth remembering – either when sending off your resume, or just to ensure good business etiquette.

Although text messaging is fast becoming a standard, a vast number of business people don't bother with it. These days, with firewalls and spam filters, I don't even assume that all my emails get through – if it's important, I follow up with a phone call to confirm.

For those of you who still have the luxury of a secretary [they're now called "personal assistants"], remember that even one-finger typing of emails is quicker and more efficient than dictating a letter [incredibly, I'm told some bosses still have their PAs print out their emails].

The biggest etiquette pitfall with a secretary or PA is using her to "get someone on the phone." Only do it if you never need that person's willing cooperation, otherwise it will create in the recipient a negative feeling towards you.

One top hotel executive who confesses to having this self-indulgent habit told me that, many times when his PA puts a call through to him, the line is dead.

I wonder why? ☐

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