EIDAM & PARTNER.
YOUR INTERCULTURAL EXPERTS.

More success with international emails – 8 practical tips from 20+ years in global business

What people underestimate in international correspondence.

Eight points that stop misunderstandings before they slow you down.

SUCCESS FACTOR #1

Exclamation marks land louder than you mean them to.

What you intend as emphasis reaches many recipients abroad as raised volume or aggression.

The more exclamation marks you use, the higher the risk.

- Keep exclamation marks rare.
- Let the content carry the emphasis.

02

SUCCESS FACTOR #2

"Thank you in advance" sounds polite, but closes the door on saying no.

Use this phrase and some recipients feel the decision has been made for them.

Especially in English-speaking countries, many read pressure where you intended courtesy. The USA is a prime example.

- Check stock phrases for their effect.
- Leave room for a no.

SUCCESS FACTOR #3

A missing name on the CC line reads as exclusion.

In strongly hierarchical and consensus-driven cultures, the CC line shows who matters.

In Japan, South Korea, India and China, for example, a skipped name in the reporting line often weighs far more than in cultures with flatter organizational structures.

→ Never skip key people.
→ Build your distribution list deliberately.

04

SUCCESS FACTOR #4

Some readers need the why before they read the what.

In many European cultures, an email is more convincing when the reasoning comes before the recommendation or conclusion.

In the USA, Canada and Australia, by contrast, the key message typically belongs in the opening sentences.

- Order your argument deliberately.
- Adapt the structure to your target culture.

SUCCESS FACTOR #5

Criticism belongs in a conversation. No exceptions.

Emails carry no tone of voice, no facial expression, no gesture. Recipients fill that gap themselves, usually to your disadvantage.

For criticism, conflict and sensitive topics: pick up the phone, open a video call, meet in person – even if that costs more time. Otherwise you may burn bridges you will need later.

- Sensitive topics never in writing.
- Time invested here secures relationships.

06

SUCCESS FACTOR #6

Wait until your counterpart offers first names.

In strongly hierarchical cultures, moving to first names is rarely a given. Granting yourself that privilege too quickly reads as overfamiliar.

Our tip: use title and last name until the other side makes the switch.

→ Stay with title and last name.
→ Let your counterpart take the first step.

SUCCESS FACTOR #7

Every extra line costs you readers.

Long emails get skimmed or postponed.

Our tip: keep your emails short and move the important details into an attachment. In many cultures, a document carries far more weight than text in an email.

- Short email, strong attachment
- Documents carry more commitment.

08

SUCCESS FACTOR #8

Is your email topic important AND complex? Call two days later!

Ask specifically: what came across from your email? What is still open?

With international recipients, that call surfaces misunderstandings that would otherwise show up much later [or never].

- Check understanding proactively.
- Costs time, delivers real effectiveness.

Strong relationships across borders.

Follow-up questions, postponed deadlines, unanswered emails: cultural misunderstandings cost time and money.

Our Global Business Training builds the skills that matter most, using situations from your day-to-day work, in-house or online.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR GLOBAL BUSINESS TRAINING.