

# Email manners matter



By [Marion Scher](#)

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So I know it's my first column of the year (still in slow Cape Town mode) and I really didn't want to start with a moan but... I just cannot stop myself.

What is it with people you deal with on a regular basis, who you urgently need replies from to emails - and who simply don't get back to you for days, or even weeks?

I mean I have to ask - how long does it take to just write one line acknowledging your email, saying they're up to their eyes, but that they'll get back to you in ...

Just recently I've had two incidents (always with the same people) where I seriously feel like telling them to take their work and get knotted - except of course when you work freelance as I do, that's not easy.

What I wonder is just how many emails do they have sitting in their in-boxes before they answer them? Perhaps I am anally retentive (please don't answer that in the comments section) but somehow to leave an email unanswered for more than a week - or longer, is beyond the pale.

On the other side of the coin are the people, always top executives, who seem to find time to not only answer your email virtually immediately but at least give you some feedback.

## A little courtesy goes a long way

Here's an example of a reply to an email I sent out recently to a client, who is the CEO of a multi-national company.

*Hi Marion,  
Just to acknowledge receipt. Will have a look in the morning.  
Regards Brian*

This was sent from his mobile while he was on his way from one meeting to the next. He was also in the middle of a media crisis at the time but still had time to do the right thing.

What it makes me think is the reason this man is the CEO of this large organisation is because he understands just what communication is about! It's simply RUDE to leave an email unanswered for more than a few days - tops.

Naturally, when the client wants work urgently from you the emails come flooding in - with deadlines attached. Fair enough. But why is this situation so one-sided?

Interestingly enough the other day, whilst working on an NGO project launch, I shot off two quick emails to two top executives asking for help. I had positive replies from both within 30 minutes. Again, they're not top executives for nothing.

In my 26 years in journalism, this is something I have noticed so often. When I want an interview with a top CEO, I generally don't have too many problems but try somewhere in the middle and again you wait, wait, wait. There has to be a message there somewhere!

## ABOUT MARION SCHER

Marion Scher ([www.mediamentors.co.za](http://www.mediamentors.co.za)) is an award-winning journalist, lecturer, media trainer and consultant with 25 years' experience in the industry. For more of her writing, go to her Bizcommunity profile or to Twitter @marionscher.

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