

Effective Email – Three Simple Clarity Tactics

We all must write, and process, hundreds of emails every week. One of the biggest challenges we have is to break through all the competing noise and get our message read – and responded to.

Have you ever received an overwhelming and confusing message like the one below? It's what we might call a "worst practice!"

It looks as though you did not have the complete application instructions. Here are the instructions sent to everyone.

Hi,

This is normally or busiest time of the year. This year we are busier than ever and I am a week behind in replying to emails. To avoid any delay in processing your application(s) please follow these instructions.

We are happy to assist you in your search for housing. At this time tours of units where people are living is limited to approved applicants. Applying and getting approved is easy and FREE! **The MOST helpful thing you can do to assure that your application(s) is approved in a timely manner is read through this entire email. All of the information you need to be an informed applicant is here.**

We have very few listing remaining. Please check to see apartment availability here:
<https://kaminsrealstate.com/our-rentals/rentals-by-list>

Apartments are going quickly and availability changes moment to moment!
 Apartments that are available for September 1st are currently occupied. The current tenants intend to reside in the apartments through the term of their lease.
In our effort to keep everyone safe during this difficult time the Kamins office is closed to 'physical' visitors. We do have personnel there to manage calls and accounting matters. The remainder of the staff is working remotely. Please read through this information. If you have any questions let me know and if we cannot address them via email I can give you a call. I work remotely so the call would come from a private phone number.

Showings of all apartments have very specific guidelines for everyone's safety and are **by appointment for approved applicants ONLY.** All of our units are currently occupied.
PLEASE READ ALL OF THESE INSTRUCTIONS TO AVOID A DELAY IN GETTING YOUR APPLICATION APPROVED.

ATTENTION: The Town of Amherst bylaw does not allow more than 4 unrelated individuals to live together in an apartment/house.
 Kamins is not "pet friendly." Kamins does NOT offer furnished apartments. Kamins does NOT lease "single rooms."
Availability date(s) for leasing each apartment advertised is clearly marked on each listing.
 Use the link below to find more information about the apartments you are interested in.
<https://kaminsrealstate.com/our-rentals/rentals-by-list>

If you are interested in multiple properties ONE application package (**per person if you are part of a group**) is all you need to be approved for **any unit** in the Kamins inventory. **Each person in your group MUST email me their application materials directly. Communication with each applicant individually is a matter of confidentiality.**

ALTERED FORMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. DO NOT CONVERT APPLICATION FORMS TO GOOGLE DOCS OR OTHER SUCH DOCUMENTS. ALL FORMS MUST CONTAIN AN ACTUAL SIGNATURE FOR STUDENT APPLICANTS ONLY.

Please note: The Town of Amherst bylaw does not allow more than 4 unrelated individuals to live together in an apartment/house.
 Check out the listings on our website for more detailed information. If you are part of a group get ALL of your UMass forms back to me ASAP. I will send them to the Dean's office. The Dean's office has limited office hours at this time and has advised us that clearances will now take 7-10 business days! There is no charge to apply and you do not need to put a specific apartment on your application(s). One application gets you (as an individual) approved to lease any unit you financially qualify for. If you are part of a group each person in the group must apply. **Get your guarantor forms to your MA resident parents. Tell them that if they send me the forms directly from their email that the form does not have to be notarized (due to COVID difficulties). It is advisable that you forward this email to your guarantor as well so they fully understand the process. Please forward this email to everyone in your group. Be sure they mention what group they are a part of when they apply. Due to matters of confidentiality, each person needs to send their application materials to us directly.**

When filling out the "Credit Application" the line that asks your occupation source of income write: STUDENT. The same for the line that asks "Credit References: STUDENT. This information will be on your parent's guarantor form or their application if they are not MA residents. You must fill out your application in full, include all of your "student" information, include your roommates, answer the eviction question, etc.
If you take a photograph(s) of your forms they MUST look like "white paper" documents. Take the photos in a very well lit area (preferably outdoors). make sure there are NO shadows (including your arm and phone). and make certain the photo is closely cropped to only show the document. Scanning documents and sending them as PDFs is preferred. YOU CAN DOWNLOAD A PDF APP TO YOUR PHONE TO CONVERT YOUR PHOTOS!

FOR ALL APPLICANTS:
 You may find more detailed information regarding the unit you have expressed interest in as well as information on our available units here: <https://kaminsrealstate.com/our-rentals>
 The most proactive measure you can take at this time is to send your application materials to Kamins. There is no charge to apply for housing with Kamins. **The only time a fee is required is at actual lease signing. That fee is one half of one month's rent.** As Kamins is "first come, first serve" having all of your application paperwork in and approved puts you 'at the front of the line' so to speak. Once you find the unit you want to lease you will be able to act on it immediately having been approved.

* I have attached all the forms needed to apply. All of these forms may not be needed in your particular case. **FORMS NEED TO BE SENT AS "INDIVIDUAL" ATTACHMENTS, (preferably as PDFs) meaning not one huge scan with all of the forms scanned as one document.** The forms are sent to different people for vetting. **ALTERED FORMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. DO NOT CONVERT APPLICATION FORMS TO GOOGLE DOCS OR OTHER SUCH DOCS. ALL FORMS MUST CONTAIN AN ACTUAL SIGNATURE**

* **ONLY MA residents** can serve as Guarantors for leasing (if your own personal gross annual income & assets [banking statements] are less than 52 x one month's rent you will need a MA resident to serve as your Guarantor.) Guarantor form **MUST** contain annual salary information. **Realizing the extraordinary times we are going through Kamins is allowing that Guarantor forms need not be notarized if they are sent to Kamins directly from the guarantor's email address.**

* If your guarantor lives out of state they may go on the lease with you. They should fill out a credit application (the same form for everyone) and provide proof of income ("POI")

* International students need only to submit a completed application and a copy of your I-20 as POI. (If you have lived in the UMass dorms or been on a lease you will need to fill out the Dean of Students and landlord reference forms as well)

* If you have ever resided in the UMass dorms you need to return the UMass Dean of Students form to me ASAP as this form takes the greatest amount of time to get back.

* If you have leased an apartment previously print, sign, and scan the landlord reference request and get it to your landlord. **Your landlord must fill out this form. Once the form has been completed by the landlord it must be sent to me.**

* All applicable forms must be returned to me for processing. **FORMS NEED TO BE SENT AS INDIVIDUAL ATTACHMENTS, preferably PDFs.** Please do not scan and send them as one document.

Non-student applicants need to provide POI proof on income* along with their application. *This may be your most recent Payroll statement, tax return, banking statements, signed offer letter, etc.

ALL OF KAMINS LEASES EXPIRE AT THE END OF AUGUST.

Thank you for your interest.

Here are 3 very simple and actionable ways we can become winners in the daily battle for email attention:

1. Make the subject line and first 2 sentences RAS-friendly.

What is the RAS? The Reticular Activating System (RAS) is your brain's master filtering system, and it approaches every message looking for immediate interest and relevance. Therefore, we only have a few seconds when someone is skimming their inbox to make our message stand out.

RAS-friendly means that in the first sentences, we get right to the recipient's WIIFM (What's In It For Me). Don't use a generic subject statement that blends in to the background - get right to the distilled essence of why this message is important. Avoid vagueness and ambiguity.



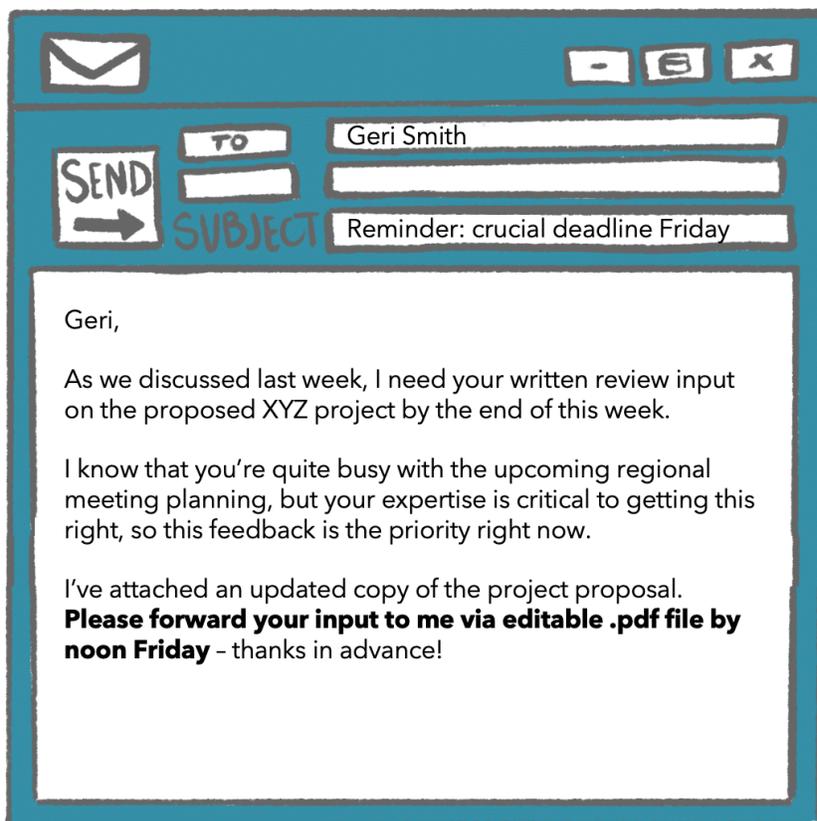
BAD: Following up on some items from last week's meetings.

GOOD: The two items I need from you by end of day Wednesday.

2. Highlight expected actions.

If your message requires a response, make sure that the specific request is front-and-center. Don't bury it and make the recipient find it. Everyone makes a visual skim of email messages in the inbox, so any call to action should be highlighted.

If there is not a specific call to action, there should still be a clear purpose for the message (the "point") that is up-front and obvious.



BAD: Just get back to me with your feedback whenever you get a chance.

GOOD: Please prepare at least 2 ideas for discussion for the 9:00 am Wednesday team meeting.

3. Don't overload the recipient's brain - simplify

Any message that requires a lot of scrolling (especially on a smartphone screen) or an extensive amount of mental processing will typically be ignored, deleted, or put off. Instead of putting multiple themes in a single email, have one main point that can be understood immediately. Consider using bullet points for summaries.

Visual overload (also called information density) is a sure way to lose attention and engagement.



BAD: *Blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah...*

GOOD: *Here's the direction I suggest we take. If you'd like more information, let's set up a meeting, or see the attached document.*

Steve Woodruff, President of Impactiviti, is the author of the book [Clarity Wins](#) and the creator of the **Clarity Formula for Effective Communications**.

Steve facilitates [workshops for life sciences companies looking to equip their employees with superior communication skills](#).

"I reached out to Steve to get some help in communication skills with my Account Managers. It can be challenging to find training for very experienced Account Managers that are already proficient in their roles.

"Steve provided me with high level yet simple methods that helped my team to raise their communication skills to a higher level! His comfortable style and industry knowledge was just what we were looking for. The feedback from my team was fantastic.

"I would recommend Steve and his programs to any Account Management or Sales Teams that are looking to increase their communication effectiveness and impact with their clients."

John Reddy

Associate Director, Market Access Training