Common Communications Mistakes: Subject Lines

Common Mistake #1: Not telling us when.

Subject: Stanford Women’s Basketball Viewing Party

Helpful Tips:

- Include the date and day of the week when possible. If the event is within the week, be sure to emphasize that it is coming up immediately.
  “See you Sunday! Stanford Women’s Basketball Viewing Party”

- When possible, include a call to action in your subject line. If there is a deadline, mention it.
  Examples: “Register by 4/5 for Stanford Women’s Basketball Viewing Party”
  “RSVP now for Sunday’s Stanford Women’s Basketball Viewing Party”
  “Purchase tickets for Stanford Women’s Basketball game by 4/6”

Common Mistake #2: Subject line is too long.

Subject: Stanford Club of Springfield – Tennessee Williams’s “A Streetcar Named Desire” at the Springfield Theatre, Tuesday, April 8

Helpful Tips:

- Send yourself a test message to see where the subject line gets cut off.
  - Keep in mind: 50% of emails are read on mobile phones, which may cut off subject lines at 50 characters. Be mindful of your word choice!
  - If you can, test using multiple email clients (Gmail, Outlook, etc.)

- If you’re advertising an event, put the day/date in the portion of the subject that people can see. You may have to cut out certain details that may seem critical, but can be paraphrased in order to emphasize urgency or general timing.
  Example: “Theater Night with Stanford Club of Springfield, Tuesday 4/8”

Other Helpful Tips:

- If “Stanford” isn’t in your sender name (i.e. “Stanford Club of Springfield”), include it in your subject line
- Eliminate filler words that can be easily moved to the body, i.e. “Hello” or “Thanks!”
- Use logical keywords for search and filtering – people may file your email away once they receive it; make it easy for them to find it when they’re looking for it!
Common Communications Mistakes: Banner Management

Common Mistake #1: Too much text in the banner so it “breaks.”

Helpful Tips:

- **Always send a test** so that you can see if you broke the banner.
- If you are having trouble finding ways to condense your text, ask someone else for help.
  - This can also be helpful when crafting your message, as often the selling points for you may be different than the selling points for someone else, especially if he/she hasn’t been staring at the email for an hour!

Common Mistake #2: Forgetting to add a banner.

Helpful Tip:

- Always send a test so that you can catch errors like this!
Common Communications Mistakes: Content Management

Common Mistake #1: Email is too long.

Helpful Tips:

- Prioritize content that is “above the fold.” Your most important details should be visible when you first click open an email.
- If the email would print out onto 3 or more pages, it’s probably too long.

Common Mistake #2: Info on website is exactly the same as in the email.

Helpful Tip:

- Use your “spiciest” language in your email (your active marketing tool).
- It’s okay to edit an event description or bio if the wording is too long or overly academic.

Common Mistake #3: There is more info in the email than in the website:

Helpful Tip:

- Add content to your event page by including a photo or links to relevant articles or videos.
Common Communications Mistakes: Formatting/Spelling

Common Mistake #1: Too little formatting.

Dear [firstname],

Please join us on Sunday, March 11th for the last and late stroll with the Red of the 63rd day walkers at Woodwalk! Meet us at 11:30 at the Cafe at Point Isabel in Ashburn. We'll bring coffee and some coffee and some more coffee... if you're starting early, we'll walk around the Bay Area's equivalent of nirvana for dogs. By the way, if it can get chilly out near the water, for more information about Point Isabel, please visit their website at www.pda.org. For more information about Woodwalks, please visit http://woodwalks.com. The weather at this time of year can be unpredictable, so please RSVP so we can contact you if there is a last minute cancellation. We look forward to seeing you there!

Helpful Tip:

- Look at your email without actually reading the words (it may help to physically step back from your screen). If the text looks clumped together, use some line breaks!

Common Mistake #2: Forgetting to check spelling and grammar.

Helpful Tip:

- Share your draft with 1 or 2 other people and ask for their edits/input. Fresh eyes will catch errors that might be easily overlooked.

Common Mistake #3: Referring to the Stanford Cardinal as “Cardinals.”

Helpful Tip:

- Yes, we are the Cardinal, as in the color!
Common Communications Mistakes: Links & Email addresses

Common Mistake #1: Pasting the wrong URL.

>> Register now

Helpful Tips:

- Always click the links you include in your emails to make sure they work properly.
- Open a different browser where you’re NOT logged into the SAA website or Facebook, etc., and see if the links you’ve included work. Try to recreate the experience of your email recipient.
- Be sure to try the links again in your test email!

Common Mistake #2: Pasting the Admin-only URL (the one you use to manage the event).

>> RSVP online
https://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/admin/events/details/?event_id=1419

Helpful Tip:

- Just delete “admin/” and test your URL again.

Common Mistake #3: Not double-checking email addresses.

Questions? Contact Jane Smith, ’90 at janemsmith2@gmail.com

Helpful Tip:

- For accuracy, whenever possible, copy and paste email addresses instead of transcribing them.
Tips on Timing and Frequency

Q: When should I send my email?

A: There is no magic answer to this, although data show that more people open email during the day than at night (2:00-5:00 p.m. seems to be a good target time) and other data show that sending between Tuesday and Thursday is a common marketing best practice. In particular, avoiding Saturday and Sunday when possible also seems like a good idea. (The jury is still out on Monday and Friday.) However, none of these theories should be taken as set-in-stone rules, because there will always be an exception. The reality is not every market is the same, so feel free to experiment and see what type of response you get based on different send days and times.

Q: How much is too much email?

A: Another question with no magic answer, although our rule of thumb at SAA is to send an invite to an event somewhere between four to six weeks out, and a reminder somewhere between one to two weeks out. Typically if a recipient has not responded to your first two emails, he/she is not going to respond to a third. (He/she may even become annoyed and attempt to unsubscribe.) If you have a more last minute event, consider an invite one to two weeks out and a reminder two to four days before.