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In this Ezine:

Use E-Mail to Build and Maintain Relationships

Best Ways You Can Beat Lower Back Pain

Nervous? It shows

Follow Groucho's advice

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Use E-Mail to Build and Maintain Relationships

E-mail's major advantages are speed of delivery and efficiency. Disadvantages result from a tendency towards spam and lack of common courtesy. Since email is free, many people abuse it by sending forwarded jokes, "good thoughts", chain email and editorial observations. Here are some tips for improving your e-mail techniques to maintain existing relationships and prospect for new ones:

- Always provide value first. Blatant sales pitches may harvest some low-hanging fruit, but effective selling should be based on value that earns you the right to their business.
- Seek permission to provide ongoing information.
- Provide contact information so recipients can reply in the media of their choice.
- Keep the email basic - avoid attachments and html graphics that take time to load.
- Use hyperlinks to allow recipients to access more complete information, which can be mounted on your website.
- Be courteous! Use salutary openings and closings, watch your grammar and check your spelling.
- Resist the temptation to forward jokes and other nonpertinent messages.
- Continually build your database of email addresses.
- Provide a subject line that truly informs the recipient of what the message contains.

Skill Set

- Make sure that there are no spelling errors. Use spell check every time.
- Focus on the customers' needs and send them valuable (to them) information about special promotions that they can read at their convenience.
- Don't send too much information. Use templates and general email to provide quick answers to routine questions and save your valuable time.
- Be more sensitive and tactful than you would be in telephone or face-to-face contact. Remember that the person who reads your email can't see or hear you. For that reason, they will assume that you mean exactly what you say in your message.



Best Ways You Can Beat Lower Back Pain

Four out of five adults suffer back pain at some point in their lives. Fortunately, it goes away 90% of the time. Here's what you can do when lower back pain strikes:

1. Apply relief. A heating pad or ice pack - whichever feels best - may ease much of your discomfort. If needed, take a non-

prescription, anti-inflammatory pain reliever containing ibuprofen, aspirin, naproxen or ketoprofen.

2. Go to bed. If your pain is severe, consider 1-2 days of complete bed rest, only getting up for meals or to go to the bathroom. *But remember:* Too much bed rest can actually be bad for your back. Experts say longer than 48 hours may *weaken* the muscles that help support the spine and delay your recovery.

3. Get in the right position. When lying down, use a firm, comfortable mattress and avoid sleeping on your stomach. Instead, lie either on your side with your knees bent or on your back with a pillow tucked under your knees.

4. Try carrying on as usual. Recent studies suggest that continuing normal activities as pain allows may speed recovery even better than bed rest or back exercises. Just be extra careful with lifting, twisting, bending, prolonged sitting or wearing high heels - all of which can further strain your spine.

When to get help. While back pain isn't caused by anything serious, it sometimes results from damage to the disks that cushion the bones of the spine. This may require further treatment. Call your doctor if symptoms persist for more than 3-4 weeks, or if pain greatly limits activities, steadily worsens or travels down the leg.



Nervous? It shows

Most of us have at least one nervous mannerism that we use all the time without even realizing it. People who know us well tend to become so accustomed to these habits that they scarcely notice them either.

But certain nervous habits can be very distracting to people who otherwise would be paying attention to what we are saying. Some nervous mannerisms that are most likely to turn others off are:

- Running your hands through your hair;
- Rubbing, touching, or smoothing your face;
- Fiddling with jewelry;
- Fingering buttons;
- Wringing your hands;
- Crossing and re-crossing your arms;
- Constantly adjusting your glasses;
- Stringing together paperclips;
- Biting the inside of your cheek;
- Tapping toes, fingers, or pencils;
- Capping or uncapping a pen, or clicking a ballpoint.

Your first reaction is probably that you don't do any of these things. But wait. Most people aren't aware of their own mannerisms. Ask a trusted colleague to monitor your behavior for these distractions.

If you find that you are guilty of one or more of them, have your colleague give you a signal - such as pulling on his or her earlobe - whenever you display your nervous habit. Becoming aware of their existence will help you eliminate these distracting mannerisms so that your message won't be overshadowed by your unconscious actions.

Follow Groucho's advice -- Don't use clichés!

Groucho Marx despised the empty clichés of business correspondence. A letter from a bank manager ended with the standard phrase, "If I can be of any service to you, do not hesitate to call on me." He immediately took pen to paper. "Dear Sir," he wrote. "The best thing you can do to be of service to me is to steal some money for the account of one of your richest clients and credit it to mine."

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