

Praise for *Wait, How Do I Lead My Team?*

"*Wait, How Do I Lead My Team?* is valuable for business professionals at any age. The writing templates are easy to follow and full of practical tips. It's a must-have item on any leader's desk!"

— SHANNON KENDRICK
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, U.S. PEACE CORPS

"*Wait, How Do I Lead My Team?* is a well-organized manual of practical reminders and insightful suggestions perfect for communication challenges and opportunities we all face as business leaders. You will want this resource close at hand."

— GARY PLAAG
ADJUNCT FACULTY, RAYMOND A. MASON SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY

"The book is user friendly, engaging and stated in common language without complicated jargon. This is a perfect read for teachers and students alike!"

— REGINA MORRONE
CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PROGRAM MANAGER
FOR FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES, FAIRFAX (VA) COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"Another great read from Danny Rubin! Whether you're building a team, running a large operation or leading an on-campus organization, this book is for you!"

— JOSHUA SUSHAN
DIRECTOR OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT,
ALPHA EPSILON PI FRATERNITY

"Danny Rubin tackles the seemingly ordinary emails and routine conversations that confront a leader day after day. He then provides simple strategies that leave a lasting impression."

— JAY REID
SR. DIRECTOR, FOOTBALL OPERATIONS TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY,
NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

"While I was reading, I often found myself screaming 'Yes!' in my head because I've seen many of these mistakes come from colleagues and people in leadership positions, and the gaffes do discredit them. I recommend this book to any person who wants to be taken seriously and gain respect from their colleagues/clients/employees."

— ANGELA BLUE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, COASTAL VIRGINIA MAGAZINE / CoVA BIZ

Wait, How Do I Lead My Team?

**Inspiring Templates for Interoffice Emails,
Client Outreach, Presentations & More**

Danny Rubin

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For information about this title or to order books and/or electronic media, contact the publisher at www.dannyhrubin.com.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018914661

ISBN: 978-0-9963499-8-7 (Print)
978-0-9963499-9-4 (Ebook)

Printed in the United States of America

Cover design: Paul McCarthy

Interior design: 1106 Design

TO EVERYONE WHO KNOWS THEY ARE DESTINED TO LEAD,
THIS BOOK IS FOR YOU.

Introduction

When you're in charge, you're always under a microscope.

Employees and other stakeholders watch your every action and hold you to the highest standards.

You're a leader. What did you expect?

That's why leaders (or people who aspire to hold the title) must treat their communication skills with great care.

A single email to your team is more than a one-off message; it's a window into your management style.

A monthly check-in meeting with a client is bigger than a routine appointment; it's an open display of how you handle business relationships.

In my first book, *Wait, How Do I Write This Email?*, we explored writing and speaking for job seekers.

Then in *Wait, How Do I Promote My Business?*, we examined the best ways to spread the word about our products and services.

Now, we turn to leadership. That's because, in every phase of our professional lives, communication skills either drive us forward or hold us back.

That reality goes for leaders in a student organization all the way up to veteran CEOs.

In *Wait, How Do I Lead My Team?*, we break down challenges in management, client relations, networking, giving presentations and more — always with a focus on the **how**.

WAIT, HOW DO I LEAD MY TEAM?

How should we write and speak in a way that makes people say, “Now *that’s* what a leader looks like”?

After all, life under a microscope does have an upside.

If you conduct yourself just right, then you — and your reputation — will be larger than life.

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If employees observe leaders drop a lot of, “I did this” and “I did that” and, in essence, “look at me go!”, the word choice can create unnecessary distance and fracture the relationship between management and staff.

If you, as a team leader, **did** accomplish a task, then it may be appropriate to lead with “I.”

For example, in an email to multiple staff members: “I went ahead and called our client, Morgan, to reschedule the meeting for Friday at 2:30 p.m.”

But if the particular action involved several hands, then don’t act like you did all the heavy lifting — or omit the people who played a key role.

Here’s an email to multiple staff members, several who could have helped with the “heavy lifting.”

“Thanks to **everyone** who put in the extra hours over the weekend to finish out the RFP for the Jackson account. That’s an account **we’d** love to have to build up our robotics division.”

Now, observe how much differently that quote reads with a focus on “I.”

“Good news. The RFP for the Jackson account is done and submitted. **I** hope we land the account because **I’d** love to add that project to the company’s robotics division.”

Feel a different vibe here? All about me, me, me — the great and esteemed company leader.

Keep an eye on your “I” usage. Your employees sure will.

Smooth, Polished Writing

SEVEN WRITING MISTAKES LEADERS NEVER MAKE

Employees, clients and others in the business community hold leaders to the highest standards. Margin for error: zero.

That’s why you need to watch out for classic writing mistakes. Here are the seven biggest ones.

1. It’s definitely, not definately

It can sound like an “a” in “def-in-ah-tely,” but the word is spelled with an “i.”

2. When do we use “then” or “than”?

I see confusion over then/than all the time.

We write “then” when the topic is related to time or a sequence of events. As in, “I am going to the park and then to the store.”

“Than” comes into play when we compare or assess. As in, “The comedian is funnier than I expected.”

3. Assure, ensure or insure?

The trio are all so similar. When do we use each one?

Assure is to calm someone’s nerves or tell them it’s OK.

Ensure is to make certain.

Insure is to cover or protect (often in a financial sense).

4. No apostrophes in plural words

I don’t know when the apostrophe situation began, but I see the error all the time. Someone will write on Facebook, “So excited for all the concert’s this summer!”

Nope. Incorrect. It’s “concerts.” Always has been.

Instead, we use apostrophes to show possession (“Danny’s article has writing tips”). Leaders need to know better.

5. Should you use “their” or “its”?

Here’s another common mistake most of us don’t think about. For example, “I learned a lot about the company and **their** approach to customer service.”

Wrong. “Their” would refer to a plural noun, but the noun in question is “company.”

“I learned a lot about the company and **its** approach to customer service.”

“Company” is singular. Always refer to your subject and *then* choose **its** or **their**.

6. When do we use “principal” or “principle”?

A “principle” is a rule. A “principal” is a title like a high school principal.

7. And finally, the word misspell.

Many people think it's "mispell" with a single "s."

But if leaders can't spell "misspell" correctly, then our grammar has a long way to go.

SEVEN PUNCTUATION MISTAKES LEADERS NEVER MAKE

Punctuation is so boring, right? Who cares about those pesky commas, periods and exclamation points?

In the business world, they matter. A lot.

Sloppy punctuation can undermine your intelligence and make people question your ability.

Here are seven punctuation mistakes to avoid. Your reputation as a leader (or aspiring leader) depends on it!

1. Run-on sentences

The first punctuation mistake on our list occurs when there's no punctuation at all because the sentence keeps going when the writer should add a period but instead continues on and there's no end to the line and the reader is worn out but there's no period in sight so when does it all end?

Whew. See what I mean?

Rewritten:

The first punctuation mistake on our list occurs when there's no punctuation at all. The sentence keeps going when the writer should add a period. Otherwise, the reader is worn out, but there's no period in sight. When does it all end?

Read your sentence aloud. Does it *feel* like you go on too long? If so, add a period or two to break up different thoughts/ideas.

2. Way too many commas

A sentence with too many commas, makes our writing hard to process, because we include unnatural stops in the flow of a thought, and it's frustrating, for the reader.

Wasn't that last sentence annoying?

Right way to listen

Employee: The Richards account has been difficult from the start, and it's obvious our team wasn't on the same page.

*Boss: **Why** do you think it's been difficult?*

Employee: Well, we struggled to find times for everyone to meet so we had trouble communicating and keeping everyone on the same page.

*Boss: **How** do you think everyone should have stayed in communication?*

Employee: I think it was too much to ask the Richards team to meet twice a month. Maybe once a month and regular conference calls instead?

Boss: I like that idea. Good thinking.

The boss allows the employee to talk further by asking questions (**why** and **how** are two of the “Six Most Powerful Words in Networking”).

A leader at a company doesn't need to create brilliant ideas out of thin air. Why not listen intently to the team and let people share insights that can guide the organization?

The only way to gain new perspective is to stop what you're doing and fall into a “listening mind-set.”

Say to yourself, “I am going to be the listener and questioner for the next few minutes.” Let's see what intel I can uncover.

Leader and Listener. Two words that look and sound awfully similar.

There's a reason for that.

Manage the team

HOW TO ASSIGN ROLES OR RESPONSIBILITIES

The best leaders understand the power of delegation.

For one, you divide up the work. Why put everything on yourself?

Plus, delegation empowers your employees. The approach shows you believe in your team members and makes everyone more capable.

When it's time to delegate, the email template that follows will help you strike the right tone.

Subject line: Assigning tasks for [name of project; for instance, “the Alpha project”]

Hi everyone,

[Set up the discussion; for instance, “As we move ahead with the Alpha project, I need all of us to take on different roles to make sure everything stays on track.”]

Note: The use of “I” shows you are confident and in charge. The use of “us” underscores how everyone on the team will work hard on the project — including you.

I know if we all do our part, the project will be a success.

[Then, explain your role and what you need from others; for instance, “I will kick off conversations with the top brass at Alpha; we have an introductory video conference on Tuesday at 11 a.m.

In the meantime, please look for your name and make a note of what you need to do.

- **Damian:** Manage the research component and report back to us on the survey findings by July 12.
- **Jess:** Be the front-facing team member to the Alpha folks. Please schedule an initial meeting for some time next week.
- **Martin:** Review the current Alpha website to understand the company’s philosophy and recent history.
- **Dan:** Develop a contact list for all Alpha employees engaged on the project.”]

CHAPTER 2: WRITE TO YOUR TEAM

[Finally, share any next steps; for instance, “We can recap all of our efforts at the next staff meeting on July 8.”]

If you have questions, give me a call.

Thanks,

– Leader’s first name

Email signature

Deeper Insight

Be straightforward but strike a tone that conveys you also have a role on the project. In that way, you delegate but claim responsibility too. You’re in the fight with the rest of your team, and the employees will take notice.

Also consider using bold and even yellow highlight on employees’ names so the words jump out.

HOW TO TELL A TEAM MEMBER HE/SHE DID A GREAT JOB

As a leader in your company/organization, it’s important to dispense praise when appropriate. Why? The move helps you build trust and authority at the same time.

It’s easy to say, “Nice job!” or “Great going!” and leave it at that. But the best leaders understand they must take the compliment a step further. They need to provide an explanation on what they appreciate.

The **what** and the **why**: essential details for leaders up and down an organizational chart.

Here’s an example: Let’s say you noticed your employee go above and beyond for a customer. Whether in person, over the phone or through an email, follow the **what/why** formula.

You: Hi Brian, I want to thank you for how you treated that stubborn client yesterday from Acme Corporation.

HOW TO DEVELOP A PARTNERSHIP

I mentioned in the previous template (How to seek advice from another leader) that it's important to maintain a strong network.

One reason is the opportunity to develop partnerships with people (and their companies) you respect.

Here's an example between the owner of a health foods store and the owner of a tea company.

Subject line: Potential partnership idea with [name of your company/organization]

Hi [first name of leader at other company/organization],

Good morning/afternoon.

[Start off with a little small talk; for instance, "How did your team fare on Small Business Saturday? We had decent in-store traffic during the morning, but it tapered off by afternoon."]

I'm reaching out to explore a possible partnership. [Explain the reason for the partnership request; for instance, "We had great feedback when you provided samples of your green tea in our store."]

[Then, share a possible next step; for instance, "Would you like to set up a display with the tea? I want to see how the product does in our beverage area."]

Please let me know when we can talk about the idea further. [Provide your availability; for instance, "I'm free Thursday morning if that works for you."]

Thanks,

– Leader's first name

Email signature

Deeper Insight

Note how the writer cuts to the chase in the second section (“I’m reaching out to explore a possible partnership”). Always put your “bottom line up front,” a concept we explore in *Wait, How Do I Promote My Business?*, my collection of writing guides for startups and small businesses.

The email also includes a clear example of a partnership or business deal (“set up a display”).

The reader has all the information to make an informed decision in the email reply.

HOW TO FOLLOW UP WITH A KEY PERSON FROM A CONFERENCE

Leaders attend conferences to learn, grow and meet new people.

And if you come across someone interesting who can advance your business, it’s important to send a message when you’re back at your desk to keep the dialogue going.

Here’s how:

Subject line: Great to meet you at [name of event/conference; for instance, “BizCon 2000”]

Hi [person’s first name],

I’m [your first and last name] with [name of company].

It was nice to meet you at [name of event/conference]. I enjoyed learning more about [what you gleaned from the other person; for instance, “the work you do at Acme Corporation related to finance and accounting. Plus, I needed someone to joke with during that boring keynote address”].

Let’s keep the discussion going. [Then, the next step; for instance, “As I mentioned, our company is looking for a new accounting firm and yours may be a good fit. I will connect you with our CFO in a separate email so you two can meet.”]

Isn't it enough to give someone a basic compliment? Sometimes, yes.

All the time? No.

As I discuss throughout the book, employees scrutinize a leader's words every day. You're in charge, and employees hold you to a higher standard — even when you dish out praise.

"The only thing I ever hear Greg say when he's trying to be nice is 'Well done.' Does he even mean it?"

Good news. There's a simple way to break up the monotony: take your compliment one step further whether it's over email, on the phone or in person.

- ▶ *"Great work, Tim. The front cover design of the new catalog looks sleek. Customers will love it."*
- ▶ *"Excellent stuff, Gina. Your presentation held the client's attention for all 20 minutes. That's not easy to do."*
- ▶ *"Well done, everyone. The initial engagement meeting with the new client went perfectly, and I already received a positive note from Jack McFarland, the CEO, about being excited to work with us."*

It's a simple formula. Offer a compliment ("Great work, Tim.") and then include a more specific reason for the kind words.

It's nice to know you liked someone's effort but extra meaningful when you explain WHY you appreciate it.

Practice the approach with compliments and watch the reaction.

Group dynamics

HOW TO LEAD A MEETING — BRIEF BUT RELEVANT

In every business, there's perhaps no more dreaded word than...

Meeting.

No one likes to sit in meetings. They tend to break up the flow of the day or hold people hostage from other tasks.

Of course, sometimes meetings are necessary. When it *is* time to bring your team around the table, keep in mind two main points so the meeting is brief yet productive.

1. Map out the discussion ahead of time
2. Know when to let the conversation percolate and when to shut it down

Point 1 is well understood. Plan ahead and think through the conversation.

Point 2 is more nuanced. As a leader, you should foster dialogue on an important issue, but you also can't sit in the room forever. Where's the balance?

Let's explore both points.

Map out the discussion ahead of time

The meeting's printed (or posted) agenda is critical as the document sets forth what everyone will discuss and in what order.

You should consider lighter pieces of business at the front of the meeting to set aside extra time for a heavier topic that warrants discussion.

FOR EXAMPLE:

MEETING AGENDA

[Name of Organization]

[Month/Day/Year; for instance, "December 17, 2019"]

- Review of last meeting's notes
- Updates on roles and responsibilities
- Extension on Robertson proposal deadline
- Discussion: Entering the robotics industry

If you know, for example, the conversation around robotics will take time, then clear out other business.

Know when to let the conversation percolate and when to shut it down

Dialogue around an agenda item — or a topic not on the agenda — can happen at any time.

And that's a positive. You want your team engaged on an issue that could impact the future of the business.

Your role as the leader may also be to serve as a facilitator. Sit back, listen to your team and decide if you should keep the chatter going.

Ask yourself:

- Is the discussion helpful to the overall growth of the business? If yes, let people talk and see what ideas emerge.
- Is the discussion too narrow in scope and perhaps relevant to a select number of people on the team? If yes, consider cutting in with, “Can the people on this particular project hold a separate conversation after this meeting so we keep everything moving?”

Leaders always need to judge the merits of a longer conversation in a staff meeting. It's possible someone utters a brilliant idea seven minutes into a drawn-out discussion. If you ended the dialogue at four minutes, the smart insight may have never emerged.

Even if the meeting goes a bit longer than employees hoped, you showed you did all you could to respect everyone's time. And the team will appreciate your mindfulness.

DELEGATE LIKE THERE'S NO TOMORROW

With every new task, leaders face a classic challenge:

Do I complete the work myself or delegate to someone else?

Yes, there are times when it's best to handle the load on your own. Just. Get. It. Done.

Then again, there are other moments when it's best to take the work off your plate and, at the same time, empower other people on your team.