



COLLEGE OF MEDIA AND PUBLISHING

COURSES IN PROOFREADING, JOURNALISM, WRITING AND MARKETING

Promoting brand YOU



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An ebook by Cleland Thom

Cleland Thom is director of CMP, the UK's largest media and communications distance learning college. He is recognised as one of the UK's leading media and communications trainers.

He has trained more than 2,000 people from hundreds of businesses, public authorities, websites and charities. [See them](#)

His clients include some of the largest organisations in the UK, including the World Trade Group, the NHS and London councils.



Since 2003, he has been legal adviser to the Manchester Evening News and Manchester Electronic Media and has trained editors and journalists from all the UK's key media groups:

- **Newspapers:** Archant, Northcliffe, Newsquest, GMG and Johnston Press.
- **Magazines:** RBI, TMG, Janes Information Group and the Consumers' Association.
- **Radio stations:** GMG Radio and TLRC.

He was previously group editor and senior executive of nine UK regional newspaper titles in London and was appraised as being their “best all-round editor for nearly 50 years”.

He holds the National Council for the Training of Journalists National Certificate, the Certificate of Education from La Sainte Union College for Higher Education, Guildhall School of Music and Drama Grade 8 qualifications in Speech and Drama and Public Speaking and is an NVQ assessor and moderator.

Cleland is a member of the Society of Editors and the Chartered Institute of Journalists. He ran the highly successful NCTJ course at Highbury College, Portsmouth, for 10 years. He has done freelance work for all the national daily and Sunday papers and for magazines, local radio, and television.

Preface

There was a time when promoting yourself meant sending a pile of CVs out in the post.

That seems a bit outdated now.

The internet and other technology means you can now get your name known to millions of people worldwide, without having to leave your desk.

But – why promote yourself?

Because if you don't, you will miss opportunities.

Selling work to an editor means showing them your blog in which you have displayed your best material, developed your profile and built up a group of followers.

And, if you get a job interview, don't expect the employer to be impressed with a scrapbook containing your 'portfolio of work' that you haul out of your bag. You may as well tell them you use a typewriter.

Without a strong, positive online presence, you are finished before you start.

This ebook will show you how to build the most important brand: YOU. And the great thing is, it will not cost you a penny.

Get the basics right

1. Review your email address

Your email address says a lot about you. No one will take you seriously if your address is barryisdrunk@hotmail.com

And, contacts will not put you in their address books if your email address does not reveal your surname. barryb1095@hotmail.com is no help to anyone.

Your email address should give your first name **and** your second name. And, having your own domain address helps to show credibility. Hotmail and Gmail accounts are not exactly convincing.

2. Use an email signature

The signature comprises a few lines of information that goes below your name at the end of each email. Use it to describe yourself or your business, and make sure it includes your phone numbers, web and blog addresses, and Twitter account details.

Include it in all emails.

3. Join conversations

Participate in forums, discussions and message boards on other websites. Provide reliable, interesting information, but don't blatantly advertise your business. Users don't like this. Remember to include a signature, as described above.

Eventually your name will become known. You should then use Google alerts to find out when you have been mentioned on the web.

4. Answer questions

Offer advice on query websites like [Yahoo groups](#) There are groups on everything from sport to rambling. Or start your own. And, use a signature that gets your message across.

5. Create a website

You can create a website yourself, free – but make sure it looks good. A poorly designed website will create a bad reputation.

Make sure your website includes:

- Contact details.
- What you do.
- What you have done.
- Education.
- Skills.
- References.
- Downloads: ebooks etc.

Your website is your professional showcase, so no holiday photos and pictures of your granny.

Use good photos – no clip art. You can get free photos at Flickr under the Creative Common Attribution Licence.

Our partners BST Creative can build you a smart, professional website. [More information](#)

6. Start a blog

A blog is essential to help you find work. It can build your portfolio, develop your contacts and demonstrate your skills.

It will display your commitment, your knowledge of your subject and your contact base. Some employers only employ people who have shown their ability on a blog first.

And, it needs to be a **good** blog. It must stand out from thousands of others.

The Guardian's head of editorial development, Neil McIntosh, wrote:

"If you enter the jobs market without a blog, no matter how good your degree, you are increasingly likely to lose out to people who better present all they can do and who have had the experience of creating and curating their own website."

Make sure your blog is focused. Remember, it is a professional blog, so no details of your trip to London or photos of your friends on a stag night.

You will probably need a niche blog, for instance: local music, specialist food, web writing.

Blog every day. Include your name in the title, in the copy and in the tags. This will increase the chances of search engines listing your name.

Our partners BST Creative can build you a high-quality blog for £59.95. [More information](#)

7. Write good emails

Emails are **not** text messages or blog posts, so write them properly. They represent you and must make a good, accurate impression.

Assume that **all** your emails will go public. Don't write anything you will later regret.

There is a section on writing emails later in this ebook.

It is important to keep emails separate from social media messages. They are different tools and are used for different things. Remember these differences:

- **Emails are more formal:** you don't have to be someone's 'friend' to email them.
- **Emails are private:** they can be viewed only by the recipient.
- **Emails are focused:** they get to the point. You don't have to wade through the writer's comments on last Saturday's football as you do on social media websites.
- **Emails are more efficient:** good mail programmes allow you to filter them and place them in relevant folders.

- **Emails work across all platforms:** you don't have to 'join', or be someone's 'friend' to send or receive one.
- **Email addresses are the most widely-used personal credential:** you invariably have to provide one when you sign up to an online service.
- **Emails are safer:** the data remains yours. Your data on social networking websites belongs to the owner.

These are the reasons we **don't** communicate with individual students through social media platforms.

8. Write articles

Publishers need good content for their websites and sign-ups, etc. So write it, free, but insist they include your bio, website and contact details at the end.

You can post articles at places like:

[Article Dashboard](#)

[Articlebase](#)

9. Do webinars

If you are an expert in a certain field, promote yourself by doing online coaching – see [Vyew](#). But, make sure you **are** qualified to teach the subject.

10. Answer questions

Answer questions posted by visitors to other websites. The work is usually unpaid, but it gets your name and reputation known.

11. Use Twitter

Use Twitter to meet people with similar interests and careers and to raise awareness of you and your work. [Read more](#)

12. Join respected groups

Sign up with business networking websites liked [LinkedIn](#) Make sure you join their [specialist groups](#) or [start one yourself](#) And, create your own [Facebook page](#)

[Here is a list](#) of the best ones.

13. Keep track of your name

It is important you know what is being said about you – good and bad! Use [Google alerts](#) to see who is writing about you. Set up alerts for your name and those of your rivals.

14. Go to networking opportunities

There is a real world out there as well as a virtual one! Go to networking events, join the Chamber of Commerce, and do talks in schools and organisations. Offer to be an expert for local radio stations, which are often desperate for interviewees.

15. Get your contact details right

Make sure your business card looks good and carries details of your website, blog, Twitter account etc. Keep a supply with you. You can get them made cheaply at [Vistaprint](#) or [123print](#)

16. Use good manners

It is very easy to appear rude or unfriendly when you use social media. Words can be misunderstood and readers can also make wrong assumptions about your mood. Emoticons can help. But, these may not always be appropriate and don't always appear on the recipient's screen.

So, it is better to follow some basic rules of etiquette. You can find some useful tips [here](#) and [here](#) In short – be **nice!** It is better to be over-friendly than to appear rude and aloof.

17. Produce a newsletter

[Read this](#)

Write good emails

Emails have become one of the dominant forms of communication. And yet, few people have been trained how to write them.

This is surprising. Some businesses communicate **only** by email, and yet follow no rules or 'etiquette'. So, everyone does their own thing with the result that the business' brand can be damaged.

For example:

Smith plc have the 'Roger problem':

1. Smith plc's young chief executive starts his emails: 'Hey, Roger', even though he would write 'Dear Roger' to the same man if he was using a traditional letter. Why?
2. Smith plc's elderly chair is from the 'old school' and believes in using the Queen's English. So, he uses 'Dear Sir' and 'Yours truly' in emails **and** traditional letters.

Roger is confused because he gets emails from Smith plc, addressing him differently.

3. Jane, the chair's secretary, knows Roger socially as well and often emails him using her work email account. So, Roger finds it hard to tell whether her emails from Smith plc are business, personal or somewhere in between.

And, how does he respond to Jane if he has to copy the email to the Smith plc chair?

4. Julian, Smith plc's head of IT, has personalised his emails, so even though they contain the Smith logo, they have yellow daffodils in the background and an animated dog that runs across the screen and barks when the email is opened.

Would he use the daffodils and the dog in a traditional letter to executives from other companies? Unlikely.

5. Jane sent an internal email to her colleague Pat in finance, BUT LEFT THE CAPS LOCK ON BY MISTAKE. So, Pat thinks she is ANGRY WITH HER. THEY ARE NOT TALKING ANY MORE.
6. Nigel, Smith plc's human resources manager, sends a BCC of every email to the chair, and everyone hates him as a result.

And so on. You can probably think of other examples from your own experience!

It is not just **how** emails are written, either. There are issues with how they are **handled**.

Again, for many people, there are no rules. So, back at Smith plc:

7. Julian **always** replies to emails immediately, as soon as they arrive. That is the way he works. But, the chair does not. He prints his emails, puts them in his In Tray with the letters that come through the post and deals with them in turn.

So, customers think that Julian is highly efficient, and that the chair is either useless or lazy!

8. Smith plc have an 'Email us' button on their website. Beryl is supposed to deal with them, but she has been off sick for three weeks. The inbox is overflowing.
9. Smith plc's finance director is 67 and cannot work computers. He **never** replies to emails. He does not know how to and is too embarrassed to ask.
10. Roger's firm, Roger & Son, are brilliant at dealing with emails quickly. But, they are very slow with delivering the product. So, customers are usually disappointed. They expect the product to be delivered as fast as the emails.
11. Meanwhile Julian, still keen to impress, checks his emails while he is on holiday in Spain and replies to two of them. Unfortunately a colleague who was covering for him answered them too, and gave a different response.

Emails are a wonderful tool. But, they need to be handled properly. Certain etiquette has emerged, but some people know it and some don't.

So, make sure you have rules, and if you write emails for a business, it is essential that everyone in that business writes and handles emails in a uniform way.

Here are some tips:

1. Plan properly

Before you write a new message, answer these questions:

- a. Why am I writing this?
- b. What outcome am I looking for?

If you cannot answer these questions, it is probably best not to write. People get enough junk in their inbox as it is, without you adding to it! Don't send an email unless you have to.

Your answers should be precise:

- a. I am writing to invite Pat to the board meeting to do a presentation.
- b. I need her to say yes or no, and if she cannot do it, to suggest someone else who can.

Goals will help to focus your content.

Emails should have one main **purpose**. They should either:

- **Provide information:** the board meeting is at 3pm, **or**
- **Request information:** where did you put the data projector? **or**
- **Ask for action:** can you book me a flight to Hong Kong?

Decide which category your email fits into. Avoid writing emails that fit into more than one category, if possible.

2. Write a precise subject in the Subject field

This makes it easier for the recipient to grasp why you have emailed them, and what you want them to do.

The subject line often determines whether the email is read.

Avoid subjects like:

- Hi
- One more thing...
- FYI

Instead, try:

- Lunch is rescheduled to Friday @ 1pm.
- Reminder: Monday is St. Peter's Day – no classes.
- HELP: Can you defrag my C drive?
- Thanks for the new printer – works great!

3. Get straight to the point

Your recipient is probably busy. So, keep your email crisp and get to the point straight away. Avoid long-winded introductions. Be brief. Fit it on one screen.

4. Make it easy to quote

The recipient may forward parts of your email to other people. You can help them by keeping your paragraphs short, and using a double-return in between each paragraph. This will make them easy to copy and paste.

5. Distinguish between formal and informal situations

Avoid mixing topics, projects and, particularly, different spheres of life. Tell people about baby Annie's adorable antics in a **different** message to the one announcing 100 redundancies.

6. Use bullet points and numbers

Some emails need to contain multiple messages. But some readers read only the beginning of an email.

So, number your points and start each one off with a brief, pertinent heading.

Don't use 'urgent' or 'high priority' flags if they are not warranted. People will ignore them and one day they will miss something that **is** urgent.

7. Use standard capitalisation and spelling

Emails must be clear. You cannot assume the reader understands your 'shorthand'. So, an email that says: 'thx 4 ur help 2day ur gr8' may not mean anything to some people other than the fact that you can't spell.

8. Avoid fancy typefaces

The best fonts are Arial, Trebuchet, Verdana, or Calibri. Avoid anything elaborate or squiggly. Use a reasonable size – 12pt is ideal. And, don't use bold or italics for emphasis. Some email readers display only plain text, so bold and italics will not show. In this case, you can use asterisks to show **emphasis**.

9. Don't type in caps

Online, caps mean shouting. Regardless of your intention, people may react as if you meant to be aggressive.

10. Avoid attachments

Put information in the body of your email if possible.

Attachments:

- Can carry viruses.
- Take time to download.
- Take up needless space on the recipient's computer.
- Don't always translate correctly, especially for people who may read their email on portable devices.

Instead of sending a whole file, copy and paste the relevant text into the email, unless your recipient needs to view a file in order to edit or archive it.

If you need to send an attachment, store it in an online server so the recipient can download it.

11. Identify yourself clearly

When you are 'cold calling' someone, include your name, occupation and any other important identification information in the first few sentences.

If you are following up a face-to-face contact, don't assume the recipient will remember you. So, drop casual hints to jog their memory: "I enjoyed talking with you about the planning strategy in the canteen on Tuesday."

12. Don't flame

'Flaming' someone is to write an abusive personal attack. If you find yourself writing in anger, take some time to cool off before you hit 'send.' Don't 'flame' without weighing the consequences. Emails are sometimes too immediate for our own good. They don't allow the time to count to 10.

13. Proofread it

Make your message look professional.

Check for typos. Take an extra minute or two before you hit 'send'. Ask a colleague to check if it makes sense.

14. Don't assume security

Don't send anything by email that you would not want someone else to read. Assume that the email **will** be pinned up, with your name attached, on the notice board in the staff canteen, or forwarded to 1,000 other people. Remember, you can commit libel with an email, so take care what you say.

Email is not secure. A curious hacker, a malicious criminal, or your boss can easily intercept it. In some companies, the email administrator has the ability to read all email messages, and the company may discipline you if you write anything inappropriate.

15. Respond promptly

It is intriguing why many people never respond to emails, even though they are written to them personally. Not replying to an email is rude and disrespectful.

Reply to every email within 20 minutes, if possible, or some other deadline you set yourself. Even if your reply is: "Sorry, I'm too busy to help you now. I will get back to you in more detail later," at least the sender will not be wondering when or if you are going to reply.

We live in a fast-moving world, and if you cannot keep up, you will lose out to those who can.

Read more about email etiquette at [Dynamoo](#)

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