

Tool #5: Personalized E-mail Builder and Templates

Personalized E-mail Builder

Template e-mails save staff members time as they manage a large volume of outreach. However, many template emails are impersonal or bland. This tool outlines a framework for templates that feel personalized through an engaging voice that fits the purpose of the email and the institutional identity. Additionally, the tool includes several examples based on lessons learned by COE Forum members. Above all, the COE Forum recommends A/B testing various components of the emails to find which content and voice resonates best—as we know, target audiences vary by institution and by program time.

Complete the worksheet below to help your team think through how to craft each e-mail component for the best possible open and action rates. Then review the e-mail samples beginning on the following page.

Email Builder Worksheet

From: Alan@exampleU.edu

- **Send e-mails from a recruitment advisor's email address.**

Subject Line

Consider the following subject-line strengtheners:

- Prospect's Name Example: Benjamin, thanks for your interest. I have a few answers to your questions.
- Question Example: What motivates you to return to school?
- Casual Greeting Example: Hello from ExU! We have stress management tips to share!
- A Call-to-Action Example: Experience online learning: Register for the next test-drive course before Friday.

List two elements from the list above that you would incorporate into a subject line.

Compare answers with a colleague and craft a sample subject line. Write your sample below:

Salutation:

- **The COE Forum recommends either addressing an e-mail to the prospect's first name or eliminating the salutation and beginning the e-mail with a casual greeting.**

Consider the following salutations. Check the salutation that you think will best resonate with your prospective student audience based on the age and career level of your typical prospective student:

- ☐ Dear Brian,
- ☐ Hi, Brian. } Generally more appropriate for older, more executive audience but A/B test to be sure.
- ☐ Hello and thanks for your interest in Example University!
- ☐ Hi there! We're glad you are interested in the MSW program at Example University.

E-mail Body

See the examples below for sample text.

Sign Off and Signature

- **Sign e-mails with a first name and include contact information in a signature:**

Have a nice day!

Alan

Alan@ExampleU.edu

xxx-xxx-xxxx

Alternative sign offs:

- All the best,
- Take care,
- Thanks again!
- Warm regards,

Calls to action serve students ready to take next step.

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1. Sample Email: Thank You for Your Interest

Subject: Padma, thanks for your interest. Your advisor has answers.

Dear Padma,

I'm glad to hear you're interested in Example University's master's degree in liberal arts. While you continue to explore the resources available via the [program portal](#), I hope you'll consider speaking to me over the phone to discuss any outstanding questions and your career and education goals. I can also share some tips for balancing coursework with family and work responsibilities.

To schedule a quick conversation, please follow the link below and select a date and time that is convenient for you to speak over the phone. I'll give you a call at the selected time, and the conversation can be as quick or as in-depth as you like.

<http://www.speaktoGryffindor.Example.edu>

In the meantime, take a moment to watch this 3-minute clip of Dr. McGonagal, professor of organizational behavior and winner of the President's Teaching Award, describe how her curriculum prepares students for a global business environment: <http://www.McGonagalCurriculum.Example.edu>. You'll also get a sneak peek into Dr. McGonagal's plans for a business immersion trip to India, a two-week experience open exclusively to online students.

I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Thanks for your time,
Margaret

Margaret Grainger
Recruitment Advisor
Gryffindor School of Professional Studies
Example University

mgrainger@example.edu
xxx-xxx-xxxx

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2. Sample Email: Register for a Test-Drive Course

Subject: Experience online learning at Example University: register for the next test-drive course before Friday, March 30

Hi Padma,

Thanks for your continued interest in Example University. We recruitment advisors know that selecting an online master's degree program is a difficult and important decision. Certainly, one factor you are weighing is quality of the course experience. To help you get a clearer sense of course quality, Example University offers test-drive courses, a chance to experience the web-based interface through which students submit assignments, communicate with professors, and engage with fellow students.

Nearly 70 percent of new students report registering for a test-drive course before applying to for the master's degree of liberal arts, and our next test-drive begins in one week. Register for the test-drive course today, and I'll remind you to log into the test-drive course next week.

Test-Drive Example University

Introduction to Conflict Management

Saturday, March 31-Saturday, April 6

Lesson: Establishing Stakeholder Interests

Professor Knox

Register by 11:00pm on Friday, March 30 to receive your username and password.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the test-drive course or any part of the application process. I am happy to discuss career goals, course selection questions, and advice for financing your degree.

All the best,
Margaret

Margaret Grainger

Recruitment Advisor

Gryffindor School of Professional Studies

Example University

mgrainger@example.edu

xxx-xxx-xxxx

P.S. Do you know a friend or colleague who might be interested in enrolling in an Example University Program? If so, please forward on this invitation by completing this [form](#).

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3. Sample Email: Read/Hear Engaging Content Relevant to Adult Learners

Subject: Need tips for managing stress? Join Example University's Dr. Barnard, psychology professor, April 10.

Hi there, Padma. Margaret here with Example University. I hope you will join us for a special presentation on stress management, a topic that surfaces in most of my conversations with adults who decide to return to school for a professional degree. With the demands of multiple responsibilities, including school, poorly managed stress can distract us from our health and path to success. Example University is here to help our students manage existing stress and prevent unchecked stress in the future. For a start, we encourage all future students to register for the presentation below:

Overcoming Stress with Dr. Barnard

Special Presentation, Including 10-Minute Quiz and Personalized Suggestions

April 10, 2013

9:00pm ET

Available as a recording until May 1, 2013

Learn successful management tactics from current students and hear from Professor of Psychology, Dr. Barnard, on the following stress topics:

- Symptoms
- Causes
- Management
- Action and Prevention

After the web-based presentation and questions from viewers, complete a 10-minute quiz and receive a personalized action plan. Select either the April 10 live option or the recorded option when registering.

>>[Register for free here](#)

I hope this helps on your road to selecting a professional program. Please reach out if I can address any concerns!

Take care,
Margaret

Margaret Grainger

Recruitment Advisor

Gryffindor School of Professional Studies

Example University

mgrainger@example.edu

xxx-xxx-xxxx

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4. Typical Areas for Improvement in Introductory E-mails

These sample emails exhibit a few worrisome traits that render them both impersonal and unhelpful: 1) vague claims about integrity of institution, 2) redundancy of information, and 3) stilted language with unclear syntax. Avoid these and other errors highlighted below when composing automatic emails.

Dear Katherine Zellner,

Thank you for requesting information regarding online education at the Example University. The Extended Education Unit is committed to providing you with an exceptional educational experience. Please see information below to help you get started in finding a quality online degree or certificate program.

If you have any questions, you may follow up with the Extended Education staff:

- xxx-xxx-xxxx
- info@example.edu

Information at your finger tips:

- **Contact us** for more help by calling xxx-xxx-xxxx or emailing info@example.edu
- **Extended Education Overview** - Provides a brief overview about Extend Education and its delivery media, programs of study, student services, credit options, faculty, admission, tuition and fees, and financial aid.
- **Degrees and Certificates Overview** - Provides printable descriptions and contact information for the online degree and certificate programs offered by Example University.

You will need Acrobat Reader to view these documents. Download here:
<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

Annotations:

- Generic language without memorable details (points to the first paragraph)
- Redundant information too close together (points to the second and third paragraphs)
- Content not specific to prospect interests (points to the list of links)

Dear Katie,

Thank you for your interest in EXU master's concentration degree in public relations online program. EXU can provide the tools to advance your skills while opening more doors for you when choosing this prestigious program. Pursuing this master's degree can provide:

- Managerial skills in communication to benefit various PR firms
- Advanced knowledge in social media, management, crisis communications, and strategic campaigns
- Potential career satisfaction, increased income, and promotion opportunities
- Deeper knowledge of social media, public relations, marketing, and advertising within various organizations

Take an opportunity to get to know our students and graduates by listening to our pre-recorded webinars. You can have the opportunity to listen to their experiences, success stories, and how they balance their obligations. You can view the webinars by clicking this link:
<http://webinarstories.example.edu>

I am pleased to guide you through the application process to discover how the online PR program can make a positive difference in your future. Please call in to apply. I look forward to speaking with you.

Annotations:

- Confusing program name (points to the first paragraph)
- Unclear wording around curriculum outcomes (points to the list of bullet points)
- A second focus of the email dilutes efficacy (points to the paragraph about webinars)
- Overly formal language (points to the final paragraph)