How to communicate with a potential employer via email?

These 10 tips and tricks will help you to communicate in a professional manner:

1. Emailing for the first time – Start your email with 'Dear' if you have a contact person at the company otherwise 'Good day' will also be a good second option.
2. Subject – Be as specific as possible but keep it short and sweet. For instance if you are following up on an application for a graduate programme. '*Enquiry: Future Leaders Graduate Programme Recruitment Process*'. You can include your name and surname depending on the amount of characters used.
3. Email address: When you email the company, make sure that your own email address is business appropriate. For instance your initials and surname is always a good option. If you have a 'nickname' as an email address future employers may see it as being unprofessional. Good advice would be to create an email account just for your correspondence between potential employers. Example: ts.andrews@gmail.com.
4. Before you sent: Read your email at least three times and ask someone else to also read it before you send the email. This will prevent unnecessary mistakes that may have been made in terms of sentence construction and choice of words.
5. Spellcheck: Possibly one of the most important points. Always remember to spellcheck your emails before you send them. Make sure that your spellcheck is set on English: South Africa. Some email providers automatically detect misspelled words, but for safety purposes, copy and paste the entire email in a blank word document and spellcheck the email.
6. Attachments: When you attach a document, make sure that you mention it in the body of the email. For instance, 'attached you will find my academic transcript, as required'. Make sure the attached document is a good quality document and check before you send the email that it is the correct document. Another suggestion, rather convert your word documents to PDF version when you send it via email. This will prevent the receiver from editing your document.
7. Use of exclamation points -   Not more than two per email. When you use more than two, it may come across as unprofessional.
8. Avoid Jargon and Slang: It is never a good idea to use an informal/relaxed or instant messaging type of tone when composing a business email. Examples that people often use: 'Gr8' instead of 'Great', '4U' instead of 'for you'. Also do not make use of unnecessary abbreviations.
9. Know your audience: It is important to realise that you are not communicating with your friends and that the level of professionalism and email-etiquette you use may influence your chances of being successful in your application.
10. Your email reflect who you are: Always keep in mind that your email is a representation of yourself. Structure your email in a manner that it flow, makes sense and is straight to the point. Once you start to build a relationship with the receiver of your emails, you can adapt or adjust your email style, but always make one hundred percent sure that you know who your audience is at all times.

By Altus Combrink