

## You've Got Mail: Examination of a Brief Online Email Training

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## **You've Got Mail: Examination of a Brief Online Email Training**

Many companies train employees on writing emails in seminar-style training sessions. However, in-person, seminar-style trainings are costly. This study aims to create a training program, rooted in the science of training to address these needs. We examine the mechanisms of action by which the training influences performance and intent to transfer. To do this, we call upon several models of training effectiveness (see Alliger, Tannenbaum, Bennett, & Traver, 1997; Baldwin & Ford, 1988; and Kirkpatrick, 1959). Taken together, these models suggest that individual differences will predict affective reactions, which will lead to utility reactions, ultimately leading to learning. We aim to test this synthesized model.

Participants were 164 undergraduate students, informed they were working for a hypothetical customer service department. Email training was provided online through Qualtrics survey software, and provided information, demonstration, and an opportunity for practice. Participants then wrote a final email according to the training.

Path analysis, using maximum likelihood estimation, found acceptable model fit ( $\chi^2(3) = 9.87, p = 0.02$ ; CFI = 0.95, SRMR = 0.045), suggesting that conscientiousness predicts comfort with training (an affective reaction;  $\beta = 0.25, p < .001$ ), which influences motivation to transfer (a utility reaction;  $\beta = 1.17, p < .001$ ). Motivation to transfer did not predict task performance. Although the model did not significantly account for task performance, it did highlight that individual characteristics can predict affective reactions which then predict utility reactions. Practitioners and researchers should account for individual and both affective and utility reactions when evaluating training programs.