How to write like Raymond: Contacting another team for the first time

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I will from time to time have a question for another team that I have not previously interacted with, or a team that I interact with occasionally and do not wish to overstay my welcome. My general approach is to open the email message with a greeting along the lines of

> Hello, intelligent and (if I may say so) frightfully attractive members of the XYZ team.

After buttering them up, I ask my question.

I don't know if it helps, but I figure it doesn't hurt.

A colleague of mine shared a story of an incident that occurred over 15 years ago. He was part of a team that hosted a group of college students who were visiting the Microsoft Redmond campus. At the end of the day's activities of visiting various buildings and introducing them to Microsoft employees across many different engineering teams, the tour organizer asked if any students had any questions.

One student sheepishly raised his hand and hesitantly said, "I expected people here to be better looking."

The student immediately recognized that this comment was inappropriate, awkwardly lowered his hand, and hung his head in shame for the rest of the session.

So um, yeah, don't do that. Even if you think it, don't say it out loud.

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