EMAIL BEST PRACTICES

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL EMAILS

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SUBJECT LINE

The goal of a good subject line is to get the reader to open. The best are short, intriguing, and capture the spirit of the email. Below are some guidelines to help craft subject lines that will get opens.

Length: keep it short. Research shows that keeping your length to 7 or less words increases the chance of someone opening.

Content: Subject lines that evoke emotion work the best. In addition, a few words have been shown to increase engagement such as the reader's "first name", "invitation", "introducing", and "we". Although these are proven to drive up opens, using them repeatedly will diminish their effectiveness. We vary our subject lines and only use personalization on our most important messages.

Emojis: Using emojis in subject lines has been shown to increase opens, clicks, and recollection. That said, these studies are done with general audiences and our testing has had mixed results. Our A/B testing has resulted in subject lines with emoji's getting more opens but not by a statistically significant margin. Overall, don't be afraid to use emoji's, especially if they help you evoke emotion 😊.

PREHEADER

The preheader is usually a summary or preview of the email. This area will only be visible on some domains but can help you increase the chance someone opens. Like subject lines, keep the message short since the message is often truncated.

HERO IMAGE

The hero image is likely the first thing a reader will see. It must grab the reader's attention and compel them to continue further into the message. The image you use should help tell the story and bring life to the body copy.

Gifs: A gif is a great way to grab attention and has been shown to increase the time someone spends in your email.

Video: An image from a video with a play button overtop has increased click through rates on our email campaigns. Be careful though with where you send the reader. It is highly unlikely they will come back to your email or go to another page after viewing the content.

Faces: Adding an image of a person's face will instantly draw the reader's attention. Eye mapping has shown that a face in an email draws more attention than nearly anything else. Also, a face looking in a direction draws the eye to what the subject is looking at. This can be useful to draw attention to a CTA, feature, or deeper into the email.

HEADLINE

The headline should summarize the message and urge the reader to actually read the body copy. With most people skimming your email, most will only see the subject line, hero image, headline, and a call to action (button). Your image and headline should communicate the message and your call to action should explain the action you want them to take.

BODY COPY

Here's your opportunity to tell your story. Readers should feel drawn to act and click through. Avoid long copy whenever possible but use the following tactics to help someone skimming your message still get the point.

https://blog.marketo.com/2018/02/email-subject-line-length-works-best.html

https://www.campaignmonitor.com/blog/email-marketing/2019/02/power-words-in-email-subject-lines/

https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/best-emojis

https://www.campaignmonitor.com/blog/email-marketing/2019/02/a-practical-guide-to-email-preheaders/

https://medium.com/@emailmonks/the-importance-of-hero-image-in-emails-caeb9e35b2fb

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Bullet points: Paragraphs of text will be glossed over by most readers but a list of short bulleted points is usually read. Use this trick to break up longer text and highlight key points you want everyone to remember.

Highlighting: Use **bold**, *italic*, or different color text to call out specific points within a paragraph. The skimmers eye will be drawn to the text helping you get the point across.

Call outs and page breaks: Breaking up long text with call outs and page breaks will make the content seem less daunting. Although a longer copy will still be passed over, this technique will lessen the initial shock and keep some engaged.

Don't use hyperlinked text: We have tested hyperlinked text several times in our sends and have yet to see it work. Use a button CTA if you want readers to click through.

CALLS TO ACTION (CTA)

The most important part of your email will be the call to action. This is the button or link in the email directing the reader to the place you want them to go. It is important to limit the number of links if you want to increase the effectiveness of the email at driving readers to take a specific action.

Button type: In order of effectiveness the CTA options are colored button, white button, large text, and lastly hyperlinked body copy. A colored button will drive double the clicks of large text and hyperlinked body copy will only drive a fraction of that. Prioritize CTA's within your message. Use a colored button for your main link, a white button for a secondary link, and large text for tertiary links.

Color: Your main CTA button should stand out from the background and using color is a great way to do it. We have had great success with a red button on a white background.

Placement: Your main CTA should immediately stand out from the rest of the email and on longer emails be both at the top and bottom of the email. Also, the best performing links are alone, away from other CTA's.

Text: Keep it really short, use active language and speak in the first person. Our best performing calls to action have been volunteer now, donate now, learn more, and watch now. These are very self-explanatory but other options would include "get my seat" or "sign me up!" for an event.

REPORTING

When just staring out there are only three main KPI's you'll want to watch to be successful. Compare these metrics on each send overtime and aim for improvement.

Open rate: The number of people who opened your email (unique opens / number sent)

Click through rate: The percent of people who clicked a link (unique click throughs / number sent) – Also try click to open (unique click throughs / unique opens) to get a more nuanced view.

Conversion / revenue: the number of people who donated, volunteered, signed up, etc. and the revenue generated from your message.

https://copywritematters.com/break-long-copy-reader-hungry/

https://www.campaignmonitor.com/resources/guides/10-tips-improve-email-calls-action/

https://www.campaignmonitor.com/blog/email-marketing/2019/03/17-email-marketing-metrics-every-email-marketer-needs-to-know/