

10 Email Design Best Practices

Create Impressive Email
Newsletters with 40
Email Newsletter Tips on
10 Design Best Practices

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Introduction

The metrics for email marketing make the platform very measurable and adjustable, but without benchmarks how will you know what adjustments to make?

To measure a campaign without benchmarks is to guess at its effectiveness—and blind guesses rarely make money.

Marketing research firm Jupiter Research gives the following industry averages for generic e-mails, via [DMNews](#):

- 88 percent deliverability
- 20 percent open rate
- 9.5 percent click through rate
- 1.1 percent conversion rate

Take a look at these numbers and compare them to your email marketing numbers.

Is your deliverability poor? Then you should decrease your use of images, remove spammy words from your subject lines and put white-list requests in every one of your messages.

Do you have a low open rate? Then your sender address needs to be clearer, your subject lines need to be more arresting or you have to provide better content. If people are not anticipating good content when they open your email, then eventually they won't open it at all.

Are people opening your email but declining to visit your website (low CTR)? Then you may want to create more incentives to click through or possibly add more links to your landing pages in the message.

In this white paper, you'll learn our 10 best practices for improving your email marketing metrics.

10 Email Newsletter Best Practices

Before reading this report, take a few minutes to really review your own email newsletter.

We've developed 10 guidelines for designing an effective email newsletter that we will use to analyze the email newsletters of successful B2B and B2C publishers. Below is the Mequoda Email Newsletter Scorecard; see how you score.

Each bullet point equals a point, so a perfect grade would be a score of 4 in each of the 10 categories.

40 = A
30 = B
20 = C
10 = D
00 = F

The Mequoda Email Newsletter Scorecard encourages you to score your email newsletters on each of the 10 Mequoda Best Practice Guidelines, add them together and arrive at a cumulative score.

The goal is to emphasize the importance of balanced, usable and effective email newsletters. Your email newsletter should achieve respectable scores in all areas, rather than over-emphasizing a single area or two or omitting other areas completely.

1. Delivery

- The email newsletter is delivered to the inbox.
- The email newsletter includes a prominently placed white list request.
- The email newsletter is sent at regular intervals.
- The email newsletter is delivered to the inbox at an appropriate day/time.

2. From Line

- The email newsletter from line clearly identifies the sender.
- The email newsletter from line is instantly recognizable to subscribers.
- The email newsletter contains both a display and an actual from address.
- The email newsletter “from addresses” are consistent from send to send.

3. Subject Line

- The email newsletter subject line is engaging and benefit-oriented.
- The email newsletter subject line features something unique in the current issue.
- The email newsletter subject line places the most important information first, so that it's not missed by readers
- The email newsletter subject line doesn't sound "spammy."

4. The Preview Pane

- The email newsletter preview pane includes a recognizable logo (or in the case of a text newsletter, a brand or company name) in a prominent position.
- The email newsletter preview pane includes a strong, benefit-oriented headline or title to help pull readers in.
- The email newsletter preview pane includes a link to view the email online.
- The email newsletter preview pane would engage the reader and pull them in even if the images were blocked.

5. First Screen

- The email newsletter includes an engaging opening paragraph specific to this issue.
- The email newsletter comes from a "real person" or group.
- The email newsletter includes a table of contents specific to this issue.
- The email newsletter table of contents includes links, either to each item in the email newsletter or to the full text on a Website.

6. Look and Feel

- The email newsletter has a design that's engaging to the eye and draws the reader in.
- The email newsletter has a design that's consistent with the sender's Website/landing pages.
- The email newsletter uses images responsibly and judiciously, to add to the reader's experience, not detract from it.
- The email newsletter is easy to skim, with short paragraphs, bullet points and white space.

7. Content and Tools of Engagement

- The email newsletter provides benefit-oriented content that is written in an engaging manner.
- The email newsletter includes engagement tools for readers, things like surveys, polls, links to discussion boards and ways to provide feedback to or communication with the editors.
- The email newsletter follows the 60/40 rule, with at least 60% of the content being editorial and no more than 40% being promotional.
- The email newsletter is a manageable length to read online—2 to 3 printed pages.

8. Business Goals

- The email newsletter has a clear, recognizable business goal.
- The email newsletter content supports this business goal 100%.
- The email newsletter includes multiple calls to action.
- The email newsletter calls to action are effective but not "pushy."

9. Footer

- The email newsletter includes a mechanism to allow readers to unsubscribe.
- The email newsletter provides a link to a subscription management page where subscribers can update their email address or change their preferences.
- The email newsletter includes a U.S. Postal Service address for your company.
- The email newsletter includes a copyright notice to protect your intellectual property.

10. Other

- The email newsletter is delivered on a schedule consistent with what subscribers were told at sign-up.
- The email newsletter content fulfills the expectations set for the readers at sign-up.
- The email newsletter includes a "forward to a friend" call to action to encourage viral marketing.
- The email newsletter includes a mechanism allowing those who receive a copy from a friend to subscribe.

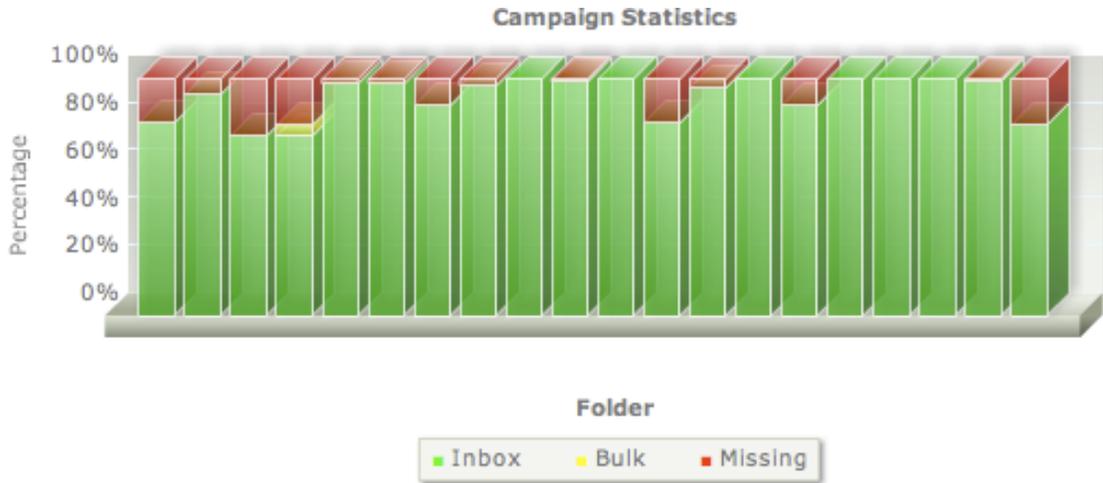
Elaborating on the Email Newsletter Scorecard

1. Delivery

If your email newsletter doesn't get delivered to the recipient's inbox, the chance of it being read greatly decreases.

Getting through Internet Service Provider (ISP) filters requires a mix of technology and relationships; most email service providers (ESP) provide what you need. Harder is getting through filters that reside on the recipient's desktop, like those offered by Microsoft Outlook, McAfee and Cloudmark; your best bet here is to ask readers to "white list" you by adding your newsletter's from address to their address book.

The timing of your delivery can also make or break your ability to reach readers. The email newsletter should be sent at regular intervals and delivered at an appropriate day/time (weekdays during business hours for B2B, weekends or evenings for B2C).



2. From Line

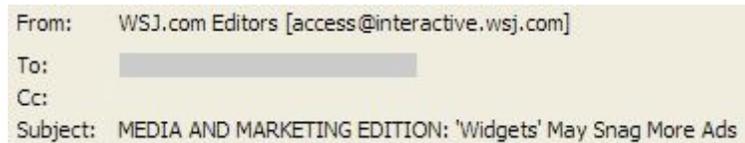
The from line of an email newsletter should clearly identify the sender and be quickly recognizable to the recipient. Studies have shown that when viewing their inbox, readers start by looking at the from line; engaging readers here has been shown to increase open rates.

Each email should actually have two entries in the from line—the display or friendly from address and the actual from address. Here's an example:

From Line: Mequoda Daily

In this instance, “Mequoda Daily” is the display from address; mequoda@e.mequoda.com is the actual from address. Most recipients will see the display from address; AOL and some other email clients show only the actual from address.

The actual from address is what is used in the desktop “white listing” we discussed above. It’s important that both from addresses feature your key brand prominently; it’s also important that both stay consistent from send to send, so that your readers—as well as desktop white lists—recognize you.



From: WSJ.com Editors [access@interactive.wsj.com]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: MEDIA AND MARKETING EDITION: 'Widgets' May Snag More Ads

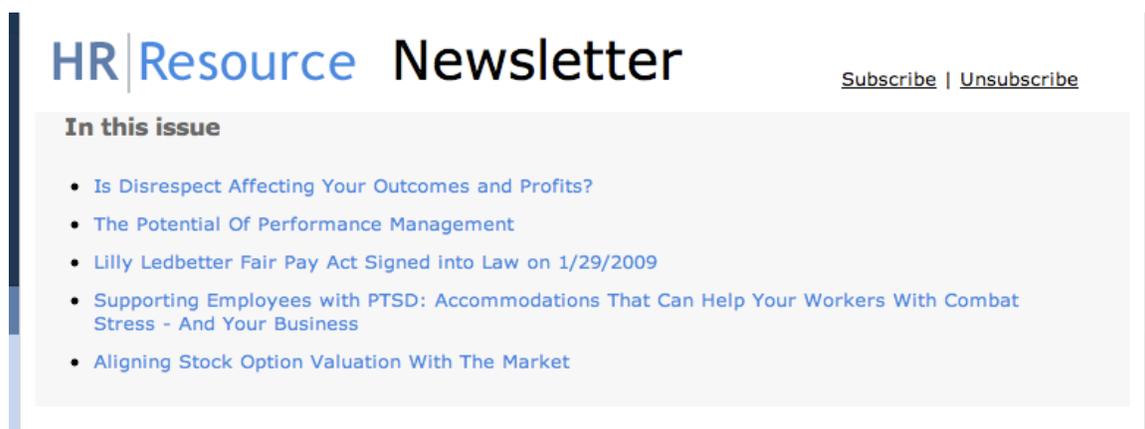
From and Subject lines from The Wall Street Journal’s Media and Marketing Edition

3. Subject Line

The subject line should be engaging, benefit oriented and talk about the content of this issue of the email newsletter. The key message in the subject line should be first; subject lines are often truncated. When writing subject lines companies should be sure they don’t sound “spammy” by avoiding over-the-top claims and language favored by less reputable emailers.

4. Preview Pane

The preview pane is the top 2” to 4” of the email newsletter; many email clients show readers a “preview pane” window as they scroll their inbox. This area is another tool that should be used to engage readers.



Preview Pane of Lorman’s HR Resource Newsletter

A company logo in this space that's instantly recognizable to readers is important; a strong benefit-oriented headline or newsletter title helps as well. Image blocking (which is getting more prevalent) makes it important to include a link to view the email online in case images aren't visible. Also good—making sure that the key messages of the preview pane get delivered even if the images aren't visible.

5. First Screen

The first screen, which includes the preview pane, is another part of your email newsletter's prime real estate. It should include an opening paragraph that draws people into the issue with reasons why they should take a minute and read it right now.

If you are having trouble viewing this newsletter, [click here](#) to view the web version.

HOME CONTACT US ADVERTISE WITH US

FDANEWS **DEVICE DAILY BULLETIN**

TRACKWISE **DEFINE. TRACK. MANAGE. REPORT.** Enterprise Quality Management Solutions **Sparta Systems, Inc.** www.spartasystems.com

Vol. 6, No. 35 Friday, Feb. 20, 2009

In this issue...

- [CBER Updates Scientific Dispute Resolution Procedures](#)
- [AHWP Outlines 2009-2011 Goals](#)
- [Organization Issues Alert on Warmers](#)
- [Device World Daily](#)

CBER Updates Scientific Dispute Resolution Procedures
In an effort to keep scientific disputes from delaying regulatory decisions, the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) has updated its [manual](#) on dispute resolutions. Regulatory decisions on new products will continue to be made despite a scientific disagreement unless the argument concerns a possible risk to public health or a delay of the decision would not be critical, the manual says.
[Devices & Diagnostics Letter](#)

AHWP Outlines 2009-2011 Goals
The Asian Harmonization Working Party (AHWP) expects full implementation of its medical device Safety Alert Dissemination System by 2011 in all member economies where an effective regulatory framework is in place and resources permit, according to a [draft](#) work plan. In addition, AHWP intends to do a study comparing the regulatory frameworks in each of its 17 members and their alignment or deviation from Global Harmonization Task Force principles. Comments on the work plan will be accepted through Feb. 28.
[International Medical Device Regulatory Monitor](#)

FDA NEWS AUDIOCONFERENCE
FDA's New Guidance on PMA Supplements
Feb. 24, 2009
1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
REGISTER NOW

BEST Selling Report **FDA NEWS**
Tune Up Your CAPA Systems
ORDER NOW

First Screen on the FDA News Device Daily Bulletin

If your brand involves many personalities, the email newsletter should come from a real person or real people (especially in the B2C market); it should not appear to be automatically generated with no human intervention. There should be a table of contents that is specific to this issue:

BAD: Top Story

GOOD: Top Story: Interview with Tyler Thomas, President of XYZ Publishing

BAD: Case Study

GOOD: Case Study: How ABC Publications Increased Online Revenue by 50%

BAD: Special Offer

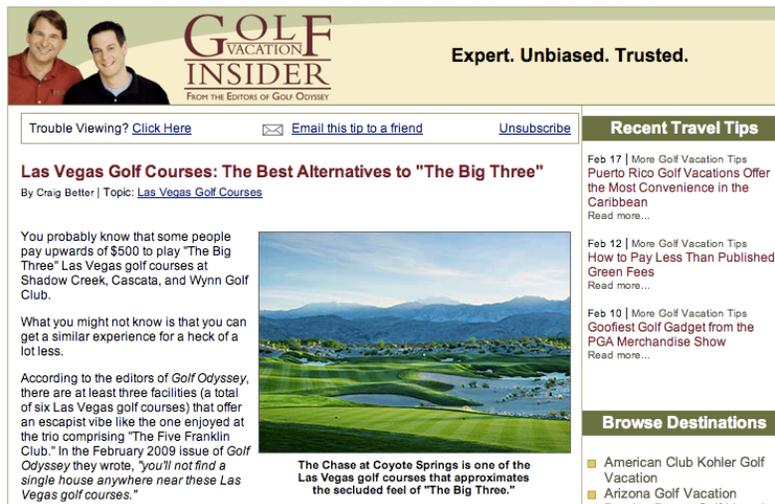
GOOD: Special Offer: Save \$100 on our Email Marketing Report

The table of contents should include links so that the reader can “jump” directly to the item in the newsletter or to the Website with the full story.

6. Look and Feel

If your email newsletter doesn't look engaging, people will be less likely to jump in and read it. It should have a design that's appealing to the eye and draws people in. This design should be consistent with that of your Website/landing pages, so there's no disconnect and the relationship between them is clear.

The email newsletter should use images to support the content and business goals, but not overuse them. It should be easy to skim, with short paragraphs, bullet points and ample white space.



The attractive Golf Vacation Insider email newsletter

7. Content and Tools of Engagement

The email newsletter should provide benefit-oriented content that engages the reader. It should promote two-way communication and community-building with things like surveys, polls, links to discussion boards and ways to provide feedback to/communicate with the editor(s).

There should be a balance between editorial and promotional content—60%/40% is the rule. The newsletter should be a manageable length to read online, usually 2 to 3 printed pages.

September 26, 2008



I admit it: I'm curious. Who are you, you loyal folks who read Knitting Daily and leave comments and download patterns and chat on the forums? I mean, there are an awful lot of you: the [main forum page](#) tells us that there are more than 212,000 people signed up here! Two hundred and twelve thousand. That's about three sports stadiums' full, right?

That's a lot of knitters. Let's see. What if each of you had only five skeins of yarn in your stash? That would be over a million skeins of yarn between us (and I don't know about you, but I have just a couple more than five skeins around the house. Just sayin'.) If everyone has made at least six scarves, that's 1.2 million scarves we've created. Stitch markers? Two dozen each means more than FIVE MILLION stitch markers in our pockets, sofa cushions, and empty mint tins.

This is one heck of a knitting party, people.





[Sandi Wisheart](#) is the editor of Knitting Daily. What's on Sandi's needles? The Camisa is blocking...soon there will be seaming and then there will be photos!



Knitting Daily's email newsletter regularly invites readers to join discussion forums and fill out reader satisfaction surveys

8. Business Goals

Every email newsletter should have a reason for being: its business goal. The content of the email newsletter should reflect and support this. You should be able to clearly justify and defend the business purpose behind every email you send and every item in these emails.

There should be multiple calls to action in each email newsletter and they should be effective but not “hard sell” or “pushy.”

Join CooksIllustrated.com!
You can get instant access to all of our recipes by joining our website. This is how all of us at *Cook's Illustrated* figure out what to cook for dinner. In addition to the recipes, we have updated testings and tastings, quick tips, hundreds of answers to cooking questions, and a bulletin board where you can post your own queries. Click [here to get a free 14-day trial](#). Thanks.

Call to action from America's Test Kitchen eNotes

9. Footer

Readers have come to expect to find certain information in the footer of an email newsletter. Some of it, like a way to unsubscribe, is required by CAN-SPAM regulations (assuming the email's purpose is promotional, not transactional). Other information is just best practice, like including a link to a subscription

management page where readers can change their preferences or update their email address.

Also good to have here: your USPS address to add credibility and a copyright notice, to protect your valuable content from those who might take it as their own.



Try a quick, delicious alternative

South Beach Diet[™] Foods from Kraft

Helps satisfy hunger with at least 15g PROTEIN 6g FIBER Herb Chicken Wrap

Life is better on the Beach[™]

SEE WHY ▶

You are receiving this e-mail because you asked us on 11/23/2004 to send The South Beach Diet[™] Newsletter to your account at [REDACTED]. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, [click here](#) or reply to this e-mail and place REMOVE in the subject line.

To add to, remove, or change the newsletters you receive from us, [click here](#).

If you received this e-mail forwarded from a friend and would like to sign up for your own newsletter, [click here](#).

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Footer from The South Beach Diet Online's Daily Dish

10. Other

There are two other things your email newsletter should do: match what you told your subscribers at sign-up and serve as an acquisition tool for new subscribers.

Making sure that the frequency of the send and the content are consistent with what subscribers were told when they signed up is key. Also key—asking readers to share your email newsletter with their friends and colleagues and providing those who receive a forwarded issue an easy way to sign-up themselves.

Share this Article

Click here [to start receiving your own copy of IL Postcards...](#) or forward this e-mail to a friend so they can sign-up to receive their own copy of *IL Postcards*.

*International Living invites new readers to subscribe and
Current subscribers to forward newsletters to their friends*

Conclusion

Marketers can get carried away with email. Some will hide the unsubscribe link with tiny text. Others will use more calls to action than a drill sergeant. These marketers forget that people, not cash machines, are reading the email, and they should be treated well.

Part of respecting your audience is designing an email newsletter that is usable. That means it should read well, link to a webpage of the article, and yes, even allow readers to unsubscribe easily.

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