Email Copywriting Basics

Tips Every Email Copywriter, Editor or Publisher Should Learn to Maximize Email Conversion Rates

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Introduction

It has been found in studies that most people decide whether to open and read emails based on a quick glance at the sender's email address and the email subject line.

The goal in email campaigns consists of getting your email delivered, opened, read and converted. This special report gives insight on using language and tactics that will help you achieve these goals.

13 Email Marketing Best Practices

Email copywriting best practices for effective consumer email marketing

Email copywriting can differ slightly when it comes to consumer marketing because consumers prefer a personal level of attention. The audience in B2C is also more relaxed and is digesting your information in a leisurely manner. They see your email newsletter as informational and as a service, while B2B readers are usually time-pressed and likely expecting to be sold in every email newsletter.

Here are 13 consumer email marketing best practices:

Send a welcome email: Remind your user that they signed up for your email newsletter. Thank them for signing up, remind them how often they'll receive emails from you, and make it personal. The welcome letter should use their name and might point them to helpful sections of your site. If you have a segmented list and your user chose "rose gardening", you might want to point her towards "rose gardening" tips, videos etc.

Include a product in your welcome email: While you have your reader's attention, don't waste the opportunity. Within your welcome letter, in your right navigation or at the bottom, provide a casual ad for a related bestselling product. The point of this email is NOT to sell a product, so it shouldn't be the topic of your welcome letter. A casual mention should suffice, remember, this is their first interaction with you so you want to make a good impression.

Ask them to whitelist you: Don't use the word "whitelist" in consumer emails, but do ask them to add your email address (and provide them with it) to their address book so that they don't miss a single email.

Be careful with images: While consumers are more likely to appreciate images in their email newsletters, consumers are also more likely to use webmail clients that automatically block images. If you plan on using images, make sure to let your user know that they need to click the option to "display images" in their email client. Also, provide a web-based version of your email.

Keep it personal: In the consumer market (as opposed to the business market) there's a shift for a user to *want* your information rather than *need* it to do their job. Being as transparent and casual in your copywriting as you can builds trust with your readers and builds a personal relationship between your brand and your reader.

Don't pull any tricks in your subject line: Great open rates don't always lead to great conversions. Trying to pull a sneak attack on your users that have chosen to give up their valuable email address in exchange for your information does not build a healthy relationship. The moment a user starts seeing you as trying to sell them instead of trying to provide them with valuable information, you're gone.

Tell a story: This might be obvious when it comes to email copywriting, or any type of copywriting but it's most important when it comes to consumers. Telling a personal story of a friend from back home who used a certain type of seed and grew an incredible garden is going to sell seeds better than a block image that says "Save \$0.25 per seed packet today!".

Personalize the "From" line: If your brand has a recognizable personality, use their name in the "from" line on your emails (or at least your email promotions).

Use names: When you tell a story, don't use the phrase "I had a friend once"; that depersonalizes the entire story. Say "my friend Jennifer has an adorable blonde little boy named Jared. The other day he said to me..."

Develop a unique voice: Building a relationship with your consumer email audience is not just about your brand. For example, Sandi Wiseheart, former editor of Knitting Daily has a dedicated audience that is hooked on her upbeat personality. In every email newsletter there's a "Note from Sandi". For example:

Note from Sandi: Liz Gipson, managing editor of *Handwoven* magazine and cohost of *Knitting Daily TV*, is back today to share more about her fiber "space". But, this time it's her backyard. Liz is the proud "mother" of cashmere goats. Truly a woman after my own heart!

Chris Kimball from America's Test Kitchen doesn't sign his email newsletter but he does sign his email promotions. The email starts with something like "*Dear Fellow Home Cook*" includes a "*From the desk of Christopher Kimball*" stamp and ends with a "*Thank you for your consideration, Sincerely, Christopher Kimball*."

Put the call to action up front and be clear: Don't blast your reader with a sell, but do allude to the product you will promote later in the newsletter. Take the time to edit your email down so that there is less clutter and more key points.

Create a sense of continuity: When writing a series of emails, it's personable to say to your readers that the email is part of a larger structure. To say "in the email we sent on Monday, we talked about XXXXX... now I want to talk about how XXXXX works with XXXXX". By building this ongoing series of events, you're likely to increase open rates on past emails and build a more evolved relationship

with your readers.

Don't tell them to "click here": This is pretty much a universal best practice not to use these two words. However, there are some consumer-friendly alternatives in consumer email marketing: "read the full story", "download this ebook", "save 10% right now" are ways to express your benefit within the link and increase clicks.

Five Quick Tips for Writing Better Email Subject Lines

Write subject lines that provoke open rates and persuade subscribers to read your email newsletters

There are dozens of methods, tricks and tips for writing great *headlines*. Unfortunately, this isn't direct mail, and we have spam filters to adhere to, and character counts to abide by when it comes to writing *subject lines*. The best email subject lines persuade the user to open and read the messages that follow.

Here are five quick tips for writing better email subject lines:

- 1. Write an email subject line that works. There are dozens of email subject line formulas [link: http://www.mequoda.com/free-reports/the-best-email-subject-lines/] suggested by top copywriters that both increase open-rates and can sell more products. Try asking a question, or adding urgency to your subject line. How-to subject lines, like "How to Get 12 Hours Out of an 8-hour Day" are also proven to have great open rates.
- **2. Keep your email subject lines short**. You don't know what email client a subscriber is using, so try to pack the punch in the beginning of your emails. Like a good headline, a good email subject line is succinct. Some email clients such as AOL and Hotmail truncate the email subject line if it is longer than 45-51 characters. Other email clients permit up to 80+ characters. Generally, shorter email subject lines produce higher open and click-through rates.
- **3. Don't give everything away in the email subject line.** Is your email subject line sufficiently intriguing to prompt the recipient to open your email newsletter or sales letter? Or do you "give away" the entire message in the email subject line, diminishing the subscriber's incentive to read any further?
- **4. Don't trick subscribers into opening your email.** Mystery is a good thing, just make sure not to cross the line of "tricking" your readers into opening an email that has content not inline with what you're promising them. The email subject line is not creative if it prompts the recipient to open your email message, but subsequently disappoints, confuses, or worse, alienates the recipient.
- **5. Keep your email subject line content relevant to your brand.** The email subject line should be appropriate to the publisher's mission statement and should support the website's brand. If your book, newsletter, magazine, video, etc. is about kayaking, don't publish an email newsletter with a subject line solely about fishing, even if the larger story is about using the kayak to get to the fishing venue.

58 Online Copywriting Power Words & Phrases

Today's multiplatform publishing requires online copywriting skills that borrow from the print world, but also address larger issues.

If you are an experienced direct response copywriter, you know that "**you**" is generally considered to be the most powerful single word, ranking right up there with *free*, *new* and *save*.

As direct marketing legend Herschell Gordon Lewis says in *The Art of Writing Copy*, "Unless the reader regards himself as the target of your message, benefit can't exist. Benefit demands a 'We/You' relationship."

Among Mr. Lewis's other favorite power words:

free free gift limited time right now surprise hot first time offered not sold in stores good only until [DATE] Don't miss out I'll look for your order Try it at our risk

Online copywriting borrows from magazine covers

Today's online copywriters are a hybrid of journalist and marketer, employing the best skills of both crafts. We—and I include myself in this group of online copywriting hybrids—have broader concerns that inform and influence the words we choose.

They boil down to two fundamental questions:

What are the keywords that web surfers use to arrive at your website? What words in email subject lines trigger the highest open rates? We asked an expert how his online publishing company addresses these concerns.

Bob Kaslik is vice president of consumer marketing at Interweave Press, one of

the nation's leading multiplatform craft media companies with businesses in magazine and book publishing, interactive media, broadcast programming, and events for craft enthusiasts. He oversees subscription and newsstand consumer marketing efforts for Interweave's titles.

Bob shared with us this list of power words that he says Interweave uses interchangeably for newsstand magazine cover lines, promotional copy, and email subject lives:



Trust

Immediately

Discover

Profit

Learn

Know

Understand

Powerful

Best

Win

Hot Special

More

Bonus

Exclusive

Extra

You

Free

Health

Guarantee

New

Proven

Safety

Money

Now

Today

Results

Protect

Help

Easy

Amazing

Latest

Extraordinary

How to

Email Copywriting Basics

For more free white papers, visit http://www.MeguodaFree.com

Worst

Ultimate

Hot

First

Big

Anniversary

Premiere

Basic

Complete

Save

Plus!

Create

This list was compiled by Curtis Circulation Company, a leading national newsstand distributor of magazines, and Linda Ruth of Publishers Single Copy Sales Services, by studying best-selling magazine covers.

Bob says Interweave has discovered that these power words also work well in email subject lines, although not in every market.

"Everybody at Interweave who works on email or circulation has the power words posted on their wall" as a reminder, he said. "They're active words that are benefit-oriented."

Used judiciously in online copywriting, power words can grab a reader's attention and help communicate and persuade. But they are not a substitute for formal structure. Good online copywriting requires an orderly format that moves the reader along to a purchase decision.

Power words can be, well, powerful, but they do not work without context. Power words in online copywriting need to be used in cooperation with all of the other tools in the copywriter's bag of tricks.

Bob also recommends using the <u>Email Subject Line Tester</u> [link: http://www.localnews.biz/subjectLine/validateSubjectLine.asp] to help develop effective, compelling subject lines that withstand sophisticated SPAM filters.

Additionally, Bob says the <u>Google Keyword Tool</u> [link: https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal] is a favorite among Interweave's copywriters and editors.

"It's just an amazing tool," he says. "We use it to expand our perceptions."

Frequently the Google Keyword Tool will indicate a popular phrase that people are using to find the KnittingDaily.com website "that we would have never thought of," says Bob.

"And <u>Google Analytics</u> [link: <u>http://www.google.com/analytics/</u>] informs us that people are arriving at our sites using search terms that we never would have discovered otherwise," he says. "It's a great resource."

An Email Subject Line Tip from a Real Pro

"The more your copy talks about the reader, the more they will read"

Mark Everett Johnson [link: http://www.copy.pro/] has been a copywriter for years. In fact, his career spans over 25 years as a communications specialist and freelance writer.

The knowledge he has to share can be utilized by veterans or beginning copywriters alike.

Below you will find four rules Mark uses while creating email subject lines. He first memorized these concepts 25 years ago for how to write a better headline. His guidelines are similar to those found in our free report The 17 Best Email Subject Lines. [link: [link: http://www.mequoda.com/free-reports/the-best-email-subject-lines/.]

Mark's four email subject line copywriting tips:

- 1. Offer a quick and easy way to do something.
- 2. Talk about the reader's self-interest –something that is a benefit.
- 3. Give the reader some news –especially good news.
- 4. Arouse curiosity, preferably related to points 1, 2 or 3 above.

When asked, Mark said his favorite of our 17 best email subject lines was the Targeted email subject line. When asked why, he stated, "The reason is because targeted subject lines are about the reader; and more than any other topic, people want to read about themselves!"

Mark also noted that incorporating numerous archetypes into a hybrid form is usually a preferable option to copywriters. For example, using a Targeted email subject line in conjunction with an Urgency email subject line, or a Reason Why subject line used in conjunction with a Fascination subject line. Additionally, certain email subject line archetypes will work better than others, depending on the reader and the offer.

Mark's Smackdown "Challenges"

One round of the *Email Subject Line Smackdown* was based on a submission from Ogden Publications. The original subject line and email published by Ogden was

meant to interest readers in giving a subscription to GRIT Magazine as a gift. The original subject line was: "Share the rural life!"

Mark's challenge was:

"Share the joy of the rural life – Give GRIT for the holidays!"

Which subject line do you think is better? Why?

Mark took his approach because he knows there has to be a clear benefit. The original subject line only hinted at an offer, so Mark made sure his was directly laid out. Enhancing both the benefit and the offer strengthens the entire copy, according to Mark.

Additionally, he discussed how his "challenge" also told the reader exactly what should be done by specifically saying, "Give GRIT for the holidays!"

In true Smackdown style, each copywriter on the panel submitted a "challenge". Do you think Mark's line was the winning selection chosen by the webinar attendees? His email subject line and reasoning behind it are certainly convincing and logical. If you had an interest in rural life or knew someone who did, and this email subject line popped up in your inbox, would you be inclined to open and respond?

Naturally, the only way to declare a true winner is to test test! We hope the attendees lucky enough to have their submissions chosen will test their control against our alternatives to see if they can pull better open rates.

These Tips Will Get Your Email Read

Valuable information on email copywriting

Our Email Subject Line Smackdown [link:

http://www.mequoda.com/webinars/email-subject-line-smackdown/] was a very refreshing 90 minutes with three of America's top copywriters, Peter Fogel, Mark Everett Johnson and Peter A. Schaible. Years of experience were shown through the guest panelists' commentary and the light-hearted nature of the webinar, which made it quite enjoyable.

Among the highlights from this webinar was the "Smackdown" portion. We had asked attendees to send us their best performing email subject lines, which we then asked our team of copywriters to re-write.

Each copywriter created his own email subject line based off the previously submitted entries. The panel then discussed the reasons why they created the new email subject in the specific manner they did.

From here, we let the audience vote on the best subject line. Who ended up winning? A subject line created by a member of our panel of copywriters, or the original submission? Despite the original subject lines being considered "best performers" by the publishers who submitted them, in every Smackdown the prevailing subject line was never the control.

These tips will get your email read

The *Email Subject Line Smackdown* taught a lot about the art of copywriting. Nowadays, I feel the information from the webinar can be utilized more than ever as everyone from CEOs to interns are asked to create original promotional copy.

During the webinar, Mark Everett Johnson offered four tips to follow while writing copy for email subject lines. They are as follows:

Email Subject Line Tips:

- Offer a quick and easy way to do something.
- Talk about the readers' self-interest. While doing so, give something that benefits them and they will be more responsive.
- Give your readers information that is newsworthy. It helps greatly when the news is good news.

- Arouse curiosity in your readers. This works the best when it directly relates to the previously mentioned guidelines.

Other helpful information on email copywriting

The average email user gets dozens of emails per day, while others may receive hundreds of email messages per day. As a publisher I'm sure you're aware of this. An email subject line that fits the above criteria has a better chance of getting read. If you don't follow specific guidelines while sending out email promotions, there's a good chance your messages may be labeled as spam or end up in your recipients' bulk folder. Pay close attention to the words you use as some words will trigger spam filters.

It's true; the explosion of electronic media has put the burden of copywriting on different team members, many of whom do not like to write in the slightest.

If this applies to you or your team members, don't worry too much. There are resources that can be utilized to learn the art of copywriting and we can help provide these resources. For instance, do you know about all the email copywriting archetypes that exist? We have compiled and named them for the benefit of all writers. All of these archetypes can be found in The 17 Best Email Subject Lines [link: http://www.mequoda.com/free-reports/the-best-email-subject-lines/] white paper for free.

Subject Line Spam Trigger Words

Put this list of no-no's next to your desk and check it often

Every email marketer should have <u>a list of no-no's</u> [link: http://www.mequoda.com/wp-content/uploads/ui/spam-trigger-list.pdf] next to their desk. While we'd argue that a subject line trigger word thrown in every once in a while won't hurt your delivery rate (if you're already in good with the delivery gods), you still need to be practical about finding good synonyms [link: <a href="http://www.thesaurus.com/].

According to SiteSell.com, who make the free email marketing tool, SpamCheck [link: http://spamcheck.sitesell.com/], you're not supposed to used obvious trigger words such as "free", but using them in combination with other trigger words such as "trial", "quote", "sample", "access" etc. can put your spam score through the roof.

In case you weren't aware, the way spam filters work is that they assign ratings to your email newsletter. Using the word "free" in the subject line with an otherwise perfectly harmless email might slide you through to home plate if you have a good delivery record.

However, do it again the next day or combine that subject line with an ALL CAPS subject line and use a * to disguise another trigger word within your email, it's off to the garbage can for you.

<u>Download our Subject Line Trigger Words sheet</u> [link: http://www.mequoda.com/wp-content/uploads/ui/spam-trigger-list.pdf] or view the list below

Spam Checking Tools:

http://spamcheck.sitesell.com/ameq.html

http://www.lyris.com/contentchecker

http://www.swiftpage.com/support/spamcheck.htm

THE WORST SPAM FILTER TRIGGERS

Info you requested

\$\$\$ Guarantee
100% free 'Hidden' assets
Ad Home based

Affordable Homebased business
Amazing stuff Income from home
Apply now Increase sales
Auto email removal Increase traffic
Billion Increase your sales
Cash bonus Incredible deal

Collect child support Information you requested

Compare rates Internet market

Compete for your business Leave

Credit Limited time offer

Credit bureaus Make \$

Dig up dirt on friends
Double your income

Mortgage Rates
Multi level marketing

Earn \$ No investment Obligation

Eliminate debt

Email marketing

Explode your business

Online marketing

Opportunity

Order Now

Extra income Prices

F r e e Promise you Refinance Financial freedom Remove

Financially independent Reverses aging

Free Save \$

Free gift Search engine listings

Free grant money Serious cash

Free info Stock disclaimer statement

Free installation
Free investment
Free leads
Free membership
Free offer

Stop snoring
Thousands
Unsubscribe
Web traffic
Weight loss

Free preview

Cheap

THE NOT-SO-GREAT SPAM FILTER TRIGGERS

4U	Direct marketing	Laser printer	Opportunity
Accept credit cards	Discusses search	Limited time only	Opt in
Acceptance	engine listings	Long distance phone	Order now
Accordingly	Do it today	offer	Order status
Act now! Don't hesitate!	Don't delete	Lose weight spam	Orders shipped by
Additional income	Dormant	Lower interest rates	priority mail
Addresses on CD	Drastically reduced	Lower monthly	Organization
All natural	Earn per week	payment	Outstanding
Amazing	Easy terms	Lowest price	values
Apply Online	Eliminate bad	Luxury car	Paste
As seen on	credit	Mail in order form	Pennies a day
Auto email removal	Email harvest	Maintained	Percent
Avoid bankruptcy	Email marketing	Marketing solutions	Perpetual
Be amazed	Expect to earn	Mass email	Please read
Be your own boss	Fantastic deal	Medium	Potential earnings
Being a member	Fast Viagra	Meet singles	Presently
Beneficiary	delivery	Member stuff	Print form
Beverage	Financial freedom	Message contains	signature
Big bucks	Find out anything	disclaimer	Print out and fax
Bill 1618	For free	MLM	Produced and sent
Billing address	For instant access	Money back	out
Billion dollars	For just \$ (some	Money making	Profits
Brand new pager	amt)	Month trial offer	Promise you!
Bulk email	Free access	More Internet traffic	Pure profit
Buy direct	Free cell phone	Mortgage rates	Real thing
Buying judgments	Free consultation	Multi level marketing	Reciprocal
Cable converter	Free DVD	Name brand	Refinance home
Call free	Free grant money	New customers only	Removal
Call now	Free hosting	New domain	instructions
Calling creditors	Free installation	extensions	"Remove"
Cancel at any time	Free investment	Nigerian	Remove subject
Cannot be combined	Free leads	No age restrictions	Removes wrinkles
with any other offer	Free membership	No catch	Reply remove
Can't live without	Free money	No claim forms	subject
Cash bonus	Free offer	No cost	Requires initial
Cashcashcash	Free preview	No credit check	investment
Casino	Free priority mail	No disappointment	Reserves the right
Cell phone cancer scam	Free quote	No experience	Reverses aging
Cents on the dollar	Free sample	No fees	Risk free
Certified	Free trial	No gimmick	Round the world

Enco vyologito	No inventory	C 1610
	_	S 1618
		Safeguard notice
		Satisfaction
_		guaranteed
	_	Save \$
Gift certificate	No purchase	Save big money
Great offer	necessary	Save up to
Guarantee	No questions asked	Score with babes
Have you been	No selling	Section 301
turned down?	No strings attached	Sincerely
Hidden assets	Not intended	Somebody
Home employment	Off shore	Special promotion
Human growth	Offer expires	Statements
hormone	Offers coupon	Stop snoring
If only it were that	Offers extra cash	Urgent
easy	Offers free (often	
In accordance with	stolen) passwords	
laws	Once in lifetime	
Increase sales	One hundred percent	
Increase traffic	free	
Insurance	One hundred percent	
Investment	_	
decision	•	
It's effective	Online biz	
Join millions of	opportunity	
Americans	T	
	1	
	Guarantee Have you been turned down? Hidden assets Home employment Human growth hormone If only it were that easy In accordance with laws Increase sales Increase traffic Insurance Investment decision It's effective	Full refund get it now Get paid Get started now Gift certificate Great offer Guarantee Have you been turned down? Hidden assets Home employment Human growth hormone If only it were that easy In accordance with laws Increase sales Increase traffic Insurance Investment decision It's effective Join millions of No investment No medical exams No middleman No obligation No purchase necessary No questions asked No selling No strings attached Not intended Off shore Offer expires Offers coupon Offers extra cash Offers free (often stolen) passwords Once in lifetime One hundred percent guaranteed One time mailing Online biz opportunity

Sources: WilsonWeb.com, Andrea O'Neill, eProfitNews.com, MailChimp.com

Conclusion

Go forth copywriters and begin using strategies that will help improve your openrate by intriguing your audience. These strategies are guaranteed to boost the numbers behind your email campaigns and hopefully increase your revenue.

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http:www.MequodaFree.com