

The background is a solid light blue color. It is decorated with several white, stylized clouds of various sizes and shapes. Dotted lines with small paper airplane icons at the end curve across the scene, suggesting movement and communication. The main title is centered and reads "THE ANATOMY OF A MARKETING EMAIL".

THE ANATOMY OF A MARKETING EMAIL



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Email marketing is one of the oldest online tools that most every marketer is still using today. Despite a few years of asking if email is dead, an argument can be made that it remains the forearm of many people's digital marketing strategies.

In fact, according to Sikich, 70 percent of digital marketers see email as the top medium for ROI, and 62 percent of B2B marketers plan to continue to increase spending for email marketing. Email marketing is a powerful channel for driving real business results and achieving measurable ROI.

Here are a few more email marketing statistics:



As of 2013, there are 3.6 billion email accounts.



The average worker spends 28 percent of his or her time on emails—that's 13 hours in an average workweek.



66 percent of consumers have made a purchase online as a result of an email marketing message.



91 percent of consumers check their email daily.

The bottom line: Email is here to stay.

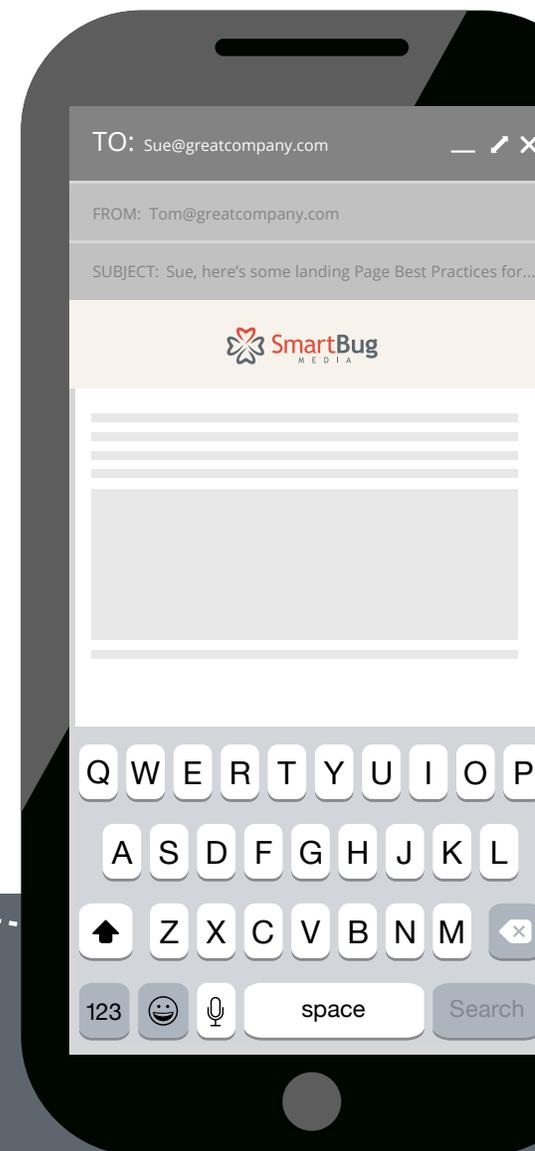
Emails continue to be a highly effective marketing practice because it is cost-effective, versatile, immediate, and measurable. Because email users are concerned with avoiding spam, we must continue to become increasingly educated on how to best deliver emails that our audiences will not consider unwanted. With the right tools and best practices in place, you can pave your way to email marketing success.



Sender address

Make it personal. Nobody wants to read an email that feels like it's been sent to a thousand other people. Email marketing should be personalized to build trust with your readers.

- Always send your emails from a real person who recipients can reply to.
- Avoid impersonal info@companyname.com email addresses. These emails are more likely to be ignored and sent straight to the spam folder.
- Optimizing your choice of sender name, and using that name consistently, will help build a sense of trust and allow readers to better recognize your emails more easily in the future.



Subject

The subject is the first bit of information your reader will digest when deciding whether or not to open your email. This is one of the most important elements of your marketing email.

The subject is what readers will see before they open your email, and, therefore, it must grab their attention. This is your one and only chance to provide readers with information to consider when deciding whether to open your email in the first place. This is your time to convince them that your email is worth their time and attention.

Here are a few tips to get you started:

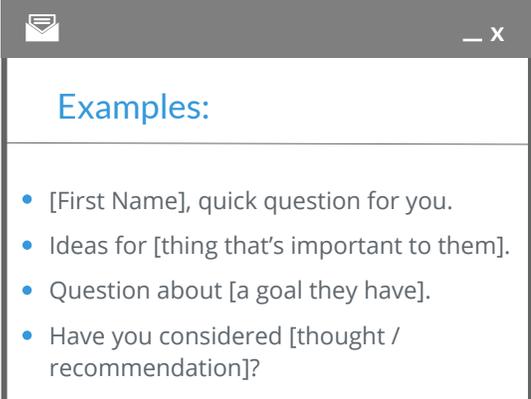
- 1 Keep subject lines to 50 characters or fewer for maximum impact.
- 2 Keep subject lines short so they can be fully read across multiple devices.
- 3 Avoid using the word “free” in the subject line—messaging with this language often gets flagged as spam. For similar reasons, also avoid using words in all caps.

There are many different types of subject lines to grab your reader’s attention.

Here are a few that we’ve found work well:

Personalized

These subject lines may include the reader's name or be based on bits of information you have gathered about them.



Examples:

- [First Name], quick question for you.
- Ideas for [thing that’s important to them].
- Question about [a goal they have].
- Have you considered [thought / recommendation]?



Examples:

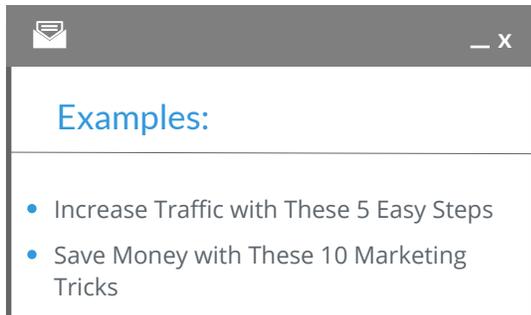
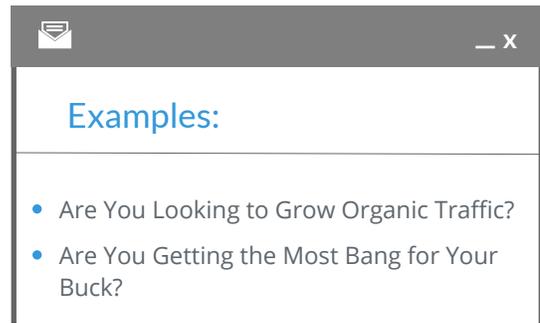
- New Email Marketing E-book
- 10 Ways to Convert Traffic Into Leads
- Landing Page Best Practices for 2015

News-related

If your email offers something new, something your customer can’t get elsewhere, consider the news subject line.

Questions

This type of subject line requires the reader to pause and mentally respond. Questions generally work well because they're short and entice the reader to discover the answer.

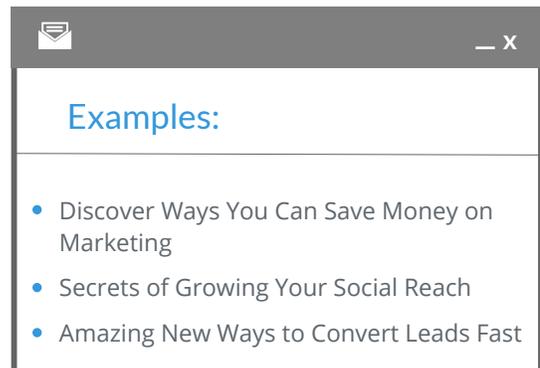


Beneficial

Marketers know the importance of highlighting benefits over features. This is what the consumer really cares about. By conveying value in your subject line, you will drive more click-throughs to your offer.

Intriguing

These are compelling, benefits-driven points that motivate the reader to discover the answer. Intriguing subjects exploit the reader's curiosity and often include words such as "amazing," "secrets," and "discover."



As always, make sure you provide the reader with exactly what you are offering in your subject line. You will quickly lose the trust of your readers if they open your message only to find something other than what they were originally promised. Arguably, the subject line is the most important part of your email, as this will determine whether your audience will open your message in the first place—make it count!

Body

Now that you've convinced readers to open your email, how are you going to persuade them to act? You need to make your emails concise and compelling. Getting your tone, layout, and language right is important in order to increase the likelihood that the reader will click through and convert on your offer. Your body copy should clearly convey what your offer is and why it is valuable.

Here are a few ways to achieve the perfect balance:

Keep it short: Readers should be able to understand what you're offering within a few seconds of scanning through your message. If they haven't figured it out in that time, chances are they will click out of your email before converting on the offer.

Use bullet points and short paragraphs to summarize features or benefits to break up the text visually. Do not overwhelm your readers. Some other tips include:

- Only include one idea per paragraph.
- Don't use full sentences when a phrase or heading can communicate the idea just as effectively.

- Emphasize key messages by bolding these areas within the copy. But make sure to use this technique only a few times because it can disrupt the look and flow of the message.
- What are the major takeaways readers will receive when they take advantage of your offer? What makes this offer awesome? Bullet-point out those takeaways under the introduction, but do not use more than 4-5 bullets—brevity is still important.

Now that you've convinced readers to open your email, how are you going to persuade them to act? You need to make your emails concise and compelling. Getting your tone, layout, and language right is important in order to increase the likelihood that the reader will click through and convert on your offer. Your body copy should clearly convey what your offer is and why it is valuable.



Use the right tone: Make sure the voice you convey in emails aligns with your company's brand. At this point, you should have a defined, consistent tone that your company uses across marketing channels. Your tone of voice should fit your brand's current messaging and value proposition. Lastly, while creating your copy, always consider your target audience or personas you are writing to.

Include a call to action: Don't rely on your readers to know what to do. Provide a clear call to action in the body of your message to direct users to sign up, subscribe, purchase, and so on. Make sure you never misguide your reader—the CTA should always match your subject. Using bait-and-switch techniques will quickly lose your reader's trust.

Signature

Your marketing email should include a personalized signature at the bottom of your email. This will reiterate that your email is being sent by a real person versus a robot. By providing all the information listed below, you are establishing trust with your reader.

Here are a few things you should include in your signature:



Full Name



Your Position



Your Contact Information
(e.g., address, email)



Phone Number



Office Hours



Social Media
Contact Information



Time of Day

When determining the best time of day to send out emails, it's critical that you're sending based on readers' schedules. Unfortunately, there's no set time that everyone checks his or her inbox. This is why marketers are encouraged to perform simple A/B tests to decide the best time for their audience. We will describe A/B testing more in depth later in this e-book.



Although there is no set time you should send your emails, here are some best practices you can follow to get started:

- *According to Hubspot, emails sent at 6 a.m. had the highest click-through rate.*
- *Emails sent from 10 a.m.-noon showed another small spike, and the later the time in the evening, the higher the click-through rate climbed.*

Again, the best time of day to send your emails will be dependent on your audience. Use these tips to get started and begin running tests to nail down your schedule.



Day of Week

Similarly, companies should test different days of the week to find out when their audiences are most actively opening emails. It's best to steer clear of sending emails Friday through Sunday, as there is a noticeable drop-off in email open rates on weekends. Many marketers have found great success sending out emails on Tuesdays because workers have settled in for the week. Again, make sure to test these efforts to find out what works best for your company. We will discuss different types of testing you can run later in this e-book.

Length

One of the most frequently asked questions companies ask when diving into inbound marketing is how long a piece of content should be—especially regarding email.

Most marketers are familiar with “keeping content above the fold,” which is generally a good rule to follow.

“

Readers should be able to easily scan through your email and understand what you're offering

”

When in doubt, emails should be short, enticing, and to the point. Readers should be able to easily scan through your email and understand what you're offering within 3-5 seconds of looking at your message. If they haven't figured it out in that time, chances are they will click out of your email.

Mobile-Specific

The majority of emails being opened are occurring on iPhones, Androids, and iPads. In 2013 alone, the mobile open rate increased 21 percent to now represent 74 percent of emails being viewed on a mobile device. This means if you are not making sure your emails are mobile-optimized, you could miss out on up to three-quarters of your potential customers. With these numbers, optimizing emails for mobile devices is crucial.

Here are a few best practices for creating mobile-optimized emails:

Enlarged Fonts

Small text is difficult to read on a desktop computer, never mind on a small mobile screen. It is recommended emails are created with a 14px minimum size for body copy and 22px for headlines. Text that is difficult to read will be easily dismissed. Readers often will not waste their time zooming in to find out what you have to say.



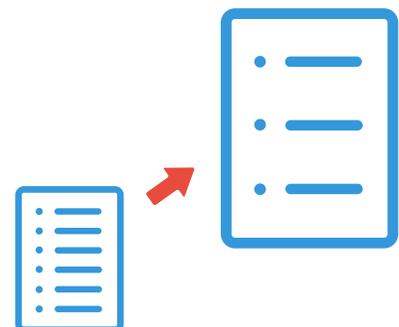
Single-Column Line

Though emails viewed on a desktop can have multiple columns without looking cluttered, you should consider keeping it to one column on mobile devices. A single-column approach will accommodate smaller screens, thus allowing users to easily scroll through your message. Additionally, you should remove all navigation because it often becomes distorted on mobile devices.



Condensed Content

Take a look at the content in your email and get rid of the less useful links, copy, and images. Make sure your email is concise and easy to navigate. The shorter the copy, the easier it is for the user to scroll on their device.





Earn Your Subscribers

Purchasing an email list will get you nowhere in the long run. Emailing the right subscribers with the right message is more important. In order to retain these subscribers, you'll need to provide them with ongoing value that is targeted toward their specific needs. Earn your readers by clearly defining what they will get out of subscribing to your emails. Transparency is key. Give them a clear description of what the value proposition is.

Example:

Tell potential subscribers exactly what they can expect. You may be offering tips and tools on how to convert leads, offering product updates from your company, or providing special in-store offers. Your audience should know exactly what they are signing up for so that your email doesn't get lost in the clutter.

Email List Hygiene

Many companies will spend a lot of time working on the actual emails—nailing down the right subject line, content, and design—but not devote nearly as much time on the quality of the recipient list. If you aren't building and managing your own email lists, you are missing out on valuable data and running the risk of being flagged as spam, thus decreasing your ROI. These are a few reasons that regularly performing list hygiene as a part of your email marketing efforts is important.

Here are a few tips for managing your email lists:

Clean Sweep

Perform a simple data check to correct misspellings and typos in your emails to clean-up simple errors such as ryan@goggle.com or matt!yahoo.com. This will ensure you are not sending emails to invalid accounts. You should also remove any distribution emails such as sales@companyname.com, or any email address with the word “spam” in it. This will keep your list clean and reduce bounce rates.

Manage Bounce Rate

Undelivered emails can cause confusion for companies because bounce codes are cryptic and lack standardization. However, this is an important step in list management as it increases your email ROI by not sending messages to addresses that bounce. Because most bounce codes can be confusing, companies need to decipher only soft and hard bounces.

Soft bounce:

A soft bounce is a temporary delivery issue, such as a server malfunction or a full inbox. It's quite alright to continue trying to push the email to these addresses. Often, you will have success resending the email on the second or third attempt.

Hard bounce:

A hard bounce is a permanent delivery issue, such as an invalid email address. Because there is no chance the email will get delivered, you should not attempt to resend, but, instead should remove the address from your list immediately. ISPs track the number of bounces you generate with each send and use it when determining your reputation, making it crucial you do not repeat the same mistake twice. If you continue sending out emails to these addresses, Internet service providers may even block your messages. Let a hard bounce be an indicator for which addresses should be removed.

Unsubscribe Button

Make sure to include the option for subscribers to opt out of your emails. Your reputation and ROI will take a hit if you continue to send emails to readers who are no longer interested. Allowing readers a way to unsubscribe will be beneficial to both the reader and your company.



You should also remove any distribution emails such as sales@companyname.com. This will keep your list clean and reduce bounce rates.



Remove Inactive Subscribers

Often, consumers will not take the time to unsubscribe from emails, but rather will continue to remain inactive. Best practices currently call for marketers to ensure their email lists contain only subscribers who are engaged. If someone is just going to delete your email, why send it in the first place?

Before removing subscribers from your list, it's recommended you try a re-engagement campaign to regain their interest. You may send out a special offer to recapture their attention. If that doesn't work, ask them if they wish to remain on your list and include an easy way for them to opt out. If there is still no response at this point, feel free to remove them from your list.

The success of your email marketing campaign is not measured on the number of subscribers on your list, but rather the quality of subscribers and the action they take as a result of your emails. Marketing emails are requesting readers to perform an action—so make sure your subscribers are actionable and ready to interact!

By taking the time to practice some of these techniques, companies can clean up their email lists to increase ROI, perform more accurate analytics, and boost revenue.





Analyzing your efforts is important. How do you know what's working if you're not reading the numbers? By performing a few small tests, your company can nail down best practices and utilize those results for a long time if completed properly.

Here are a few components of your marketing emails you should be testing:

Time/Day Tests

Time and day tests are necessary to find out when your emails will best reach your audience. A good time/day test is run over a series of emails, slowly breaking down a list of times to find the optimal send for your business. You should expect these tests to take about a month or two in order to find your "golden hour."

Hubspot allows users to easily create A/B tests by splitting your email distribution list and sending to these two-segmented groups at different times. Users then can review open rate results and adjust distribution time accordingly. Continuing this type of testing is important for your marketing efforts to ensure that your emails are being sent at the best time based on the schedule of your audience.

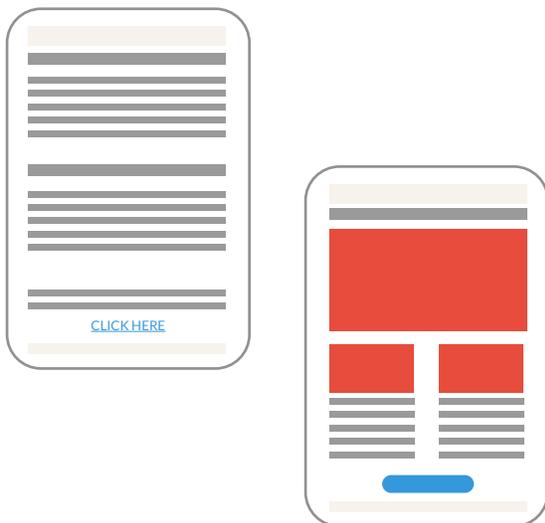
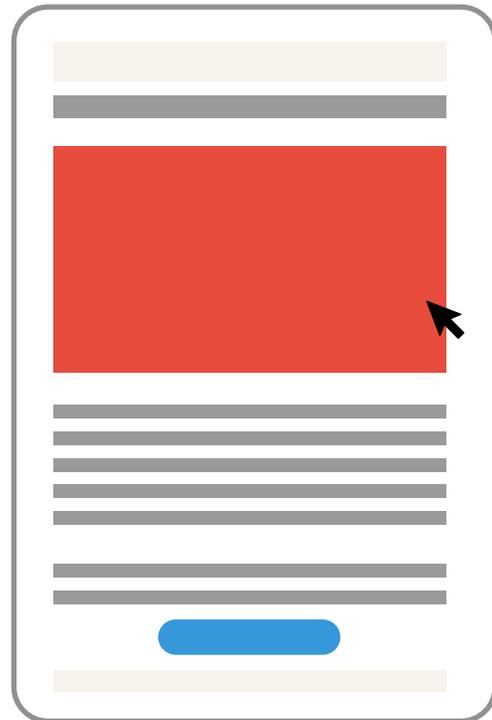
Different companies will find different results as they are targeting separate audiences. After testing, Company A may find 3 p.m. Wednesday was the best send time, but for Company B, it was Thursday at 6 a.m.



Structure Tests

How your email is structured has a surprisingly large impact on how readers digest your content. The placement of different elements in your message will directly affect your clicks and conversion rates.

Take a look at your current marketing email and decide if you can create a version with the same content rearranged in a different format. Perhaps you can move something from the middle of your message to the top. Also, for promotional offers, try adjusting the placement of your call to action. Does it work better on the top or bottom of the email? Although these are minor changes, they may have a large effect on how your reader reacts to your message.



Visual Tests

Depending on your audience, design may have a large impact on how readers react to your email. Though some readers may appreciate a rich, flashy message, others may be scared off by emails that look too “promotional.”

Testing the visual style of your message is another important aspect of your email analysis.



Plain-Text Emails

Instead of using an email with a colorful header and graphics in the body, try using a blank template to create a plain-text email. Often, a plain-text email appears more professional and performs well with readers in higher levels of their organizations.

Visually Compelling Emails

Performing a visual style test may be as simple as changing the color of a heading or testing different call to action variations in the email. Do more people click on a text-based link or a button-style CTA? Test these smaller elements by adjusting one aspect at a time to uncover what will improve the overall performance of your email.

Content Tests

As any marketer will tell you, planning out your content strategy is one of the most important aspects of your marketing plan. So what types of content should you be sending in your emails? White papers, blog posts, case studies, videos?

Try sending out different types of content to random, segmented groups to find out what your audience responds to. You may find emails including popular blog posts perform better than those including premium content.

Another thing to consider is the type of reader you are sending your content to. A high-level executive may prefer pieces of content he or she can quickly digest, such as short videos or blog posts. Varying your offers to different personas will not only improve your email program, but also help you focus on your overall content strategy.



There are many marketing tools that can help make email marketing easy, but the most helpful is HubSpot. The software is rated No. 1 in customer satisfaction, and the tools are unmatched across competitors.

Here are just a few of the benefits Hubspot offers:



There's more to emailing than broadcasting out to a static email list. HubSpot gives you the tools to actually attract new subscribers.



Segment your lists based on as many as 1,000 different criteria, and personalize everything about your emails, from sender to message.



No more exporting and merging data. With HubSpot, email metrics are fully integrated into the rest of your marketing analytics.



Dynamically change your email content, including images, text, and CTAs, based on the recipient's past behavior and patterned interests.

Ready to see what Hubspot can do for you?

Request a free consultation and we'll set you up with a free 30-day demo of the software.

[Request a free consultation](#)