

How to increase email open rates with subject lines?

The art of writing email subjects



sendloop

Create beautiful email newsletters in less time

<https://sendloop.com/>
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The art of writing email subjects

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Cem Hurlturk is in the email marketing industry since 1999 and he's co-founder of Sendloop, Sendloop Studio, Octeth and PreviewMyEmail (acquired) email marketing and analytics companies which send more than 10 billion emails every month. These companies provide email marketing services to more than 100,000 businesses all around the world.



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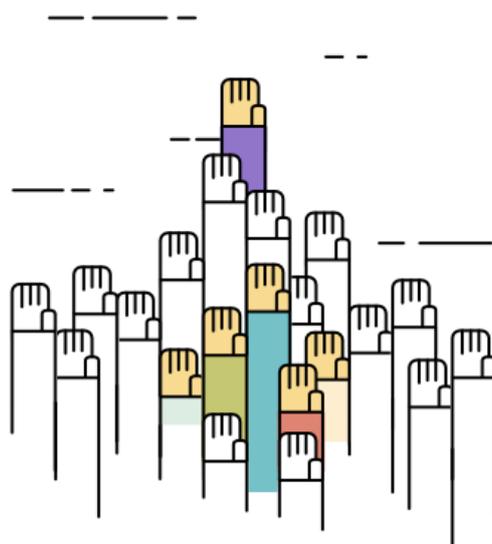
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The Everlasting Impression

Everybody knows that first impression always lasts. Just like judging a book by its cover, people tend to judge emails by their subject lines. In fact, one out of every three email recipient decide whether or not to open an email based on subject line alone. So much precious data intended to be useful is going to waste, don't you think?

Whether it's business related, personal in nature or aiming to grab the attention of a consumer or a potential buyer; subject line is where you introduce yourself. It is the area where first bit of information about the sender is revealed to the receiver. It is the first impression you're going to make. In this context, what to write in the subject line might be the key to standing out and making a striking first impression on business professionals, subscribers, potential customers and buyers when it comes to email marketing. The numbers don't lie and they say a lot on this matter.



One subject line to rule all subject lines!

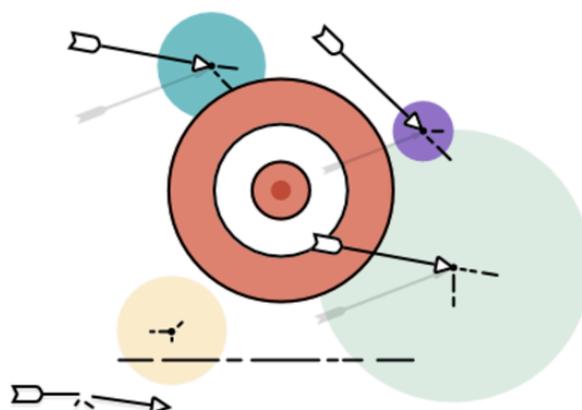
The book by the cover

Subject line is the way in to your customers' attention span. A small window of opportunity to prove that your email is worth the seconds or minutes in the digital wasteland of junk emails. It's like competing to grab a piece from the promised land. That land in today's currency is of course time and attention. It's the way of standing out in a very very very large ocean of data.

Let's think about classic ways of communication; letters for example. Imagine after putting your letter in the envelope and sealing it, you're supposed to summarize the content of your letter in a few words or sentences on the tight space on the envelope so that the receiver would know exactly what to expect from your letter. Ways of communication may have changed drastically but the theory remains: Standing out in the crowd is the key! And people still judge the book by its cover, they open the email depending on the subject line.

Let the right one out

There is a lot of conflicting information, professional opinion and ideas all over the internet about email marketing, subject lines and dodgy copywriting. One minute you're reading through an article telling you to write really short, smart and catchy subject lines aiming to grab the attention and you're thinking "Good idea," and BAM! Next minute you're looking at an infographic proving that long and informative subject lines have better open rates among permissioned subscribers. There is a saying in Turkish; "Trying to sell snails in a Muslim district..." It means if you're targeting the wrong crowd, failure is inevitable.



The right subject lines never miss!

Who you talkin' to?

Since your emailing lists are made out of your current and potential customers, partners, buyers, associates; shortly your target audience; you have to get to know them better on every opportunity you get. Know your audience, simple as that. The better you know your crowd the more effective your email marketing will get. What makes your subscribers or the receivers tick & click in life? What makes them to tick & click when receiving a message in the digital world? What makes them react? What interests them more than everything? What are their habits? Which emails do they tend to open more? Have you done any CRM? Do you know who are you talking to? Or are you just shouting out into the darkness and praying it reaches someone?

Have a Do-Not

After you get to know your audience, targeting and fine crafting emails and subject lines will get much easier and effective. Still, let us give you a hint head on: There's no such thing as the perfect subject line but there is always the right one, the one that tends to boom open rates, the ones that are guaranteed to land you in the spamland. When you know what not-to-do first, you can focus on improving your subjects. If you dig a little into the web you'll come to realize that there are two no-no's of the subject line in email marketing nowadays; No CAPS LETTERS and No EXCLAMATION MARK!!!! Considered to be the taboo of the subject line, using all caps letters and few or many exclamation points also depends on what you're trying to achieve with your subject line. Do you want to Shock? Alert? Generate curiosity? Make an offer? Grab attention? Inform? What primal instinct are you trying to trigger in your receivers mind?

OPEN ME, OOOPEEEEN MEEEEEE....

How you would react to what you're writing? Would you open a mail after reading "You!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! YES!!!! YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! WE FOUND YOU!!!!" or one that says "Do Not Open! Never Open!"? How much time do you spend on going through your permissioned subscriptions and sorting out important or relevant emails? What are the driving powers behind your click impulses? Your interests, your business, your career? Remember the good old days where you saw "RE" in the subject line and thought somebody replied to your application? Remember you how many times you clicked on a subject line of an email with FW: only to find out you've been tricked into clicking, that you have taken the clickbait? Weren't you angry? Well, we don't want our subscribers to feel that way now, do we?

Here is a useful article on the devil's rejects of emailing by Cem Hurturk: [The FW's and The RE's....](#)



Give your crowd a reason to get wet!

It's raining data

Considering an average business professional gets 100 to 150 emails every working day in his/her inbox, the weather in that inbox is pretty stormy; it's a data storm! Raining information! It almost reminds me of the miracle of the childbirth, the single sperm that successfully makes it to the uterus out of the million. So try to empathise with your subscribers; think about a new business specialist or a product specialist working a tight schedule. Imagine if you were strictly busy and still make time to have a quick look over every email arriving in the inbox, even a glance through the spam or junk folder looking for that useful email, that newsletter or the info that will make your day better. Today, you'd probably unsubscribe in the blink of an eye if you felt you were being tricked into opening an email.

So think ahead and be truthful to your customers and potential buyers. Don't create false expectations that end up frustrating your audience. It all comes down to knowing your target audience better. When you've successfully analysed and identified with your crowd the effect of your subject lines will have increased tremendously. However the next thing you'd worry about will be keeping away from the junk / spam folder. So, if you'd like to know what words will most likely get you blacklisted, check this list out:

Subject is King

Well sort of. OK maybe not so much when it's compared to content but it's not to be underestimated. Generating curiosity is known to be an effective way of achieving higher open rates. There are a few things that email marketing community have identified in years that statistically increase your open rates. So, here's a benign list that every email marketer, or any sender for that matter, should go through before crafting the right subject line. A list containing tips, information, advice, a few tactics and a few ideas to help you improve the quality of your subject lines and increase your engagement.

Let's have a look at which balls to dodge while we go for -not the perfect- but just the right subject line. We put this useful list together based on 10 years of experience in email marketing, and hoping that it will one day become to be known as the "Golden Principles of Writing Subject Lines" for email marketing. Here it is:

The Benign 99 of the Subject Line

- Give recipients a reason to check out your content
- Keep it short
- Know your subscribers
- Personalize but not too much
- Be descriptive
- Keep it smart
- Don't create false expectations
- Give news & first hand information
- Use online tools like subject line checker, spell checker
- Use a thesaurus for a more effective and varying wording
- Appeal to recipient's emotions
- Use location-specific subject lines
- Always A/B test your subject lines
- Be relatable and keep a professional distance at the same time
- Adapt your subjects periodically (Special days, holidays, celebrations etc.)
- Spice up your subject lines with some pun / word play
- Aim at the right audience
- Open with a greeting
- Use timing to maintain actuality, don't be old news
- Avoid too familiar phrases
- Be natural and humane to avoid being identified as a robot
- Don't use all uppercase subject lines
- Create a specialized tone of voice
- Recommended character count is 40–60
- Empathize with your crowd

- Create a sense of scarcity
- Want to stand out? Keep it shorter or longer than the standard
- Imagine subject line as the cover of a book
- Avoid RE: or FW: handling unless intentional
- Know what gets you in the blacklist (a good list of words here)
- Do some research on good and bad practices
- Keep your subscribers engaged by varying your subject lines
- Follow up on your previous subject lines
- Analyze and get to know your competition
- The word NEWSLETTER may decrease open rates
- Use / give numbers and statistics
- Mostly be straightforward
- Avoid overly used phrases like; Special, Exclusive, Only, Offer etc.
- Subject lines with How-to may increase open rates
- Do not misspell unless it's a deliberate typo — use a spell checker
- Follow, track your rivals & adapt accordingly
- Know-Your-Crowd to write more relevant subject lines
- If you're going for humour know your limits
- Take calculated risks when trying something new
- Never ever plagiarize
- Always keep an open mind, times are changing faster than ever
- There's no room for grammatical errors unless it's intentional
- Micro-test your subjects with a potential customer you know
- Challenge your subscribers
- 2/3 of every email is reported as spam based on their subject lines
- Make sure you're heard by the right crowd
- Rise or generate curiosity
- Track, measure and analyze useful feedback

- Make an offer
- Ask an intriguing question
- Rise awareness
- Creating a sense of urgency may increase open rates
- Be specific
- Introduce new stuff
- Don't pass on old news
- Build a relationship with your customers
- Do not trick your customers by creating false expectations
- Study the recipient's spam policy
- Although using special characters may trigger spam filters they may also
- increase open rates so experiment occasionally
- Maintain a subject — content harmony
- Shorter the subject line higher the open rate on mobile
- Creating a sense of exclusivity may rise open rates by 20%
- 8/10 recipients prefer all lowercase letters in the subject line
- Know your boundaries
- Use CTA's
- Localization is known to increase open rates
- Preview your subject on mobile / desktop
- Be humanistic introduce people behind your products
- Tell a compelling story
- Using special characters may trigger spam filters
- Attention spans are decreasing so being brief may work every time
- Have solid, selected mailing list & always keep growing it
- Differentiate your subjects Potential customer / Permissioned subscriber

- Create and build up a tone of voice
- Give a good hint
- Do not complicate things; be perceivable
- Do not underestimate the power of a good copy
- Provide useful information to build your authority
- Appeal to emotions
- Improve your audience
- Be self-aware and confident
- Do not beg for attention
- Stay flexible and be adaptive
- Invite your audience to your website
- Be friendly
- Remember, you're competing for bandwidth and attention
- Not getting good rates, then hire a copywriter
- A business professional receives 100–150 emails every day
- Highlight a single benefit
- Test, test, test & adapt accordingly
- Don't overdo any of the above, variate & diversify
- Remember; you make your own rules on writing subject lines
- Congrats, you've reached the end! Keep in mind that there is no perfect subject line but there is always the right one!
- Stay in the Loop & Happy Emailing!



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