

# How to write successful copy for email campaigns

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Writing for your email audience is quite different from traditional direct marketing. Think avoiding spam filters, encouraging as many opens as possible (through compelling subject lines) and driving readers to your website using crisp message designs. Exploit the experience of ESPs to help your campaigns succeed – although every campaign is different, there are some tips that are always relevant. Henry Hyder-Smith, MD at Adestra explains...

Transactional emails (i.e. order confirmations) and those forwarded by friends/colleagues always have the highest open rates, and hence don't have to encourage the recipient to open them – but you will.

For your email marketing campaign, it is essential to plan from name and subject line. Try not to look at each communication in isolation, but as part of an ongoing dialogue – previous history and recognising sender details play a central role. So make sure that any email you send out is worth reading.

## From name (sender)

This is one of the first things an email recipient will look at and therefore should be recognisable.

Consider using: your brand (e.g. Argos, B&Q); your product (e.g. Technology Weekly); your company (e.g. BBC Shop, ODEON Cinemas); a person's name – this may seem more personable, however you have to consider what happens if that person leaves.

## Subject line

The recipient needs to glance at your subject line and want to open your email. Successful subject lines clearly and concisely explain

what the email is all about, grab attention and may include an urgent deadline:

“HURRY – 20% OFF ends 8th January...”

“June ODEONScreen: Free Shrek ears for the kids”

“Research Request: Email Marketing Census”

The best way to find which subject lines work best is to test repeatedly and use a spam filter pre-send.

### After they open

Once the recipient has chosen to open your email, they are showing a clear interest. The key trick here is to make it easy for them to scan your message and commit your key action!

Unfortunately, as different email systems display html messages in different ways, each brings their own challenges.

### Preview pane

Ad hoc research shows that up to two-thirds of your audience will read your email in their preview pane first. You must make the very top of your email clear and enticing, if you have an offer put it here. Different email systems show preview panes as standard – webmail systems (like Hotmail) don't – which may impact your design.

### Once the message is opened in full

Always put your special offer/most exciting news above the fold (the area on view when the email is opened) before scrolling down. Capture readers' attention straight away and give clear instructions. Also keep it short and punchy – longer emails mean more to scan and recipients lose interest. If people are interested to learn more, they will click to your web site, which you can track!

### Key format tips include:

- Opening Paragraph: clearly state what the email is all about.
- An email isn't your web site: don't repeat the content of your entire website
- Break it up into short paragraphs, it makes it easier to scan

- Bullet points/numbered lists – space out key points
- Use headings to road sign key points.
- Emphasise: Use Bold, underline and italics to draw the reader's eye to key details.
- Links: position them on separate lines so they are clear. Don't forget text underlined in blue is the international format for a link.
- Use clear call to actions in separate sections, not hidden in text, and link directly to your landing page.
- Use images to draw the eye to key points, but repeat key messages from the images within the text (in case an image is blocked)

#### Other ideas include:

- Personalisation – if you have your customer's name use it.
- Ask the recipient to add you to their safe sender list or address book to avoid spam filters.
- Encourage contacts to forward your email onto colleagues and friends.

Finally, make unsubscribe links clear on all emails – so recipients don't use the "mark as spam" button, potentially causing future deliverability challenges.

#### In summary

Keep it short, make your offers stand out, always have a call to action and make it personal. Don't forget that you know your audience better than anyone else, and clever copy will never support a poor, badly targeted offer. Finally, keep testing, it's the best way to find out what your customers want.