

# 101

## WRITING TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL EMAIL MARKETING



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## How your email marketing message is structured will determine 50% of its success



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**Despite some similarities to creating traditional direct mail, email marketing is setting its own rules.**

It's difficult to quantify the impact your email message will have on your total email marketing efforts. But, it's safe to say, that impact will be significant.

Obviously, if your email is poorly structured, few will read it. If your message is effectively written, however, the results can be considerable. In fact, many direct-response offers delivered by email out-pull conventional mail by a wide margin.

Like the best sales letters, email is personal, one-to-one communications. But delivering an effective marketing message through this media can be tricky business.

Perhaps the biggest mistake writers make is relying too heavily on the lessons learned from decades of "paper" direct mail. True, certain principles still apply — such as a strong offer, powerful lead-in, and an appeal to buyer self-interest. But other writing rules, successful in print marketing, fail miserably in email. As a marketing medium email, it seems, is setting its own rules.

But what are those rules? Unfortunately, these are still evolving. What follows are one-hundred and one of the best writing tips — based on research, testing, interviews with experts, and personal experience with dozens of successful campaigns — I have discovered for creating successful email marketing messages.

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# What you need to know before you write

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**It's important to pay attention to the "fields" of email marketing — the FROM line, the TO line, and the SUBJECT line.**

## 1 Anatomy of an email marketing message

When writing for email marketing, you must focus on three key areas: the "Fields"; the "Body Copy"; and, if applicable, the "Landing Pages". All require virtually equal attention.

## 2 Understand the "Fields"

These are what you see when an email drops into your inbox. Like an envelope, the Fields give you a hint of what's inside. With business people and consumers receiving multiple emails each day, the Fields are increasingly used to judge whether an email should be opened — or trashed. Fields of most concern to email marketers are the FROM field, the TO field, and the SUBJECT field.

## 3 Set a singular objective

Email is the wrong media for a diluted marketing message. Your purpose for writing — whether that be to make an offer, or announce a special — should be strong and crystal clear. Rambling, saying too much, introducing extraneous information, or adding complementary offers will drive down response. The reason is, many Internet users will quickly scan your email message to determine if it's worth reading. If it doesn't come to the point, and stick to the point, your prospect will simply delete your message and move onto the next.

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**Used effectively,  
email is a  
powerful  
relationship  
building  
medium.**

#### **4 Target. Target. Target.**

The flexibility and economies of email allow you to target with precision. So, make the most of this advantage. For example, if you are making an offer applicable to two different audiences — IT professionals and marketing managers, for example — write two versions of your email marketing message. The more you customize your email to specific target groups, the more successful your efforts will be.

#### **5 Write to target**

Develop a thorough understanding of the needs and sensibilities of your target market before you write. This will help you select a style and tone appropriate to the audience — be it business professionals, college students, or homemakers.

#### **6 Focus on building the relationship**

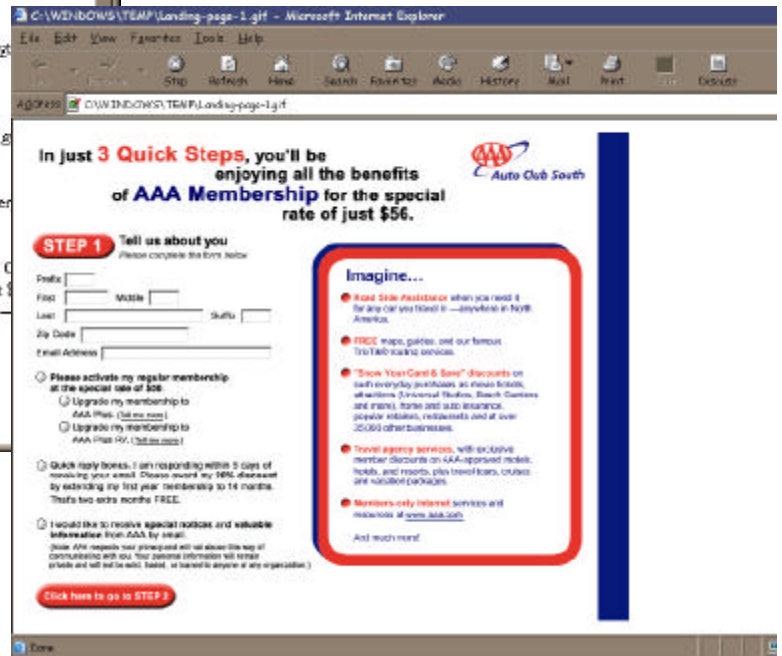
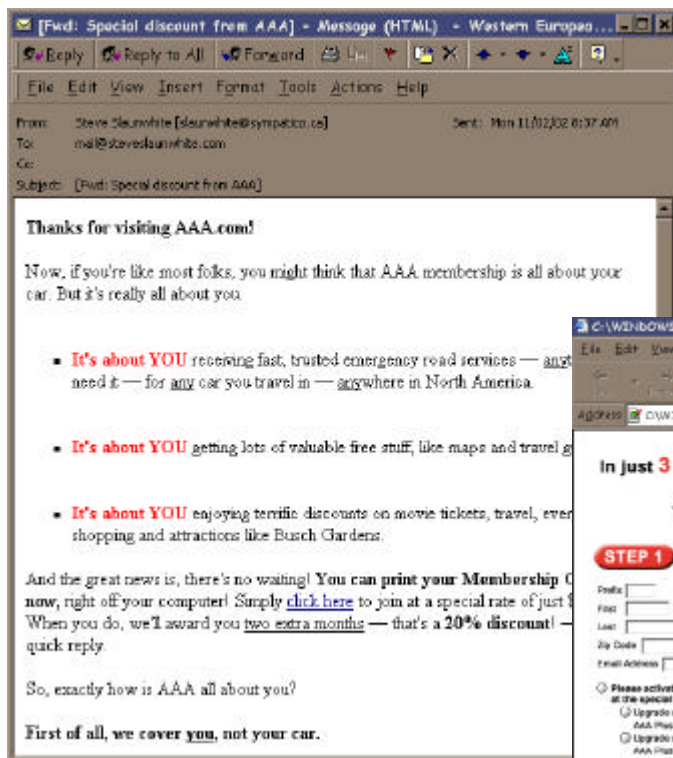
Email marketing is not a hit and run medium. It works best when you use it to build sustainable relationships with prospects and customers. So, each time you write an email marketing message, remember that you're building a relationship *in addition* to trying to generate a lead, hit, or sale. Building a solid relationship with your email marketing list will lead to higher response rates in future campaigns.

#### **7 Plan for rapid fulfillment**

Sluggish fulfillment leads to dissatisfied customers. So, make sure you have all the internal resources in place to handle fulfillment of premiums, leads and other responses to your email marketing campaign. You may be surprised at the amount of response you receive from your efforts — often within hours of your emails being transmitted.

## 8 Think in two parts, not one

An email marketing campaign has two parts, not one: the email your customer receives; plus the hyperlink embedded in the email that he or she clicks on to respond to your offer. This link takes the customer to a web page with a reply form (to email marketers, this is called the landing page). The landing page requires almost as much attention to writing and design as the email itself.



# Style, tone, and formatting tips for email marketing

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**A friendly, conversational tone works best in most email marketing messages.**

## 9 Avoid using ALL CAPS

In dealing with the limits of plain text, many copywriters are tempted to apply all caps to words and phrases for emphasis. In one or two areas of your email, this is fine. But don't overdo it. It can look blatantly promotional, which is a turnoff for Internet users. Also, in the Internet culture, ALL CAPS can be considered shouting.

## 10 Easy on the exclamation marks!

In general, you should never overuse exclamations in any form of marketing communication. This is especially true in email marketing for two reasons: One, the "!" symbol is used as a spam filter in many email software programs. So, if you use too many exclamations your email may not reach some intended recipients. Two, excessive use of "!" adds little to the power of your email message, and may, in fact, diminish its impact. Like copywriter Herschell Gordon Lewis says, "If you emphasize everything, you emphasize nothing."

## 11 No long paragraphs

Long paragraphs are intimidating. A rule of thumb for sales letters and other marketing materials is that no paragraph should be longer than seven lines. In email marketing, I suggest you keep paragraphs in your email to no more than six lines. This will make the text look more concise and inviting to read.

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**Like a good sales letter, your email should look like one-to-one communication — not advertising.**

## **12 Use a standard letter format**

Standard letter format is best for practically all email marketing audiences. This means starting with a salutation and ending with a signature. Remember, email is personal communication — even more personal these days than mail delivered by post. (My sister has never mailed me a letter in her life, but she sends me plenty of email.) If you don't use a standard letter format, you risk sending an email message that looks impersonal and promotional.

## **13 When to use non-letter formats**

In some forms of email marketing, however — such as catalog updates, special announcements, and email newsletters (ezines) — a standard letter format is not necessary. But I would use one anyway. Even in an ezine, leading with a friendly note from the editor will help build the relationship with the reader.

## **14 Don't send advertising**

Don't design your email message to look like a print advertisement or banner ad. Just because these are effective in other media doesn't mean they will perform well in an email. Usually, they won't. And will only prove to irritate your target market. Write for the medium.

## **15 Watch the margins**

If your email program has this option, set the margins for outgoing email to 20 and 80. This will make the text easier to read. If you don't have this option, consider manually returning each line at about 55 characters (an average of 12 words.) This will present your text attractively without displaying any weird line breaks.

## **16 About fonts**

Readership studies indicate that the best fonts for email communications are Arial 10pt and Verdana 10pt. Never go smaller than 10pt under any circumstance. If you decide to send your email message in 12pt, use Arial.

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**A hyped,  
aggressive  
selling tone is  
rarely effective  
in email  
marketing.**

## **17 No icons, cartoons, or emoticons**

If you're writing an email in plain text, avoid using the ASCII characters on your keyboard to create icons (smiles, winks). Even cartoons (dancing letters, flashing fonts) available to you with HTML email can have a negative effect. I suspect this is because these are cutesy symbols shared between friends — and much too familiar to use in marketing communications. So, go ahead and ;) at a friend, but not at a prospect or customer.

## **18 No jokes, puns, or cute praises**

For some reason, a joke can be too easily taken the wrong way in an email. I once received a message from a company poking fun at Monica Lewinsky. I wasn't impressed. Be conversational and friendly, but don't joke.

## **19 Don't send file attachments**

File attachments of any kind should be avoided in email marketing. This is because few recipients will open an email file attachment from an unfamiliar source. We've all heard of (or experienced) computer viruses sent in this manner. As a result, Internet users are naturally suspicious of attachments and will tend to delete these without opening. An alternative? If you have information to share that requires a file attachment, turn it into a web page instead. Then add a hyperlink to it from within your email marketing message.

## **20 Hype doesn't work**

In general, the tone of your email should be friendly, informative, and helpful. Avoid the hyped benefits and empty promises found in so many (poorly written) sales letters. Sometimes you *can* get away with a high-octane, excited tone in print. But, I've never seen this work effectively in email marketing.

## **21 Select a conversational voice**

Scholarly, "corporate-speak", technical, and other formal writing styles don't work well in email marketing. The best writing style for this medium is conversational and to the point. Just be sure you understand your target market enough to apply the appropriate tonality. You wouldn't speak about technology to the VP of IT the same way you would a teenager.

## **22 Avoid empty praises**

"Quality service." "The best." "Leading-edge products." These are empty phrases when not supported by specifics and proof. You can rarely get away with this in traditional marketing communications, and certainly not in email marketing.

## **23 Words don't speak down; tone does**

In direct marketing, we often say to write at a grade five level. I think this is an oversimplification. The axiom here is to write in a clear, conversational manner, using everyday words and phrases your target audience are familiar with. A warning: don't try to impress prospects with your knowledge of industry buzzwords and acronyms. It may have the opposite effect. And besides, "footprints in the sand" sounds much more interesting than "nurbs".

## Plain Text or HTML?

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**HTML gives you more formatting and visual options — but plain text can still be effective.**

### 24 **Plain text is okay. For now.**

Many email marketing messages are still sent in plain text (ASCII) format. This is email created using only the keys on your computer keypad with no advanced formatting options. Internet users are comfortable receiving email in this format, so plain text is usually not a problem. However, an increasing population of email users (over 80%) are able to display messages with fancy fonts and visuals. Not now, but in a few years, I suspect, plain text marketing messages will seem amateurish and cheap.

### 25 **Writing in HTML**

Email sent in HTML format — the same code used to display most web pages — gives you the opportunity to apply fonts, backgrounds, graphics, and even animations to your email marketing message. The latest versions of all email software programs (i.e. MS-OUTLOOK), and web-mail services (i.e. Sympatico and Yahoo) can of send and receive messages in HTML. Use this capability to enhance the presentation and readability of your message. But don't go crazy with the graphics. Don't make your email look like a web page!

### 26 **The simplest way to enhance an HTML marketing message**

When constructing an email marketing message in HTML, consider adding size and color to the headline and subheads. Whenever I have tried this — using no other graphics or effects — response improved.

## **27 Adding pictures**

In HTML email you can also include a picture of your product. In my experience, this has been very effective in lifting response. Of course, if your product is intangible, you'll have to think of an interesting way to present it as an image. But, trust me, it's worth the effort.

## **28 Drop-text the images.**

A drop-text is a text message that appears when your curser hovers over a graphic. Here's an example: Your reader opens your email message, sees a picture of the white paper you're offering, instinctively hovers the curser over this image and (surprise) a special message appears. Very powerful.

## **29 Do fancy fonts and graphics improve response?**

To date there is no slam-dunk hard data to indicate that fancy beats plain in email marketing. In some cases, a visually enhanced, effects-filled email will improve response dramatically. But I have also seen the opposite happen. My best advice is this: visuals are only effective if they motivate the reader to read the text. After all, if the text isn't read, your email marketing efforts will fail (no matter how pretty your message looks.)

## Customizing the "FROM" field



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**The FROM line is more than a return address — it's an introduction of you and your company.**

### 30 Don't settle for an email address

Virtually all email software is capable of customizing the name that appears in the FROM line of your email marketing message. So, instead of "From: mail@steveslaunwhite.com" you can send an email that says "From: Steve Slaunwhite, Copywriter". You decide. Which approach is more friendly, inviting, and likely to get opened and read?

### 31 Make it personal

If possible, use a personal name in the FROM line of your message. For example, "From: JaneStrong, ABC Inc". This reinforces the one-to-one, friendly tone your message must have to be successful. Think about it? How often do you delete messages from such unfamiliar and suspicious sources as: "From: 346list@tricomcan2000.com"?

### 32 Include your company name

Whether or not you are able to include a personal name in the FROM line, always include your company name. If the email marketing message is from a particular department, consider also including the department name. For example: "From: ABC Inc. Customer Service".

### 33 Consider using the word "TEAM"

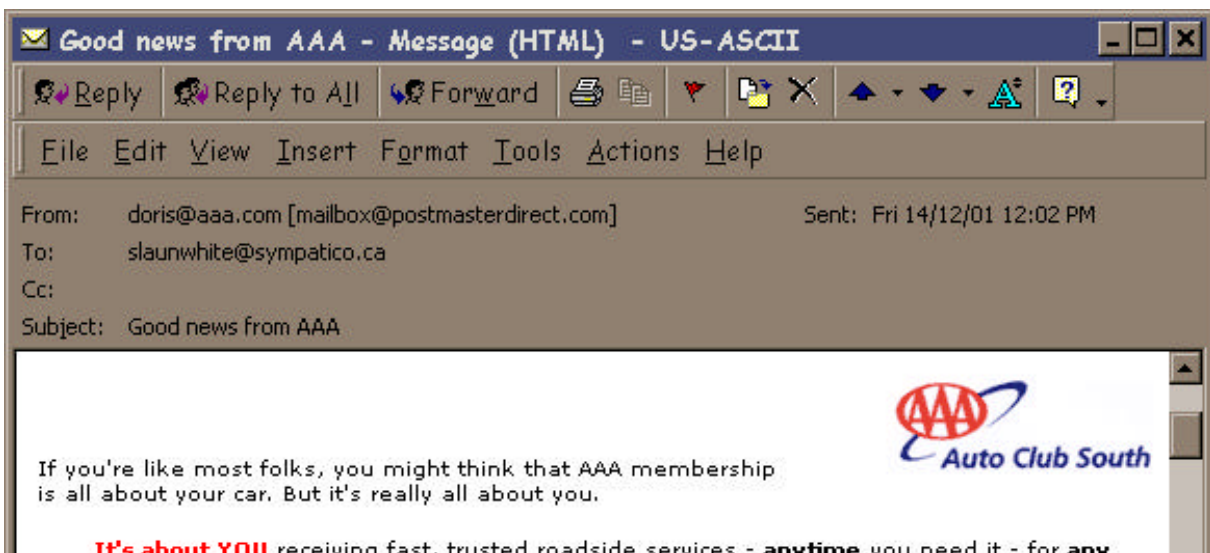
Team is a terrific word. When you think of a team you conjure up images of trained, dedicated professionals working together to make it happen. Everyone likes the idea of a team on their side. So, consider using this word in the FROM field of your email marketing message. For example: "From: The ABC Product Upgrade Team".

### 34 Take advantage of brand recognition

If your company or product has strong brand recognition, use it to your advantage in the FROM field. If your company is unfamiliar but your product is well known you can say: "From: Edgeware, the "Dynamo" people". Another approach is to hang onto the shirrtails of another popular brand. If, for example, you are sending an email message to a list from another company with a strong brand, be sure to include that name in the FROM field. For example: "From: Ignite Software: A Certified Microsoft Partner".

### 35 Work with the list owner

If you're renting an email list, the list owner – not you – may be identified in the FROM field. Depending on the name they select for the field, this could flag your email as promotional and reduce response. Be sure to ask the list owner what information is displayed in the FROM field and, if you don't like it, ask to have it reconfigured. Keep in mind that the list owner may have recognition in the target market your sending the email to. For example, if you rent a list from a well-known professional association, it might be advantageous to have that association's name in the FROM field, and not your own.



# Customizing the "SUBJECT" line

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**The SUBJECT line is a determining factor to whether your email marketing message gets opened and read.**

## **36 It's important**

Your customers and prospects will base much of their decision on whether or not to open your email based on what is written in the SUBJECT line. Like the headline of a print ad, the SUBJECT line copy is vital to the success of your email marketing efforts. So, pay due attention.

## **37 You don't have much room**

My email software will allow me to type a long sentence into the FROM line, but most recipients will only receive part of it. The rest will be cut off. Realistically, you have only about 60 characters in this area to write a message everyone on your list will be able to view. This equals only seven to nine words to gain attention and get the recipient to open and read your email message. Quite the copywriting challenge!

## **38 Ask a question**

This almost always get the email opened. I suspect this is because questions are so much a part of everyday email between friend and colleagues. It's a natural way to begin a conversation. Just be sure your question is honest and straightforward — not cryptic, hyped, or suspicious.

## **39 Avoid cryptic or clever phrases**

These can sometimes work well in conventional direct mail, but rarely works with email. What arouses curiosity or intrigue on a printed envelope may be greeted with suspicion when used in the SUBJECT field of an email.

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**If you have a terrific offer, highlight it in the SUBJECT line, don't bury it in the body copy.**

#### **40 Avoid hype and empty promises.**

Hype rarely works anyway. Why use it in email? We've all received these types of messages in our inbox: "Subject: Double your income in one month!" Such marketing messages are usually greeted with skepticism and deleted.

#### **41 Teasers work well**

An attention-grabbing teaser works very well in email — perhaps more so than in conventional direct mail. I once wrote a SUBJECT field copy that read: "Guess who's reading your email?" It was for a company that marketed email encryption software. The campaign did very well.

#### **42 Why not write what the field says to write?**

Often, the most successful approach is to write exactly what the field is asking for: the subject. Simply state the subject of your email, clearly and succinctly, without clever wordplays, teases, or cryptic phrases. This often works surprisingly well.

#### **43 Start with the benefit**

Highlighting the key benefit of your offer can be effective in the SUBJECT field. This is provided you can do so effectively in just seven to nine words. Just be sure to avoid a promotional or hyped tone. State your benefit simply.

#### **44 Use a deadline**

If there is a time limit to your offer, including this in the SUBJECT field can be motivating. For example: "Subject: Renewal notice. Deadline noon tomorrow."

#### **45 Remind them they asked for it**

It can be frustrating for marketers when customers ask to receive information or notifications — and then don't read the subsequent email. In these cases, remind your recipients in the SUBJECT field that this is requested information. People forget.

#### **46 Consider using the customer I.D.**

If your email is customer communications, consider adding the customer ID numbers in the SUBJECT field. This indicate to the recipient that your email contains important customer information. Never assume that customers will know they are customers simply by recognizing your company name. Amnesia runs rampant on the Internet.

#### **47 Be careful using the word FREE**

There is a debate raging in the world of email marketing concerning the word "free". I suspect this is because direct mail writers have been using this word successfully for years, so why not in email as well? But, as I have pointed out, email marketing is setting its own rules. Email is a relationship, not an advertising, media. And, while we have all accepted advertising and direct mailings mixed with our regular postal mail, we are not so willing to yield ground in our email inbox. I suggest you keep the word "free" out of the SUBJECT field, and use it only once or twice in the body of your email marketing message — and only when appropriate. Try alternatives like " no cost" and "complimentary".

## Customizing the "TO" field

### 48 **Avoid using the email address**

Email addresses do not always include a proper name. In popular email services, such as AOL and Yahoo! it can be difficult to get your name within your email address because someone else has already taken it. As a result, addressing someone by his or her email address can have the same impersonal effect as "Occupant" in conventional direct mail. So, if possible, always customize the TO field.

### 49 **Consider using the proper name**

Email is personal communication. More personal, in fact, than mail delivered by post. So, if available, use the recipient's own name in the TO line. Unlike conventional direct mail, it's difficult to overuse personalization in email marketing.

### 50 **Avoid using first name only**

I regularly receive email marketing messages from a company that says: TO: STEVE. I find it too personal, too soon. Even my friends don't email me with just my first name in the TO line. Worse, it smacks of email trickery. Would you put a first name only on a printed envelope or even a letter?

### 51 **Avoid using the word "LIST"**

Some email marketing lists will actually say "list" somewhere in the TO line. For example: "To: TravelRight\_List". This is very impersonal and gives the impression of mass mailing, or worse, spam.. Ask your list owner to change it.

### 52 **When you can't personalize — individualize**

If, for technical reasons, you cannot include a proper name in the TO field, consider individualizing this section. For example: "To: Valued CMA member".

## Body Copy: The Salutation

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**Always begin your email message with a salutation — personalized, if possible.**

### **53 Always use a salutation**

Although it's an informal medium, some marketers make the mistake of being too casual. Some email marketing messages have no salutation at all, appearing more like a flyer than one-to-one communication. Like any good sales letter, always greet your customer or prospect with a friendly salutation.

### **54 If you can, personalize**

If available and practical, always begin your email message with the proper name of the recipient. Use both the first name and last name if possible.

### **55 If you can't, individualize**

You may not know the proper name of your recipient. Or, if you do, you may not be able to include this name in the salutation for technical reasons. In these cases, consider individualizing the salutation. For example: "Valued UPS Customer:"

### **56 Dear, hello, or hi?**

"Dear John Smith" is best. "Hello John Smith" is okay. Unless the recipient is a customer, never say "Hi John Smith." That's too familiar for a first-time contact.

### **57 When to use first name only**

If you have a strong business relationship with your customer or prospect, then consider using the first name only in the salutation. For example: "Hello Janice,".

## Message area: The Opening

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**Headlines in email marketing are effective, but not as powerful as in print communications.**

### 58 Careful using traditional headlines

Headlines in sales letters – aka overlines – can work well in conventional direct mail packages. But their influence is diminished in email marketing. This doesn't mean you shouldn't use headlines. In some email campaigns, you should. You just need to realize that headlines are not as powerful in this medium. The SUBJECT and the OPENING are the most testable indicators of response.

### 59 Don't write headlines in ALL CAPS

When writing a plain text email marketing message, the temptation is to write the headline in all caps, for emphasis. But this is a mistake. All caps are hard to read and makes your email look more like advertising than personal communication. If you are creating your email message in HTML, then adding bold and color to your headline is effective — just keep it upper and lower caps.

### 60 Work hard on the opening sentence

You need to give your opening sentence a lot of thought. When I write for email marketing, I focus on the opening sentence as much as I do the headline and SUBJECT field. It is here that the reader is either drawn into the body copy of your message, or skips it entirely and moves on to the next email in her inbox.

### 61 The opening sentence should stand alone

I have found that opening an email marketing message with a standalone sentence — rather than a multi-sentence paragraph — works well. I ask a proactive question, quote an interesting statistic, or highlight the offer. A standalone sentence makes it easier for your audience to get into the copy. It makes the opening look a less intimidating read than beginning with a full paragraph.

## **62 Focus on the first few lines**

Many Internet users set their email programs to display the first few lines of their email message. This is especially popular among busy business users, enabling them to quickly decide if an email is worth reading. As a marketing writer, you must understand this and focus your attention on the first few lines of copy. Think of a window envelope. What do you want your prospect to see that will persuade him or her to read further?

## **63 Apply the 5-30 rule**

What's the 5-30 rule? It's this: First you tell the 5 second version of your marketing message. Then you tell the 30 second version. The 5 second, mini-version of your story should be at the top of your email. Obviously, it needs to be short and concise, containing a couple of the key benefits along with the offer and response instructions. This will appeal to those with short attention spans and others who don't like to scroll.

## **64 Forget the warm up**

Sometimes, in conventional direct mail, you have room to draw your audience into the copy. You can introduce yourself, warm them up, and provide some interesting background before getting to the offer. Not so with email marketing. You must get to the point, but quick. No warm ups, set ups, or lead ins.

## **65 Within the first few sentences...the offer**

In conventional direct mail, it's not uncommon to get to the offer only after the first few paragraphs or even at the end of the letter. This is a no-no in email marketing. You need to state the offer right on top, preferably within the first few sentences. If you force recipients to scroll down to get to the gist of your message, you risk losing them. In test after test, email marketing messages with the offer stated on top pull better than those with the offer highlighted only at the end.

## **66 Within the first few sentences... the main benefit**

In conjunction with the offer, you should highlight the main benefits at the top of your email message. If there is more than one key benefit, use a bullet list, but keep that list to three points maximum. Don't be afraid to be quick and brief with the benefits at the top of your email message. You can always go into more detail further down.

## **67 Within the first few sentences... the response instructions**

Never state the offer without associating it with the response instructions. In email marketing, the most popular method of response is clicking a hyperlink (embedded in the email message) to a web page. Toll-free numbers are also an option, but do not pull as well. Internet users prefer to click, not pick up the phone.

## Message area: The Middle

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**Never force your prospect to scroll up and down the email, looking for the response instructions.**

### 68 Highlight the offer and the response instructions

You must sell the offer and provide clear response instructions in the body of your email message – even if you already did this in the opening (as suggested). Since your message body contains expanded information, this will appeal to those who make a decision only after learning more details. As with conventional direct mail, you don't want them scrolling up and down searching for how to respond.

### 69 Don't be afraid to go long

In the early days of email marketing, short copy was the rule. But this is changing. For some offers at least, longer copy that tells a more complete story is doing better. This is especially true when a transaction is involved, such as a subscription or sign up.

### 70 Tell the complete story

Email is about the open, free flow of information. People use it to save time. If you tease or hold back information, readers will get annoyed. Tell them all they need to know. If there is too much background information to include within the email message, consider embedding a hyperlink to a web page containing more details. I work with an email marketing agency in Florida that uses a small popup window to provide more information. Click on the word ASP within the email message, for example, and a small window pops up with the definition of Application Service Provider.

## **71 Divide the key messages into sections**

Your message should be comprised of short paragraphs, subheads, modules, and bullets. This improves readability and makes the text, especially longer text, appear less intimidating.

## **72 Write for the scanner**

People tend to scan email before reading it word-for-word, even more so than in print communication. So, make sure a reader can gain a clear understanding of your message from the fields, opening sentence, subheads, and bullets.

## **73 Check the links**

A recent email campaign for a major telecom provider contained an incorrect link. Unfortunately, it wasn't just a dead link. It was a link to a pornographic web page! I can think of nothing more frustrating for a marketer than losing a potential customer because of such an error. Check, check, and re-check.

## **74 Don't be dull**

There's no excuse for boring copy, regardless of the product or service involved. Freshen it up. Liven it up. Avoid clichés and tired phrases. Think of new ways to describe features and benefits with impact. Use examples, statistics, and testimonials. Benefits described in a way meaningful to your audience will always be an interesting read.

## **75 Don't overuse the word FREE**

Earlier, I suggested you don't use the word "free" in the subject area. You can, however, use this word in the message area. But don't overuse it. I never use "free" more than twice, and never use the word at all unless it is absolutely necessary. An email crammed full of FREEs will quickly be deleted.

## Message area: The Signature

### 76 Always include a signature

Never forget that email is personal, one-to-one communication. This means that the email is not only directed *to* someone, but *from* someone as well. Always include a signature.

### 77 When you can't personalize a signature

Sometimes it is inappropriate or impractical to include a personalized signature complete with a proper name. In this case, consider using the word "team" For example: "Regards, Your Edgeware product support team."

### 78 Advertise below the signature

Although your email as a whole should not look like advertising, you can get away with a promotional blurb incorporated into the signature. Below the name in the signature you can include your web site address, a recent special offer (for example: "Click here for a 10% discount..."), links to new product information, a current promotion, and, of course, your company slogan or tagline.

Trust me. You won't want to miss the news we have for you in the very next issue. So, I urge you to accept our invitation today.

Best regards,



Paul Minter  
Director of Client Services  
Merit Capital Group

## Presenting the OFFER

### 79 **Hyperlink the call to action**

Most prospects will click on a hyperlink in your email message to respond to your offer. If you don't have a hyperlink, response will suffer dramatically

### 80 **Add a toll-free number**

While most prospects will respond to your offer online by clicking a link, some will prefer to call and speak with someone live. A toll free number will often boost response.

### 81 **One the top. In the middle. At the bottom.**

.Most click-thru responses will come from the hyperlink at the top, bottom, and middle of your email message — in that order. A lot of marketers forget the middle hyperlink. Don't. Your response rates will suffer.

### 82 **Keep it simple**

Don't make the response instructions within your email marketing message cumbersome or difficult to understand. State it simply in clear, everyday language.

### 83 **Always say "Click Here"**

Surprising, not all email software programs display hyperlinks in a special color. Therefore, never assume that your customer or prospect will know where to click to respond to your offer. I always hyperlink "Click Here" and never have a problem.

## 84 **Link to more information**

Some people need more information before they will respond to your offer... more information than you have room for in your email. In this case, create a link to more in-depth information existing on a web page. For example, if you are promoting a new software product, you can provide technical specifications with a link to an FAQ. Just be sure to include a link back to your offer on this web page. You don't lose them surfing the internet! You can also create popup windows within your email to present shorter chunks of background information — which has the advantage of keeping the reader interacting with your email message.

## About the landing page

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**Never leave the Landing Page as an afterthought. Give it as much attention as you would the email message itself.**

### 85 Don't use email forms

Avoid designing a form within your email for users to respond to. In plain text email, this looks cheap and suspicious. Even with a graphics-enhanced email message, few will fill it out. Instead, create your form on a separate Internet web page (we email marketers call this a landing page), and then add a hyperlink to that page within your email message.

### 86 Use a landing page for response

A landing page is the most popular way of responding to your offer. It works like this: you prospect clicks the link in your email message and is taken to a special web page. This page will often include a form to fill out and submit to complete the transaction.

### 87 Use a secure web page for transactions

Having a secure web page for your customer to complete a transaction will boost response to your email tremendously. Even if the transaction does not involve credit card payments! Internet users prefer to fill out forms within a secure environment because they think their personal information will be in more trusted hands.

### 88 Restate the offer

On the landing page, restate your offer. This is a similar approach to designing reply cards in direct mail, and is equally important in email. You need to maintain momentum when your customer or prospect clicks through to the web form because, once they do, they rarely return to the originating email message. Keep on selling right to the finish line.

## **89 Ask for what you need, and no more**

Some like to use the landing page to gather more data on the customer — such as family income, occupation, types of computer equipment they own, and so forth. But the landing page is no place for market research. Even if you make it clear the information you are asking for is optional, your potential customer may still think "Forget this" and decide not to continue with the transaction.

## **90 Adding to your in-house list**

If you are using a rented list, the web form is a good place to ask your new customer if he would like to be added to your in-house list. If he agrees, then you are free to email market to that customer for as long as he stays opted-in. Software companies use this approach very successfully when users register their software.

## **91 Tell them what happens next**

If your customer is placing an order, give her an estimate of delivery times, a tracking number, a number to call in case there is a problem. If it's a subscription, let her know when she can expect the first issue. If signing up for a seminar, give her a confirmation date. If she is requesting information, when will she receive it? You get the idea.

## **92 The final screen**

When submitting a form, or sequence of forms, the final screen the user sees should contain these two messages: a confirmation that the order or request has been successfully received; and a "thank you" for their business. If there is other information, such as tracking numbers and customer service, this is the place to include it.

## Privacy and Permissions

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**Privacy is a concern among Internet users. Be sure your copy reflects a respect for your prospect's personal information.**

### 93 Don't be big brother

People are concerned about their privacy when using the Internet. Even experienced users don't have a full appreciation of how much personal information they give away each time they send an email or surf a web site. Although you may have plenty of information — legitimately gathered — on your target audience, it's a mistake to let them know how much. For example, an email message that begins "We noticed you have visited our web site several times in the past month..." may seem innocent to you, but tantamount to an invasion of privacy to your target audience.

### 94 Always include an opt-out message

Email marketing is a permission-based medium. A surprising number of prospects will look for the opt-out instructions at the bottom of your email marketing message, even when they have no intention of opting out. I suspect this is because clear, no-hassle opt-out instructions establishes credibility. When these are conspicuously missing, you're on shaky ground.

### 95 Make it easy to opt-out

Don't make opting out a cumbersome process. I tried opting out of a list once and was sent to a landing page. This page asked me for my name, address, and the reasons for opting out. When I just typed in my name and email and clicked the button, the system refused to accept my message. Don't make your opting-out procedure this annoying.

## 96 Confirm opt-out status

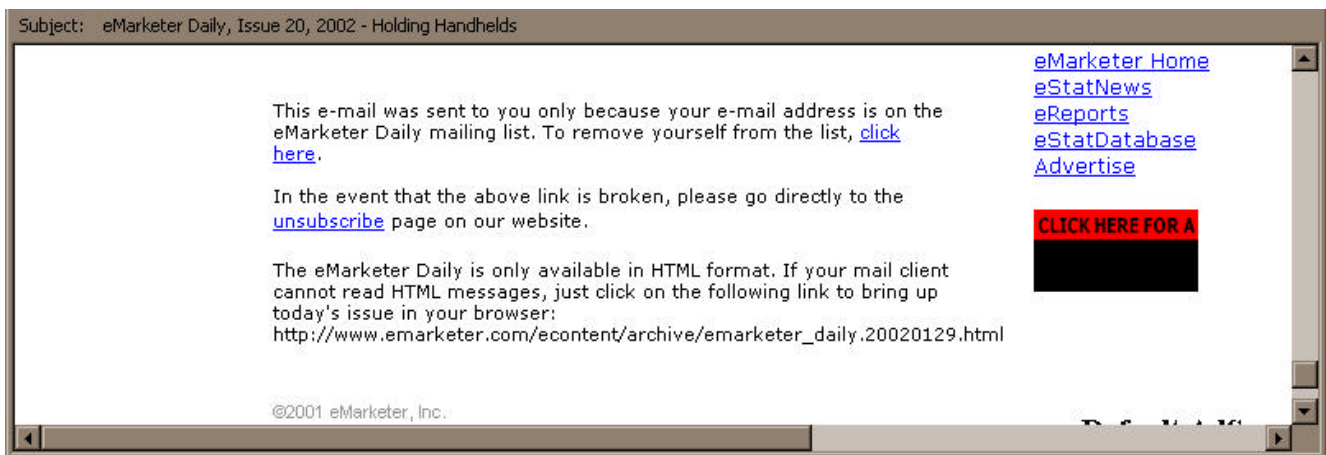
Configure your opting-out procedures so that, when users make this request, they receive a confirmation. This can take the form of a return email, or a web page telling the user that he is now off the list.

## 97 Sample wording

I find these opt-out instructions work well in most email marketing: "We respect your privacy, and promise not to abuse this method of contacting you. However, if you prefer not to receive further emails from us of this type, please [click here](#) and we will remove your contact information from our list."

## 98 Link to your privacy policy

Privacy is a big issue among Internet users. So, alleviate their concern with a link to your company privacy policy. The best place for this within your email marketing message is below your opt-out instructions. But you can also add this link to your landing page as well



## Tips for writing productively

### 99 Schedule your writing



It's amazing how many business people will schedule meetings and other appointments, but leave writing as something to do on the fly. The best, and less stressful, approach to writing is to set time aside and do it. Schedule at least a one-hour block each time you write.

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**Make time to write.**

### 100 Picture the person you're writing to

Email is the most personal form of communication next to the greeting card (and perhaps even more so.) To make your writing sound more conversational and appealing, create a picture in your mind of someone representative of your target market. And then write to that person. Make her skeptical and curious. Imagine she is asking you as you write, "What's this all about?" "Why should I be interested?" "What's in it for me?"

### 101 Persuade a friend

Have you ever been so excited about a new product that you persuaded your friends to try it, too. That's the perfect approach to writing email marketing, or any marketing communication. By persuading a friend, you're acting like a friend. And not like someone who is aggressively flogging a product. You'll be encouraging, understanding, thoughtful, and personable. Just the tone needed for successful email marketing.

## About the author

Steve Slaunwhite is an award-winning copywriter and creative strategist with 20 years experience in business-to-business and direct marketing.

Steve specializes in writing and creating direct mail packages, email marketing pieces, advertising, sales letters, web sites, brochures, presentations and other communications marketers use get leads and make sales

A frequent contributor to magazines and journals, Steve is the author of the book *Copywriting Business* (Self-Counsel Press) and the following professional guides: *7 Keys to Creating a Lead-Generating Brochure* (H-S Learning Series), *Customers for Life* (Intelygis), and *Web Self-Service for Non-Profits: Six Keys to Success* (Intelygis).

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## About MailWorkZ



With leading edge email applications and expertise, MailWorkZ is quickly becoming a leading provider of e-marketing enabling technology.

### **Did you know?**

Almost 70% of USA email users have made online purchases as a result of receiving permission email marketing.

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