

Email Triage: Tips for Effective Email Marketing

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When the majority of emails are deleted unread, how do you get past the delete barrier and make sure your customer hears you?

Spam now accounts for more than 90 percent of all email traffic, according to a report released in 2009 from security vendor Symantec. This means that nine out of every 10 emails are junk. So if you are using email blasts as a marketing tool, you have your work cut out for you. Spam filters and junk folders are getting more sophisticated all the time, and they will catch in their net and delete all kinds of emails, yours included!

If you consider that 69 percent of people will delete an email based on the subject line alone, you better think carefully about composing your subject line before you hit send.

Here is a typical thought process that people may go through when they read their emails:

1. "Okay, so who sent me emails today?" At this point they are curious and eager to receive and read emails.
2. "I'm busy and I have just enough time to read the good stuff." They proceed to scan for (in order):
 1. Personal correspondence;
 2. Important business emails;
 3. Other emails that they have time to read.
3. "Let me delete all the junk mail so that it doesn't clutter up my inbox." Our potential audiences are inundated with commercial emails and free newsletters, and their forefingers are positioned on their triggers, ready to quickly delete anything that doesn't pass muster.
4. "My inbox is a private and personal space, and I don't want strangers and salespeople invading my privacy." The inbox is a sacred place, and people are protective of it, inviting only friends, relatives, colleagues, and select business acquaintances to enter. This last point is your main hurdle, and the one you must overcome if you want to get your message across.

Which one best describes you?

If you use email marketing to promote anything, you better do your homework and do it right; anything short of this will produce little or no results. Remember who you're writing to and what you're trying to accomplish.

Picture Sally. She has six meetings and 11 action items to conquer today. She is receiving, 50, 60, or possibly even 100 emails throughout the day. While humor is fun, it's a waste of valuable time Sally doesn't have. Instead of laughing at cute subject lines and enjoying her emails, she's looking for reasons to hit delete and avoid having another thing landing on her plate. If she doesn't recognize your name immediately, your lighthearted subject line instantly hits the delete barrier.

Your email is no different than a cold call. You're interrupting the day of an already overworked person. Regardless of how busy she is, you want your subject line to draw Sally in with a personal and compelling message.

How do you do this? Here are a couple of tips on how to write a subject line that will draw your potential client in:

If you're attempting to have Sally register for an event, avoid:

- "Reminder: register today for XYZ event"
- "You are cordially invited to XYZ event"

Try instead to illuminate what's in it for Sally if she does register:

- "Learn the five latest trends to increase productivity at XYZ event!"
- "The best way to produce results at XYZ event!"

The idea is to get Sally interested by showing her what she will get out of registering for your event.

Bottom line: make it personal to your customer but in a way that doesn't sound like a marketing email.

One final note; steer clear of gimmicks like "Enticing Ideas: Sally, Did You Catch the Wave?" If Sally is your client, you've already lost her. This subject line has nothing to do with her even though her name is in there. It was clearly a marketing message. No action was required on her part. There was no sense of urgency or compelling reason to open it.

In the time it took her to read it, it hit her delete barrier—gone without her reading more than the subject line. Don't let that happen to your emails.

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