

Lesson 2: Writing An Email

Right before we get into the crucial details of writing email let's have a look at the three common types that people send. There are pretty much three categories of email:

1) Periodical Emails

The most popular form of email campaigns is periodical emails. By creating regular and frequent emails, periodical emails are a subtle but effective digital marketing strategy.

Periodical emails are often comprehensive, including news about your company, updated information about the latest offers of your products or services, and more all in one attractive newsletter.

Through email, you can convey your marketing message as well as specific information, making your words powerful in converting leads. With the body of the email, include a call to action, addressing leads directly to undertake a valuable action such as visiting a link to a sale on your ecommerce site.

While it is dependent on the customer's willingness to read the email, once you compel them to open your email, you can encourage conversions with the promise of a great value or deal in the form of special offers, coupons, discounts, or sales. Subscribers respond positively to deals that are useful and relevant to them.

When you send a periodical email, specify the company name in the From line to avoid confusion about the sender or purpose of the email. Within the email, display links prominently so they are not hidden in the body text. Include logos or other company brand images in your HTML to increase brand awareness and image.

2) Drip Campaigns

If your site revolves around nurturing lead conversions as part of your digital marketing strategy, consider drip email campaigns. With drip campaigns, after a customer has completed a step in the conversion process, emails are pre-set to send automatically at predetermined times to encourage conversion.

Drip emails are a great opportunity to engage with customers and follow up after they take valuable step toward conversion or respond to a call to action. Send an email as a reminder to act, download, purchase, or follow.

Build anticipation and interest in your ecommerce site promotions with drip campaigns. Draw subscribers in to follow or remember a special event or sale, especially if it is dependent on the season or holiday.

3) Transactional Emails

It is typical for ecommerce stores to send a confirmation via email after a subscription or purchase. But transactional emails can serve a far more useful purpose than simply confirming an action—they can motivate action.

As a form of email marketing, a wide spread practice by thousands of ecommerce stores is to send an email immediately after the customer takes action to motivate them into taking even more valuable action. If a customer has been inactive after they filled a shopping cart, you can notify them of their inactivity and motivate them using incentive (such as a recent product price drop) to add more to their cart or complete the purchase.

When sending transactional emails, personalize the message. Target email subscribers through keying in on their location, previous purchase history, category most browsed and other information that can compel a customer into buying. By tracking user purchasing behaviour and decision making, you can make the offers that will get their attention.

With these three types of emails, your business can harness the power to turn leads into conversions.

As an ecommerce store owner you are certainly going to send transactional emails and possibly periodical emails, but you are unlikely to spend time on drip campaigns which is more of a services format.

Now you know your audience a little better how are you going to attract their attention, keep them engaged and convert that attention into a sale?

Here is our ecommerce email formula in stages:

STAGE 1 – Subject Line

There are so many pitfalls when writing an email subject line and the best way of demonstrating these is by writing some. See what you make of the following:

Fantastic new product only available for 24 hours

Wow! Check out those \$\$\$\$ how did he do that

Change your life – just open this email

We have just sold 5 million products – here's how

[International Business] weekly update

How to master social media

Each of those subject lines would be rejected by the majority of people because of these simple reasons:

- They are clearly sales orientated and we do not like sales in our faces all of the time – especially not in our inboxes that get cluttered with so many of these emails
- They are likely to end up in spam if they say free, have money signs in them or contain monetary sums
- They make grand statements which are clearly designed to get your attention so naturally you refuse to be interested
- They have been said a million times before and you despise their lack of originality
- They are mundane and of absolutely no interest to you
- They are just too good to be true so they have lost your trust and respect already

To get the right subject line you need to know one thing:

WHAT DO YOUR READERS REALLY NEED TO KNOW, NEED TO BUY, NEED TO SEE?

You have to address their pain points so for that you must reply heavily on what you know about your demographic. That is what guides the perfect subject line which could be targeted at a niche or in line with more general mainstream offers. Check out these ideas:

- The closest thing to a cure for eczema
- Great Winter stock discounts to survive the snow storms
- Brand new bikini designs in stock now
- Inside London Fashion week – top takeaways
- Great online prices for electrical products all through February

The trick is not to sell people what is inside but to tell them what is. If you keep your subject lines simple, straightforward, and consistent they are more likely to be opened. Anyone who tells you they know a magical formula, or restricts your word count, is talking nonsense.

STAGE 2 – Content

The first rule here is to be as conversational as you can because people do not want pushy sales speak or a formal business tone. The best response comes from talking to them as though they were sat next to you.

Remember: You are not selling to people – you are adding value to their lives!

You have to hook them early with something they will want to know – you can go into detail about this later on in the email but it needs mentioning at the beginning. If you are using the email to sell a new line or announce a discount then this needs to be centre stage in the opening paragraph of your email.

Make them Scannable

You may think people don't have time to read your email, but you're wrong. People just don't make the time to read emails that don't give them valuable information. By making it

easy to scan your emails and your blog posts, you'll immediately give readers value by saving them the trouble of searching through to find the point of what you're saying.

They can choose to read your article, or just pick out what they need – what they find useful. It is part of human nature to scan through things and find the parts that are of most value to them. Exactly, like you pick out your favourite sandwich and crisps, or salad, at lunch. You dismiss the rest and go for the quick win – the interesting read. Headings make those parts easy to find and navigate to.

Using bolded lines, clear buttons, images, and short paragraphs are all great ways to make your emails more scannable. The easier your email is to read, the more likely people are to actually read it (and click through to your site because of it).

Tell a story

Writers are always trying to tell a good story, and your emails are a great place to do it. Think of the classic story structure:

- Introduction
- rising action
- climax
- falling action
- conclusion

Your introduction should attract the attention of your reader, get them interested and then spark a desire for more. You build on that desire with rising action. Your climax should encourage people to take action, to click or to sign up.

Thinking about your email in the structure of a story will help you figure out how its pieces fit together. Here's a useful exercise: think of subject line as your introduction. The climax is then the goal of your email, and the conclusion reinforces that goal.

If you want to sell a product, the climax is often the final sentence in a story about how someone raised their conversion by 100% using your service. If your goal is getting people to click through to a new page, your click-through button is your climax. Make sure your email leads up to it, and make your story so interesting that people just have to find out what comes next.

Ask for feedback

It is so easy to be proud of your work and sometimes finishing an email can feel like an achievement in itself for many short on time. But realistically that is only a first draft. You have to tweak it and hone it if it is ever going to be truly successful. You must open yourself up to criticism and take others viewpoints into consideration.

A nice cross section of people you can trial the email on with yield the best feedback. Think about your target audience and try to get people within that audience to offer their opinions on your emails. Some of the feedback can be brutal given the amount of time and effort you have put into perfecting something you believe to be fit for purpose.

You cannot write something that will appeal to everyone but you do need to write something that will not just appeal to yourself/yourself.

Be current

If you are writing about something that everyone is writing about then your email will blend in with all the spam. You need to stick out and be topical, current, news worthy. Your email needs to grab their attention and then hold it by being genuinely interesting.

The only way you can do this is by writing with the mind-set that you are not producing emails for the sake of revenue/leads but for the purpose of giving your audience valuable knowledge. Find something newsworthy and pass it on in an entertaining and stimulating way. We all read articles that grab our attention – make yours as topical and eye catching as those!

STAGE 3 – PROOF READ

All I am going to say here is: check your spelling and grammar and then check them again, and again and again before sending! A simple but crucial stage!

STAGE 4 – CALL TO ACTION

Your email needs to read like it is giving the recipient pure value without sales speak but of course it has a purpose. It may seem contradictory to now tell you that you can never lose sight of the fact that it is all about sales/referrals.

Of course it is! Why would you be writing it otherwise? The thing is you need to have a sales focus running through it without making obvious to the recipient. You do this by following these steps:

- Make sure you are recommending something as part of the story so it feels natural and organic – not forced or flashy
- Have calls to action that are set aside from the story – these will be down a sidebar or at the end (or both) and include: blog post article links, website link, consultation button, social media icons, a free offer, a free whitepaper/checklist/eBook
- Have links to your content hub within the story that do not draw attention to themselves but are clearly hyperlinks. These may link off to a blog that you did on a different subject matter that is related to the one you are discussing presently
- State clearly that you may as well get the sales out of the way because you do not want to detract from your story but you have a special offer on at the moment. Then say ‘anyway that’s enough of that what I want to tell you about it’

These techniques all need monitoring for their effectiveness and all of this data can be tracked using analytics.

STAGE 5 – WRITING STYLE

This needs to reflect the ethos of your company and any guidelines you have about your tone of voice, level of formality and of course be centred on your target audience. If you are selling punk rock albums then your writing style will be more chilled, slangy and teen focused. If you are writing about Corporate Social Responsibility then your style will be cleaner, more formal and in line with Received Pronunciation. You adapt your language style for the audience you are reaching out to. This is a simple but crucial stage to get right.

STAGE 6 – MISCELLANIOUS

For the final stage I am just going to round-up everything you need to consider that do not need an entire paragraph but certainly need mentioning – here you go:

- 1) Stop talking about your list. Stop talking about subscribers. Write as if you're emailing one person only. It instantly makes your emails more personal.
- 2) Quit wasting people's time. Only email when you have something truly valuable or helpful to say.
- 3) Be useful. Don't just email when you need something from your readers. Be helpful. Be generous. Be friendly.
- 4) Use your actual name as your from address. Put your name and reputation on the line. That's more personal.
- 5) Be trustworthy. Let people know what to expect. Yes, sales messages should be part of your email marketing, that's fine. Just be clear about it is when they sign up.
- 6) Feel free to personalise emails, but don't repeat people's name too often, because it makes you sound like a call centre script.
- 7) Be on their side. Remind people that they're not alone. Tell them you understand their struggles. Empathise with them, and ask how you can help.
- 8) Give people a reward for reading. Make sure people benefit from reading your emails. How? Share a useful tip. Make them feel better. Inspire them.

I will go back to the most crucial message that I have written throughout this PDF and remains at the core of a successful email campaign:

It is all about how you can help your readership – they do not care about your product or service – they care about what will make their lives easier. If that is your product or service then that is great but you cannot just convince them of that by saying how amazing it is. You have to earn their trust, keep them interested in what you have to say, until the point that they decide themselves that actually what you sell might be of use to them. They make the decision – there is no red button they can press on your email that will convince them to decide instantly – emails can convert but only if people feel like they are making the decision to buy themselves.

If you are not clear on this then ask yourselves which emails you have opened in the last month and which ones you deleted without even taking a breath.