

HOW TO COMPOSE DIRECT MARKETING EMAILS

Subject line

Focus on several key words that you wish to convey, while avoiding:

- The use of all caps and/or spaces between letters,
- The use of consecutive exclamation marks, question marks, or other characters,
- An empty subject line,
- The use of generic or excessively marketing-oriented words, as well as words and characters typical of spam, such as “Euro”, “free”, “€”, “hot”, and so on.

How to choose an effective subject line?

1. Adapt the subject line to your target audience

Because they lead fast-paced lives, your recipients **first scan their emails** to check if they contain **useful content**. By choosing a **generic** or **boring subject line** or by sending messages with a one-size-fits-all approach, you will have a difficult time drawing attention to yourself. You will only stand out by thinking hard about who **your recipients are** and what their characteristics may be.

Ask yourself if your direct email marketing campaign is intended for a **female** or a **male target audience** and consider **the age, purchasing habits, desires, and interests** of that audience. Listen closely to your prospective customers and address them with a subject line that is tailored to them.

“Do It Yourself – Inexpensive Tools” is probably not the most effective subject line if you also intend to reach a female target audience. It is important for the recipient to feel that the email is intended just for him or her, and that the information in the email is interesting, relevant, and current.

2. Be direct and offer something attractive

Do not beat about the bush with boring or overly general subject lines. Instead, **draw attention to yourself**. You can do that by referencing **entertainment events, approaching holidays, attractive special offers, discount coupons, or useful tips** that you think may draw in your reader and encourage him to open the email.

What your recipients see first when they check their inbox determines whether they will open your email or not. It is crucial that the **subject line is sufficiently inviting and that it promises to reveal something interesting**.

3. Less is more

More and more people check their emails on their **smartphones** or **tablets**, devices that, due to their **smaller screen sizes**, display emails differently than PCs. We suggest that your subject lines contain **no more than six**

words. The recommended length is **between 20 and 40 characters.** This length is sufficient for you to **hint at the contents** and to convey **the value, the urgency, and the relevance** of the email to the recipient. Also consider your choice of words. Studies have shown that several long words are easier to read than many short ones.

4. Avoid subject lines that resemble spam

The use of certain words or phrases in the subject line can reduce the likelihood of **your email being perceived as spam.** You have many options of choosing the right subject line.

We recommend that you reference **a news event**, offer **useful advice**, or ask an **interesting question** and then **promise to answer it** in the message body.

The Form of the Message

When composing the subject line, pay attention to the following:

- Do not use several consecutive exclamation marks or question marks.
- Do not leave the subject line empty.
- Avoid using well-known words typical of spam email, such as “free” or “hello”.
- Do not use any special characters (such as €) in the subject line.
- Check to see what subject line works best. [It can be funny if that suits your message.] In the past, subject lines that referenced well-known song or film titles have shown to be effective.
If you are making a limited-time special offer, do not forget to emphasize (BrE: emphasise) its urgency to the recipient.
- Avoid overly general subject lines. [If the subject is too general, there is a significant likelihood that your email will remain unread].
- Adapt the subject line to your target audience. [When selecting the subject, always consider the target audience of your campaign. If needed, send two different messages to two different audiences, while adapting the content, the title, and the subject line.]

The Correct Use of Images and Links

You can draft your email in two ways: using text or HTML. You need to pay attention to the following:

- The message should never consist solely of images. You should add text and alternative text [alt tags] to the images.
- The proportion of images to text should be just right. Most senders tend to go overboard with images.
- The text should be at least 500 characters long.
- Do not send messages containing only text. Include at least one image.

- Avoid images in the .gif format. [Use the .png or the .jpg format instead.]
- Pay attention to the number of links to landing pages. Check to see if they work and make sure that they are not in numerical form, such as <http://12.34.567.899/info.php>.
- Do not conceal your links [for instance, by having your text state <http://mycompany.si/page1> when your link actually leads to <http://mycompany.si/page3>].
- We suggest that you use restrained colors [BrE: colours]. Most importantly, avoid red, blue, or green text, as well as having the background change into any of these colors. Use pastels instead.

The Content of the Message

What should the content of your email look like?

You should encourage the recipient's desire for [or interest in] your product or service. You need to convey the value of what your product or service is providing or what problem it can solve.

Avoid certain phrases:

- Phrases such as "Click here!", "Buy now!", or "An opportunity of a lifetime!" should be replaced with less forceful and more inventive alternatives.
- Even in the message body, avoid all caps, spaces between letters and several consecutive exclamation or question marks.

