

## How to create successful subject headings

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Successful subject headings can be the crucial difference between your email communications closing a deal or being instantly condemned to the deleted items file. Yet so often, marketers are guilty of leaving them as last minute considerations. In the last of a three-part series, Volker Wiewer, CEO of eCircle, explains how to ensure your email gets past the first post.

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Consumers want to know who is communicating with them, so introduce yourself. Include your company name in the heading because mail from an anonymous source is far more likely to be classed as 'junk'. But ensure you don't waste words – subject headings constitute a classic example of less is more – you only have limited space on a heading, and whilst it is crucial to display your company's name, there is little point in saying something twice. So if your brand or company name is in the sender's address, then you don't need to reiterate that in your subject heading.

### Emphasise the call to action

A subject heading may only consist of a few words, but if you can convey urgency, spark an immediate reaction and amplify the call to action with those words, then you will notice the results improve dramatically. For example, "shirt sale!" is positively unnoticeable compared to "All shirts discounted – for another 12 hours!" Make the recipient curious, use teasers, hint at important announcements. Peak interest and make it clear that this isn't 'just another email'. A good way to maximise this engagement is by asking questions, prompting interaction and a response. Anything that encourages the recipient to stop and think gives you an extra couple of seconds of precious attention in a world increasingly jam-packed with marketing messages.

## **Accentuate the added value to the recipient**

Imagine how you feel when a salesman approaches you on your way to work, or a telemarketer calls you in the middle of a busy day. As someone being sold to, through an interruption to our daily routine, the first thought is often 'get to the point'. We want to cut through the niceties and establish exactly what is on offer. Bear this in mind with your subject headings. Put aside your urge to convey brand messages or weave clever marketing-speak into the subject heading. Imagine how the recipient will interpret the title and get to the point. Keep it short and sweet and you will extract maximum value. A clever pun, or amusing joke might make the copywriters smug with glee, but it won't achieve the same cut-through as 'Order now and receive two for one.'

## **The whole truth and nothing but the truth – focus on appropriate subject headings**

Only raise the expectations you are able to fulfill. Nothing causes more harm to your business than a dissatisfied, disappointed customer. By being reliable and truthful you build up long-term trust with your customers and accomplish a loyal readership. Yes, your subject heading should be concise and summarise the offer, but the click-through must deliver on that offer. Remember that stretching the truth or misleading the recipient might well get their interest the first time, but once you let them down, your communications are likely to be ignored forevermore.

## **Personalising the subject heading and sender's address**

Personalisation may have been talked about exhaustively, but the fact is that it is still the best way to show consumers that you value them, you're prepared to take the time to address them individually and you see them as more than just a sales target. Don't overdo it, but where appropriate a name check or personal reference can be a great way of achieving cut-through in a crowded market. And personalisation shouldn't just be about the consumer. Personalise your sender identity too – people are far more likely to respond to another person than a faceless company. The only note of caution is that your communications must also work without the personalisation for those times when you don't have access to as much information.

If you are after a long-term relationship with a customer, then your subject heading is like the first introduction. Before you reach your first date, where you can find out more, the subject heading is the 'Hi, I'm X, lovely to meet you Y!', and the crucial hurdle that can make the difference between 'Not interested, thanks', and 'Wow! Tell me more'. Get it right, and the rest could be history – get it wrong and you risk permanently damning the relationship.

**Click to read the [first](#) and [second](#) of Volker Wiewer's articles on email marketing**