

How to Get Your Email Message Opened

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Copywriting Tips: How to Get Your Email Message Read

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Email Copywriting Tip 1: Handling Spam Karma.

Nobody likes spam, but some Internet Service Providers (ISP's) are pickier than others. Services like Yahoo and AOL are the most severe, often putting everything that isn't flagged by the user as acceptable into a spam folder. Worse, they'll often simply remove the message from galactic existence before the recipient ever has a chance to see it. It's for your own good, they'll tell you.

The point is that perfectly valid emails like yours won't make it to the inbox of your recipient unless you are put on their "white list" - a list of acceptable email addresses and/or domains. And there's no point in trying to be a perfectionist in your email message. If you're not on the list, forget it, buddy. Your message is gone forever.

Aside from the fact that you should avoid certain trigger words (sex, free, Viagra, and an enormously long list of other words), there isn't a lot you can do if you're not on someone's white list.

So, your main objective when building a mailing list (you are building a list, aren't you?) for your site should be to encourage your list members to put you on their "OK" list. Now, most good mailing list systems require the user to respond to a confirmation email before they're added to your list. Here's what I do:

- When they fill in the form to join the list (or download the free report), they immediately get sent to a web page with instructions on what's going to happen next.

- The web page lets them know that they'll receive a confirmation email and that they won't receive the free report (Ebook, or whatever) unless they respond to the email.

- And... they probably won't SEE the email if they don't add my email address to their white list! I'll sometimes include explicit instructions on how to do this with Yahoo and AOL.

That is, I get them to add me to their white list right then and there. The open rate for emails jumps by 30-40% when I do this.

Copywriting Tip 2: Getting the Email message opened

You want them to open the message. That's where a good, catchy subject line comes in. Studies have shown that the open rate increases if the message is sent FROM a familiar name. So make your messages from YOU - someone they know and trust.

Other studies have shown that the open rate increases if the subject line starts with another familiar name, such as the name of the newsletter:

"Early to Rise: ..."

"Natural Health Newsletter: ..."

That way they know right away who it's from, which means they'll be more likely to open the message. If you send messages on an irregular basis, then don't worry about adding a familiar name here. Your name in the FROM should be enough.

Once they know who the message is from, the subject line should entice them to open the message to find out what it's about. You can:

- Elicit curiosity
- Make a bold statement
- Create a short, but irresistible offer
- Ask a question (preferably an intriguing question)

Here are recent examples from my inbox of good copywriting subject lines:

Make \$500+ an Hour Talking About What You Love

Hurry! Only one week left of savings

Are you going?

What's with all the expensive cars?

Every freelance writers "second business"

Can you join me next Thursday?

Sid, Do Not Click the Order Button

Note a few things about these headlines:

- They evoke some kind of curiosity. You want to find out what's inside the box.
- They don't tell you what it's about, unless it's a dramatic promise ("Make \$500+ an Hour")
- They may or may not use the recipient's name. I've seen no real evidence that this increases the open rate. There was a time a few years ago when it did, but it's so common now that most people ignore the name.

If they know who the message is from and the subject is compelling enough, they'll open the message. Of course, you know that this is only a portion of the battle.

Copywriting Tip 3: Making the message work

Next, your message must provide some meaningful benefit to the reader. You don't have to hit a home run every time, but you need to get on base with your email often enough so that they'll open the next message from you.

This is where many Internet marketers fall flat. They'll create a compelling subject line, but deliver a dull message that doesn't meet the expectations of the reader. Either the message is too full of hype with not enough substance, or the only time they hear from you is when you're promoting the "next mega money making deal."

I've unsubscribed from some lists because everything they pitched was "the best ever." If that's true, then was the last one you pitched pure garbage? You've got to stay in alignment with your readers' needs, or they'll pitch you like yesterday's coffee.

The bottom line: create lasting relationships with your readers with good, useful copy; make a strong promise in the subject line; and, deliver on that promise in your message. That's copywriting for the Internet at its finest.