

How to Write Subject Lines That Get Opened AND...



50+ SUBJECT LINE TEMPLATES TO GET YOU STARTED

One of the biggest mistakes a person can make in their email marketing is...not putting enough effort into their subject lines. Many entrepreneurs spend upwards of an hour writing a great email...choosing *exactly the right words*.

But once the email is perfect, they **slap a subject line on it** and send it.

The whole process is a little mixed up. After all, what are your contacts going to see first? Not your perfect email. The first thing they see is your subject line. And it's your subject line that will determine whether or not they even open your email.

So where should most of your efforts be spent? That's right! On your subject lines.

As you learn to give subject lines the time and effort they deserve, you will see measurable improvements in your open rates.

Let's get started writing subject lines your contacts respond to.

Watch the “Thoughts” Your Subject Lines Inspire

Bad subject lines seem to be ruling my inbox. And I can only imagine what that means for the business owners behind those subject lines. Take a look at a few I’ve seen recently:

“Children are the bridge to heaven”
“The truth about Aztec gold”
“OMG. What a day. Our little Mister-Man”
“STOP Waiting for Strange Women to Make You King”
“Don’t buy this course...”
“It’s been awhile but...”

Email marketing is supposed to be an “ongoing conversation” with your contacts. What are your contacts “saying” after reading your subject line? I’ll give you an idea...because these are the exact thoughts I had when I read these.

Children are the bridge to heaven

Hah! Not today they’re not...(I have 3 very small children)

The truth about Aztec gold

Is there a lie about Aztec gold?

OMG. What a day. Our little Mister-Man

OMG, I don’t need to hear about your day, I’m having a day of my own.

STOP Waiting for Strange Women to Make You King

If I open that, it's going to take me straight to a porn site.

Don't buy this course...

Okay, I won't. (This reverse-psychology strategy has been done very effectively. This one just didn't come off quite right.)

It's been awhile but...

...it's going to be awhile longer.

Really good subject lines won't leave room for dismissal, argument, or disinterest. As you come up with multiple options, choose the one that is compelling and *starts a conversation* with your contact. A conversation **they want to continue**.

Too many times, we come up with something clever or puny or that we think is intriguing. But if your contact doesn't, that email is going straight to the trash. Is there room for humor? Yes, depending on your audience and purpose. Is there room for curiosity? Absolutely! If it comes off right; if your contact reads it and reacts the way you were hoping they would.

But unless you "play it safe" with your subject lines, you're taking the risk of looking very foolish.

Need a real life, bad example? Several years ago, I was working at a company called Infusionsoft. Most of our clients were new to email marketing and they were making poor choices that affected the deliverability of all Infusionsoft customers. We needed to get our customers on an educational webinar and fast!

Someone made the analogy that when one person "peed in the pool" it affected everyone in the pool. That analogy became a subject line that read, "Don't pee in the pool."

No one got it. They didn't get it even after they read the email. When in doubt, go with a subject line that can't be misinterpreted.

Okay. You've seen what happens when a subject line starts the wrong conversation - or gets you tossed in the trash. Now let's look at how great subject lines help you achieve the right results.

Offer Your Contacts What They Need/Want... And They'll Open Your Emails

When writing your subject lines, the most important thing to remember is this - your contacts are busy!

And not only are they busy, but their inbox is cluttered with hundreds of marketing messages. As they sort through their email (deleting messages as fast as they can), your message has got to stand out.

How do you do that? By making your subject line beneficial. Use your subject line to show your prospects you have something they might be interested in. Because all the other headlines they're reading are just noise.

Want some examples?

Let's say your prospects are business owners. And you have an 92-page ebook that shows them how to increase their profits. What would you write to cut through the clutter and get them to open your email? How about:

9 proven building blocks to double your sales

(That subject line not only got people to open, but the email itself led to over 200,000 opt-ins in just under a year.)

What if you promoted autism education through a webinar and wanted more people to sign up? You could try:

Webinar Invite: get puzzling questions about autism answered

(Using this as a subject line got close to a 20% opt-in rate from cold traffic.)

Should we do one more? What if you wanted to tell your contacts about a new event they had probably never heard of? You might couple it with a benefit you know, for sure, they want. Something like:

More valuable resources and SuccessCon

(That subject line got a 46% open rate and the email got a 7% click rate.)

Once you get your contacts into the habit of opening your emails, then you can be a lot more flexible. You can try humor. You can tease them with content that piques their curiosity. You can use one word. And they'll still open the email.

Years ago, I made a huge mistake when sending an email out to a list of 200k. I forgot to include a link to a resource I had referenced. When you do something like that, there's only one choice to make it right...send another email.

The second email went out 10 minutes after the first. And the subject line contained a single word:

Oops

We were carefully tracking the open rate on the first email to see how many people were affected by the mistake. But an interesting thing happened. About 20% more people opened the Oops email than the original email. And then...we saw a huge bump in the open rate of our first email.

I would not suggest purposefully using a tactic like this one. It was a very stressful day. But it did tell us something about subject lines. And we learned that once you've built a solid relationship with your contacts, you can get away with a lot more creativity. Or mistakes.

However, until you reach that point, focus your efforts on proving the content inside the email is worth being opened.

There is one more section to cover, and then, you can get to the stuff you really want: the templates.

Unless You're Testing...Shake Up Your Approach

If you're into automated marketing (and anyone growing a business should be), then you know how easy it is to send out a lot of emails. And send them frequently. But the ability to "set it and forget it" with your marketing means a lot of business owners make assumptions they really shouldn't make.

For example: just because you've sent 3 emails about the same topic to your contacts, doesn't mean they even saw them. But that doesn't stop business owners from writing subject lines like this:

Did you read it yet?

You haven't been responding to my emails

What else do I need to tell you?

You get the idea. The subject lines get more aggressive but without any proof that they need to. Maybe your contact was on vacation for 10 days and never opened their email. Maybe their computer crashed and they didn't see the 2 emails you sent because those emails were never recovered.

Give your contacts the benefit of the doubt.

On the other hand, don't assume the person has NOT read your emails just because they didn't take action. Maybe you just didn't hit the right emotion with your copy that day.

So how do you handle sending multiple emails on the same topic to your contacts...without getting too aggressive or alienating someone who simply hasn't had time to respond?

Switch up the content. Especially the subject line.

As mentioned, maybe what you wrote the first time didn't hit the right buttons. No biggie. You focus on a different benefit or approach. Because more often than not, your product or service has multiple benefits or sub-benefits. You've got to find the one that matters to your contact.

Here is a series of subject lines from a marketer who understands what she's doing. (By the way, her name is Amy Jo Berman, and I love her copy!):

Day 1: Struggling without an agent this pilot season? Is so, you need this...

Day 2: The worst way to try to get an agent is...

Day 3: [Shaira's Story] She got an agent! Here's what she did...

Day 4: [EXPIRING] Save \$44 on Representation Domination (last chance)

If at first you don't succeed? Try again with a little different approach. In 4 emails, you've got the straight-forward benefit, a curiosity approach, a case study, and exclusivity with an expiring offer.

Keep your subject lines fresh and exciting. You're sending a lot of emails. Find the right buttons to push.

Okay, enough from me. Check out these easy-to-use templates.

Subject Line Templates to Get You Started And a Few Thoughts About Each Style

How-To Templates

Pros: The great thing about a how-to subject line is that your contact knows they're about to learn something. Hopefully, something valuable and applicable to them.

Cons: If your contact doesn't want to learn about your topic, they're not going to open the email.

- **How to {something they'll learn how to do} without {a negative side effect of doing that something}**

Examples:

How to write great subject lines without spending hours at your computer

How to cook a gourmet dinner without breaking the bank

How to remove lice (without the risk of infection)

- **How to quickly and easily {something they'll learn}**

Examples:

How to quickly and easily change a flat tire

How to quickly and easily grow your database by 1,000 people a day

How to quickly and easily shed 20 lbs

- **How to {desirable outcome}**

Examples:

How to sell your business for a profit

How to command an audience when you're on stage

How to win a foot race

- **How to {desirable action} and {unexpected benefit}**

Examples:

How to eat more carbs and still lose weight

How to win friends and influence people

How to build muscle and fight cancer

Question Templates

Pros: It's easy to come up with questions. Just think of a common question you ask prospects when speaking face to face. Plus, based on the question you ask, your contact will likely want to "answer". So they'll open the email.

Cons: Depending on the question, your contact might answer the question in their head and then move on.

- **Have you ever wanted to {ideal situation or solution}?**

Examples:

Have you ever wanted to climb Mt. Rushmore?

Have you ever wanted to lose weight while eating junk food?

Have you ever wanted to yell, "I quit!"

- **Wouldn't you like {solution to your prospect's problem}?**

Examples:

Wouldn't you like to work your own hours?

Wouldn't you like to buy a new house?

Wouldn't you like to attract beautiful women?

- **Can you really afford to {what happens if they don't take action}?**

Examples:

Can you really afford to live with your back pain?

Can you really afford to skip out on your education?

Can you really afford to ignore the warning signs of a heart attack?

- **When are you available to discuss {solution you provide}?**

Examples:

When are you available to discuss your retirement portfolio?

When are you available to discuss your childcare options?

When are you available to discuss your divorce plans?

- **Are you still interested in {solution you offer}?**

Examples:

Are you still interested in finding a foreclosure?

Are you still interested in making your home scorpion-proof?

Are you still interested in planning a weekend getaway?

- **How else can I help you {solution you provide}?**

Examples:

How else can I help you keep custody of your children?

How else can I help implement SMS marketing strategies?

How else can I help you teach your child to read?

Personalized Templates

Pros: The more you “know” about your contacts, the more likely you are to close sales. If you’ve got a database that shares interests, birth dates, buying patterns, etc. you can definitely use that to your advantage to strengthen relationships.

Cons: Too much personalization (like putting the person’s name in the subject line every single time) can come across as creepy.

- **A {special occasion} gift for you, {name of person}**

Examples:

A birthday gift for you, Stephanie

A Christmas gift for you, Stephanie

A you’ve-been-a-customer-for-a-year gift for you, Stephanie

- **Your order {name of product} has shipped**

Example:

Your order, a Princess Umbrella, has shipped.

- **{Name of person}, you might enjoy {name of product or service}**

Examples:

Stephanie, you might enjoy our DVD gift set
Stephanie, you might enjoy a buy-one-get-one free message
Stephanie, you might enjoy our recent podcast on caring for bees

- **It's been {length of time} since we discussed {topic of discussion}**

Examples:

It's been a week since we discussed your bankruptcy options
It's been several days since we discussed your plans to travel to France
It's been awhile since we discussed solutions for your struggling student

- **New {product or service} for those who love {product or service purchased in the past}**

Examples:

New cardigans for those who love our spring dresses
New webinar series for those who love our podcasts
New done-for-you services for those who love our talented team

- **Because of your interest in {topic}, join {description of event or membership}**

Examples:

Because of your interest in baseball, join our Hall of Famers Facebook group
Because of your interest in college, join our college costs discussion group
Because of your interest in dog walking, join our free listing of dog walkers

- **The information you requested about {topic}**

Examples:

The information you requested about losing 10 lbs fast

The information you requested about dental surgery

The information you requested about my mentoring program

Story-Telling Templates or Case Study Templates

Pros: People love stories. And if you can show your prospects how someone else benefited from your services or products, they'll be a lot more likely to trust you. And give you a try.

Cons: Story-telling emails are a little bit harder to write than other emails. And you shouldn't use this tactic too often or it loses its appeal.

- **How I went from {bad situation} to {desirable situation}**

Examples:

How I went from struggling single mom to successful business owner

How I went from being a horrible driver to defensive-driving master

How I went from chronically ill to running marathons

- **Discover how {name of case study} {accomplishment} in just {time frame}**

Examples:

Discover how David grew a 6-figure business in just 7 months

Discover how Ann overcame aviophobia in time for her honeymoon in Tahiti

Discover how Sally read 8 books in just 2 days

- **Find out how {surprising object} almost {shocking outcome}**

Examples:

Find out how fortified iron almost killed me

Find out how one tax law almost destroyed my business

Find out how dog poop almost ended my marriage

- **Have you heard the {name of lesson-learning story} story yet?**

Examples:

Have you heard the “double your sales” story yet?

Have you heard the “boy who became football captain” story yet?

Have you heard the “preschool camera hack” story yet?

- **How {someone} discovered {valuable discovery}**

Examples:

How Amy discovered she was allergic to marshmallows

How Suzie discovered her natural talent for tennis

How Mike discovered his dream job (and got hired)

- **{Name of person} {what they achieved} with this {secret, technique, strategy, etc.}**

Examples:

Annie overcame her fertility issues with this natural supplement

Jim saved almost \$100 a week with this one financial tip

Natalie doubled her homepage opt-in with this marketing technique

- **The surprising {value} of {thing}**

Examples:

The surprising healing power of oysters

The surprising effectiveness of text messaging

The surprising ingredient in our award-winning pasta

Offer Templates

Pros: If someone is sitting on the fence about your products or services, a great offer could move them to action.

Cons: Send out too many offer emails, and your prospects and customers get used to waiting for the deal.

- **Get {offer} for your birthday - details included**

Examples:

Get a free meal for your birthday - details included

Get 50% off any item for your birthday - details included

Get an upgrade for your birthday - details included

- **This week, you can enjoy {offer}**

Example:

This week, you can enjoy 30% off your entire purchase

- **Because we love our customers, {offer details}**

Example:

Because we love our customers, we're offering a 2 for 1 deal

- **Going on now - {offer details}**

Example:

Going on now - our 4th of July savings of more than 40%

- **Don't miss our {type of sale} sale - details inside**

Example:

Don't miss our Christmas for Mom sale - details inside

- **Choose {Product A} or {Product B} and {offer}**

Examples:

Choose Paris or London and save 40% on your flight

Choose Zumba or Speed Cycling and you'll get a second class free

Choose Early Entry or Breakfast with a Princess and save 10%

- **{Sale type} sale starts now! See our new inventory**

Example:

Summer-savings sale starts now! See our new inventory

Benefit Templates

Pros: All of your contacts are going to be drawn to what benefits them. If you can show a benefit in the subject line, they'll be a lot more likely to open it.

Cons: It's difficult to clearly articulate benefits and make them enticing enough to get the email opened.

- **{Number of} ways to {obstacle to overcome}**

Examples:

5 ways to free yourself from back pain

10 ways to save money at your favorite grocery store

7 ways to find more time in your day

- **Free {product, service, resource, etc.} to help you {solution you provide}**

Examples:

Free webinar to help you process your grief

Free blog series to help you organize your home

Free consultation to help you identify your money-wasters

- **The easiest way to {obstacle to overcome}**

Examples:

The easiest way to approach a beautiful woman

The easiest way to find your dream job

The easiest way to cut your own hair

- **How {product or service} solves {problem they're facing}**

Examples:

How Bug-Free solves your worst pest problems

How Clear Face solves your acne problem with one application

How I Can Speak solves your fear of public speaking

- **{Number of} secrets to help you {solution you provide} **

Examples:

3 secrets to help you save your struggling marriage

9 secrets to help you land that promotion

4 secrets to help you sell more makeup

Exclusivity/Scarcity Templates

Pros: This is for fence sitters and people who have a fear of missing out. By creating real scarcity, you encourage prospects to take action now.

Cons: If it's not done right, it's not believable.

- **Only a handful of people will {action you want them to take}**

Examples:

Only a handful of people will throw out their old sales scripts

Only a handful of people will decrease their ad spend and increase their profits

Only a handful of people will join us for this controversial webinar

- **Exclusive invite to {action you want them to take}**

Examples:

Exclusive invite to join our webinar: How to Cook Like a Gourmet

Exclusive invite to become our new case study

Exclusive invite to support your local band

- **Final offer to {offer}**

Examples:

Final offer to critique your website for free

Final offer to get your makeover done this week

Final offer to buy your home at a fair price

- **For our valued customers only - {offering}**

Examples:

For our valued customers only - free samples

For our valued customers only - an invite to a Facebook support group

For our valued customers only - movie night

- **{Number of} {thing} available**

Examples:

7 consultation slots available

3 discounted AC units available

9 half-price tickets available

- **24 hour sale - {description of sale}**

Examples:

24 hour sale - 50% off our spring fashions

24 hour sale - webinar training + personal coaching

24 hour sale - \$15 to put toward any ebooks you choose

- **Close Out on {product or service} - buy now**

Example:

Close Out on 12 speed SCHWINN bikes - buy now

Quick Fix Templates

Pros: Who doesn't love a fast, effective solution.

Cons: You don't want to become the permanent quick-fix solution

- **You could {solution to problem} today!**

Examples:

You could lose 5 pounds today!

You could close a 5K client today!

You could finish your to-do list today!

- **A quick solution for the {description of target market}**

Examples:

A quick solution for the last-minute Christmas shopper

A quick solution for the mom-on-the-run

A quick solution for the eat-on-the-run family

- **You're in luck - you can still {action}**

Examples:

You're in luck - you can still get seats for tonight's game

You're in luck - you can still sign up for our master class

You're in luck - you can still get the recording for the webinar

- **Last minute {type of product or service} for {person or benefit}**

Examples:

Last minute tooth whitening for a bright smile

Last minute consultations for busy moms

Last minute appointments for dental emergencies

- **How to fix your {problem they have} forever**

Examples:

How to fix your follow up failure forever

How to fix your struggles with eczema forever

How to fix your broken relationships forever

- **{Name of offering} for when you're in a pinch**

Examples:

Perfect gift ideas for when you're in a pinch

5 minute hairstyles for when you're in a pinch

Proven conversation starters for when you're in a pinch

- **No {undesirable thing}, no {undesirable thing} - just {quick fix}**

Examples:

No prescriptions, no oils - just instant relief from itching

No crazy diets, no tortuous workouts - just easy weight loss

No fighting, no teasing - just our instant recipe for helping your kids get along

- **Do-it-yourself solutions to {problem it solves} quickly**

Examples:

Do-it-yourself solutions to kill off pests quickly

Do-it-yourself solutions to creating science fair projects quickly

Do-it-yourself solutions to fix the bathroom leak quickly

Short, Descriptive Templates

Pros: Your contacts are going to appreciate knowing what you are emailing them about. If you're straightforward, they don't have to guess and, assuming you're offering them content they want, it will lead to better open rates.

Cons: More sensational copy sometimes pulls in the curious contact that the straightforward approach might not.

- **News about our upcoming {event}**

Examples:

News about our upcoming webinar

News about our upcoming product release

- **{Something} now available**

Examples:

Webinar recording now available

Valuable ebook on copywriting now available

More consultation slots now available

- **{Offering}: {Name of offering}**

Examples:

Ebook: How to Grow a Thriving Garden with Less Effort

Exclusive webinar invite: The 3 Step System to Becoming a Better Manager

Free samples of our new flavor: Chocolate Cashew Crunch

- **The {descriptive something} for {target market}**

Examples:

The ultimate gift for golfers

The award-winning cookbook for meatlovers

The “Makes Sense” organization system for really busy moms

- **We need your {what you need}**

Examples:

We need your web address for a site review

We need your feedback on our latest product

We need your referrals so we can send you commissions

Now, are there other subject line types? Absolutely. But some I didn't share (like "humor" or "curiosity") on purpose. First of all, there isn't usually a template for those styles. Second, they are really difficult to get right. Master these other types first and then try your hand at some of the more unique styles.

Writing subject lines doesn't have to be difficult, but you should give it the time and attention it deserves. If you can't come up with a subject line on your own, use a template. The more emails you send, the better you'll get until subject lines become second nature.