

MIXTE TIPS

Writing a successful email

The email inbox is a hectic crowd of distractions and impulse. A reader decides within seconds whether or not you're worthy of their attention. Check out these tips to win the inbox!

What's good email?

The best form of communication is two people who know and trust each other, talking face-to-face, undistracted, about something they both care about, with both people offering value to one another and working together. Good email gets as close to this ideal connection as possible. Every email you send

What's bad email?

A one-way blast from an untrustworthy, faceless source of useless, difficult-to-understand information meant for no one in particular. This is junk mail. We're so used to seeing it, we don't think twice before throwing it away without opening it. Every email you write should move further away from junk mail.

How to cut through the clutter

Sender name

The sender name is how people determine the context of the subject line and the trustworthiness of an email.

- Send as a real person, not an organization (in the email, use an image of their face and the voice and format they would use if they were emailing a single person).
- Be consistent in the type of emails each sender name sends. Help recipients get to know them and trust that when their eye catches that name, they will always receive a specific type of information that is consistently valuable to them.

Subject line

A subject line is a promise that must accomplish two things:

- Grab attention and be enticing
 - Your toolbox:
 - Urgency (this is important now)
 - Personal relevance (this is important to you now)
 - Promise a story (John used to be green. Now he's blue.)
 - Promise value (here's how Mixte can help you)
 - Intrigue interest with unique information (something crazy happened to John)
 - Emojis (use sparingly)
 - Unusual formatting, like all lowercase text or sentence punctuation ("I did something cool." vs. "I did something cool" vs. "I Did Something Cool") (use sparingly)

- Be honest
 - Your subject line is a promise, if you break the promise, readers won't trust you. When you deliver exactly what you promised, readers will engage with your content more deeply and open them more often.
 - Your toolbox:
 - If it's not an emergency, or truly urgent, don't tell them it is (you may have a real emergency later, don't cry wolf)
 - Avoid all-caps and exclamation marks
 - Avoid cliché link-bait language, even if it's accurate, it doesn't seem that way (you'll be shocked by this result, you won't believe this, if you don't read this you'll be sorry)

Preview text

Your preview text should reinforce and enhance the promise you're making with your sender name and subject line.

Example:

Sender name: John From Nonprofit

Subject Line: How you helped us reach victory

This subject line is promising a story that offers the reader connection to something larger and a feeling of pride. This preview text reinforces and enhances that promise:

Preview text: We weren't sure we'd make it, but you came through more than we ever could've expected. Now the community is better and it's all because of how great you are. Here's the quick story to learn all the details that we know will make you feel even better.

Note: The preview text is taken from the first bit of text in the body of the email. That means that...

- You can make the preview text invisible in the body of the email by making it the same font color as the background color. Make the font size 1 px so it doesn't take up space.
- If an image appears before the first text in an email, the preview text may include the alt-text or file name of the image. Put the text first to avoid this.
- Different email browsers show different lengths of preview text. Some will show only 100 or so characters, some show more than 400. Make sure your text accomplishes its main objective early.

Identify and achieve your objective

Before you start building your email, you need to form a clear objective. Achieving this objective will inform every decision you make. Building your email creative brief will help you form this objective.

What is my objective?

The objective of your email needs to achieve two things:

- Give your reader something valuable
- Give your client something valuable
- Examples:
 - For my reader to make a donation to my client and feel great about it.
 - For my reader to attend my client's event and have a great time.
 - For my reader to enjoy learning about my client's victory on the client's website and feel happy that they did.

How to achieve my objective?

The message of every email you send should utilize most or all of the following principles:

Write as a real person

Readers want to hear their information from the mouth of a real person. Mimic the format, tone and voice of one person emailing another. Speak through the lens of the personal experience of the email sender. Share life moments and authentic feelings. Include an image of their face.

Write to a single person, not a crowd

How do you make a single email relevant and tailored to every recipient? Create an audience proxy, an ideal person who represents the average characteristics of your subscribers. Imagine they are real and, with all aspects of your email, speak directly to them. Write the email they will love.

- Example: [CLIENT]'s audience proxy is named Joan. She lives in Encinitas and works as an architect. Joan walks her dog on the beach as often as she can and loves to hike and paddleboard on the weekends. Joan is worried about her environment and knows her water is important, but often doesn't know what to do. She only gets involved as a volunteer if it's fun and she knows someone else at the event. She likes to stay up-to-date on the latest events that affect her water, but that she doesn't see in the newspaper. Deep down, she just wants to feel like she's making a difference, and she's part of the solution, not the problem.

Story is king

All information is more compelling and memorable when told as a story. Take the information you want to communicate and frame it with the following elements:

- One person
- Beginning
- Movement (something happens that changes things in the beginning)
- One moment, experienced by your person
- Example:
 - Information without story:
 - Last week, [CLIENT] performed a flash mob in downtown D.C. involving more than 100 people. The flash mob mimicked a large group exercise class, led by a trainer. The flash mob assembled to the call, "Let's get moving, America!"
 - Information with story:
 - Last week, Jill (one person) stood in front of the Washington monument feeling plenty sweaty, but she hadn't even started exercising yet (moment). Finally, she conquered her nerves (movement) and shouted, "Let's get moving, America!" and more than one hundred exercisers assembled for a flash mob group fitness class.

Attention, interest, desire, action

The order you present your information matters. The best way to get people to click on a link or take an action is with the AIDA formula:

- Attention: First grab their attention. In a single issue email, this is the subject line and the headline or first sentence.
- Interest: After grabbing attention, interest and intrigue your reader. A compelling story, surprising facts and new information all create interest.
- Desire: Sell the reader on exactly how they will benefit from taking the action you'd like them to take. Don't just tell them what they'll get, tell them how awesome it will feel.
- Action: Tell them exactly how to take the action you want them to take. Make it easy.

Make value to reader crystal clear

Every email must give something to your reader and the reader must realize it. Communicate how your email will benefit readers explicitly and early. In the AIDA formula, this is the “desire” step.

Be ultra-easy to read

People read email quickly, haphazardly and skeptically, looking through lots of noise and chaos for anything relevant, and deleting the rest. If your content doesn't look short, clean, clear and dead-easy to read, people will move on.

- Break up blocks of text with subheadings, line breaks and bullet points.
- Use less words to say more. Cut out anything unnecessary.
- Don't use more than two or three fonts and font sizes.
- Use only one or two colors besides black.
- Always check that your email is simple to read and navigate through on a smartphone.