

Email Marketing: Subject Lines

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The subject line for your email marketing publications and newsletters can often be the most important few words in your email. A good subject line will get you past a spam filter as well as get you read. A bad one will ruin your day — and your delivery ratios. So here are some examples of good subject lines and bad ones to help you optimize your subject lines' inbox delivery rates.

According to MailChimp.com's Subject Line Comparison Study, that analyzed over 43 million emails, the following 20 subject lines represent the type of subject lines that consistently experienced high delivery rates (60-87%).

1. [COMPANYNAME] Sales & Marketing Newsletter
2. Eye on the [COMPANYNAME] Update (Oct 31 - Nov 4)
3. [COMPANYNAME] Staff Shirts & Photos
4. [COMPANYNAME] May 2005 News Bulletin!
5. [COMPANYNAME] Newsletter - February 2006
6. [COMPANYNAME] Newsletter - January 2006 [*IFNAME!* *ILNAME!*]
7. [COMPANYNAME] and [COMPANYNAME] Invites You!
8. Happy Holidays from [COMPANYNAME]
9. ATTENTION [COMPANYNAME] Staff!

10. ATTENTION [COMPANYNAME] West Staff!!
11. Invitation from [COMPANYNAME]
12. [COMPANYNAME] Jan/Feb 2006 Newsletter
13. Website news - Issue 3
14. Upcoming Events at [COMPANYNAME]
15. [COMPANYNAME] Councils: Letter of Interest
16. [COMPANYNAME] Coffee Exchange - Post-Katrina Update
17. We're Throwing a Party
18. October 2005 Newsletter
19. [COMPANYNAME]: 02.10.06
20. [COMPANYNAME] Racing Newsletter

The following subject lines experienced low delivery rates (1-14%)

1. Last Minute Gift - We Have The Answer
2. Valentines - Shop Early & Save 10%
3. Give a Gift Certificate this Holiday
4. Valentine's Day Salon and Spa Specials!
5. Gift Certificates - Easy & Elegant Giving - Let Them Choose
6. Need More Advertising Value From Your Marketing Partner?
7. [COMPANYNAME] Pioneers in Banana Technology
8. [COMPANYNAME] Moves You Home for the Holidays
9. Renewal

(c o n t i n u e d)

[c o n t i n u e d]

10. Technology Company Works with [COMPANYNAME] on Bananas Efforts
11. [COMPANYNAME] Update - A Summary of Security and Emergency Preparedness News
12. Now Offering Banana Services!
13. It's still summer in Tahoe!
14. [COMPANYNAME] endorses [COMPANYNAME] as successor
15. [COMPANYNAME] Holiday Sales Event
16. The Future of International Trade
17. [COMPANYNAME] for your next dream home.
18. True automation of your Banana Research
19. [COMPANYNAME] Resort - Spring into May Savings
20. You Asked For More...

Here's the principal idea: stop trying so hard. It's better to be accurate about the content of your correspondence. Be interesting but straightforward, not salesy or pushy. Subject lines don't have to jump off the page and grab someone's attention, they only have to identify themselves. Stay with the soft

sell. It will not only get you read but it will help you build trust and interest with your potential customer.

I like the way MailChimp puts it: "the best subject lines TELL what's inside, the worst ones SELL what's inside."

Further Studies

In a follow-up study, MailChimp.com studied over 200 million emails and concluded that there are three specific words to avoid: "help", "percent off", and "reminder". They also found that subject lines work best when kept to 50 or fewer characters. And localization helps. If you can work in the city or town that's relevant to the content, it increases people's interest.

Again, relevance and brevity are your friends when it comes to Subject Lines. Couple that with a message that rings true and provides useful information and you'll have an email communication that is sought after rather than avoided.

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