WRITING KILLER SUBJECT LINES

presented by Maxmail

What's Inside

Hi! Writing a subject line is not just an art. It's a science. Did you know 65% of people open emails based on the subject line? That's high. This guide is going to tell you what works and what doesn't when writing subject lines, based on the analysis of hundreds of millions of emails. Maxmail delivers your emails, now we'll tell you how you can drastically improve the performance of your email campaigns. All by learning the art and science of subject lines. Here's what's inside:

- How long a subject line should be
- Words to use
- Words that trigger spam filters
- Positively affect open rates
- What to avoid in subject lines
- Creating actionable subject lines

Need help? Contact our support team or if you prefer, our Support Docs can take you through step-by-step.

Increase your open rates. Let's get started.

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Subject Lines and Open Rates

How much time do you spend writing the subject line? What are your open rates? Navigate to the **Reports** tab. Select a campaign and view your open rate. What is it? Across all industries, average open rates are between 25% and 40%.
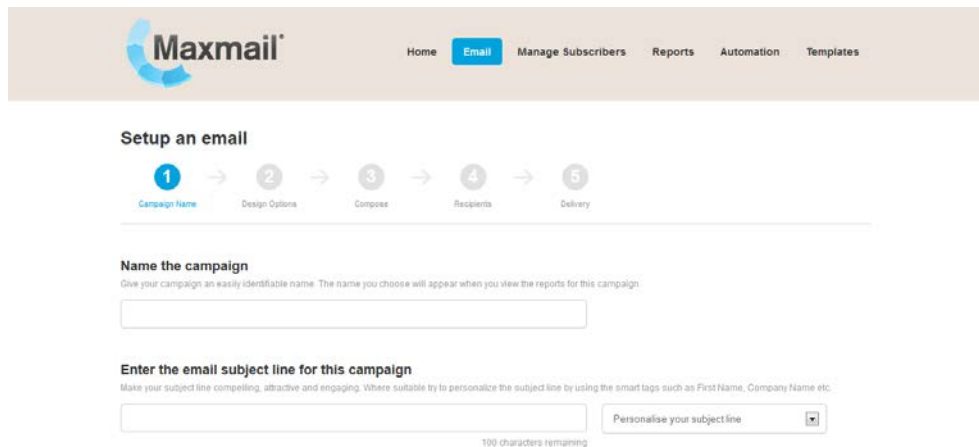
If you are sending out one email to your list and not using the segmenting features, you will get fewer opens, lower click through rates and more unsubscribers. To earn your place in a subscriber's inbox your emails need to be well designed and contain relevant content. To be opened they need an exceptional subject line.

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How Long?

When you setup an email campaign you have a 100 character limit for the subject line. Short subject lines perform better than long subject lines.

Keep subject lines short. Under 50 characters works best. Statistics find that subject lines with 28-39 characters get higher open and click through rates.

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Words to Use and Not Use in Subject Lines

Words that increase open rates

If you are in Retail, use the words "Free Delivery" (+50% higher open rate) "Sale" (+23% higher open rate) and "Voucher" (++20% higher open rate).

Other words that work well in subject lines are "Alert" (+38% higher open rate) and "Daily" or "Weekly" (+27% higher open rates).

For B2B subject lines, use the words "Breaking" (+35% higher open rates), "Editor" (+28% higher open rates) and "Update" (+26% higher open rates).

Words that decrease open rates

If you are writing B2B, words not to use in subject lines are "Learn" (-35% lower open rates), "Forecast" (-34% lower open rates).and "Report" (-23% lower open rates).

For retailers avoid using "Save" (-27% lower open rates), "Cheap" (-67% lower open rates) and "Free" (-23% lower open rates).

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Words that trigger spam filters

Of the 144 billion emails that were sent last year, 85% was spam. The list of words that trigger spam filters is many. For an exhaustive list of trigger words check out this Hubspot blog post:

http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/30684/The-Ultimate-List-of-Email-SPAM-Trigger-Words.aspx

This list is a good reference when writing your next subject lines. An easy way to avoid getting trapped in a spam filter is to avoid using trigger words in your subject lines and choose the ones that are engaging for your target audience.

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What to Include in Subject Lines

Personalization

If you do not have data to segment your list by location, use geo-location in the subject line if the email content is region specific. Using geo-location communicates the relevance of the email to the subscriber.

Ask questions

Frame your subject line as a question at the types of problems your customers need solutions to. Whether it is wardrobe solutions, "How to wear white this winter", tech solutions, "The accessories you need for iPhone 5 now". Questions create actionable subject lines that increase email campaign performance.

Draw attention

Use caps in your subject line on words that work well in subject lines, for example "SALE". Just not the entire line.

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What to Avoid in Subject Lines

Faking relationships

Using FWD in subject lines is cheating. It implies the email comes from a trusted source when in fact it is not. A sure way to get people unsubscribing.

Using the subscribers name in the subject heading can reduce open rates. 70% of people say they receive so many emails with their name that it no longer makes a difference.

Attention grabbing

Using Emoji or other characters and symbols can negatively affect open rates.

Don't use all caps. Using caps for a single word, for example "10 nail polish trends you NEED to try now" can be affective, just not the entire line.

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Actionable Subject Lines

What is the objective of your email campaign? Is it a welcome back email with an offer to get customers to shop with you? An event invitation you want subscribers to register for? Content you want your subscribers to download? Subject lines needs to let the reader know what they can do or get in the email.

How to write an actionable subject line

The following is a subject line from an online city guide. The email featured a new restaurant opening, a new menu at another and a list of the seven best food courts in Auckland.

AUCKLAND /// The Seven Best Food Courts in Auckland, the Coffee General, Miss Clawdys, Golden Dawn + Five Days of Specials at Tyler Street Garage

The above subject line is 145 characters, way too long.

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There is no call to action and although there is geo-localization in the subject line, the website is city specific. You wouldn't sign up for the newsletter if you didn't want to know about the goings on in Auckland.

A more effective subject line would read:

Visit Now - New Openings + Save now - 7 Cheap Eats

Now 50 characters, over half of the subject line would also be displayed on most smartphones. The reader knows what he/she can do from reading this subject line. Using verbs such as 'visit' and 'save' provoke action and interest without having to list the entire content of the email.

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