

Your Subject Line - Fabulous or Filtered

63.3% of respondents cite the "From" line as the most important factor motivating them to open emails (up from 60% in 2002).

The report asserts that the increase is most likely driven by the importance of identifying a sender and distinguishing legitimate email from spam.

While the report did not update the data on the importance of the Subject line, it is safe to say that your Subject line is the second most compelling reason your email gets opened. In 2002:

35% of respondents cited the "Subject" line as the most important factor motivating them to open emails.

As promised, this issue is all about the "Subject" line and how to make sure yours serves as an advantage in getting your emails delivered and opened, not an obstacle. Here's our friend and marketing expert, Nancy Michaels, with some great Subject line tips.

The Importance of a Good Email Subject Line

You put a lot of work into crafting the perfect email, right? But how much thought and creativity do you put into the Subject line? Many people treat this important part of the email as an afterthought when, in fact, it is part of the first impression your readers will receive - one that can get your email delivered and convince recipients to open it and read further.

It's helpful to think of the Subject line of your email as the headline of a news story. The headline draws the reader in, enticing her to get the whole story. With an email Subject line, however, you only have three to five words to do this. Following are some tips to help you reach out to readers with winning Subject lines.

Brand It. According to the DoubleClick Study: When asked how they define spam, 95.5% of respondents said, "emails from senders that are unknown to me." So, make sure your email conveys who you are. Do this by incorporating your brand into the Subject line, especially if the 'from' field does not make this clear. And, be consistent in your branding so that recipients become familiar with your communications.

Keep it Short. The typical email Subject line window has room for between 30 and 40 characters including spaces. The recipient will decide whether to open or delete your email in 3 seconds or less. And if the Subject line is too long to fit in the window, the recipient is likely to delete your email. Make up for your lack of space with solid words that offer value.

Spell Out the Benefits Not the Features. Let the reader know what's in it for him, before he even opens the email. State a clear

benefit; let the recipient know how your offer or content will save him money, time, or otherwise improve his life.

According to the DoubleClick Study:
Of all types of subject lines, 59.5% of all respondents say discount offers are the primary motivational factor for opening emails, while 48.6% say they are motivated by compelling news and information.

Never Mislead. According to the DoubleClick Study: When asked how they define spam, 95.5% of respondents said, "emails intended to trick me into opening them." The use of misleading Subject lines is also punishable by law in some states. So, be honest and straightforward in your Subject line.

Overstating your offer or benefit is also a bad idea. Spam-wary people are sensitive to inflated claims and the possibility of scams. If your Subject line sounds too good to be true, recipients won't give a second thought to hitting the 'delete' button.

Make it Urgent. If appropriate, give the recipient a reason to open the email right away, such as a limited time offer.

Don't Be on a First-Name Basis. At least not in the Subject line. This is primarily because Subject line personalization is a tactic that spammers have adopted, but secondarily because it is a waste of valuable real estate. Better to personalize the body of the email and leave the all-important Subject line to carefully chosen words that will compel the recipient to open your message.

Easy on the Punctuation. In many cases, you can eliminate punctuation altogether. Subject lines don't even need to end in a period. And by all means, stay away from exclamation points. These are highly likely to get your email filtered. Unless your Subject line is a question (and therefore needs a question mark), it's best to stay away from punctuation.

DON'T USE ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. Subject lines rendered in all caps are a one-way ticket to "filterville" or at least the bulk mail folder. If your email does make it through, all caps have become a signal to recipients that an email may be spam -- a rap that will send yours straight to the recycle bin.

Proofread. Check your Subject line for errors before you hit the 'send' button. Run it through spell check, and have someone you trust give it a read as well. Nothing can undermine someone's credibility like incorrect grammar or misspelled words.

Email Promotions That Deliver Results