EMAIL MARKETING

BEST PRACTICES

agillic act on insight

SUBJECTS AND PREHEADERS

> ❝ *Tell it don't sell it*

Your subjects and preheaders can make all the difference to your email. They are the most sensitive of all things email related. If you don't get them right, you are likely to miss out on a significant amount of opens.

People receive a lot of unsolicited emails these days and can recognize spam in an instant. The majority of these emails want you to engage with fishy content by using flashy wording in the subject and preheader text.

SUBJECTS

First, it's important to understand that you need to make it very clear who you are so the recipient knows what to expect of the email. Once you've established who you are, it's important to explain the content you have in your email rather than try to sell it. Emails that have the best open rates usually have subjects that 'tell' the content instead of selling it.

Take the following examples:

✓ *[Company] Newsletter #3 2016*
Notice how the content of the email has been explained without selling anything?

✗ *Big Sales this Weekend*
Notice the use of flashy words to catch the attention of the readers? It's just selling the content.

The only time flashy subjects are justified are when they are expected; for example; if the recipient signed up for notifications on sales.

PREHEADERS

The preheader is a text excerpt of your email generated by email clients to give your readers a preview of what is inside. Email clients will use the first characters of your emails so it's important to include a preheader at the start of your HTML email templates otherwise you may find that your preheader text is 'Can't see this email? View it online.'

The preheader functions the same way as the subject; a text you can use to tell the recipient what they can expect to find in your email. Thus the same principle goes for the preheader as with the subject - do not sell what is inside, describe what is inside. In this case supplement the subject, don't spend valuable characters on repeating yourself.

The character count on preheaders varies. Some clients use a full count on both subject and preheader text, others do not and some do not even display a preheader at all. Gmail displays about 100 characters and iPhones display 140.

People quickly decide whether to open an email or not so make the preheader short and precise.

EMOJICONS

We all know the power of a smiley when we text each other. It makes all the difference in a text. Messages without a visual representation of emotions can feel very clinical and sterile and can often be mistaken for being negative in some way. When you use emojicons to support your text and to express a positive state of mind it often has a positive effect with your readers.

> **"** *Positive emotional attachment*

Image that you create a positive emotional attachment with your readers through a little heart symbol or thumbs up within your emails or subjects and preheaders. Would that impact your brand in a positive way? Some reports show an increase of 10-15% in open rate (Litmus, 2012). Our take on it: a reported increase of 10-15% in open rates makes the experiment worth the while.

Not all email clients support emojicons though. In addition, not all clients support the same symbols. The fallback for unsupportive email clients are a square instead of the icon itself so you'll notice quickly if the icons doesn't work as intended. Also every client renders an icons individually. Gmail might show the icon one way while iPhones show them differently.

Carefully consider the use and decide whether you want to experiment with icons. Remember to test and test again.

So go ahead and try it out. You can get icons from a variety of places but to get you started we have supplied a list that is tested to work in most major email clients. Go to http://agillic.com/resources/emojicons/ and grab some icons to test out. You can either copy and paste the icons from the page or download the text file with all the icons in it.

CALL TO ACTIONS

Click Me

" *Describe what you achieve by clicking*

Call to actions are an important tool to engage the reader through clicks. They often describe links or buttons which are the center of attention in your emails and are used to generate traffic to your chosen web destination.

So what do you need to know about them?

- Keep it simple and make it clear what you want from the reader. Knowing how to write to your readers is important.
- Use engaging and powerful words but do not make it too long.
- Do not use call to actions on an image, It can be confusing and sometimes entirely overlooked.
- Make it stand out. Let it have a suitable size on both desktop/web client as well as mobile clients.
- Consider the use of CSS3 animations but do not overdo it.
- Do not make too many. Choices require more effort from the reader.
- Make it clear that your call to action is the only thing to consider engaging with. Have a Call to Action within the first 500px so readers can take an action without needing to scroll too much.
- Lastly...test. Test different Call to Actions. Placement, Size, Wording, Design, all of it, and see how your readers respond.

Do not describe the action it takes to achieve something, instead describe what you achieve by clicking. Consider these 2 examples:

Download

Read the PDF
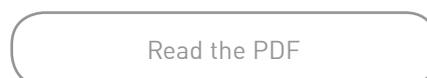
If we can avoid downloading anything we will. It's an unnecessary action. But we would, most likely, want to read a PDF. So there is more incentive to click on something that reads like the latter rather than the former.

EMBEDDED VIDEO
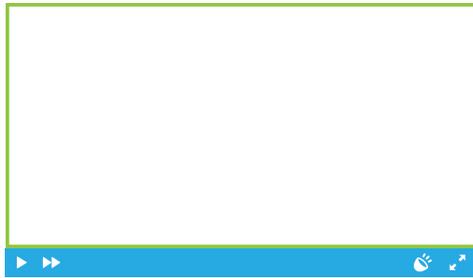
Think about it

We can actually begin to think about video in emails now. IOS is doing a great job of playing video in some of its clients, Apple Mail for mac was one of the first clients to utilize embedded video. Thunderbird 13 is now on to it as well, along with Outlook.com and slowly some others.

It is still not possible to include a YouTube video in a newsletter. YouTube videos are based on JavaScript and as such cannot be displayed, and probably never will be. In order for a video to work, you need a full path to the file on a server and a fallback image for those unsupportive clients. With that, you are good to go. Of course, as it is with everything, you need to know your audience. If your audience does not use clients that can display video, you might want to reconsider. However, video is fun. It makes a huge difference for the people who are able to see it. A survey by Email Monks and GetResponse (socialmouths. com, 2014) noted the following:

- An increase of 55% in click-through rates is not unheard of
- 44% more time spent reading the email is possible
- 41% more exposure through sharing and forwarding
- A 24% increase in conversion rates

*Unfortunately, iOS 8 and iOS 9 prevent video playback at the moment. Video support was scrapped in iOS 8 and continued on to 9 so it's not clear whether it will be supported in the near future.

BACKGROUND IMAGES

We are often told that we cannot use background images because certain clients do not support them. While this is true, there is a workaround. Background images can be visually pleasing element in your email that can be used for image tile backgrounds or full images with text displayed on top.

Granted there are issues that can arise from the use of background images but they differ from layout to layout, as do the solutions. Talk to us at Agillic about your ideas and we can find a suitable solution together. Be advised though; currently we cannot change the background image in Agillic Dialogue, the image will be the same across all emails.

CUSTOM FONTS

Custom fonts are often made into images to make sure they display nicely. In addition, images are usually hidden from the recipient at first. Now you can enhance your emails with fonts that stand out and look good, even when images are hidden. And they are easy to implement.

Using fonts in emails has always been very limited due to the few standard web fonts, like Arial, Times New Roman, Verdana etc. Now you can use your own fonts, provided that you have them in the woff2 format. The font has to be located on your own or our servers before they can be used. Alternatively you can use Google's open library of fonts (https://www.google.com/fonts).

You should also consider a fallback font for those clients that do not support google fonts. Outlook specifically does not support many email features and google fonts are no exception. No problem though, the fallbacks take care of that.

ALTERNATIVE TEXTS
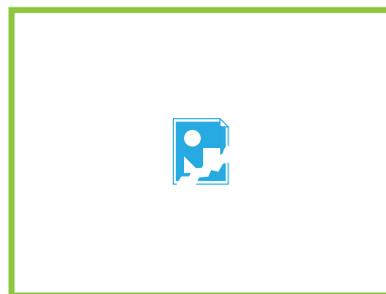
Also known as the tooltip in Agillic Dialogue. You find it by clicking an image in the content manager. Alternative text is a powerful tool to engage your recipients before images are shown in their clients. The only client out there displaying images by default is Gmail. Therefore, it is safe to say that many people are presented with an email with no images.

To make this experience better we can style our alternative texts in a creative way. Imagine your logo. You probably have a company name, but it is unrecognizable before images are shown. Enter alternative text (Tooltips). Write your company name as the alternative text and style it to look like your logo. You are limited to font- families, font color and font size for now, but that can be enough to present your brand the right way.

OPT IN / OPT OUT
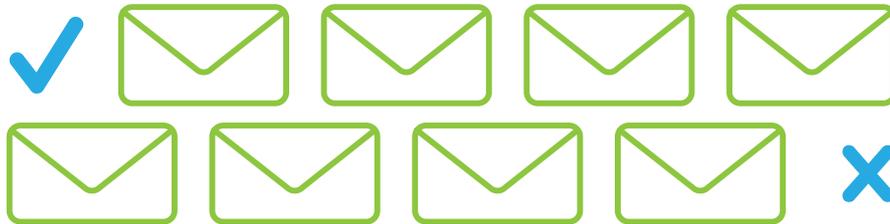
The important unsubscribe text. The one thing that you do not want in your emails but are required to add. Or do you really not want it?

The thing about unsubscribing is that it is part of a relationship between you and your readers. Not only is it required but you also want to tell your recipients that they can get out of this whenever they chose. It's like in a store, you wouldn't invite people in for a sale and then lock the doors.

> **It's like in a store, you wouldn't invite people in for a sale and then lock the doors**

Therefore...

- You want the link to be visible. Do not hide it in large chunks of legal text.

- Use terms that people know, like unsubscribe or opt-out.

- Make a page where readers can easily manage their preferences and personal details. This is easily achievable through Agillic Dialogue's questionnaires and landing pages.

- When recipients choose to unsubscribe, make sure that they know they have unsubscribed from your emails. Represent your brand and follow them out with a page that thanks them and clearly states who you are.

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST... SPAM
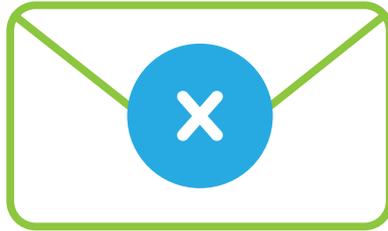
Don't buy lists or else...

There is a lot to be said about how to avoid ending up in the spam folder. The best practices on the server side of things are already taken care of by Agillic.

Here follows a checklist of things that you can take into account:

- ☑ Keep in touch with your audience regularly - too many bounces is a sign of old lists

- ☑ Never use deceptive headers, from names, reply-to address or subject lines

- ☑ Never purchase lists with email addresses - those have a high rating in spam abuse reports and that is something you definitely do not want

- ☑ Always provide a valid unsubscribe link

- ☑ Always include your physical mailing address

- ☑ Don't talk about lots of money or money back guarantees, some sort of breakthrough, or a mortgage pitch

- ☑ Avoid excessively using exclamation marks

- ☑ Don't use all caps (Especially in the subject and preheaders)

- ☑ Don't use brightly colored fonts

- ☑ Don't use many images with little to no text

- ☑ Don't use the word 'test' in the subject

- ☑ Do not send to inactive or stale lists (permissions generally go stale within 6 months) - subscriber engagement is a huge part of getting to the inbox and low activity makes the ISPs bulk the campaigns to the spam folder and block the domain and IP

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