



## **The Content of Your Message: Creating a Successful Email**

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**A Whitepaper from Topica  
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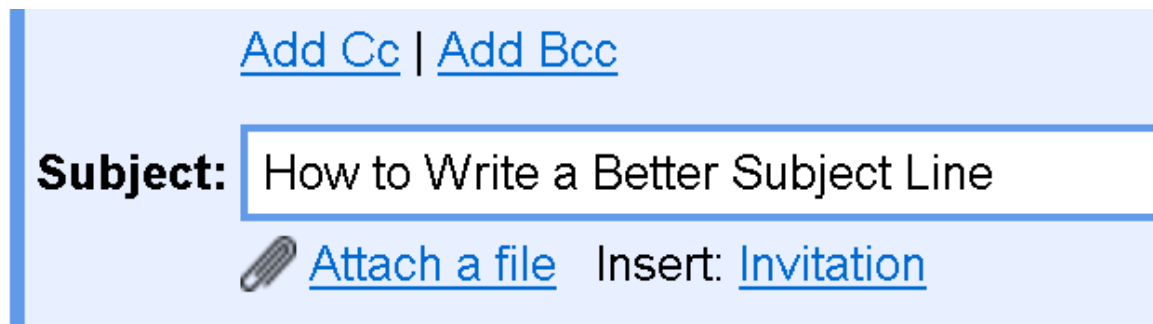
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## Introduction

**A successful email involves many aspects. The content of your message, from your subject line to the appearance of your text, will determine whether or not your message gets opened, read, and produces the results you want. In this white paper we will describe hints and tips to make sure you're getting the most out of your email marketing. We start with the all important subject line, talk about reputation and content score, and finish with six secrets for getting your message across.**

Where it all begins, **the Subject Line**



The subject line may be the most important part of the entire email. Think about it, when you get an email what is the first you see? The subject line. First, you should double or even triple check for spelling and grammar errors; nothing turns people off like poor English.

Then you have to make it interesting. If it's not appealing, attractive or informative, your subscribers are not opening the message. Sometimes your message might not even make it into the inbox if you use the wrong kind of language. We'll discuss content scores next, but basically you want to make sure your subject line is direct, but not dull. You want to catch the readers eye and peak their interest enough to get them to choose your message out of all the others in their inbox. Look back at past campaigns and learn from the subject lines that worked well for you and others that didn't. Test different subject lines on small audiences before sending to all your subscribers to get an idea of what results you can expect. Lastly, always think to yourself, would I open this?

## Making Sure Your Message Gets Through, Reputation & Content Score

Keeping your reputation high and your content score low is the key to successful deliveries. The following tips will help you do just that. First, make sure your emailing the right people. Use an opt in method to ensure you have correct, valid email address and the people on your list actually want to receive your messages or newsletters. Otherwise you may get marked as spam by users who don't want your messages, which can kill your reputation. Another way to avoid this issue is to make sure every message you send includes a link to unsubscribe from the newsletter or any future messages. It's better to have lots of people unsubscribe than lots of people marking your messages as spam. To avoid accidentally getting flagged as spam you should try to send your messages as regularly as possible. Whether it's once a month or once a week your customers will know what to expect and when to expect it if you keep things consistent.

To keep your content score down you want to avoid clutter. Don't use lots of different colors, size texts, or too many images. You want to keep things simple and consistent between your html and text versions to have the lowest score possible. By law, you are also required to include company contact information on any message you send out. Lastly, test your message. Send it to a few of your own accounts first and see if the message gets through to your inbox, or if you have to go fishing through your junk. While having a low score doesn't necessarily guarantee your message will make it through to an inbox a high score definitely hurts your chances.

**Content Checker Results**

Shown below are the results of checking your content against current email marketing best practices. Lower scores are better, a score of 5.00 or higher will likely result in your message being classified as spam. [See below](#) for additional detail.

Text	Score
No matching rule	0

HTML	Score
Message only has text/html MIME parts	1.204
Message is 80% to 90% HTML	0.027
HTML included in message	0.001
	<b>1.232</b>

Multi-Part	Score
Message is 80% to 90% HTML	0.027
HTML included in message	0.001
	<b>0.028</b>

Content checking rules are based on industry analyses of what content and formatting correlates with spam. Triggering a single rule or multiple rules does not mean that your mail is spam, and even properly permissioned email that is desired by the recipient may trigger these rules. However, keeping your score low can help prevent having your mail misclassified as spam by some ISPs and can improve deliverability.

A total score of 5.0 or higher means your message will likely be classified as spam by ISPs using this system. To lower your score, change the content of your campaign related to the warnings reported, save, and check again. It is not necessary to reduce your score completely to zero – for example, it may not be possible to use promotional wording without some warnings. Many ISPs use 5.0 as their threshold. We recommend keeping your score below 3.0.

[\[ close window \]](#)

## The Meat of it All, **The Message**

This is where it gets tricky, but if your message got through and opened, you're on your way to a successful message. Although there is much debate about how long customers will actually give your message their full attention, we really can't count on anything more than 5-10 seconds of their close attention. What this means is you have a very small amount of time to get your point across. For that reason, you want to make sure your message is short and sweet. The first thing you want to check is your call to action, what do you want the reader to do? Giving a little explanation, rather just a simple "click here," may entice more people to follow through. For example, "buy now to get our best offer." This explains what you want them to do. If set up well it will direct them so they receive that offer right away without having to click anything else on a new page. Once you have a clear call to action you can follow these six secrets to get the most out of your message.

1) **Typography** - Don't use more than one of two different font sizes, not only will this hurt your content score, but it makes your message harder to scan, and a lot of the time a quick scan is all your message is going to get.

2) **Type Size** – Keep it big, but don't get crazy. Think about your audience, if it's intended for elders increase your font size because you know they will have trouble reading small type.

3) **Colors** – You should always keep in mind how your colors will mesh with the users email inbox layout. Light blue borders could get muted by AOL's predominantly blue interface. Keep it simple for the most part, but use the principles of design and go for contrasting colors when you want to draw the eye, reinforce a value statement or amplify a call to action. Cool designs can enhance your message, but also may create competition between flashing ads on the edges of the users inbox. Avoid competition and work to make your message cohesive.

4) **Borders** – Not every picture needs a frame. Borders can help an image stand out, but can also distract the eye while scanning a message. Borders, horizontal bars and frames should be used with restraint, too many can ruin a good design.

5) **Proportion** - Emails should flow smoothly and be evenly distributed if your intent is for the reader to flow through content. Eye tracking studies show how most users scan e-mail and apply those logics (if you want more information on this, check out <http://www.eyetools.com>.) If you have a singular message, then design it to a five-second preview. That way the eye is conditioned to the flow and not tempted to roam.

6) **Focus** – This is an email, not a website. Just because you have an unlimited scroll, doesn't mean you should try to use it all. Stay concise and direct. Be sure to use images to communicate messages quickly, not just to look pretty. Include some creativity, but don't get flashy.


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Dear Baker,


Yesterday was the first day that really felt like summer. (It froze one day last week!) It was in the eighties with a warm southwest breeze drifting in from the Nevada desert. There will be some hot days ahead when the corn will grow and we'll close the house and concentrate on indoor projects. Like these . . .




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## **Conclusion**

If you want results from your next marketing campaign keep these issues in mind when you put together your next email blast. Make sure you have an eye catching subject line, a good sender reputation and content score so your message gets through and avoid cluttering your message so you have a clear call to action for your customers.