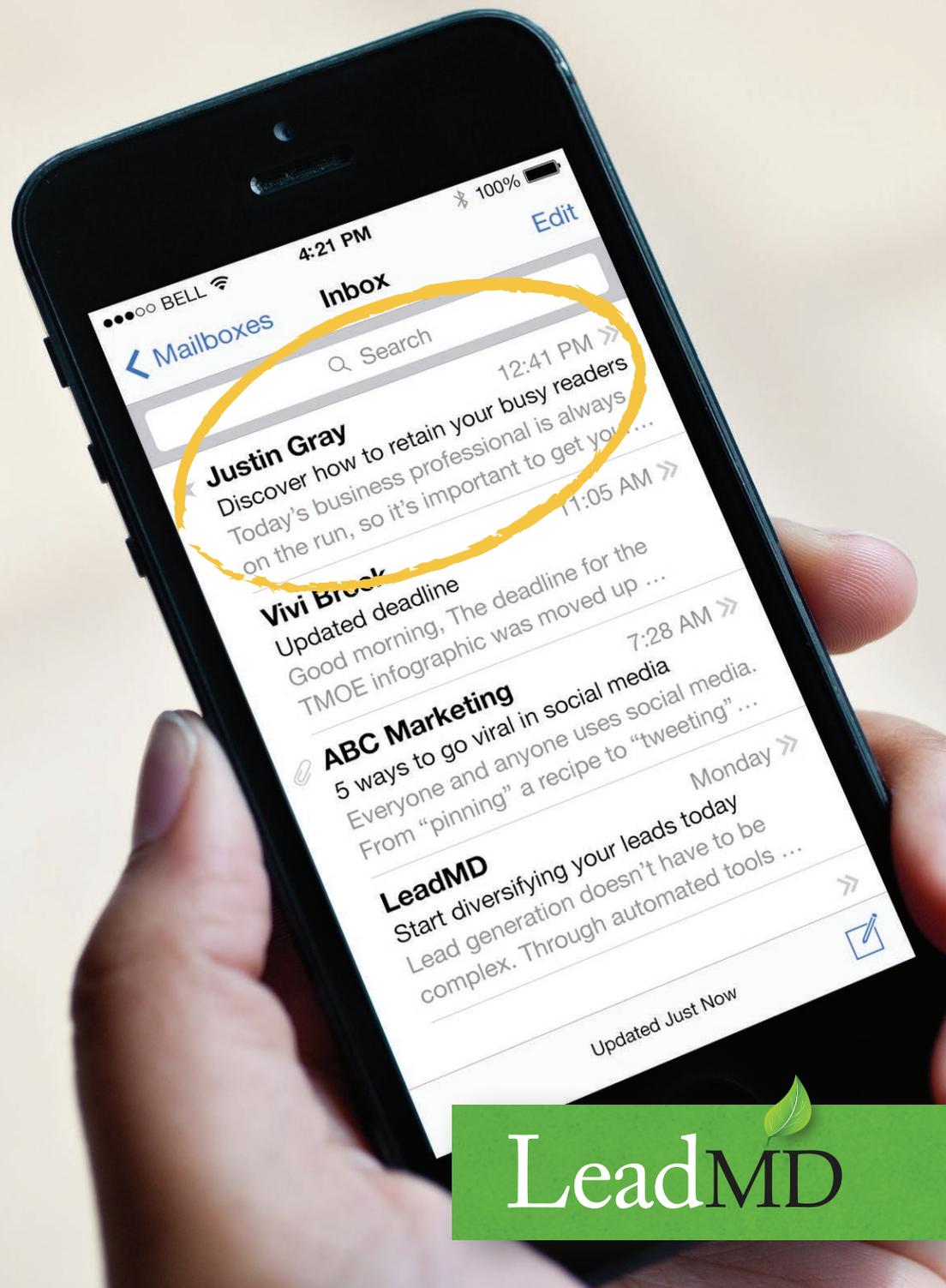


# Email Subject Lines

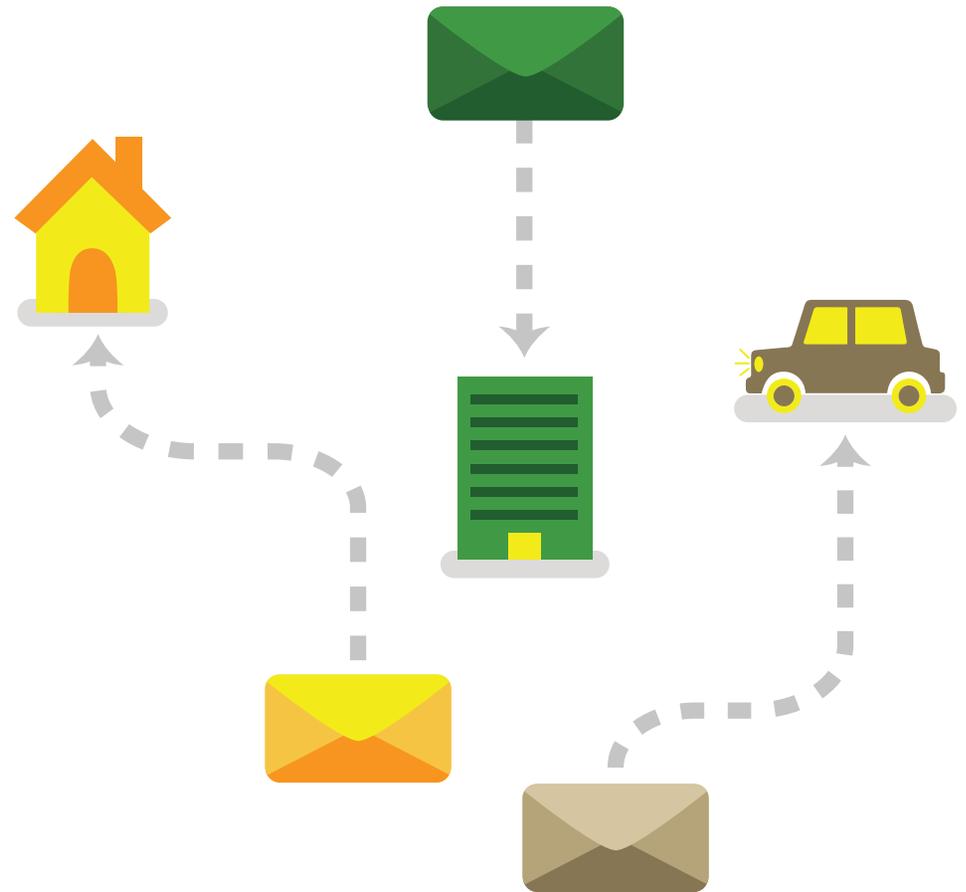


Writing enticing copy  
readers can't resist

LeadMD

# With the rise of digital marketing,

businesses are using **multiple platforms** like social media and Web content to attract and cultivate leads—yet **email marketing is still one of the most dominant** mediums in marketing.



The ability to craft personalized content and reach prospects at **home, work, or on the go** has made email marketing one of the most powerful tools available today.

Yet the reach and effectiveness of email marketing has made it a highly popular tool as well – which means that marketers often find themselves competing with a legion of other businesses vying for the same targets' attention.

**100+**  
EMAILS  
IN A DAY

Experts estimate that the average professional receives over 100 emails a day, while many personal inboxes are flooded with retail offers, advertisements and spam.

Because it can be complicated and difficult to unsubscribe from a vendor's mailing list, many recipients suffer through a load of unwanted emails, and gradually come to characterize **all commercially-oriented email as a burden.**



## The result of the email blizzard:

**many recipients automatically delete their emails unread.**

They don't have time to read through all of their daily messages, and past experience with spam emails and unwanted offers has taught them that most emails offer no real value. For these people, the easiest method for confronting a full inbox is to simply make a clean sweep of every message that looks even vaguely commercial.

# This reality has delivered **two** challenges to email marketers

To stand out in a sea of competitors



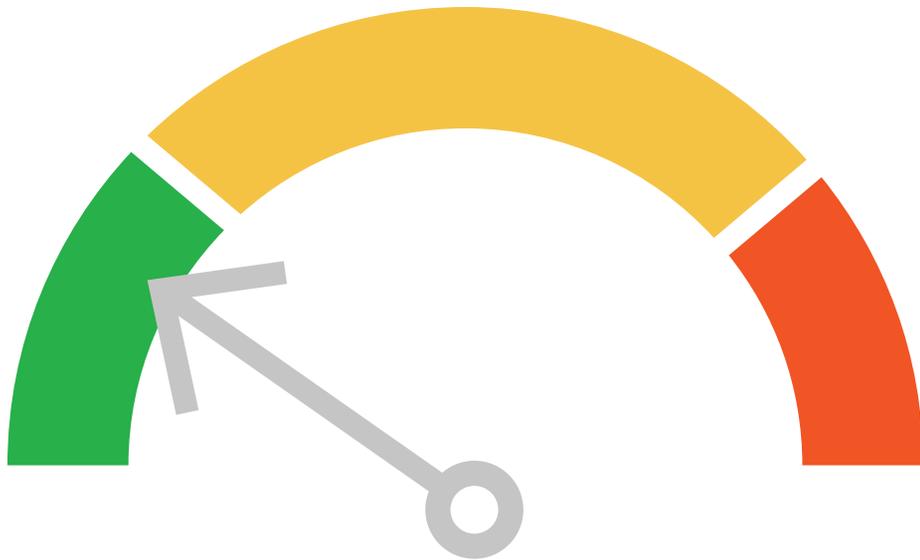
To entice the recipients to open their email.

This means that while your email campaigns must be compelling and distinctive in general, your **subject lines** in particular must be appealing to recipients. As the driving factor in open rates, **subject lines are your best opportunity to stand out in a crowded inbox.**

Offering a solution or an attractive deal, or piquing curiosity are all effective ways to cut through the digital noise and save your email from the delete key.

But while composing an eye-catching and intriguing subject line might sound easy, there are certain techniques that can earn a higher open rate- as well as tactics that can alienate leads and get your emails deleted.

# Keeping your spam score low



One of the **biggest mistakes** an email marketer can make, of course, is writing a subject line that gets interpreted as spam.

Spam filters act as a modern-day digital Cerberus, guarding inboxes from “junk mail” such as fraudulent or unwanted messages.

## So how do smart marketers avoid them?

The CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 addresses the criteria for spam identification, one of these being the difference between “creative or deceptive” subject lines.

**If a subject line is misleading, in that it creates an expectation that has nothing to do with the actual content, it can count as spam.**

Yet if the subject line wording is judged to be a creative use of language, it’s acceptable. **The difference?** In the latter case, the subject line uses clever language that might not be clear at first, but ultimately aligns with the actual content once the email is read.

# Experienced marketers know

that some terms and individual words can **trigger a spam filter**, such as **“free”** or **“offer”**– but few are sure of the exact algorithm in play.

## The truth is

that it's rarely just one word that'll send your email to the filter. Instead most platform filters assign points to certain words in the subject line and body. While using just one or two can escape the filter, **scoring a specific point** total will cross the spam threshold.

## The best advice is

to be judicious with spam-friendly words, when using them at all.

## Subject lines aren't the only factor in your spam score;

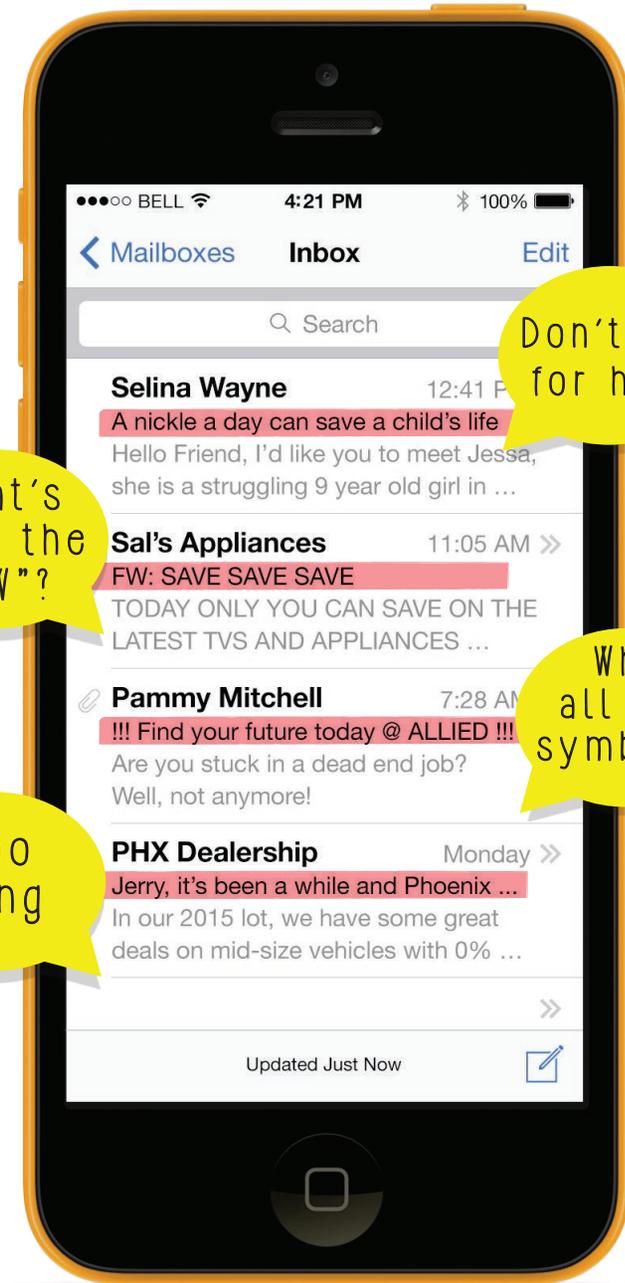
your **online reputation** as a sender and your history of email marketing can weigh heavily as well in rating your emails.

So while it's important to avoid using too many obvious spam trigger terms in your subject line, it's just as essential to protect your sender reputation and engagement metrics by delivering **relevant, well-structured content**.

# Common subject line MISTAKES

While many marketers know how to avoid spam filters, they use other tactics that get spur recipients to delete their emails unread.

These tactics are all likely to have your campaigns ignored or viewed as an annoyance.





# Common subject line ~~MISTAKES~~

## Lengthy lines.

Numerous studies have shown that **long subject lines don't get read**. Remember that online readers tend to scan while reading; too long a line will be ignored.

## Beginning the line with RE & FW.

This strategy is intended to trick the recipient into opening the email by structuring subject lines to look as if a friend sent the email, or was responding to an earlier email. While it may work the first few times, eventually the target will no longer fall for it – and discovering the reality upon opening your email can **damage trust in your brand**.

## Requests for help.

Most recipients have received a multitude of emails that began with something like, *For just a nickel a day, you can save a child's life*. These days people are cynical and wary of being scammed, so seeing a request for help in a subject line will usually trigger their cynicism.

## Addressing targets by their first names.

Back when this was a new technique, it helped emails feel personal and meaningful to recipients. These days it's such a common tactic that many targets associate it with unwanted email – and most studies say it does not improve open rates.

## Using too many numbers

Constantly using monetary figures such as *30% off* or *Save \$10* can position you as an aggressive merchant in your target's mind, and lead to fatigue.

## Capitals and exclamation points.

Used sparingly, these can get attention - but using them too often will seem strident, pushy and inauthentic.

## Symbols and special characters.

Some marketers employ these to help their subject lines stand out from the list of other emails, but they're interpreted by many recipients as tacky and salesy.

# Crafting a compelling subject line

So how does a smart marketer craft a subject line that gets attention?

Many of the same marketing dictums/strategies that work in general campaigns apply here as well. The underlying element that should spread across strategies is value - by structuring your subject line to appeal to your recipient's needs and interests, you hold up an immediate flag that stands out in a cluttered inbox.



5 ways to reduce expenses



HDTV sales this week only



Top 10 "Pins" this week



Free shipping today only



Start saving on tuition now

# Crafting a compelling subject line



**Be relevant.** The first rule of email marketing applies to the subject line as well. Use your **knowledge of the target** to compose a subject line that reflects their goals and behaviors.

**Be clear.** While clever subject lines can intrigue readers, being too obscure or confusing will cause a recipient to skip over your email. Make sure your message is clear and that your recipients understand who's emailing them. Using a **brand signifier** such a consistent prefix for all subject lines can impart immediate identification.

**Be urgent.** Imposing a deadline or sense of scarcity such as *this week only* or *only 12 left!* can instill a feeling of urgency and inspire open rates. However, too many "last chance" emails will quickly wear out their welcome and create skepticism, so use sparingly.

**Be timely.** Tying your content to a current news or pop culture event will require some creativity - but it will catch attention.

**Keep it short.** Studies have repeatedly shown that subject lines with **fewer than 50 characters** have the highest open rates.

**Be regional.** Mentioning location in a subject line – such as *Visit our new <hometown> location!* will not only catch your recipient's eye, but it can make your business feel more accessible and your content more personally significant.

**Ask Questions.** A subject line that asks, *Do you have the right insurance when you travel?* will jolt the reader into thinking about the answer. Suddenly, they're thinking about what they need and they're engaged – and you've positioned them at the starting point of the selling process.

**Use a Call to Action.** Putting a command in the subject line such as *Call me today for your new discount* can be surprisingly motivational. Once readers are given a task to complete, they often feel compelled to respond.

**Be persuasive.** Consider the spam filter criteria above. Appealing words like *free* or *special offer* can attract attention when used sparingly - but used too often, they can mark your emails as spam. To avoid getting stuck in a spam trap, *offer free shipping*, or *gifts with purchase* to entice prospects.

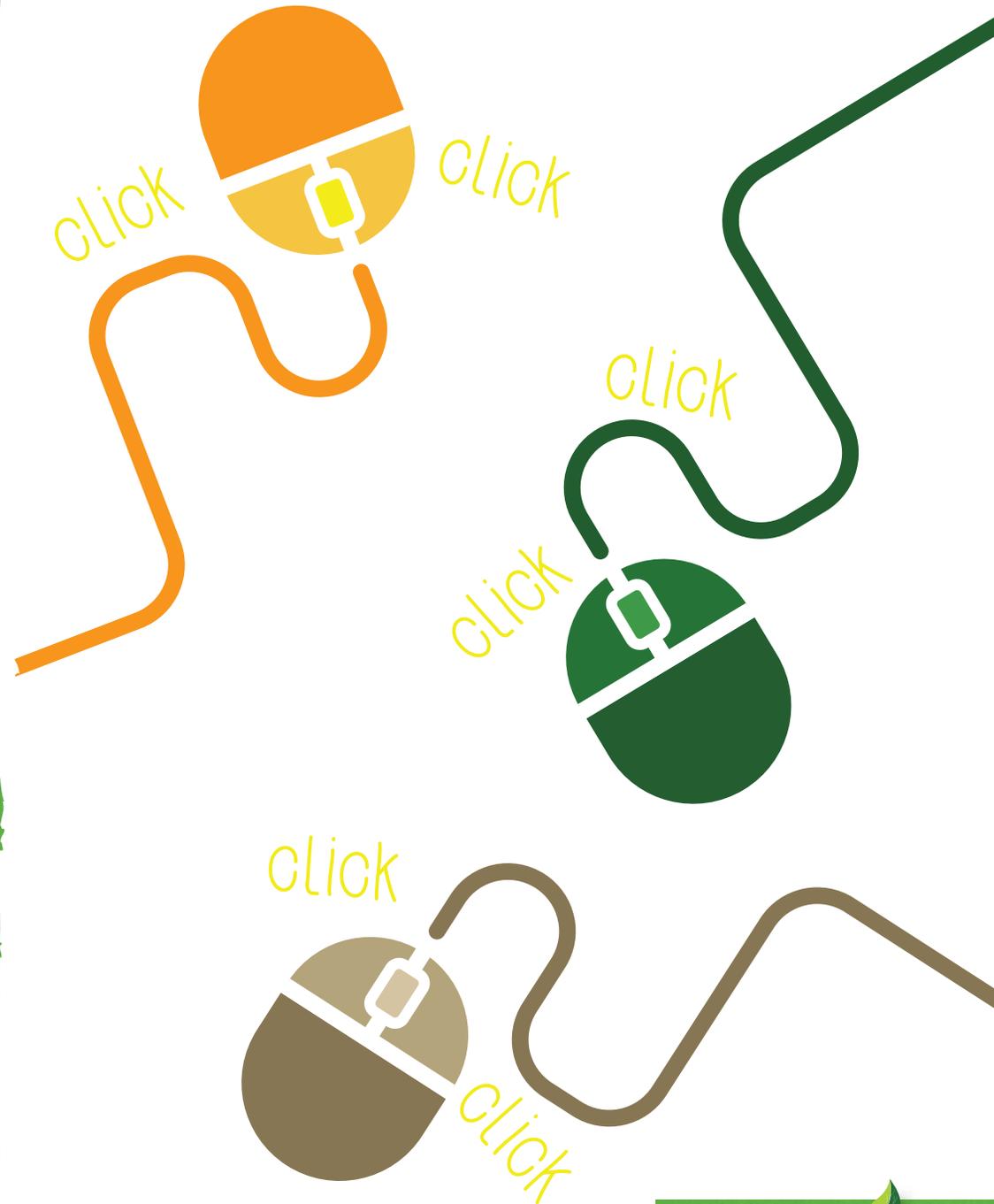
**Announce a list.** Articles titled *5 tax deductions you must take* or *8 steps to get in shape* often prove popular with readers, since even the busiest people have time to quickly scan down a list. Subject lines are no different.

**Mention trends.** Promising to tell recipients about *The best new laptops* or *The gifts on every graduate's wish list* can make readers want to feel in the know

# Best practices for higher open rates

Using the above techniques can help you craft a subject line that gets your emails opened, rather than caught in a spam filter or sent to the trash.

Yet taking an intelligent approach to email marketing means **going beyond individual messages** and **implementing overarching strategies** to help you develop consistently fresh and inspiring campaigns.



# Best practices for higher open rates



**Stay current.** Email marketing is a shifting landscape. The nonstop daily deluge of emails means that once-effective techniques can quickly wear out their welcome, as exposure hits “critical mass” and recipients stop responding to tactics they recognize and dislike. **Marketers must stay vigilant** to which techniques are generating responses and which are outdated.

**Test.** An A/B testing campaign can **save you** the wasted effort of running a subject line that doesn’t perform well. Track which subject lines generate higher open rates from your target audience before launching a major campaign – and incorporate the results into designing future initiatives.

**Use power words.** Targets can have weighted reactions to specific words and terms. Do some keyword research on the ones that trigger open rates and draw an emotional response. Even similar words can have a noticeable difference in impact; for instance, studies have shown that “discover” often outperforms “learn.”

**Be clever – but not too clever.** Catchy subject lines that don’t quite relate to the content can stimulate curiosity and result in a higher open rate. However, they must ultimately **connect to the content** and **pay off for the reader**, or your recipient can feel misled or deceived.

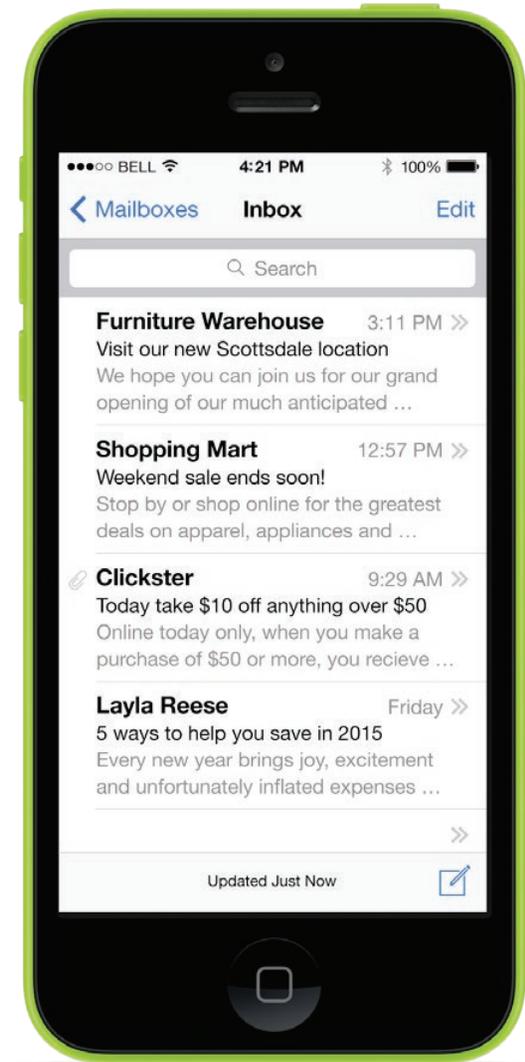
**Build a good reputation.** Take a long view of your relationship with your customers. Instead of only architecting individual emails designed to be opened, aim to create an appealing email personality that your targets trust.

By sending **carefully timed** and **designed emails that offer value**, you will train your subscribers and recipients to associate positive benefits with your brand and spare your messages the delete key.

# Email marketing can be a marketer's most effective tool

**And that power can all hinge on the subject line.**

By writing brief and engaging lines that interest your particular targets, you can enjoy higher open rates while deepening brand engagement and ultimately driving sales.





LeadMD combines the resources of a digital marketing agency with revenue focused sales and marketing alignment strategy, all through the use of on-demand cloud technology. Creating, managing and converting quality leads in higher numbers is how we enable our clients to out-perform their competitors and out-market their peers.

The most effective way to engage more prospects and convert better leads is through Conversational Marketing. at LeadMD, we will help your team leverage email and online channels to build buyer trust through cutting edge technology such as Marketing Automation. When your focus is on building a demand generation process that truly drives revenue, it's time to engage LeadMD and fix your funnel.



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