THINKING LIKE YOUR AUDIENCE:

9 Conversion Triggers in Email

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Introduction

Study after study shows that psychology is the heart of marketing. The more you're able to reach audiences on a human level (and in a way they connect with), the better positioned you'll be to drive sales.

If you're reading this guide, you're probably well-aware that psychology and online marketing go hand-in-hand. You know how important it is to build trust, demonstrate a clear solution to a particular need, and clearly answer the question - 'what's in it for me?'. These concepts are marketing 101.

What's challenging, however, is what to do next. How can you take these online marketing concepts and reposition them into a clear customer acquisition, engagement, and retention plan? How do some of the most well-known psychology triggers apply to email marketing?

These questions inspired us to write this guide, to give you an insight into how psychology can help your email marketing. We have compiled 9 psychological triggers that, if implemented, will ramp up your marketing strategy.

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Commitment

When you put a little bit of effort into something, you'll be more inclined to follow through with finishing it. That's the exact principle behind this 'psychological trigger' - when you ask shoppers to commit to making a purchase on your website, they'll be more likely to complete the conversion funnel.

Paths to conversion are complex, involving a series of steps before a casual browser becomes a dedicated customer. Each stage of the conversion funnel introduces a new opportunity for churn, but when shoppers make an upfront 'mental commitment' to a product or service that you're selling, they're less likely to drop off.

For inspiration, check out fashion retailer ModCloth. The company sells out of products quickly but allows shoppers to 'ask' for notifications when the item is restocked. In other words, ModCloth is asking shoppers to say - 'Yes, I want this item.

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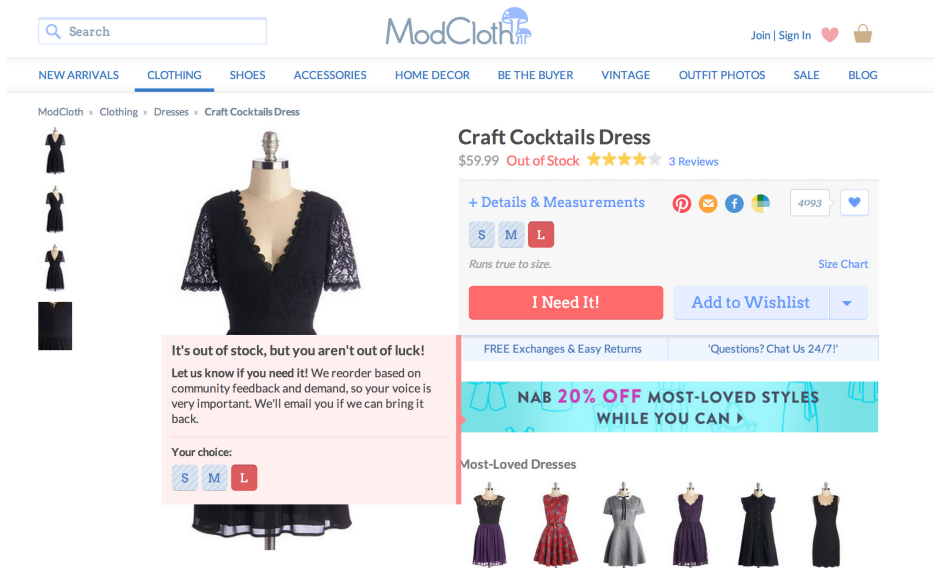
When an item is 'back by demand,' audiences will receive a notification. By this point, they've made a mental note of wanting something - so they'll likely be receptive to your email (and likely to make a purchase).


What the ModCloth example teaches us is that asking audiences to make a commitment isn't enough. You need to ask them to follow through. Email is a strong communication channel for forging these 1:1 connections and moving conversations along.

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Effort

Ask your prospects to put in a little bit of work ahead of time. Why? The more they've invested up front, the more likely they'll be to stick around throughout the entire conversion process.

One website that exemplifies this idea is Codecademy, a platform that helps people learn how to code for free. Users can start using the site - and start learning javascript - immediately.
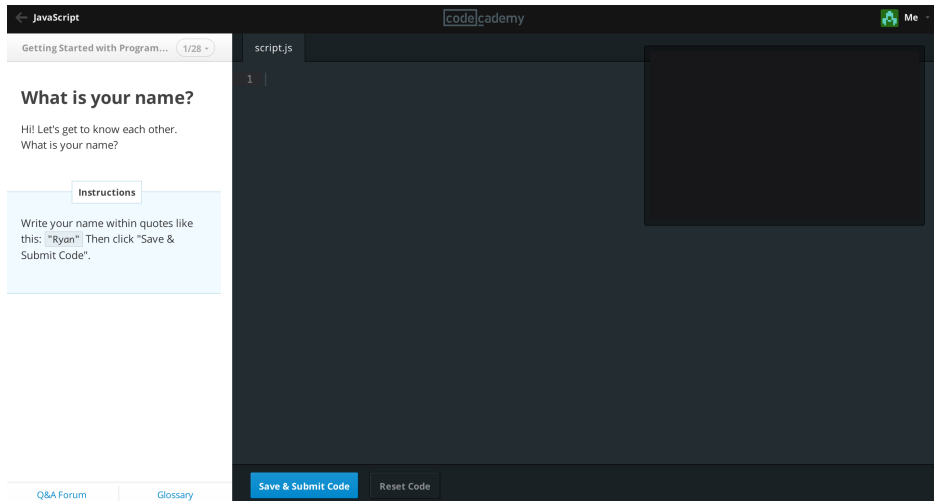
As you can imagine, learning to code is hard. Once you start, you'll want to keep learning more. That's where email marketing comes in - to remind you of the work that you've already put in to get started. Effort makes an experience memorable - it's only natural that those using Codecademy will want to keep learning more.

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Codecademy

NEWSLETTER

"It is the man who carefully advances step by step...who is bound to succeed in the greatest degree."

- Alexandar Graham Bell

New on Codecademy

Visualize your progress

We've added a few features to our learning environment to give you an overall sense of your progress. Roll-over the language title on the top left corner to see how far you've come. You can also view all completed and in-progress exercises in our improved pull-down on the left panel. Sweet!
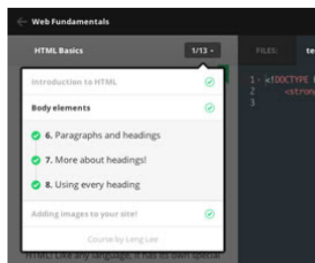
Glossary to the rescue

Our glossaries are just a click away whenever you're trying to remember tricky syntax. We've recently updated them to include more examples and references. You'll find the **Glossary link** at the bottom left of the main coding page.

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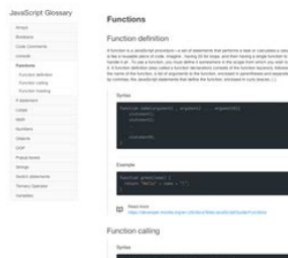
However, it should be noted that this approach won't please everyone. Why is that so? Not everyone has the time or interest to learn how to code. The same holds true for any other project or brand. People put work into the things that they care about - and if they don't care about your brand enough, they'll drop off the funnel sooner or later.

How does all of this pertain to effort? In a sense that "effort" as a psychological trigger will backfire. So before you ask audiences to commit time to engaging with your brand, ask them qualitatively - is the effort worth it? If the answer is yes, you'll build an extremely loyal community.

If the answer is 'no,' you'll kill your conversion metrics - which may be a good thing, for instance, if you're part of a B2B brand that wants to reach the most qualified leads on the planet.

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Persistence

Technology is destroying your audience's ability to focus. According to one report, average human attention spans decreased from 12 seconds to 8 seconds between 2000 and 2013. That's why shopping cart abandonment is so common, with rates as high as 71 percent, according to research from Boston Marketing Data firm - SeeWhy.

Retargeting campaigns through email and social media can help. Inboxes provide a direct link between your brand and your prospects. If shoppers abandon their carts or leave your site before downloading an ebook or reaching out to your team for more information, send them a note as a reminder, like the one in our example from ModCloth:
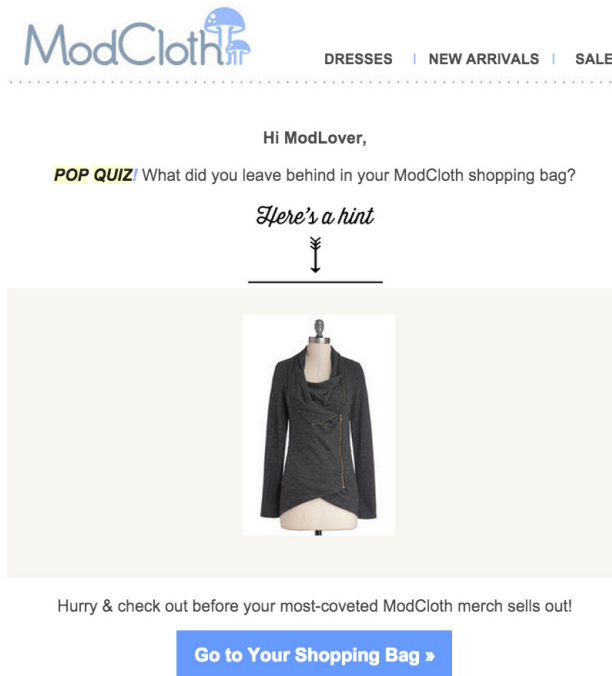
It's not only email but also social media that can help you in your campaign. You can run retargeting campaigns on platforms like Facebook to ensure that your brand is front, center, and most importantly - unforgettable.

Take a look a this awesome ad:

By reaching your audiences across multiple channels - and touchpoints - you will always ensure that your brand is somewhere on top of their mind.

As a bonus tip, always make sure that your emails have social sharing buttons, that way your customers will not only always keep you in mind, but they will also share your brand with others.

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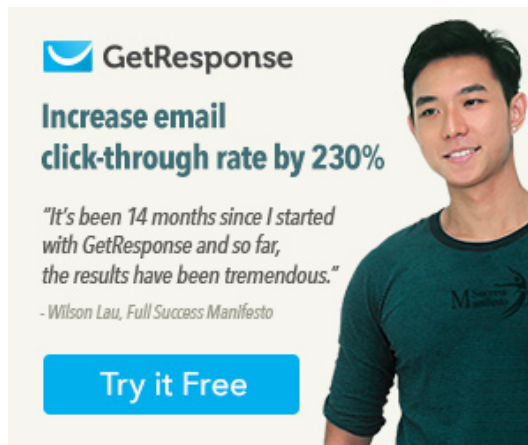
Novelty

Studies show that human beings love what's new. When we're exposed to something exciting - that we haven't seen before - **the brain releases a burst of dopamine, which inspires the feeling that there is a reward waiting for us.**

This feeling is so amazing that we're likely to seek out 'upgrades' and new experiences whenever possible - even if our rational brains are telling us to do the exact opposite.

As a marketer, it's important to reinforce 'newness' into your brand's marketing, especially if you've recently released a new website feature, new product, or service. **Make these 'upgrades' a part of your core brand messaging.**

When you've released something new, you probably want your audiences to find it, as they may not be checking your website every day. One way to bridge these - potentially missed - connections is through email marketing. Something as simple as a product announcement can help keep audiences engaged.

For inspiration, check out the following email from Redfin, a real estate platform that helps people buy houses:

Redfin can easily detect where its users - likely in the real estate market - are browsing for new homes. These targeted emails are based on the user's search parameters including location and budget - it's a way to keep people looking and continuously engaged with what's new on Redfin's site.

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Another example of novelty is sharing up and coming (or simply new) merchandise, service, or like in case of Lumitrix - new photographers (authors).

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Reciprocity

Humans, when given something, want to give back. Think about the last time you went to the store and tried a free sample - you probably felt a strong urge to buy the item after trying it. And this is nothing new! There's a concept in biology called 'reciprocal altruism.' Here's what happens:

Organism A takes the 'hit' to do something nice for organism B, with no immediate expectation of anything in return. The kicker? Organism A is well aware that organism B will 'return the favor' at a later date. Scientist Robert Trivers developed this theory as part of his research to better understand mutually altruistic acts in nature.

But over the years, reciprocal altruism has become an important concept among business communities. As Scott Roen, Vice President of Marketing and Digital Innovation at American Express puts it:

"When brands give something away for free, they're much more likely to get more in return."

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That's why American Express launched OPEN Forum, a community for small business owners to share insights and knowledge to help one another succeed. The idea is simple - American Express does not directly monetize OPEN Forum; rather, the goal is to build trust among the small business community.

But still, OPEN Forum helps American Express drive double to triple digit growth each year - and according to Roen, it's all thanks to reciprocal altruism.
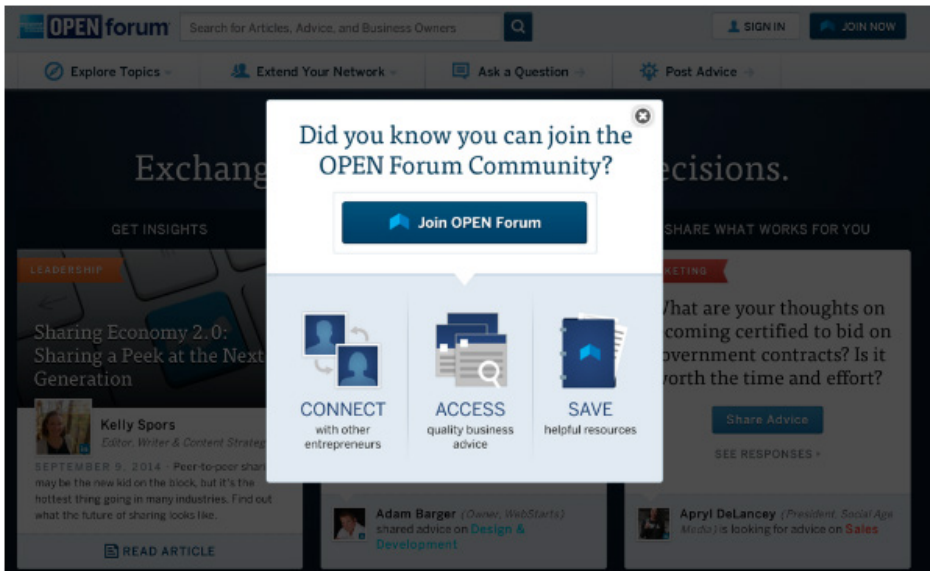
What's important is to keep this 'giving mindset' front and center - to keep audiences engaged on a 1:1 level with a regular content newsletter:

American Express OPEN forum could have very well sent their customers a regular sales email. Instead, the brand stays on point by emailing a roundup of truly helpful content - to help their audiences't businesses grow. The goal is to help drive stronger connections.

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Fear

Fear can be used in a variety of marketing contexts. Before we go further into this discussion; however we want to make a disclaimer that you should proceed with caution - there's a fine line between what's ethical and what isn't.

Don't scare people. Instead, give them an honest and accurate assessment of risk. 🐦

Public health organizations, for instance, use fear for the purposes of good, not evil. Take this anti-smoking ad from the U.S. Center for Disease Control, for instance. It's a scare tactic to keep people healthy.

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In our books, that kind of a metaphoric approach is ok. The image is a bit shocking, but it does not scare the life out of the reader.

However, sometimes fear is used for purposes of manipulation rather than good. Consider the following ad from a soap brand as an example - a blatant scare tactic for the purpose of increasing sales.

Take a look at this unappetizing ad:

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As marketing blogger Russ Henneberry explains, there are two key reasons why fear 'works' in marketing:

1. **Perceived Vulnerability** – Translation: 'How likely is it to hurt me?'

2. **Perceived Severity** – Translation: 'How bad will it hurt?'

If people feel that they are likely (high vulnerability) to be hurt badly (high severity) they will feel threatened. But is this enough to get them to take action?

Research shows that there is a third element that plays an important role in a person deciding whether they will take action to avoid a threat. Listen up because this part is important - after all, it's the action (purchase, donate, subscribe) that the marketer is after.

This third element is called efficacy. Efficacy is a person's perception as to whether or not they can do anything about the threat. Those that feel they have no control, will take no action.

A classic application of 'fear' that you've likely seen, over and over, in online marketing? "Last chance" messaging.

One of the biggest sources of fear that buyers face is the potential to miss out on a valuable deal or opportunity.
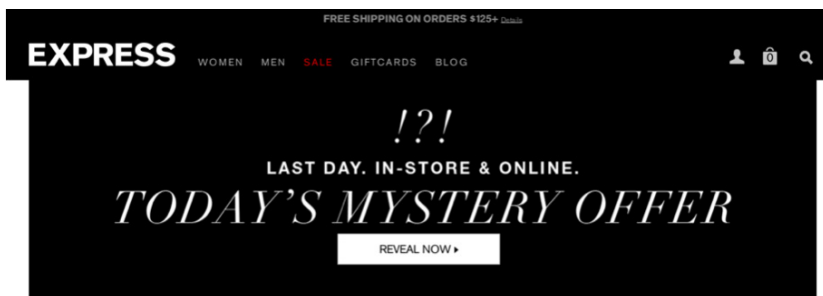
The outcome of "last minute" marketing is that buyers are likely to take action much more quickly. You can even accelerate the process by sending your subscribers a quick "last chance" email:


If you're thinking about using fear in your marketing, it's important to take a step back and ask yourself whether you're making the most ethical decisions possible. Is this approach one that you would feel comfortable taking with your family? If the answer is yes, then you're probably in the clear. If not, then you may need to re-think your strategy.

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Vanity

People like to feel good about themselves and they love recognition. Thanks to social media, people have a forum to share more of their accomplishments and place themselves 'in the spotlight.'

Klout uses vanity in the best of ways. For example, when you share content, schedule great articles, follow more people - and your Klout score goes up - you get a nice email letting you know:

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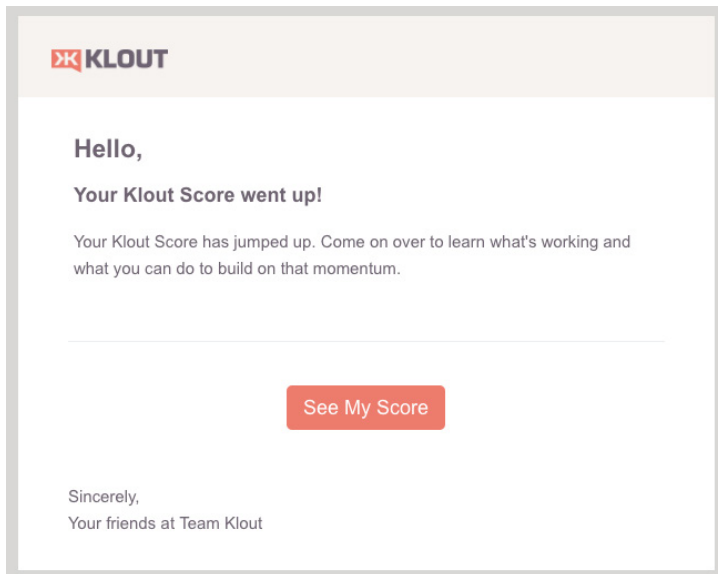
So, you start feeling good about your successful online undertakings, you begin to share more. Klout will recognize what you share, how much you share, and how many people enjoy it.

That's when you get a peachy follow-up mail with a guide tailored especially for your needs and interests:

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Storytelling

Humans are naturally drawn to other humans, and 'storytelling' is a powerful strategy that brings people together. Why?

Stories evoke emotional experiences - helping build empathetic connections between people who are otherwise strangers. Through storytelling, we can fully imagine ourselves in one another's shoes.

That's why content marketing techniques like blogs and case studies are powerful - they allow us to understand one another on a human-to-human level.

As an example, consider the following customer stories on Clarity.fm - a company that connects new entrepreneurs with experienced business leaders and subject matter experts.

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Clarity's core business model **paying for advice** is relatively new and may be difficult to grasp by an audience that may be used to finding information through alternate channels like conferences, blog posts, books, or tutorials. To explain how Clarity can help entrepreneurs, the company's marketing team released a series of stories about its community of startup founders.

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When using storytelling as a marketing tool, it's critical to focus on the experience of your customers. At any given time, your prospects are asking 'what's in it for me?' - so it's important to share the experiences of people who are just like them.

You can even integrate storytelling into your email marketing strategy by sharing editorial content about people.
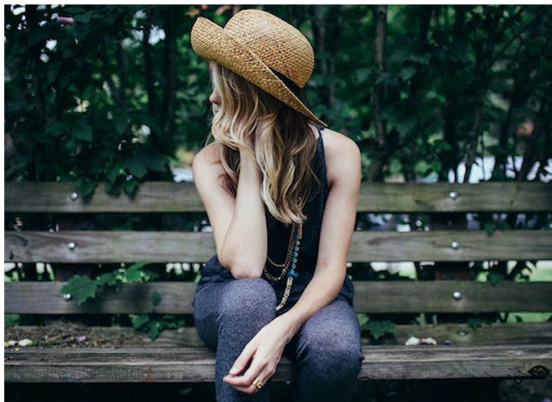
Results

At the end of the day, people want to make money, cut costs, and save time. The most compelling psychology trigger comes from the results that your business has been able to generate for its existing customers.

From a marketing perspective, it's important to make your company's ROI front and center. Share data across your clients as well as specific case studies that highlight the value that you're able to provide.

For inspiration, check out SaaS analytics company KISSmetrics, which makes its entire marketing message about the value it provides its customers.

See how these companies are using KISSmetrics to grow their business

≋ buffer

Learn how KISSmetrics helped Buffer increase their revenue by **$25,500 in less** than 30 days.

Read Success Story

LiveChat

Learn how KISSmetrics helped LiveChat increase their new customers by **18% in 30** days.

Read Success Story

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Prospects who browse KISSmetrics's case studies page can clearly see the ROI that they are likely to derive from using the software - it's a marketing strategy that clearly revolves around what potential customers should expect to get.

How Buffer Increased Their Revenue by $25,500 in 30 days by Using KISSmetrics

The Problem

Buffer is one of the largest social media management platforms with over 300,000 customers. Given the volume of customers, they were having an issue analyzing all of their individual customers and identifying actionable metrics. In addition to that, the company couldn't figure out what experiments to run in order to help increase the lifetime value of their customers, reduce churn, improve conversion rates, and increase average selling price.

> Buffer turned to KISSmetrics to solve these problems through the use of our person-based customer analytics service.

The Solution

Through the use of KISSmetrics, Buffer was not only able to find the areas in their signup flows that were reducing conversions, but they were also able to get actionable insights on how they could reduce their churn and increase their lifetime value per customer.

> Buffer was able to do all of this through the KISSmetrics funnel, cohort, people, and power report views.

The Results

> Within 30 days KISSmetrics made Buffer an extra $25,500 in revenue.

> " KISSmetrics gave us actionable insights that helped us improve the life-time-value of our customers. This resulted in a $25,500 increase in revenue.
>
> — Leo Widrich, Co-founder of Buffer

≋ buffer

Buffer automatically share articles, pictures, and videos throughout the day on one or all your social media accounts.

- **Industry:** Social Media App
- **Business Model:** Freemium SaaS (Software as a Service)
- **Headquarters:** Hong Kong & San Francisco, CA
- **Previous/Alternative Analytics Solution:** Internal analytics
- **KISSmetrics customer since:** March 2012

You can also use email marketing to show audiences the precise results that they're seeing with your products or services. As an example, check out this automated report that MixPanel deploys:

blog_widget_footer	5 ↓ 37.5%	8 ↑ 100%	4 ↑ 33.3%	3 ↑ 50%	2 ↓ 71.4%	7 ↑ 75%
redirect	4 ↑ 33.3%	3 0%	3 ↑ 200%	1 ↓ 50%	2 ↑ 100%	0 ↓ 100%
blog_widget_profile	3 ↑ 100%	0 ↓ 100%	1 ↓ 50%	2 ↑ 100%	1 ↓ 85.7%	7 ↑ 100%
answer_share_twitter	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 ↓ 100%

At the end of the day, your customers care about results. Marketing programs should speak to this need head-on.

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Room for Thought

This guide taught you 9 psychological triggers with the potential to amplify your marketing. But before you get started, it's important to take a step back and assess the unique needs of your audience. What do they care about? What messaging speaks to them?

Marketers, eager to drive results, often jump into their campaigns and make changes based on 'best practices' that they've read.

Don't make this mistake.

Every company and customer base is different. Always start with a rigorous qualitative research process that pinpoints exactly what your audience needs. This research process will be the absolute best source of marketing inspiration.

So if you're looking to get started - and take that next step - look no further than a simple customer conversation. Seek out patterns that inadvertently arise. These patterns will be the heart of your marketing program.

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Sara is always on the lookout for new ways to improve marketing strategies using email marketing. An expert in her field, passionate about helping marketers grow their campaigns and personal branding strategies.

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About GetResponse

GetResponse, World's Easiest Email Marketing, is a complete email marketing platform with a suite of innovative features, including drag-and-drop email and landing page creator, advanced email analytics, email automation and smart list import.

Its user-friendly interface, best-in-class 99% deliverability and 5-star Customer Service, make it one of the top solutions available on the market, all at an affordable price.

The system is fully scalable and can handle everything from small lists for solo entrepreneurs to high-volume email campaigns delivered with superb reliability and 24/7 consulting services.

Since its inception in 1997, GetResponse has grown to serve more than 350,000 Customers from 183 countries and now manages and delivers more than 12 billion permission-based emails per year.

See how it works in less than two minutes

Try GetResponse - FREE for 30 days
NO CREDIT CARD REQUIRED

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