Increase Your Emails'



GetResponse

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Introduction

If you skim through your spam folder, you'll notice patterns in the structure of emails that land there. Let's face it — not all marketers follow email marketing best practices, especially when it comes to email design. So we often see messages that contain one large image and a link to a landing page. Or that contain a short piece of copy with many hyperlinks.

This approach doesn't help marketers build relationships with their audience or avoid the junk folder. In fact, even a great domain reputation and a top-notch delivery optimization team are likely to fail if the messages don't abide by antispam rules and email marketing best practices.

This whitepaper will **shed light on** industry best practices for planning **each section** of your email message.

Preheader

What is a preheader

Imagine walking down the street looking at storefront windows, trying to decide whether to go in or not. You walk by a chocolatier that stops you on your way! The gorgeous, mouth-watering, colorful truffles, crèmes, and jellies are already melting in your mouth.

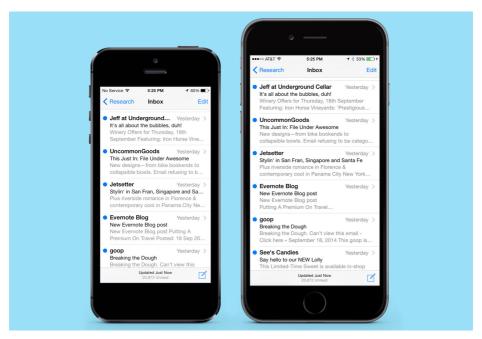
The preheader is *like your storefront window* — the email section subscribers see before they open your email.

Typically, the preheader is a **snippet of text** that appears next to the subject line in the email client and on top of your message once you open it. Depending on the device or program, the portion of text that is visible may differ, so you have to make your point in a quick and powerful way.

Here are screenshots of how preheaders look in popular email clients.



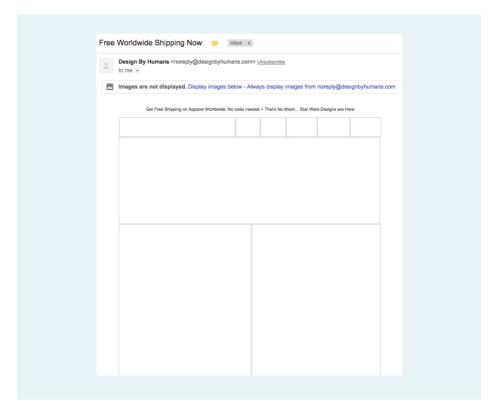
Img.1 Preheader text in Gmail



Img.2 Preheader text in iPhone 5 & iPhone 6 native email client

As Pam Neely puts it - "Preheader text is really important, and getting more important all the time. It may not get much attention anywhere else, but preheader text is extremely important in the inbox. The yellow areas in the screenshot shown on the previous page take up more space than the subject lines. Sure, the subject lines are in bold, but the preheader text still takes up more space. From that view, you could make an argument that subject lines and preheader text are equally important. I'm not quite ready to step out that far on a limb and assert that, but I think you'll agree preheaders are pretty important. And vastly neglected."

Preheaders show their value even after the email has been opened. Most email clients automatically block images from being downloaded unless the sender is known and added to a safe list. But your preheader text and ALT-text are visible right away, which gives you a chance to convince your subscribers that your offer is valuable.



Img.3 Email without ALT text

As you can see, an email that consists of only large images without ALT-text isn't the best way to gain your readers' interest.

How to design a preheader

Let's talk about how to design a preheader. Here are some rules Pam Neely proposes for crafting an effective preheader:

1. Think of the preheader as the subtitle of an article, with your subject line being the title. Don't repeat your subject line in the preheader. Start your preheader copy with a call to action. Then include a summary of what your email is about and a link to the landing page. If you want to include the "View this email in a browser" link (highly recommended), add it to the end of the preheader text.



Img.4 Timberland preheader text



Img.5 Jay Baer preheader text

These preheaders start with a call to action, followed by a brief summary of what the email is about. The summary supports the call to action. Notice that these preheaders also begin with a verb.

2. Write your preheader with the understanding that subscribers using different email clients will see different lengths of it. Some email clients will show the first 75 characters, including spaces, If a subscriber is using Gmail on a desktop, they'll see about 100 characters. On an iPhone 6, they may see up to 150 characters. How much of your preheader someone sees depends also on the length of your email subject line.

It's tough to write a preheader that works well at all those different lengths. But that's what we have to do. This is one reason preheaders should open with a call to action. Marketers believe that, if a subscriber can only see one thing, they should see the call to action.

3. Use an easy-to-read font in your preheaders. Arial in at least 12-point type is a good choice. When you send test versions of your emails, pay close attention to how easy or difficult they are to read.

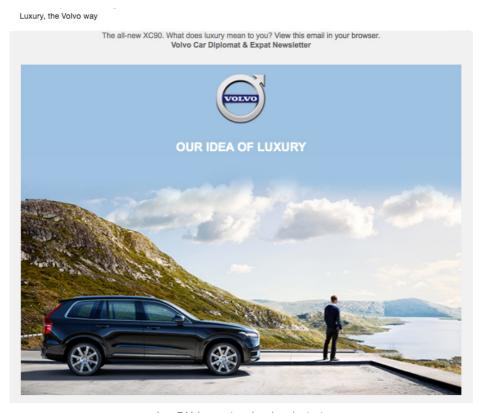


Img.6 GAP preheader text with an easy to read font

This preheader is fairly easy to read, but the background color could be lighter. It's also centered, which is not recommended for preheader text.

Many subscribers read your email on smartphones, where the preheader text size is controlled. They spend 3-4 seconds looking at your subject line, sender name, and preheader then decide whether or not to open your email. They could be distracted or preoccupied with some other activity. They could be walking down the street or waiting at a traffic light. Do you see why your preheader needs to be easy to read?

4. Some email experts say to align the text of your preheaders left because it makes the preheader easier to read. But then we see examples like the one below, which breaks the left-align rule and still looks good:



Img.7 Volvo centered preheader text

- **5. Test preheaders as you would test subject lines.** Try out different approaches - numbers, questions, humoristic text or just an introduction to your email.
- 6. If you have personalization data, use it. It's easy to add a name field and other fields to preheader text. Personalization can be a powerful way to increase conversions. If it has been working for you in your subject lines. why not test it in vour preheaders?

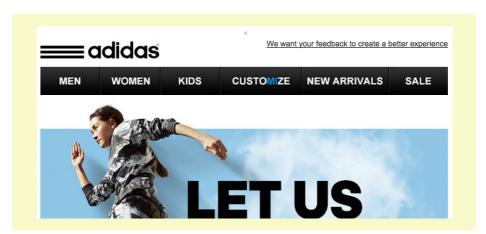
Extra credit: Preheaders are a nice place to add a symbol or emoji .

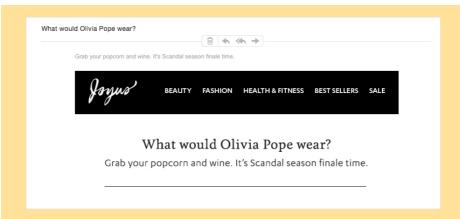
- 7. Use dashes or plus signs to separate phrases, not periods. Preheader text has breathless quality, so use punctuation to suit it. Plus signs "+" are good for connecting phrases, so are dashes and ">>" signs.
- 8. Consider adding navigation links, an unsubscribe link, a whitelist request, or a forward-to-a-friend link at the end of your preheader text.

This tactic may not work out for everyone. But depending on your list and your goals, you can do more in the preheader than just announce the email. Keep it simple. Preheaders are a tweetable version of your emails. Shorter isn't just better, it's expected.

Preheader examples

Here are some examples of effective preheaders used by Adidas and Joyus.





Now that you know how to create eye-catching, compelling preheaders, let's focus on headers.

Header

Right, so you've planned your preheader and made sure it contains a concise call to action and link to open the message in a new browser window.

Now you face the real challenge: how to design the "above-the-fold" elements of your sales message to encourage subscribers to click the call to action and explore the entire message.

Email headers 101

Let's start with a short definition. "Above-the-fold" is the 400-450 pixel space subscribers see when they open the message — everything that fits on the screen and can be seen without scrolling.

Studies show that the most popular resolution is 1366x768. But with mobile devices on the rise, be careful when you optimize content for your readers.

Ideally, fit the header into the first 400-450 pixels. But make sure the size of your content is adjusted when read on a device with a smaller resolution. Learn more about this in our Responsive Email Design Guide.

You can do your own study using a survey or web tracking system to find out which screen resolution is the most common among your subscribers.

The key point here is to design your message in a way that will engage recipients quickly and encourage them to interact with the rest of the offer or content. Otherwise they may abandon the message or, worse, mark it as spam.

Unfortunately, industry stats show that not every subscriber will scroll through your email. In fact, 51% will delete the message within 2 seconds after opening it. So marketers should begin their email template design from the top and work through to the bottom, not the other way around.

How to create an effective email header

Like the first pages of a book, email creative should start with a smart title, eye-catching cover, and the name of the author or organization.

Due to the limited size of most preview panes, the sender needs to pack three **elements** into the above-the-fold section to entice the recipient to engage further. With this in mind, here's what to include in the header:

- ✓ The name of the company, brand or person sending the offer. Include the logo to increase trust and recognition — key to a successful email!
- ✓ The purpose of the message. Provide explicit information in the header about the intent of the email (transactional, event-related, product campaign, newsletter). It's helpful to re-evaluate the relevance of your email to make sure you're giving subscribers what they expect.
- ✓ A large, clear, enticing call to action. The CTA in the above-the-fold area is your big chance to create subscriber interest, encourage them to read the whole message, and eventually convert them into paying customers.

Avoid vague, obscure slogans like "Great Sale" or "New Products!" Instead, pin down the exact benefits a recipient could gain by reading the email: "15% OFF on all electronic devices!", "Buy one book, get the second one free!"

Keep in mind that most people are flooded with offers every day via email, snail mail, robo calls, and social media. An incentive (discount, bonus, or gift) can make your email marketing campaigns stand out amid the marketing noise and inbox clutter.

How some experienced marketers handle headers

These headers don't cause doubt or confusion about why it's worthwhile to click the call to action: "25% OFF on Car Speakers and Subs", "Accessory Sale, Ends Tuesday!", "New Arrivals Make Great Gifts for Father's Day."

The strongest selling point of your offer needs to be prominently displayed to make a big impact on click-through and conversion rates.



Img.10 Hostelworld newsletter header

BEDDING DECOR & PILLOWS

SALE **GET IT NOW!** BEST-SELLING UPHOLSTERY & LEATHER FURNITURE. DELIVERED TO YOUR HOME IN 1-3 WEEKS. SHOP NOW >

Img.11 Potterybarn newsletter header

UEFA.com



Img.12 UEFA newsletter header

Elements of an effective header

Now let's break the header into components and consider how to make them more effective:

Recognizable logo for your brand, website, product or company. Don't forget to use ALT attribute to give subscribers a hint about the image content, even if it's blocked by their email client.

Shop the top summer sandal styles >

view: mobile | browser



new arrivals handbags clearance women shoes jewelry men home

Img.13 TJMaxx newsletter header

✓ Crystal clear and concise call to action that communicates: "Here's the exact benefit you'll obtain once you scroll or click the CTA."

sevenly

View this email in your browser

Support and Raise Awareness For Adoption

Sevenly + International Down Syndrome Coalition

SEND SUPPORT

Img.14 Sevenly newsletter header

✓ A navigation bar that lists products by category offered on your website. You can easily hyperlink each category to improve the subscriber's browsing experience and take them directly to the page they want.

Make sure that if you are selling e-books and recipients click the "Getting things done" category within the email, they are taken straight to those offers.

Some marketers *make the mistake* of hyperlinking all of the segments to one landing page, usually the home page, making recipients browse further and often losing sales opportunities.



Jackets & Coats Shoes A-Z of Brands

Img.15 Asos newsletter header

✓ A "Share This" integration for Facebook, Twitter, MySpace. With so many. social media users, don't miss an opportunity to push your latest offer or newsletter out of the inbox and across the Internet for more exposure.

Wrapping up headers

A well-designed header should be clear and orderly. The goal is a reasonable balance of text, images, and overall proportion, so the content is accessible and attention-grabbing.

Remember, the content below the top 400-450 pixels will not be visible unless the subscribers scroll through the email.

To find out what subscribers will see above-the-fold, test the HTML template before sending the newsletter. Use the Inbox Preview, which will show you how your email looks in popular email clients. Then adjust to deliver the best header design to all subscribers.

If you send monthly newsletters that don't contain sales pitches, promo offers or coupons, include a summary of the message content in the header. It will give subscribers a hint about what to expect, so they can decide whether to scroll or not.

Headers that grab attention

An effective header should be like a movie trailer — an excerpt that summarizes the **most desirable**, interesting, and enticing parts of the message.

Make your subscribers want to read more and you'll increase your email marketing ROI. Instead of highlighting four random products in the header, pack it with the hottest, most exclusive (or cheapest) offers. Once subscribers scroll down to check out the rest of the offer, you'll know the header has done its job!

Content

Now is the time to get to the point - the most important parts of an HTML message. True email "meat" includes content that generates a high conversion ratio and a call to action.

Content best practices

An email and a website are each designed for different purposes. An email message is NOT the final destination. You can't expect your subscribers to buy a purse or book in an email.

What is the main goal of an email message? It is to direct your readers to a dedicated landing page where conversion takes place — a shopper becomes a buyer, a reader becomes a subscriber, and so on.

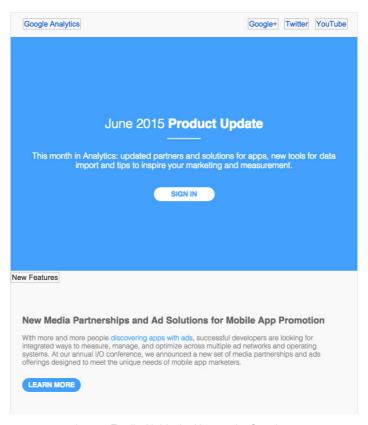
Do you like scrolling through paragraphs of copy in an email? I know I don't. Your email content should focus on a simple message, emphasizing the unique selling points and ending with a clear CTA:

- Click here to find out more,
- Read about all the benefits of investing
- Get the 7 healthy dinner reports FREE! Click here!

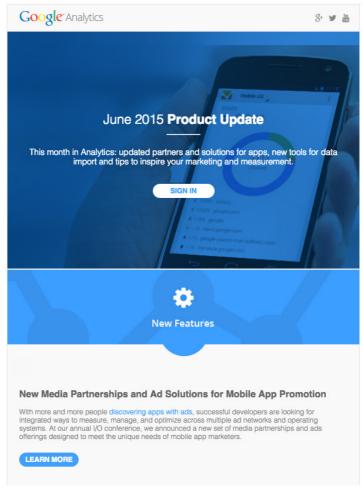
Where to send clicks

Compelling copy and a call to action should work like a one-way traffic sign, pointing the subscriber in the right direction -a landing page.

Here's an example of a simple newsletter that gets your imagination going and makes you curious enough to click the CTA instantly. (The version with blocked images also looks impressive).



Img.17 Email with blocked images by Google



Img.18 Email with images by Google

Using ALT attribute for image content

Why are ALT attributes a must?

Senders should always use ALT attribute to describe each image, in case the graphic is blocked. This provides a hint for the subscribers regarding what they will get to see when the images are unblocked.

Many email clients block images by default, especially on office computers. And even if your business is legitimate and reputable, some subscribers may not recognize your company name.

ALT attribute gives your subscribers that extra bit of information they need to feel confident about your message — and that increases responsiveness and engagement.

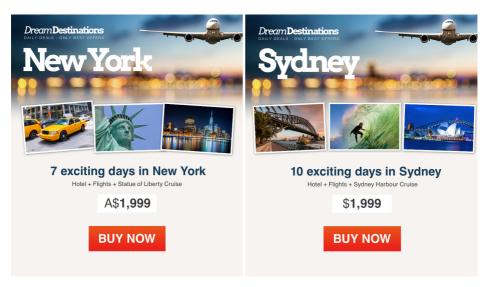


Img.19 GAP newsletter using ALT text

Scattered vs. focused content approach

Not so long ago, it wasn't possible to target or personalize content, so marketers sent the same messages to all subscribers. They were using a shotgun, but what they needed was a precision rifle.

Some marketers still use the shotgun strategy, which often leads their emails to the junk folder. Some readers lose interest but forget to unsubscribe, so they simply ignore the messages or move them to a folder they'll never read. Worse, they mark them as spam, which has a negative impact on email deliverability.



Img.20 Newsletter example using Dynamic Content to present geographically relevant content

Today, there are sophisticated tools such as behavioral targeting and dynamic content to make it more likely that your messages hit your target audience. **Dynamic Content** is an advanced way to automate the personalization of content. You might use this feature to count down the time left to an event or connect with the Central European Bank to convert currency. Such messages beat those that begin with "Hello, [[name]]" hands down.

Branding and email consistency

To keep the bounce rate on landing pages at a minimum, make your marketing communication consistent across all channels. Use consistent brand colors and the same marketing strategy. When it comes to branding, consistency is key.

Simplify user experience. If you run an online perfume store and you send a message about a perfume sale, give subscribers a chance to buy the product as soon as they click the CTA button, instead of sending them to the home page to hunt for it.

Design your newsletter layout carefully — subject line, preheader, headline, CTA, etc. The header and content should complement each other. If your message confuses subscribers, the effectiveness of your message will decrease.

Why content testing works

Did you know that some email clients not only block images by default but they also don't display ALT text? Maybe you realized it right AFTER you sent your message to your email list.

Designing effective HTML newsletters is a difficult task. So test the message several times in popular email programs to be 100% sure it will display the way you want.

Footer

The footer is the *most neglected element* of an email message. It's the place where all the boring parts go — legal jargon, contact info, and so on. But if your reader gets down that far, it means they've read your entire message. Congratulations! But like the title, header, and other email elements, the footer can easily be ruined.

What sets professional email marketers apart from thieves and spammers? It is the transparency of their offer and contact details, elements that allow the reader to identify the company that sent the message.

Elements that belong in the footer

Let's start with what each law-abiding marketer should place in the footer of a commercial newsletter sent by email.

Depending on the local laws and regulations in your country, you will probably have to include the company name, address, tax registration number, etc. Marketers in the U.S. need to include the physical address and company information so that the subscribers can easily locate them in the email body.

Spammers don't work that way, so you need to be transparent with your audience. It builds a massive amount of trust when you show your real name, an honest email address, and accurate contact info.

Placing an unsubscribe link in the footer

It's surprising that there are marketers who complicate the unsubscribe process. They want subscribers to click through several pages, log in to several websites, or send a request email before their address is removed from a list.

But why make subscribers jump through hoops? It makes them hopping mad and may cause them to send your messages to the junk folder or mark your message as spam. This may seriously harm your sender reputation and lead to problems with deliverability.

Subscribers know when they want to unsubscribe. There's no vendor lock-in in email marketing.

Word of caution about footers

If you still think the footer is a place to throw unwanted elements and small print in hopes your reader won't notice, check out these great footer examples for inspiration.

- The background image you can see on the next page is consistent with the rest of the HTML template. The footer is usually black or gray text on a white background. But you can enliven it with graphic elements while keeping all the necessary info.
- ✓ Why not give the reader an opportunity to share the newsletter with others? Add links to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media.

SHOP ONLINE > STORE LOCATOR ▶ MY ACCOUNT ▶ CONTACT US ▶ **GET SOCIAL GET MOBILE** GET YOUR RI FIX ON THE GO!

privacy policy | contact us | unsubscribe

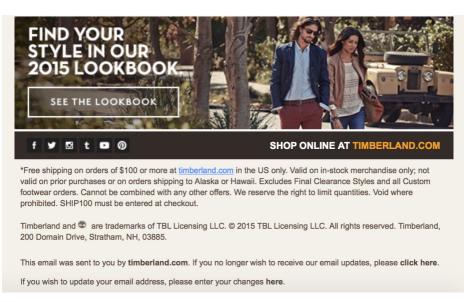
You have received this newsletter after signing up either when you made a purchase online or registered with us at riverisland.com.

If you wish to unsubscribe or change preferences, please click here.

Registered address: Chelsea House, Westgate, London, W5 1DR Registered in England No: 636095

Img.21 Footer example by River Island

Reinforce branding by adding a logo. If you have space left, link to the online version of the newsletter or add a "Forward to a friend" button to increase newsletter sign-ups.



Img.22 Footer example by Timberland

- ✓ Make the footer an integral element of the template. If you like to read about web design trends, you'll know the importance of footer design. Use the footer to wrap up the lower section of the newsletter and improve navigation.
- ✓ Add links to the previous issues of your newsletter. If you have a web archive, place links to previous messages in the footer to help orient those who have just signed up.
- ✓ Add links to terms of service, regulations, and new promotions. If possible, place the legal information on a web page and provide a link instead of overcrowding the footer with small print that might be confusing.

One of the biggest mistakes people can make is to include a statement like this: "This is an automatically generated email, please do not reply to this message."

It's only a dozen words or so, but the message is devastating. It's another way of saying: "Dear Subscriber, you're one of tens of thousands of anonymous records in our database. We have no intention of replying to your emails because we treat email marketing as a one-way communication channel that is no different than advertising on the radio or TV. If you don't like it, please unsubscribe. Don't bother trying to contact us, because no one will read your email anyway."

What do you think about finishing your newsletter off with this kind of message? Not very effective, right? We trust vou'll steer clear of such statements.

Implementation

Professional marketers know that, if you have a large marketing list, tiny improvements can translate into big gains in sales and ROI. So they give attention to the areas we outlined in this whitepaper: preheader, header, content, and footer.

But what if your email list is small but growing? We recommend that you **STILL** implement the same best practices.

These best practices will make your business look professional. And you'll be giving your subscribers a more enjoyable brand experience. So they'll be more likely to stick with you. And buy your products and services.

And tell their friends!

With all of that going for you, there's no telling how far your business can go.

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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.

