



**How to craft email subject lines that will shoot your email open rate to the Moon!**

## How to craft email subject lines that will shoot your email open rate to the Moon!

*23 proven, easy-to-use tactics (with examples!)  
to get your emails noticed, opened and acted upon.*

Have you ever wanted to craft an email that will make a recipient drop everything he/she was doing and hang on to your every word as if their life was dependent on it?

I ALWAYS wanted that and, after doing some research, I found something... I will tell you about it in a second.

First, let's see how people decide to open an email.

Do you think they tick boxes on a checklist and if every box is checked they open it?

No!

People decide to open an email the same way they decide anything in life:

With an instantaneous emotional reaction...

Instantaneous because we all look for shortcuts (to deal with TMI syndrome - too much information) and because we look to lessen the cognitive load (we want to do as much as possible in the background).

So it's your job then to stop them like Wile E. Coyote running into a brick wall the Roadrunner painted to look like the sky.

Wham!

And you can do that by using trigger words that tap into the emotional center of your recipients.

To do that your subject line must pack a strong punch:

- **emotional**
- **relevant**
- **timely**
- **personal**

The subject line could contain one of the items above, or better – a combination of several items. With this, let's examine some of the specific techniques you could use:



## 1. The MIND-CONTROL Subject Line

“Mind-control” – did I get your attention?

What I am talking about is NLP – Neuro-Linguistic Programming – a rather recently developed field that looks into techniques using language as a persuasion.

Without getting into details, there is one technique that is applicable to email subject lines and that is of “open loops”.

Human mind has this (weird) tendency to seek completion – e.g.: if we started listening to a joke then we want to hear the punch line.

If you ever watched “Lost” or “24” TV shows you can, you can almost always predict when an episode would end – finding new evidence, a new thread in a plot, a new character introduced. This opens a loop, and you’d be dying to see how it develops.

Now, back to email subject lines:

- The following questions...
- These proven tactics...
- This secret...

“The following”, “these”, “this” – open up a loop that often would prove irresistible for your email recipients.



## 2. The FOLLOW UP Subject Line

This subject line presumes a previous conversation: over the phone, email or in person. You are not emailing, you are following up on a previous discussion:

- To follow up on our conversation
- As discussed...
- After our meeting...

Word of caution: only use as appropriate. If you only use it as a gimmick and don't pay it off in the body of the email, you will turn off your recipients forever.



### 3. The FEAR FACTOR Subject Line

The fear factor subject line shows items that in all likelihood your recipients are trying to avoid or are fearful of:

- Are you making these mistakes in your firewall settings?
- 10 most exploited vulnerabilities in the cloud infrastructure
- Are you aware of these hacker-magnet IT security flaws?



### 4. The NUMBERS Subject Line

People love lists. The reasons of that are probably a good subject for a book, however on the surface, people are looking for short-cuts, a summary, a “Readers’ Digest” version of complex things:

- 5 simple ways
- 7 hidden lessons
- 9 stupid email marketing mistakes
- 20 ways to monetize your B2B blog

## 5. The STRAIGHT UP BENEFIT Subject Line

Straight-up benefit is exactly that: just show the value your email reader would get from opening and reading your email; and following your link/advice:

- How to double your sales while cut sales cycle time in half
- Learn how to grow your lead generation 5x with these easy tactics
- How to triple your conversion rates



## 6. The CURIOSITY Subject Line

Curiosity subject line creates a “bait” – a taste of what’s to come if you only open an email. The list of possible ways to spin this is endless:

- Never ask pose questions to your sales leads
- Why your email marketing sucks
- What never to put in your marketing email
- The shocking truth about email marketing
- The long-lost “persuasion secret” of the deadliest con man who ever lived



## 7. The URGENCY Subject Line

Using urgency in the subject line is a time-honored method of creating anxiety. Some people respond better to the threat of losing than to the promise of gaining. Urgency subject lines are generally straightforward:

- Save 50 Percent Today Only.
- Early-Bird Registration Ends Friday.
- Last Chance to Send Your \$10



## 8. The QUESTION Email Subject line

The linguistic structure of a question requires the reader to pause and respond. In other words, questions force us to think and answer. Question subject lines generally pull well:

- Would Self-Hypnosis Help You Achieve Your Goals?
- Will You Have Enough Money to Retire at 65?
- Tired of Making Your Boss Rich?
- Can This Marriage Be Saved?

Rhetorical questions are intended to provoke thought rather than prompt a specific answer.

- Are You An Over-Educated Under-Achiever?
- Is the Life of a Child Worth \$15 to You?
- Does Uncle Sam Owe You “Forgotten Money”?



## 9. The NEWS Email Subject Line

If your email offers something new, something your customer can't get elsewhere, consider the news subject line:

- Federal Home Loan Program Announced
- New iPhone “Visual Voice Mail”
- 10 IPOs that Could Double in 12 Months
- Gold Price Poised to Soar in 2009



## 10. The TESTIMONIAL Email Subject Line

Testimonials help convince buyers because they provide validation and social proof. While testimonials usually appear in the body copy of a sales letter, they can also be effective in the subject line.

- Why Arnold Palmer uses Quaker State Motor Oil
- More Alaskans drive on Michelins...
- Tiger Woods can afford any car; he drives a Buick.

Note: While “all caps” normally increases email open rates versus “standard upper and lower,” our testing reveals that the standard capitalization used above often wins when subject lines include names and other proper nouns.



## **11.The AUDIENCE SELECTING Email Subject Line**

This subject line is very direct in that it specifically identifies its intended audience:

- Attention Bostonians Who Need to Lose Weight
- For Investors Who Hate Paying Commissions
- Are You a Sales Pro Who Wants to Close More Deals?
- For DBA running Oracle

Variations include:

- What Every Investor Must Know about IBM
- To the Road Warrior Who Hates to Travel
- Confidential to Corvette Owners

## **12.HYBRID and PERSONALIZED Email Subject Lines**

All the email subject line archetypes can be used in combinations, and many can be personalized:

- Janice Morgan, your children can earn top grades.

- A stock portfolio for Justin Carver
- Bernie Madoff, happy with your stockbroker?



### **13.The SEASONAL Email Subject Line**

The Seasonal email subject line references a holiday or time of year. Often your control mailing can be adapted to use a seasonal reference, thereby increasing response:

- Your New Year's Resolutions for Losing Weight
- Columbus Day Sale Starts Today.
- Unique Gifts for Dads and Grads
- Huge Savings on Holiday Overstock

### **14.The ISSUE-BASED Email Subject Line**

The Issue-based email subject line simply announces the editorial content contained in the body copy. It tells what's inside, and subliminally sells what's inside:

- Your Wednesday Issue of Daily is Enclosed.
- Today's Early to Rise: Barney Frank Speaks Out.
- Bulls vs. Bears in This Special Issue of TSI Daily



## 15. The COMMAND Email Subject Line

The Command email subject line directly tells the reader what to do. It always begins with a verb that demands action:

- Register for CloudForce conference today
- Signup for the IT Security webinar now
- Subscribe to Sunset Magazine
- Put a Tiger in Your Tank.



## 16. The SHOCKING Email Subject Line

This tactic should be mostly reserved for the B2C environment, however with taste and consideration it might be used in a B2B context as well:

- Lazy email marketers have skinny kids
- R-obam-ney – certain things just don't mix

## 17. The DOGMA CHALLENGE Email Subject Line

Pick an opinion or a view most people hold as true and then reverse in the subject line. This surly will grab attention of your readers:

- Why social media doesn't work
- Why cloud computing has no silver lining
- Stop wasting your time on inbound marketing



## **18.The AUTHORITY Email Subject Lines**

The authority subject line simply means quoting someone who'd be easily recognizable and then tying this to the subject of your email:

- Email marketing trick of Mark Twain
- Einstein genius sales secret

## **19.The CLICHÉ REMIX Email Subject Line**

Take a cliché and play with your keywords to find some that may work:

- Revenge is a dish better served sold
- Don't count the chickens before they hack



## **20.The REASON WHY Email Subject Line**

The Reason Why email subject line is a hybrid of the List email subject line archetype.

- 5 Reasons why CMOs will have larger IT budget than CIOs
- Reasons Why Microsoft Outsell Apple
- The Reason Why Betamax Failed
- 12 Reasons Why You Should Invest in Bonds



## 21. The CONTRAST Email Subject Line

The contrast subject line is all about picking two opposites and combining them in a subject line. Start with a list of keywords and concepts, and then find the opposites for them... let your creative juices flow:

- IT security tips from the world scariest hacker
- How to charge higher prices in a recession



## 22. The MOVIE Email Subject Line

This one is easy: pick one a movie title or a quote from a popular movie. Then twist or even leave “as is” and you’ve got your subject line:

- There is a difference between knowing the path and walking the path (Matrix)
- In a sales and marketing galaxy far away
- Beam me up, Scotty



## 23. The TV Character Subject Line

If you are anything like me, you probably watch a lot of TV shows. Dexter, Lost, 24 – you may have your own poison. Regardless, if you bring it up in an email subject line there is a 99% chance your audience will understand what you are talking about:

- George Costanza's guide to inbound marketing
- How to close a sale like Jack Bauer
- James Bond's secret weapons of mass marketing

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