How to Generate B2B Leads with Email Marketing

A guide for technology companies

CTOsOnTheMove

How to Generate B2B Leads with Email Marketing:

A Definitive Guide for Technology Companies

Billions of emails get delivered, opened, and acted upon every day. Hundreds of $ billions get transacted based on email marketing.

Today it is more important than ever to get email marketing right because the opportunity to generate revenue is ever increasing.

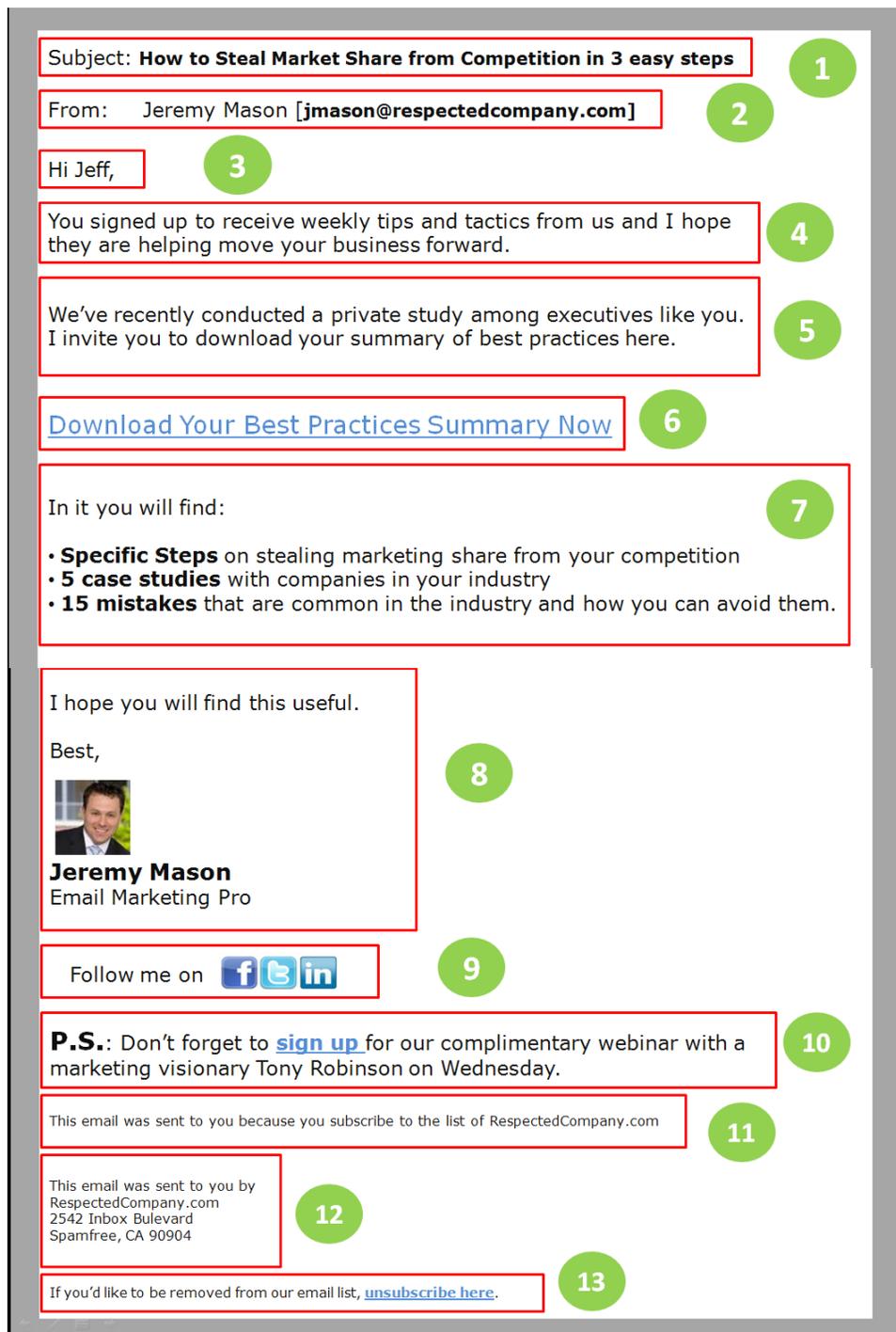At the same time, however, the margin for error is shrinking

The stakes are high.

So let's get right to it.

Your Email: What to Say?

Anatomy of an effective email

Subject: **How to Steal Market Share from Competition in 3 easy steps** (1)

From: Jeremy Mason [**jmason@respectedcompany.com**] (2)

Hi Jeff, (3)

You signed up to receive weekly tips and tactics from us and I hope they are helping move your business forward. (4)

We've recently conducted a private study among executives like you. I invite you to download your summary of best practices here. (5)

Download Your Best Practices Summary Now (6)

In it you will find: (7)

• **Specific Steps** on stealing marketing share from your competition
• **5 case studies** with companies in your industry
• **15 mistakes** that are common in the industry and how you can avoid them.

I hope you will find this useful.

Best, (8)

Jeremy Mason
Email Marketing Pro

Follow me on [f][t][in] (9)

P.S.: Don't forget to **sign up** for our complimentary webinar with a marketing visionary Tony Robinson on Wednesday. (10)

This email was sent to you because you subscribe to the list of RespectedCompany.com (11)

This email was sent to you by RespectedCompany.com
2542 Inbox Bulevard
Spamfree, CA 90904 (12)

If you'd like to be removed from our email list, unsubscribe here. (13)

1. A Compelling Subject Line That Will Get Your Email Opened: A subject line for your email is what an attention-grabbing headline is to a

magazine. Its purpose is to stop the reader dead in her tracks and have her rush to open and read your email.

Read the subject line paragraph in the Email Copyrighting section of the eBook for further details.

2. "From" header: Do you like receiving emails from admin@ or generalinquiries@? I know I don't. I want to make sure that I am talking to a live and intelligent life form here, not an emotionless machine.

So your real name is critical. Also important is your domain name. It helps if it is recognizable, or descriptive.

3. Personalization: "The sound of one's name is the sweetest" - especially if you have a decent business relationship with the recipient and his/her behavior shows engagement then by all means, use personalization.

4. Offer some background. The most effective marketing technique is not to impose a new conversation onto the email recipient but instead to join a conversation already going on in his/her head.

And imagine that the first question they are asking is : "Why am I getting this?" Be sure to answer this question in the first sentence of the first paragraph. Otherwise, the reader will tune out, delete the message or (worse) mark it as spam.

5. Offer value: In the same vein, the second question your reader is asking is: "What is in it for me?" So be sure to show compelling value you are offering.

Notice the wording here: "private study" highlights exclusivity… "executive like you" establishes rapport.

6. Value-based Call-to-Action (CTA): Right after the value section includes a call-to-action – i.e. what is that you want the reader to do. It may be "subscribe," "sign up," "attend," "download," "visit," etc. Just make sure it is not "click here."

You CTA needs to give the reader an indication of what would happen after the link is clicked. For example, if I click on "download" I can expect that I will be taken to another page that will load up something of value for me. Notice the language here: "your" confers ownership…. "best practices" conveys value.

7. Substantiate Your Offer: Here you need to unpack the value for the reader. Bullet points work great, as do numbers, examples of results, and testimonials. Further, you can just list the key takeaways and components of the offer.

8. Signature: Including your headshot image is optional; however, we feel that it increases the "human touch" factor of your emails. Again, use your judgment and obviously tailor your message to the type of readers and where they are in the marketing funnel.

9. Social Media Follow Buttons: Add social media follow buttons to encourage subscribers to follow you on Twitter, 'Like' your Facebook page, subscribe to your YouTube channel, or follow your company updates on LinkedIn.

10. Post Scriptum: Some researchers are saying that P.S. section is the 2nd most read part of the email after the headline. I am not sure I believe 100% in this, however, there is enough evidence from direct marketing fields to support this point. Do include a P.S.

Here are some uses for it: a testimonial that support your offer (P.S.: I forgot to mention what Jason Clark, our client, said about…), a bonus (P.S.: If you sign up before Nov 1st, you will get additional…), or a sense of urgency (P.S.: This is truly the last batch and we only have 127 units left…).

11. A Few Good Words for the Sender. Re-iterate why the user is receiving this email. This feature will help reduce unsubscribes, spam complaints and annoyed replies. Trust me, it is worth including.

12. Here's Where I Live: CAN-SPAM requires you to include actual street address (no PO Boxes) in the email.

13. Unsubscribe Link: Do include an unsubscribe link at the bottom of your email. If you don't, you will be in violation of CAN-SPAM regulations and, maybe more importantly, annoy your readers and negatively impact your email deliverability and brand in the long run.

Email Copywriting That Delivers Results

"Last night I dreamed in e-mail."

Subject line:

A subject line to an email is what a headline is to an article – it should grab a reader's attention, show the obvious value of reading further and demonstrate that the email is trustworthy, personalized, timely and relevant… all in a span of 0.3 seconds.

Are you ready for the challenge?

So, let's begin…

These are the types of subject lines – here are some of the subject lines you may want to use:

⇨ NUMBERS subject lines:

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

⇨ The URGENCY subject line:

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

⇨ The QUESTION subject line:

- 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?

⇨ The AUDIENCE-selection subject line:

- 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

⇨ The COMMAND subject line:

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

⇨ The TESTIMONIAL 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.

⇨ 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
-

⇨ The CURIOSITY subject line:

- 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

⇨ The straight-up BENEFIT:

- 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

Email Body:

Rules of thumb:

⇨ **Short and sweet.** Email, especially B2B email, is a tricky medium. It is geared towards busy executives with short attention spans. So, a short form is not only welcome… it is the only one that works.

⇨ **Few fonts.** In the same vein don't use more than 2-3 font types. Otherwise, you risk making your message look busy and therefore increase the chances it will get ignored.

⇨ **Spell check and proof read.** Enough said.

⇨ **Join the dialogue.** Instead of interjecting into the conversation, try to join the dialogue that's already going on in the head of your reader. I can guarantee that the first questions that pop up in their minds and that you should answer in the first lines of your email are:

    o "Why am I getting this?" and

- o "What's in it for me?" – i.e. "Would I get something of value if I do what you want me to do?"

⇨ **Tell stories.** "Let me tell you a story…" Notice how you tuned out everything else and prepared to be entertained once you read these 5 simple words?

Now compare this to: "Let me tell you about our state-of-the-art capabilities to deliver software development projects for a range of industries… "I bet you tuned out before "state-of-the-art," didn't you? So tell stories in your emails, or get your happy clients tell stories for you.

⇨ **Maintain 9:1 ratio.** Do you know why people hate being sold to but love to buy? That's because they buy from companies they know, like and trust… and they hate when someone trying to go for the homerun before covering the first base, if you know what I mean.

Don't be that Alec Baldwin'esque "Always Be Closing" guy everyone hates.
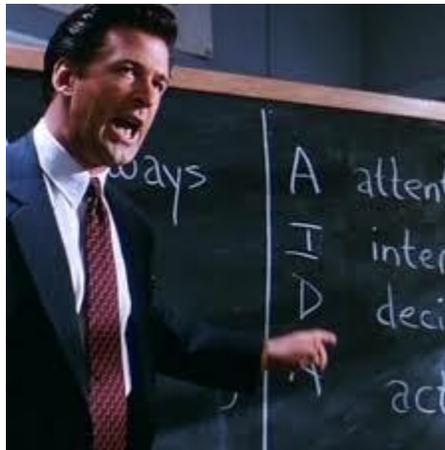
Provide value to your readers: tips, tactics, eBooks, advice, freebees… get them to know you, like you and trust you. Once this happens, an actual transaction would be natural, expected and welcome. So try to maintain 9 parts of "value" for every 1 part of "pitching" in your emails.

⇨ **Include your call-to-action.** The time of "FYI" and "just want to keep you in the loop"-type emails is long gone and it is not coming back. Assume your reader has 5 seconds to read and act on your email. Make it obvious and easy to understand what you want her to do.

⇨ **Don't be a Dostoevsky.** He was a genius, famous for his run-on sentences that could go on for a whole page. Don't do that. Use small paragraphs, bullet points, standalone transition sentences wherever you can. This would make your email more readable, scannable and ultimately – more effective.

Types of B2B Emails:

- TRANSACTIONAL

    o **Welcome email** – readers are most vulnerable right after they make a decision. Make them feel good about it. Thank them for signing up, tell them they are in good company and tell them what value they can expect. Don't forget that they can change their mind and unsubscribe any time.

    o **Confirmation** – this could be a reservation confirmation, purchase confirmation, etc. This provides an excellent opportunity to cross-sell and up-sell. Don't waste it.

- NEWSLETTER

    Nothing fancy here. Usually industry news, with editorial content covering your solution addressing clients' pain points mixed in. Weekly is the best.

- EVENT-BASED

Are you organizing a webinar, a conference call, a live event or sponsoring an industry conference? What a wonderful opportunity to reach out to your current and potential customers and invite them to participate.

- NURTURING

Very few people are ready to buy at the first contact, especially if we are talking about B2B environment. The "Like Me – Know Me – Trust Me – Pay Me" sequence is almost impossible to disrupt, skip or swap steps. This is what nurturing emails are for. Downloaded a white paper? Here is an invitation to a webinar? Listened to the entire webinar? Here is an invitation to a live demo. Liked the demo? Here is a free trial. You get the idea.

- SOLICITATIONS

At some point the education and get-to-know part come to an end and it is time to go for hard selling. Not to worry: by now you've established yourself as a trusted, liked and respected authority on the solution you are selling.

Plus you are not going to be pitching "buy my stuff, it is good." Nope. You will be making offers stressing:
   o <u>Scarcity</u> – e.g. "we only have 4 remaining licenses left."
   o <u>Price</u> – join before December 1st for a 30% discount.
   o <u>Bonuses</u> – sign up today and receiving additional license 50% off, plus free training and support for 1 year ($10,000 value).

You get my drift.

Essentially, you are not even selling here. You are hooking up your loyal email readers with special deals not available for a regular gal on the street. Talk about making your prospective customers feel special…

Your Email: When to Send?

Quick answer: it depends…

If you already have an established relationship with your readers, your email provides value and not annoying, then week-ends sometimes produce great results.

For other emails, mornings (6:00 am – 10:00 am) and lunchtime (noon – 2:00 pm) produce the best results.

This is one area that's particularly lends itself to split testing. Do exactly that, split your list in 2 and test different times. In a couple months time you will find the best time to send your emails.

Your Email: How Often is Too Often?

Again, it depends. I know very successful email marketers who send daily emails. Yes, daily.

Do they have high unsubscribe rates? You betcha.

Do people who continue to subscribe to their lists are more likely to buy from them? Sure they are… Are you more likely to respond to a phone call from a friend you talk to every day or the one you hear from every other month?

I rest my case.

The general rule of thumb is this – I can guarantee you that you can figure out a way to provide value to your prospective clients 350 times a year. However if, for your own reasons, you prefer not to send daily emails then weekly is a good start.

Then just keep your ear to the ground, solicit feedback from your readers and watch the unsubscribe rate.

Making Sure Your Emails Get Delivered: Getting There is Half the Fun!

So you spend all that time crafting the perfect email, coming up with an irresistible subject line, wordsmithing your call-to-action to utmost perfection… Now guess what? If you can't get this email to the inbox of your reader than all your effort was for nothing.

How can we make sure your emails get delivered after you hit "send" button?

<u>Avoid purchased lists</u>

I can show you many reasons why buying lists is not a good idea. The most important ones:

- You don't have permission to email to these recipients and therefore are in violation of CAN-SPAM

- It is likely your open rate will be extremely low since most recipients will not recognize you as someone they signed up to receive email from – you are not familiar.

- It is also likely that your response rate will be low – you haven't earned the trust.

- It is likely you will annoy people who will view your email as unsolicited and unwelcome, therefore damaging your brand value.

- It is likely that some of the emails may be used by ISPs as "honey pots" which may land you on a spam black-list.

Don't use spammy words in the subject line or email body

You know, words like "free," "buy," "offer," and "risk free" are likely to trigger spam filters and will not get delivered. When in doubt, run your email draft through a spam-checker tool.

Size matters

Keep your emails under 50K size. Don't send attachments, send links instead.

No tricks

What may have been effective in 1997 no longer works today. Remember, being caught red-handed in any of these practices may cause permanent damage to your deliverability ratios:

- **Hashbusting:** Inserting random characters in the subject line or content to fool spam filters, e.g. "F.ree. p.r!z.e"

- **Special Characters:** Like "&," "$," "^" and others

- **ALL CAPS:** If you have something of substance to say, then there is NO NEED TO SHOUT!

- **Attachments**: if you need to share a document, send a link instead of an attachment.

- **Deceptive Subject Lines:** Starting the subject line with "Re:" or "Fwd:" to suggest an ongoing communication with the sender.

- **Misleading Claims:** Subject lines stating that the recipient has won a prize, while the copy lists conditions that have to be met in order to claim it.

- **Image Text:** Concealing a text message in an image to fool spam filters.

- What will get you in trouble
    - Spammy words, like "free, "deal," "offer" or other words that are overly used by spammers are likely to trigger a spam flag and should be avoided. When in doubt, run your email draft through a spam-checker tool.

    - Flash, javascript or video

    - Assuming familiarity – leading with the recipient's first name in the subject line will help the open rate, however only when you have a legitimate business relationship with the person.

    - Bait-and-switch – putting attention grabbing, yet irrelevant things in the subject line. For example, "your friend may have cancer" in the subject line however if the text of the email doesn't follow through on the subject line, you are in trouble.

    - Pretexting – this really means pretending to be someone you are not. For example if you put "your traffic violation – respond immediately" in the subject line, then your email will likely get opened. However if the reader sees then something like "Now that I have your attention, let me sell you our new…" they will be mightily annoyed.

Use an established ESP

Someone like MailChimp or ExactTarget has dedicated teams who worry about deliverability all day. Make sure your email service provider (ESP) is a reputable company.

Get whitelisted

Ask your email recipients to add you to their address list. This will tell their internal spam filter to back off.

Your Email List: Feeding and Care

How to grow your email list

- Provide value for signing up – eBook, free access, etc.
- Simplify sign up forms (only ask information that's relevant, ideally – only their email address)
- Leverage social media – create content on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter that links to a landing page where users can provide their email.
- Reduce unsubscribe rates:
    - o Remind them of value in the unsubscribe language
    - o Segment the list
    - o Map your content to the stage in the sales funnel
    - o Keep content relevant, timely, contextual, helpful, valuable. Remember, many recipients of your email are trying to reduce cognitive load that is essentially the "cost" of your email. Make sure that they pay-off – i.e. the value of the email – is obviously larger so that users are aware of vastly positive ROI of reading your emails.
    - o Provide value vs. pitching 80 : 20

How to maintain your email list

⇨ How to clean

Remove emails that are:

- Catch all – e.g. admin@ or info@. These are likely monitored by an intern once a month.
- All unsubscribes – the sooner the better.

- All readers who didn't follow through with the double opt-in – i.e. those who didn't click the opt-in link in the confirmation email.
- All bounced emails – hard and soft.
- All recipients who didn't open your email even once in the last 6 months.
- Autoresponder emails saying "Jane Doe is no longer with the company"
- Duplicate emails

⇨ How to segment

The concept here is to tailor your message to your reader to maximize engagement. By "engagement", I mean any activity that your users can take that is beneficial for you: open an email, refer a colleague, provide additional information, etc.

Ideally, you also want to map your email recipients to the sales funnel so that you can tailor your email messages more specifically to them. In other words, someone who just signed up for your newsletter yesterday and someone who read 3 white papers, attended a webinar and participated in a product demo are on the opposite ends of the sales funnel and should be receiving vastly different email messages. Lumping them together is one of the gravest mistakes you could be making as an email marketer.

- By geography
- By age
- By source
    o Search
    o Social media
- Behavior-based segmentation
    o Opened?
    o Clicked?
    o Bought?

The Magic of Autoresponders

An email autoresponder is 1 or a sequence of emails sent over time that gets triggered after the email recipient opted-in for the list.

For example, if a web visitor fills out a contact form on your website and checks a box saying she would like more information on product X, you can respond with a series of emails that go something like this:

Immediately: send the prospect a "thank you" email along with a product brochure. Give them the contact information for a sales rep if they should have any further questions.

Week one: send the prospect a follow up, including a deeper piece of collateral, such as a case study involving the product. Again provide a call to action with the email and telephone number of a sales rep.

Week two: Send a helpful email with a few FAQs and a client testimonial.

Week three: Send the latest white paper and offer to set up a web conference to go over the solution with all members of the decision-making team.

Week 4: Send along an industry report on the subject.

Week 5: etc…

As you can see, setting up an email responder series for each of your products and services creates a hands-free follow-up system that keeps you top-of-mind with your prospect for weeks or even months.

This Tasty (or not?) Spam Sandwich

Overall, the best marketing practices for CAN-SPAM compliance is fairly simple. Here are the five main points in the legislation:

1. Create and maintain a "Do Not Email" (DNE) list
2. Make your opt-out process "uncomplicated"
3. Add your company name and address to your email messages
4. Allow opt-out by any means mentioned in an email (hotlink, reply to, Web-based unsubscribe requests)
5. Train your customer service staff to capture and process any non-Web-based unsubscribe requests within the 10 business days deadline

There is a great deal of misinformation regarding CAN-SPAM. Here are a couple of points that might help you when discussing CAN-SPAM with your marketing organization:

1. CAN-SPAM allows for the promotion of commercial email to no-opt-in names, as long as the email is labeled as an "Advertisement" or "Solicitation." However, your Email Service Provider may not allow that email send. And, remember that ISPs will use the promotional consideration as a way to filter your message from the Inbox.

Tools of Trade:

1. **Aweber**
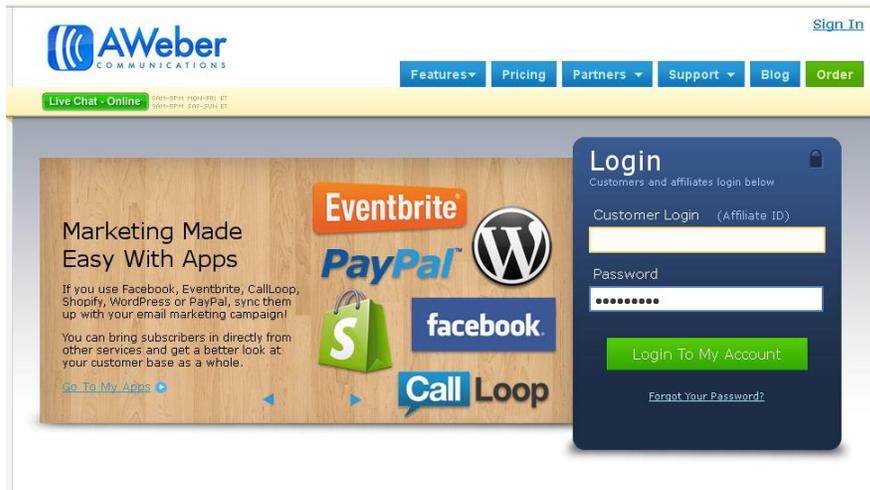
   AWeber, headquartered in suburban Philadelphia, helps businesses, entrepreneurs and bloggers increase sales and profits through its suite of web-based email marketing software. The privately held, debt-free company was founded in 1998. For more information, visit http://www.aweber.com, subscribe to the AWeber blog, or follow on Twitter and Facebook.

2. **Unbounce**
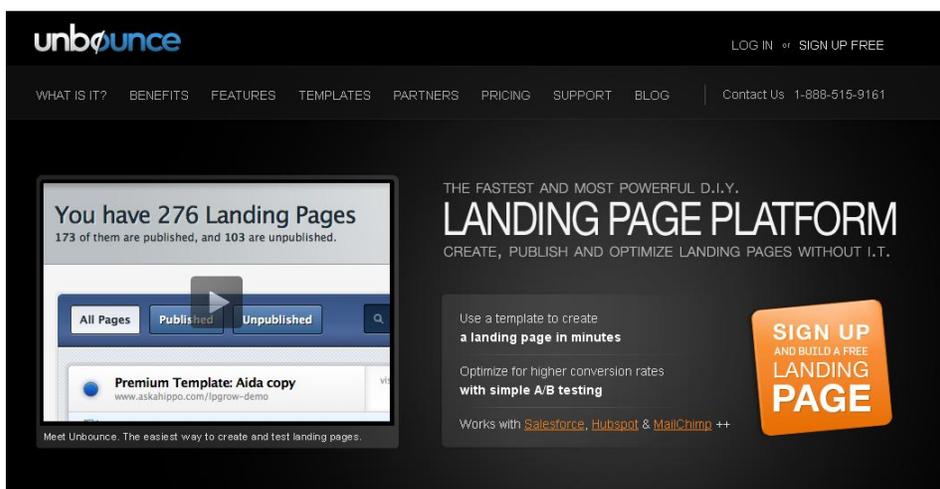
Unbounce is the leading provider of a hosted solution for landing pages, sign up forms and such. The application provides a state-of-the-art WYSIWYG editor and integrates with most email platforms.

3. Email Grader by HubSpot

EmailGrader Helps Marketing and Sales Professionals:

- Keep emails out of the spam box
- Increase conversion rates
- See how emails look on mobile devices
- Ensure emails are CAN-SPAM compliant
- Tag and organize email campaigns

4. Subject line checker
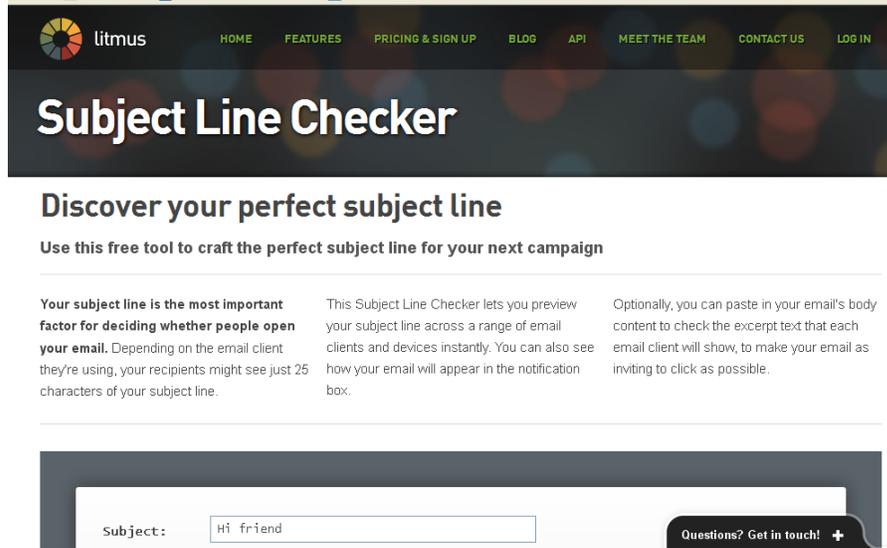
This Subject Line Checker lets you preview your subject line across a range of email clients and devices instantly. You can also see how your email will appear in the notification box.

5. FiveSecondTest
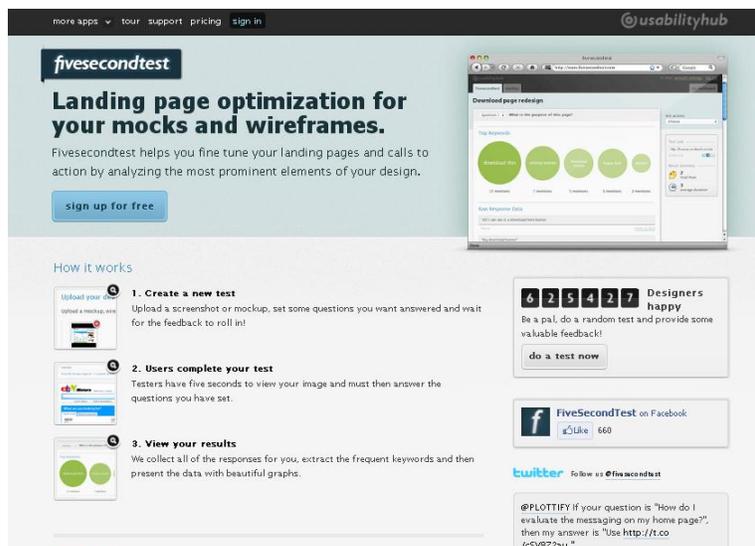
Fivesecondtest helps you fine tune your landing pages and calls to action by analyzing the most prominent elements of your design.

6. [Postmark](#) – spam checker
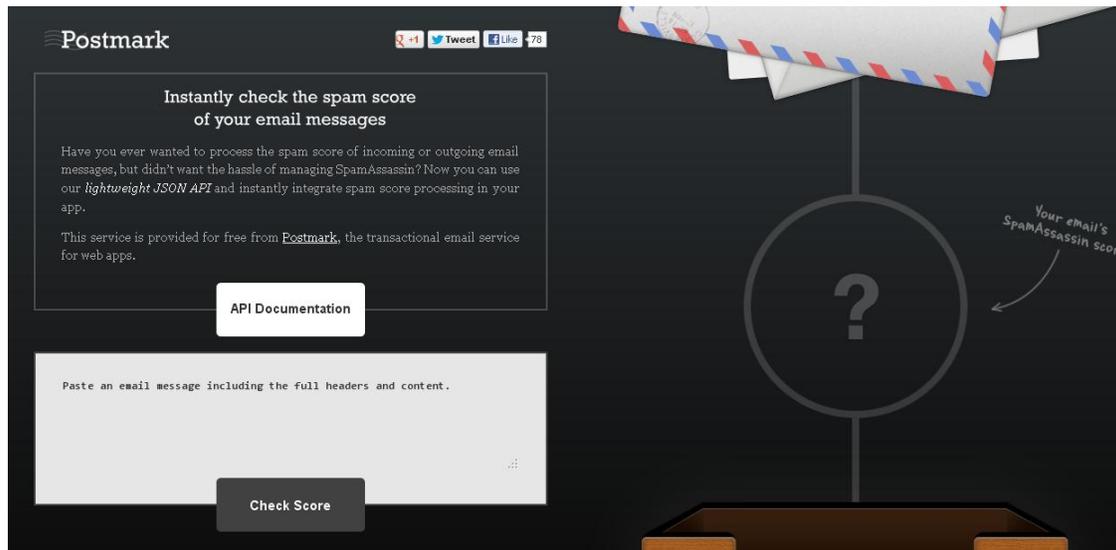
Instantly check the spam score of your email messages
Have you ever wanted to process the spam score of incoming or outgoing email messages, but didn't want the hassle of managing SpamAssassin?

This service is provided for free from Postmark, the transactional email service for web apps.