Anatomy of an Email

(Product | Newsletter | Survey | Event | Competition | Welcome)

Your ultimate guide to creating emails that rock!

An e-guide by Vision6
This guide covers six of the most popular types of emails:

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Use this guide for:

- Ideas and inspiration
- Content guidelines
- Suggested layouts
- Design tips
- Learning the tricks of the trade

A note from Vision6

Welcome to the Anatomy of an Email. As professionals working within the e-messaging space we’re always on the lookout for new ideas and inspiration. This guide contains over 30 emails that we love and feel compelled to share with you.

There are lots of best practice guides out there; but not many places where you can sit back, flip through a diverse range of examples and learn a little something on the way too.

Good luck with your next email!

Sincerely,
The Vision6 Team
Anatomy of a Product Email

Looking for a cost effective way to acquire more customers, promote your business, and sell more products?

A good product email (or series of emails) can go a long way to helping you reach your targets. It will showcase your products, provide information and help to facilitate sales.

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1. **Pre-header text**

This text often appears as an extension of your subject line in many email clients. The pre-header text is also the very first thing readers see after opening an email so it draws your recipients attention, helps you get more opens and is very important if there is any image blocking.

2. **Getting attention with video or animation**

A 2010 study by the Web Video Marketing Council found that 73% of marketers say that video-based email marketing is more likely than static content to generate higher conversion and purchase rates. In this email all of the umbrellas open and close so that recipients can see what they look like in both states. Animation and video are very engaging mediums and there are a number of ways you can use them to enhance your emails.
3. Logo and brand

Brand consistency is essential when creating a product email. Brand recognition generally provokes a certain amount of trust thereby reassuring your audience that the email they have received is legitimate. It is also worth remembering that a ‘brand’ is more than just a logo. Ultimately it’s everything in your email including the colours, imagery, language and tone that you use.

4. Incentives

Providing recipients with the chance to win a competition, free shipping offers or small discounts on future purchases can spark their interest and also forms a positive brand connection. This STA email includes a competition that is really well targeted towards their audience.
5. Relevant/tailored content

Make sure you are in-tune with your audience and environment in which you are selling. For example, this email is a seasonal email and it uses a combination of imagery, colours and language to create a theme that is relevant to the recipients. You can also tailor content by using event related news, fashions, trends and your audience’s specific interests and preferences.

6. Calls to purchase

This is the most important (and unfortunately the most over looked) part of any sales email. Make it easy for recipients to purchase your product or service. Don’t make them go hunting for an option to buy. Include call to action buttons that take them straight to a shopping cart. Or if you don’t have a shopping cart, make sure you provide them with a stockist, store locator or an option to buy via mail or phone.
7. Catalogue imagery and information

Like a print catalogue, a product email must showcase your ‘hero’ products and offers. There should be adequate information to prompt a purchase but keep it punchy enough to avoid clutter. Use images, colours and text styles to create an easily scanned structure while remaining conscious of potential image blocking issues.
8. Weblinks
Weblinks help you to drive traffic to your website or shopping cart. They also provide important sign posts for recipients who may not be interested in your email but would like to visit your website.

9. Urgency
Creating a sense of urgency is a very good technique for helping close a sale. I’m not just talking about the good old CALL IN THE NEXT TEN MINUTES ‘shouty’ sense of urgency either. It’s more about reminding recipients when sales end, when stock is running low or sharing the benefit of making a purchase sooner rather than later. Creating a sense of urgency can encourage recipients to act rather than setting the email aside.
10. Social sharing

Use social media to help spread the word about your product. As well as including links for pre-filled tweets and status updates, you could offer an incentive such as a discount in an attempt to encourage your audience to promote you.

11. Relate to your audience

Think about your prospects and customers. What are their tastes and preferences? What are the sorts of things they really care about? Do they have a lot of time to go through a long email or do they just want to know about any sales or specials? Always remain focused on the needs of your audience and let this guide you when designing your product emails.
Newsletters can either be one of the most fun and rewarding aspects of your job or a bit of a pain. How your email template is designed will have a significant effect on your experience.

We recommend having a flexible template that contains many sections and layout options so that you can adjust your email design to suit the content you wish to include.

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1. View email online

This link is best positioned at the very top of your email and should direct recipients to an online version of your email in case of inbox display issues. Check out some additional creative uses for this part of your newsletter that can help drive conversions.

2. Separate key messages with colour

Use colour that is consistent with your company branding as a way to break up newsletter content into smaller, more easily scanned sections.
3. Calls to action throughout

Increase the likelihood of recipients taking action when reading your email by including multiple calls to action throughout. For best results, use a mix of text and images as your calls to action and hyperlink them to relevant landing pages where appropriate.
4. Valuable, interesting and relevant content

Personalise content so it is relevant to your audience. Only send content that your audience will genuinely be interested in.

5. Update preferences and unsubscribe

Include links for subscribers to update their profile or unsubscribe and make sure they’re easy to find. Traditionally these links are placed somewhere at the bottom of your Email.
6. Quick scanning and navigation
Include an ‘In this issue’ section with article headlines that link directly to the article content below. This is particularly important for lengthy newsletters.

7. Call to action above the fold
Place your main call to action within the top 400 pixels and make it easy to find without the need for scrolling. Experiment using both text and images with your call to action.

8. Social sharing
Include links to your social network pages so that email subscribers can easily connect with you in other ways. Also include social sharing options that allow recipients to share your newsletter with their own networks.
9. Eye-catching headings

Format headings for quick scanning and use font size and colour to stand out from the rest of the newsletter content.

10. Appealing imagery

Use images that are relevant to the content and enhance both the design and the call to action. Include alt text in case the images don’t display in the recipient’s inbox by default.
11. Logo and brand

Position your logo in the top-left corner of your email so recipients can quickly identify your branding.

12. Create a dialogue with customers

Remember that email is not a one-way communication and include options for recipients to contact you and provide feedback.
Surveys are a great way of collecting valuable market intelligence.

The only problem is that countless companies know this and send out surveys endlessly. Due to this, many recipients are ‘fatigued’ and no longer complete surveys.

However, you can break through the clutter! There are a number of strategies you can use to achieve the highest possible response rates.

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1. Reward participants
Let’s start with the obvious, reward your participants. They have taken the time out of their day to help you with your business. Say thank you with a discount or other incentive.

2. Set expectations
Tell people how long it will take to complete your survey. There is nothing worse than starting what you think is a two minute survey only to be confronted with a ‘never ending’ questionnaire.

3. Grow your sample size
If you need as many responses as possible (and they don’t need to come from your existing client base) make it easy for participants to share the survey. Also remember to put it on your website, social media pages and promote it via email.
4. **Short and painless**

Only ask participants for information that you actually intend to use for a specific purpose. If you can’t use the information collected by a particular question maybe it’s not worth asking.

5. **STRONG call to action**

If your aim is to get recipients to fill in your survey you need to make this call to action very strong and enticing. You can do this by using action orientated words, images, layout, buttons, fonts and colours.
6. Explain why

Tell participants how you are going to use their information so they understand why it’s important. It’s also a good idea to include a link to your privacy policy.
7. Correct fields

Make sure that you use the correct field format for each question. For example use a date field for a date of birth, a text field for names and when you only want a participant to choose one option use radio buttons. This makes it very easy for participants to complete the survey and also preserves the accuracy and integrity of the data.

8. Breaking it down

Think about collecting information in stages. Realistically how much can you do in response to your findings? Collect some information starting with the most important, make improvements then collect more.
9. Post survey updates

People like to know that their feedback had an impact and if you tell them what improvements resulted from their feedback they are much more likely to participate in your next survey as well.

10. Attention

By the time participants reach the end of a survey you generally have their complete attention. This is a good time to ask participants to tell a friend, subscribe to a new offering or check out your social media pages.
One of the occasions that email marketing can really help you save time is when promoting and managing an event.

A great event email will grab the recipient’s attention, provide them with the information they need and entice them to RSVP.

Furthermore, setting up a good automated email campaign can streamline administrative processes involved in collecting RSVP’s and payments.

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1. A clear and strong call to action

This is the most important part of your email and therefore must be placed in a prominent position (ideally the top 400 pixels of your email) and be easy to understand. Many event organisers also choose to include a ‘decline’ button or equivalent. This allows the recipient to opt-out of future messages for this particular event without unsubscribing from future event communications.

2. Social sharing options

One of the easiest ways to promote your event to a wider audience is to encourage word of mouth. Social media provides an easy way for your audience to share your invitation.
3. Essential information

Make it easy for recipients to view all the information they need to make a decision and act.

This includes:
- Time and Date
- Add to calendar link
- Location
- Parking/transport options
- Ticket prices
- Catering
- Dress code

4. So what should you include or leave out?

Include anything that is a key motivator for people to attend your event. For example, tell people if you are raising money for a charity or have a great speaker. This can lift the perceived value of an event and motivate many people to attend.
5. Video promotion

Want your audience to really get a feel for your event? By including a promotional video in your email you can help your audience to learn about your event in an engaging way. Creating a short video is much easier than you may think.

6. Interactive elements

Polls, competitions and QR codes are effective ways to encourage greater interaction with your invitation and event in general. For best results, use these elements to help promote your event and obtain information such as attendee expectations and preferences.

7. Build credibility

Share information about your company within your invitation. Depending on how your event is positioned, you may do this subtly with a line such as ‘proudly supported by company name’ with a link to your site, or more directly with a company blurb or video.
8. Teaser for future events

If you regularly hold events consider including a teaser for upcoming events in your emails. Recipients may not want to attend your next event — but the one after that might be something they will consider. Just be sure to structure your email in a way that is very clear and separates out each individual event to avoid confusion.
9. Convince people to attend

Outline the topic or purpose of the event clearly. This is where many invitations fail. While focusing on the email design, many email marketers forget to include key information about the event. Including information such as the purpose for fundraising events, the reason for gala events or the achievements being celebrated at anniversary events can be key to encouraging attendance.

10. Housekeeping

Make things easy for yourself and include links that allow recipients to manage their own profile and registrations. Also, be sure to include a ‘contact’ option so people who have questions can get in touch with you.
11. Sponsors

To keep your sponsors happy it’s important to set expectations as laid out in your sponsorship agreements. Often you’ll need to include sponsor logos in your email so make sure the design of your invitation has a place for them.

12. More in-depth information

More information is required for events with multiple streams, topics or speakers. This is especially the case for educational or professional development events where attendees may need to obtain permission or budget to attend your event.
Competitions are a fantastic way to increase engagement, grow your audience or promote your brand.

Not all competitions are created equal though. Some are definitely better than others.

There are some very simple elements within competition emails that will persuade me to enter every time.

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1. Entice your audience

For a competition to be successful, you need to offer a prize that your audience will want. In this case, food franchise Mad Mex is appealing to their audience with an opportunity to win a trip to Mexico. Here are some ideas for prizes you could give away:

- Aspirational experiences that money can’t buy. (Or that few people would organise.)
- Cash prizes are untargeted and will encourage a wide range of entrants who may or may not have an interest in your organisation.
- Category specific prizes are related to your company or brand and will attract a more targeted range of entrants. For example, a hairdresser who offers a makeover as a prize.
- Random draws or sweepstakes work well for charities where entrants are motivated by philanthropic reasons as they are generally perceived as ‘fair.’

2. Urgency

Competitions work best when they have a sense of urgency. Including an ‘end date’ on your competition email will increase the likelihood of people entering. If the competition does not have a sense of urgency, people may set it aside for a mythical time known as ‘later.’
3. Increase the perceived chance of winning

Many people hesitate to enter competitions as they feel that they are unlikely to win. Increasing a potential entrant’s perceived chance of winning is quite easy. In your email, draw attention to any ‘runner-up prizes’ you are going to award. For example, this Nivea competition offers 50 Nivea Prize packs as well as the main prize of a trip to New York.

4. Entry mechanism

Your call to action and steps required to enter the competition must be prominent within your email. Entry details and instructions must be very clear and uncomplicated - if your audience can’t easily enter, they won’t bother. This also ensures that potential entrants do not get part way through the entry process and then abandon it.
5. Conditions of entry

Competitions are about more than just ‘giving stuff away’ and it’s important to make the conditions of entry clear to the entrant. In this case Life Instyle has several conditions of entry which they have made very clear to the recipient.
6. The fine print

The fine print is a necessary evil when it comes to competitions. It may not look great however it can save you a lot of heartache by clarifying the conditions of entry so that entrants do not dispute competition terms or outcomes. Depending on your geographical location you may also be required by law to display permit numbers or other details. Remember if you have quite a few T’s and C’s you can always use a landing page as well.
7. Multimedia

Including multimedia is a great way to encourage higher levels of engagement with your competition. Multimedia you could use include: games, videos, forums, images or other interactive elements.

8. Share the love

Unless you have a particular reason to keep your competition small, chances are you want as many people as possible to enter. One of the easiest (and cheapest) ways to reach a broader audience is to encourage and facilitate sharing by including links to send to friend forms and social media pages.
Anatomy of a Welcome Email

Welcome emails are like digital handshakes with new subscribers. And nobody likes a wet, cold handshake!

So get your email relationship off on the right foot by sending welcome emails that offer subscribers an informative, rewarding greeting.

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1. Recap
Remind subscribers what content you’ll be sending and how often you’ll be sending it.

2. Be personal
If you’ve asked for a first name at the point of subscription, use it.

3. Promote the benefits
Remind subscribers of the benefits your emails have to offer them.
4. Become a ‘safe’ sender

Include a simple request to add you to their safe sender list or email address book. This helps overcome issues with mailbox filters and image blocking in most email clients and will generally help improve your email deliverability as well.

5. Admin

Advise how to update details or unsubscribe.
6. Peak interest

The moment someone subscribes to your newsletter is their moment of peak interest! They have subscribed for a reason and at this point in time are most likely to complete a ‘call to action’ so make sure you use this email to ask your subscribers to act.

Hi KristinAdeline!

Thanks for joining! Here’s your account information:

- Flickr screen name: KristinAdeline
- Google: buddleum.kristin@gmail.com
- Contact email: buddleum.kristin@gmail.com

Flickr is a great place to share photos. Get started now:

1. Add a buddy icon
2. Upload your first photos
3. Find your friends

To keep you in the loop, we will notify you by email when there is activity related to you on Flickr. You can customize these emails or turn them off at any time.

To learn more about Flickr, read our informative FAQs or take the magical feature tour.

We look forward to seeing the world through your eyes!

Team Flickr
7. Bonus!
To really get your email relationship off on the right foot, include something a little extra in your welcome email as a reward. Apart from monetary rewards like vouchers and discounts, things like helpful tips and access to exclusive resources are equally as effective. It doesn’t have to be big or expensive, but as long as rewards are unexpected and valuable they’ll capture people’s interest and help keep you top of mind for when your next email arrives to their inbox.

8. Say thanks
Specifically thank the new subscriber. Remember, they’ve just invited you into their inbox which is no small deal.
Last tip
Subscribe to as many emails as possible! If you see a company with marketing you like subscribe to their emails. This way you will always find new ideas and inspiration, plus you’ll start thinking like a recipient rather than a sender.

Like this guide?
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Time to start your e-messaging journey?
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