

**LOOK  
INSIDE!**

Sample the first  
few pages of the  
full report.

## Marketing How-To Guide

# THE PERFECT PITCH: HIT A HOME RUN WITH EVERY HEADLINE, SUBJECT LINE, AND CALL TO ACTION



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# FIRST BASE: THE HEADLINE (OR TITLE)

Headlines are designed to be eye-catching. They're big, bold, and begging for attention. But simply being seen isn't enough. Your headline has a much bigger job to do: it has to entice those who see it to want *more*, so much so that they willingly stay on the page or click through as needed in order to get the full scoop. This chapter offers strategies and tips for writing headlines that inspire your audience to make that decision.

## Pitch It Into the Strike Zone

The fastest way to hook your audience is to hit them squarely where it matters most by focusing on their greatest joys, fears, or pains while answering the number-one concern: *what's in it for me?* Here's how to get started:

- **Highlight the value within:** What tempts *you* to spend time with someone else's content and messaging? For many of us, it's an informal exchange: we agree to set aside some of our precious time and, in return, expect to be rewarded in some regard, perhaps with a nugget of insight or a helpful hack, an opportunity to be "first to know" or a chance to win or save, or maybe just a good, hearty laugh. In the same way, your audience is deciding whether this interlude will be worth their time and attention, so it's important for your headline to make it immediately clear that it most certainly is. Here are some examples:

## How to Get Rid of 'Mommy Guilt' (or Daddy Guilt) Once and For All

Source: <http://lifehacker.com/how-to-get-rid-of-mommy-guilt-or-daddy-guilt-once-and-1679504610>

## How to Overcome the #1 Objection in Sales

Source: <http://blog.hubspot.com/sales/how-to-overcome-the-number-one-sales-objection>

How to Create Seductive Blog Content: A Quick-and-Dirty Guide

Source: <https://moz.com/ugc/how-to-create-seductive-blog-content-a-quickanddirty-guide>

Why the Links You've Built Aren't Helping Your Page Rank Higher - Whiteboard Friday

Source: <https://moz.com/blog/links-built-arent-helping-page-rank-higher-whiteboard-friday>

How To Survive A Heart Attack When You're Alone - And What NOT To Do

Source: <http://simpleorganiclife.org/survive-heart-attack/>



Source: <http://www.upworthy.com>



Source: <http://use.unbounce.com/free-trial-unbounce/?gclid=CICwy7v2xMUCFROUfgodob4ALg>

# SECOND BASE: THE SUBJECT LINE

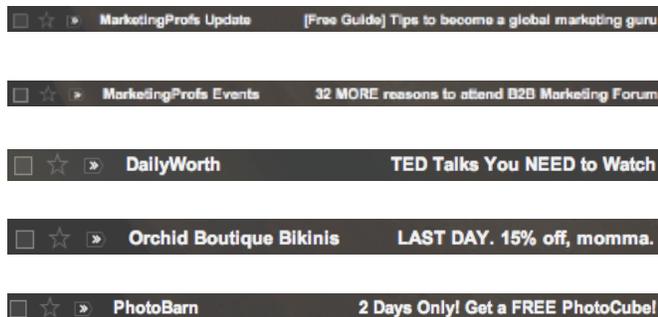
In many ways, subject lines are like headlines: they are the first thing your subscribers see, and they must convince those subscribers to take action and open the email. But that doesn't mean your winning headline should also serve as your subject line. Although many of the same best practices apply, there are a number of very important differences, which we outline in this chapter, along with tips for structuring your subject lines for best results.

## Subject Lines Have to Pass the Spam Test

Your subject line has to prove its worth—not just to your audience, but to the ISPs and industry blacklists that decide whether or not your message will be delivered to subscribers' inboxes. Should these organizations smell spam, all the effort you put into producing and sending the email will be for naught, so make sure you attend to the following:

- **Avoid the red flags:** ALL CAPS, extra punctuation!!!, unnecessary spaces, and repetitive words commonly signal spam, as do most references to pornography, miracle cures, or pain medications. Overly used terms like “100% Free,” “Dear Friend,” “You're a Winner,” “financial freedom,” “fast cash,” and “as seen on \_\_\_\_” can also alert the spam gods.

That doesn't mean you can never use CAPS, or shouldn't include that exclamation point, or should altogether remove the word *free* from your copywriting vocabulary. These tactics can help improve response, but need to be used responsibly and in moderation, as in these examples:



- **Mention your brand:** Including your company name in the subject line can help reassure your subscribers (and the ISPs) that your message is legit. This has become even more important with the evolution of mobile viewing because some devices display subject lines without “from” lines in the inbox.

In addition, make sure you proofread thoroughly and run your text through a spam filter before sending anything out so that you can catch any errors before they have a chance to mess with your sender reputation.

## With Subject Lines, Length Really Does Matter

While some may argue over the optimal length of a headline, the consequences of choosing one that's lengthy or short are often negligible as long as the message itself remains strong, coherent, and compelling. Subject lines, on the other hand, are constrained to a single row and can be truncated if they exceed a certain character count. In traditional settings (i.e., desktop programs), that limit hits at about 50 characters, including spaces; for mobile email clients, it's often somewhere between 20 and 35 characters (sometimes less!).

Numerous studies have been conducted, and most (like [this one from Retention Science](#)) will tell you to keep your subject lines short. Typically, these focus on open rates.



Source: [New Research Reveals Which Email Subject Lines Perform Best for Marketers](#)

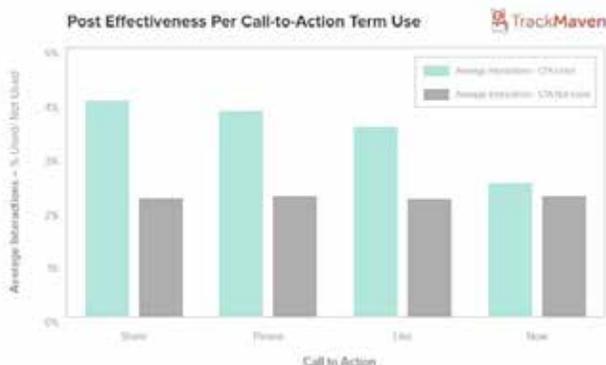
# THIRD BASE: THE CALL TO ACTION

Every item of content, every blog post, article, web page, email, video, webinar—you name it—should include a call to action. You’ve worked hard to get your audience’s attention, to earn their interest, and get them to this point, so don’t leave them hanging now. Keep that momentum going and reveal the next step that will help them continue on the path toward fulfilling their goals... and yours.

For your call to action to effectively do that, it has to be very clear: clear what to do, clear how to do it, clear why to do it, clear when to do it, and clear what will come next. In this chapter, we cover each of these essential attributes.

## Clear What to Do

Don’t be shy about telling your audience what you want them to do, even when you think it must be obvious. Just take a look at this chart from TrackMaven, which found that Facebook fans share and click Like more often when the post includes a call to action specifically asking them to do so:



Source: [The Marketing Maven's Guide to Facebook](#)

How you frame your request can make all the difference, however, so here are a few recommendations:

- **Urge with confidence:** Strong, direct action verbs that keep with your brand’s style and tone are generally the way to go. Here are a couple of fun ones from Mozilla and Virgin America:



Make your browser even more furr-tastic with our cat theme collection. [Get them meow.](#)

Source: <https://start.mozilla.org/en-US/>



Take A Trip By The Horns

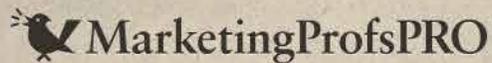
Go get some sun with sweet low fares from \$59 one way.

Restrictions apply

GRAB A SEAT

Source: <http://www.virginamerica.com>

The trick, however, is to use verbs that describe positive actions for your audience, instead of those that may sound oppressive or that remind your audience that they’ll soon be parting with their hard-earned dollars. Words like *save*, *get*, and *win*, for example, are much more empowering and pleasant for your audience than *submit*, *buy*, or *click*. Watch as Kath Pay shares an example that shows how big a differ-



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## LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Kimberly Smith** is a professional content creator, marketing enthusiast, and the author of several MarketingProfs guides, including *Once Upon a Marketing Message: How to Craft Stories That Sell*, *The 25 E's of E-Book Marketing*, and *Content Machine: The Street Guide to Building a Successful Content Marketing Program in 7 Weeks*. Reach her via [LinkedIn](#).

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