39 Things Every Sales Email Needs to Have

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Did you know Gmail alone has more than one billion monthly active users?

That means roughly one in every seven humans on the planet has a Gmail account.

And that's what I love so much about email marketing: the fact that it's so universal and allows you to reach such a huge audience.

Just think about it. Not everyone uses Instagram. Not everyone uses Snapchat.

But *almost everyone uses email*.

I look at email as the great equalizer in marketing. It's especially helpful if you need to reach an older demographic of baby boomers and beyond.

Of course, there's a lot that goes into a well run email marketing campaign.

Not only must you get recipients to open your sales email, but you also need to drive conversions.

To accomplish this, you've got to cover all the bases.

Here are 39 things every sales email needs to have.

1. A definitive purpose

Before you do anything, you need to have a clear understanding of the specific purpose behind each and every email.

One may promote a new product; another may discuss a major update to your service...

This will dictate the direction you take, the content you feature, the CTA you include, and so on.

Make sure you always know the precise purpose of your message before getting in too deep.

2. Specialized targeting

It's likely your brand has multiple audience personas.

Effective segmentation is critical for getting the right marketing material in front of each email subscriber.

I recommend creating at least a few different personas and sending out individualized emails based on each group's needs and preferences.

Here's a very basic example:

This should ensure no one receives irrelevant content, which should have a noticeable impact on your open rate and conversions.

In fact, "segmented email campaigns have an open rate that is 14.32% higher than [that of] non-segmented campaigns."

3. A killer subject line

Almost 75% of people don't open emails.

A big reason for that is lackluster subject lines.

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They're not inspiring enough to motivate subscribers to open the email.

This is why you need to understand the psychology behind a killer subject line.
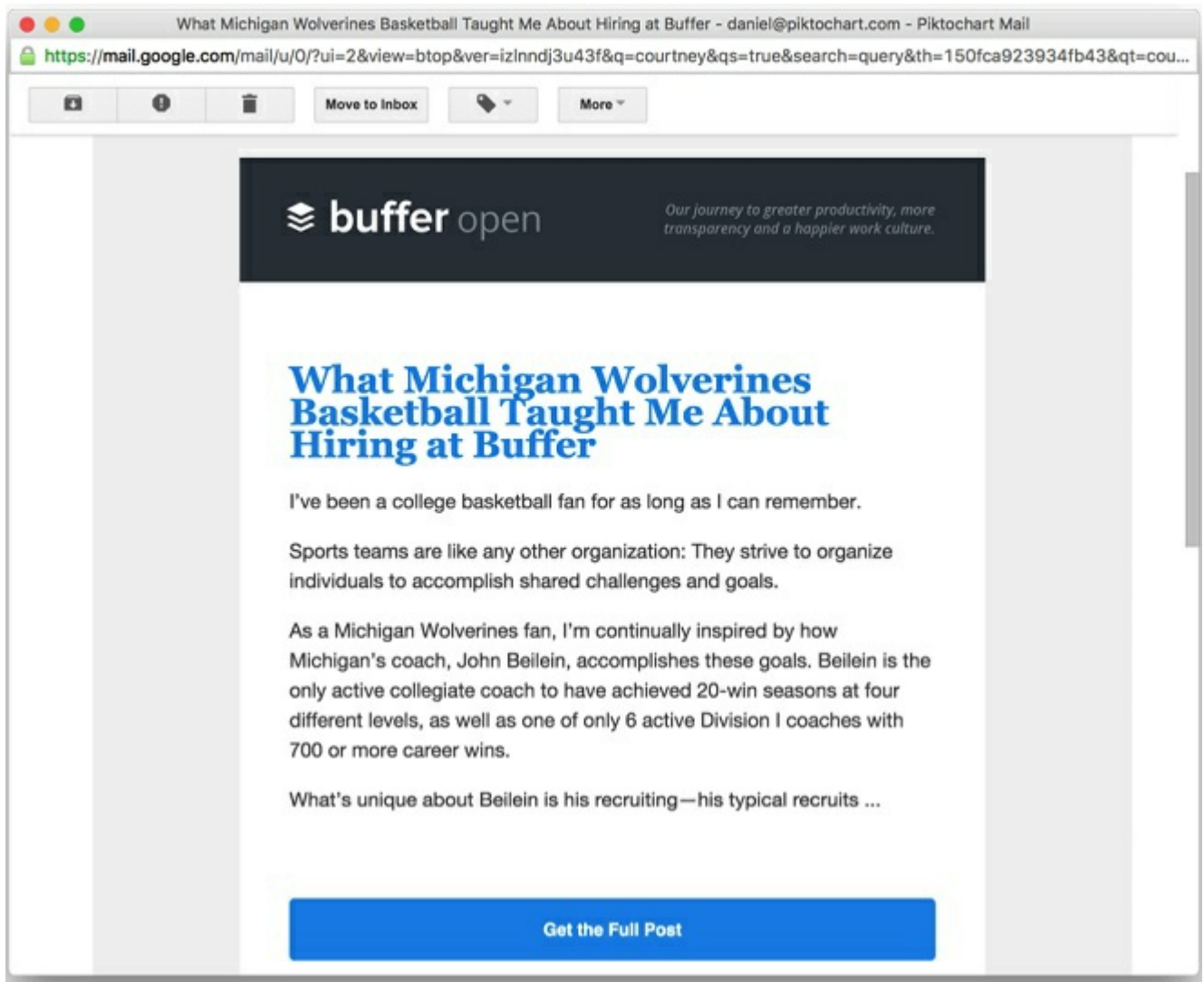
As a huge proponent of email marketing, I've done a considerable amount of experimenting with this process.

Check out this post I wrote on NeilPatel.com to learn the fundamentals of creating better email subject lines.

4. A personalized message

Research from Aberdeen found that "personalized email messages improve click-through rates by an average of 14% and conversions by 10%."

Other studies have seen a similar trend

Email Personalization
comparing emails with personalized subject lines to non-personalized emails
March 2013

- With personalization
- No personalization

	Promotional open rates	Triggered open rates	Promotional click rates	Triggered click rates
With personalization	19.5%	29.2%	3.2%	6.7%
No personalization	15.1%	23.3%	2.3%	4.4%

MC MARKETINGCHARTS.COM

Source: Experian Marketing Services

So it's really important you personalize each email.

Ideally, use each recipient's first and last name.

Name Personalization
Impact on Open Rate in Standard Deviations

First & Last Name	0.33
Last Name Only	0.17
First Name Only	0.09
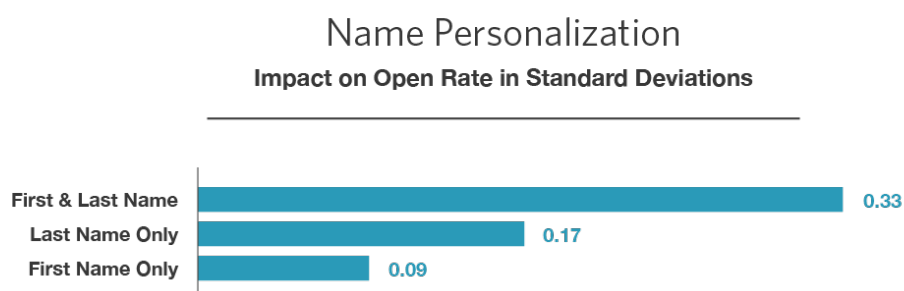
5. To be brief
I love long-form content.

Aferall, it's long-form content that tends to rank the highest in SERPs.

But a sales email isn't the place for it.

Keep it short, sweet, and to the point for maximum impact.

6. A natural voice

I would wager that the majority of email subscribers don't want to be addressed in some hyper-corporate, formal fashion.

Instead, most prefer to be spoken to like an actual person.

Use a conversational tone, and approach it as if you're *speaking* to your blog readers.

7. Power words

Studies in psychology have shown that people respond better to some words than others.

Utilizing power words is a simple way to connect with readers and pique their interest.

Check out this list from SmartBlogger for examples of power words.

8. The word "you"

At the end of the day, we all want to know what's in it for us.

If you want someone to read through your email in its entirety, you'd better darn sure appeal to them on a personal basis.

One of the easiest ways to do this is to use "you" when addressing your readers.

"You" is one of the most persuasive words in the English language and should help you connect with your readers.

9. To ask questions

I find asking questions to be a great way to mimic the feel of a face-to-face conversation.

There's no need to go overboard, but asking a few key questions is an effective way to create rapport and get readers interested.

10. Empathy

People are interested in buying a product or service for a reason.

They have a problem or pain point they're seeking a solution for.

Make it clear you understand their struggles and that your goal is to help them find a resolution.

11. Trustworthiness

Any semblance of sketchiness is a recipe of disaster.

Be diligent about establishing your brand as a trusted source.

12. To say "thank you"

I find that simply thanking readers for their time and consideration to buy my product is a perfect way to humanize my emails.

Here's a great quote from The Harvard Business Review:

> Saying "thank you" – sincerely and with heart – feels good. Not just to the person receiving it, but also to the person offering it. And that's part of work too. It's hard to remember, as we process our hundredth email, that behind each message is a person.

Saying "thank you" is a great way to close and shows you genuinely appreciate the fact that someone took the time out of their day to read your email.

13. A personalized product recommendation

Keeping with the theme of personalization, I suggest including a personalized product recommendation whenever it makes sense.

Take into consideration the needs, wants, and overall pain points of each targeted demographic.

Then include a link to a particular product they would be interested in.

14. Educational and/or entertaining content

One of the quickest ways to kill your subscriber's vibe is to blast them with super salesy content.

Of course, you want to be actively promoting your brand, but it shouldn't come across as obnoxious.
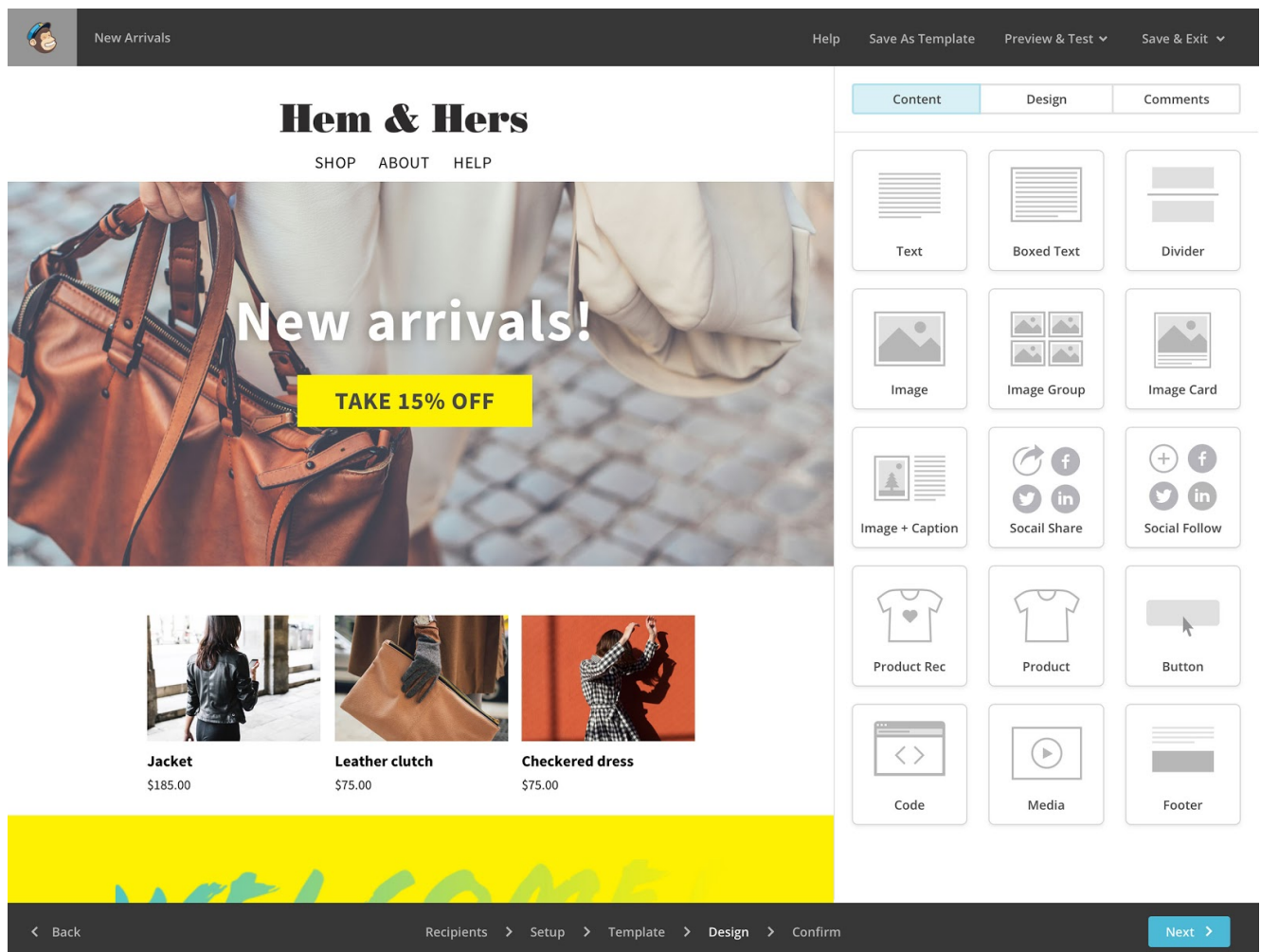
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I suggest focusing on the two E's:

Educating and Entertaining your audience.

Use these as guides for creating your email, and the rest should follow.

15. Eye appeal

Platforms, such as MailChimp and Aweber, offer a boatload of design features to make your emails pop.

Take advantage of these features, and place an emphasis on aesthetics.

This is extremely important for getting readers to browse through your emails and ultimately work their way to your CTA.

16. A branded template

Speaking of visuals, I can't stress enough how important it is to create your own branded template.

Achieving consistency through this medium is vital for establishing and reinforcing your brand identity.

Once again, most platforms, like MailChimp and Aweber, offer everything you need to create a branded template.

Be sure you're incorporating your company's colors, logos, style, etc. so that it sticks with readers and helps them distinguish you from competitors.

17. Standard font

One mistake I see email marketers make is getting too cute with their designs.

More specifically, they get a little crazy with their fonts, making the content difficult to read.

Keep it simple, and stick with tried and true fonts, like Arial and Calibri.

These are easy on readers' eyes and encourage them to read through the entire email.

18. Font consistency

I also suggest sticking with one font.

Make sure you're not switching from font to font throughout the body of your email.

This disrupts the flow of your message and can kill conversions.

19. Short paragraphs

White space.

To me (and most readers), it's a beautiful thing.

One of the easiest ways to maximize the digestibility of your emails is to use short paragraphs.

I recommend shooting for an absolute maximum of four sentences per paragraph.

One to two sentences is even better.

20. Sub-headers

What's the other key element of digestible content?

Sub-headers to provide breaks and highlight main points.

Never include a large mass of text without breaking it down into individual sections, using sub-headers.

More specifically, it's smart to use a variety of H1s, H2s, H3s, etc. to prioritize content.

Here's a good example of how to do this effectively:

21. Bullet lists

Let's not forget about bullet lists.

They're ideal for breaking down longer lists into concise and succinct points.

22. Visuals

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It's no secret most people respond overwhelmingly well to visuals.

In 2017, "37% of marketers said visual marketing was the most important form of content for their business, second only to blogging (38%)."

I suggest using at least one image per email to give it some pizzazz and fulfill your reader's inherent desire for visuals.

Here's a really nice example of an email from United By Blue:

It's actually the same image they use on their opt-in page, but it works perfectly.

23. Alt tags for images

In the event an image isn't properly displayed, you need to have an alt tag for that image.

The alt tag will describe exactly what the image is so there's no confusion for readers.

24. A video

Okay, you may not necessarily want to use a video in every single email you send.

But they're definitely an effective way to increase your open rate and click-through rate.

According to Pardot, "Using the word 'video' in an email subject line boosts open rates by 19% and click-through rates by 65%."

This proves people respond favorably to video, and it is something at least worth experimenting with.

25. A clean layout

This should go without saying.

Always be sure to look over each email and eliminate any clutter or unnecessary info that's not genuinely contributing to its value.

I like to strive for a minimalist feel.

26. An enticing offer

Not only should your offer be relevant to the specific person receiving an email, it should be genuinely enticing.

Ask yourself whether it truly scratches an itch.

If not, tweak it until it hits its mark.

27. Specific benefits

Also be sure to mention the key benefits.

Let readers know exactly how their lives will improve.

28. What they'll miss out on if they don't buy

For most humans, "the fear of loss trumps the desire to gain."

In other words, we're risk averse by nature.

Briefly touching on the things someone will miss out on by not buying your product or service can provide the extra incentive needed to convert.

Here's an example:

- **OK**: "Save $100 in energy annually! Buy our furnace gizmo!"
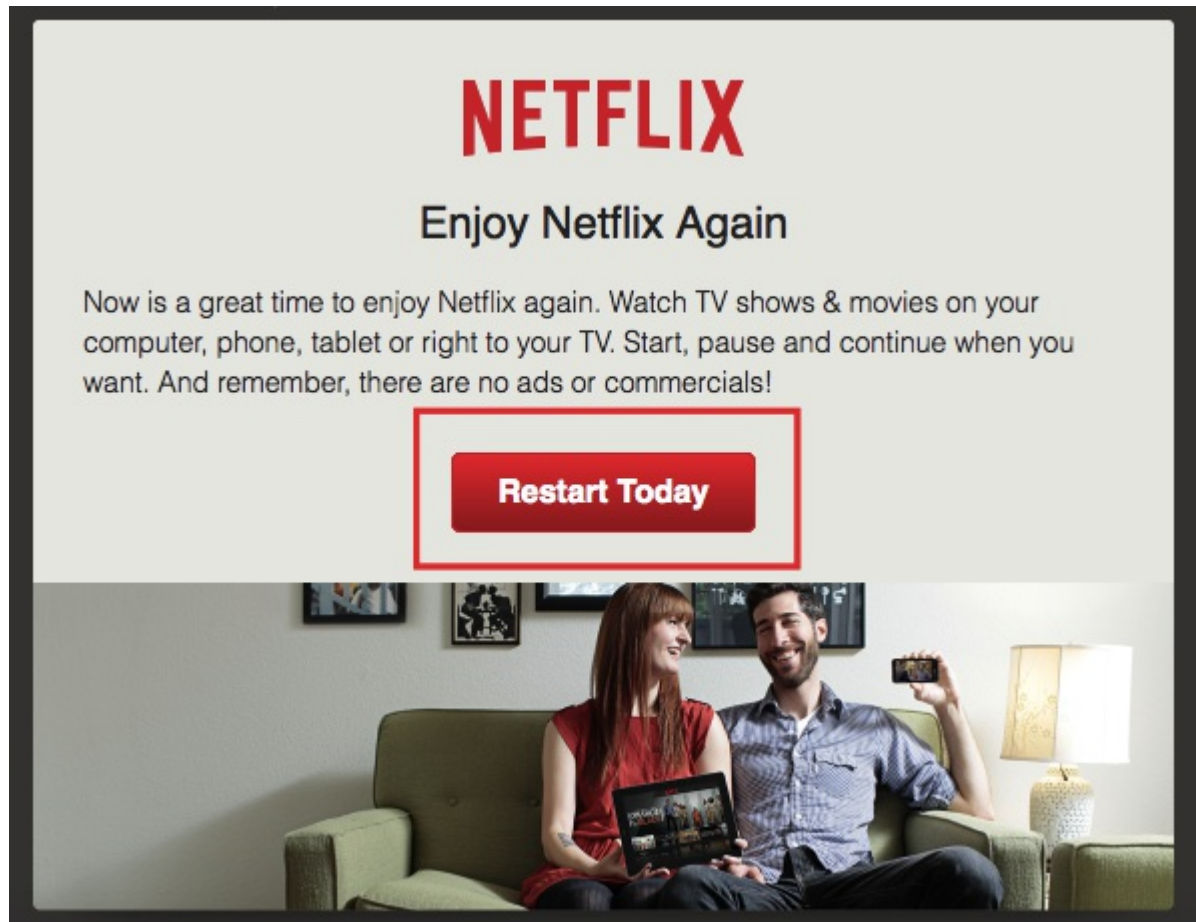- **Better**: "Don't lose $100 in energy every year! Buy our furnace gizmo!"

29. A clear CTA

The CTA is hands down one of the most critical elements of a sales email.

Not only should it be crystal clear which action you want readers to perform, it should be visible.

Netflix crushes it with this email where the readers' eyeballs instantly gravitate to the red CTA button in the middle of the page:

NETFLIX

Enjoy Netflix Again

Now is a great time to enjoy Netflix again. Watch TV shows & movies on your computer, phone, tablet or right to your TV. Start, pause and continue when you want. And remember, there are no ads or commercials!

Restart Today

This one, from Cards Against Humanity, also pulls it off well, incorporating the brand's signature humor style:

We're crazy for Black Friday savings.   View this in your browser

Dear horrible friends,

As you know, Cards Against Humanity is crazy about Black Friday savings, and we never fail to mark the occasion with incredible door-busting deals.

This year, we've taken down our entire store, and we're announcing a one-day-only *Give Cards Against Humanity $5 Sale.* The deal is simple. You give us $5. We give you nothing.

Give us $5

These prices won't last—don't miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to give us $5.

- The Cards Against Humanity Team

Our mailing address is:
Cards Against Humanity LLC
1917 N. Elston Ave
Chicago, IL 60642

update preferences · unsubscribe

30. Social proof

You've probably heard me talk about the importance of social proof in other areas of marketing.

It's also quite effective in sales emails as well.

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Whenever you're directly promoting a product or service, include a quick little something-something that backs up its legitimacy.

Here's a great example:
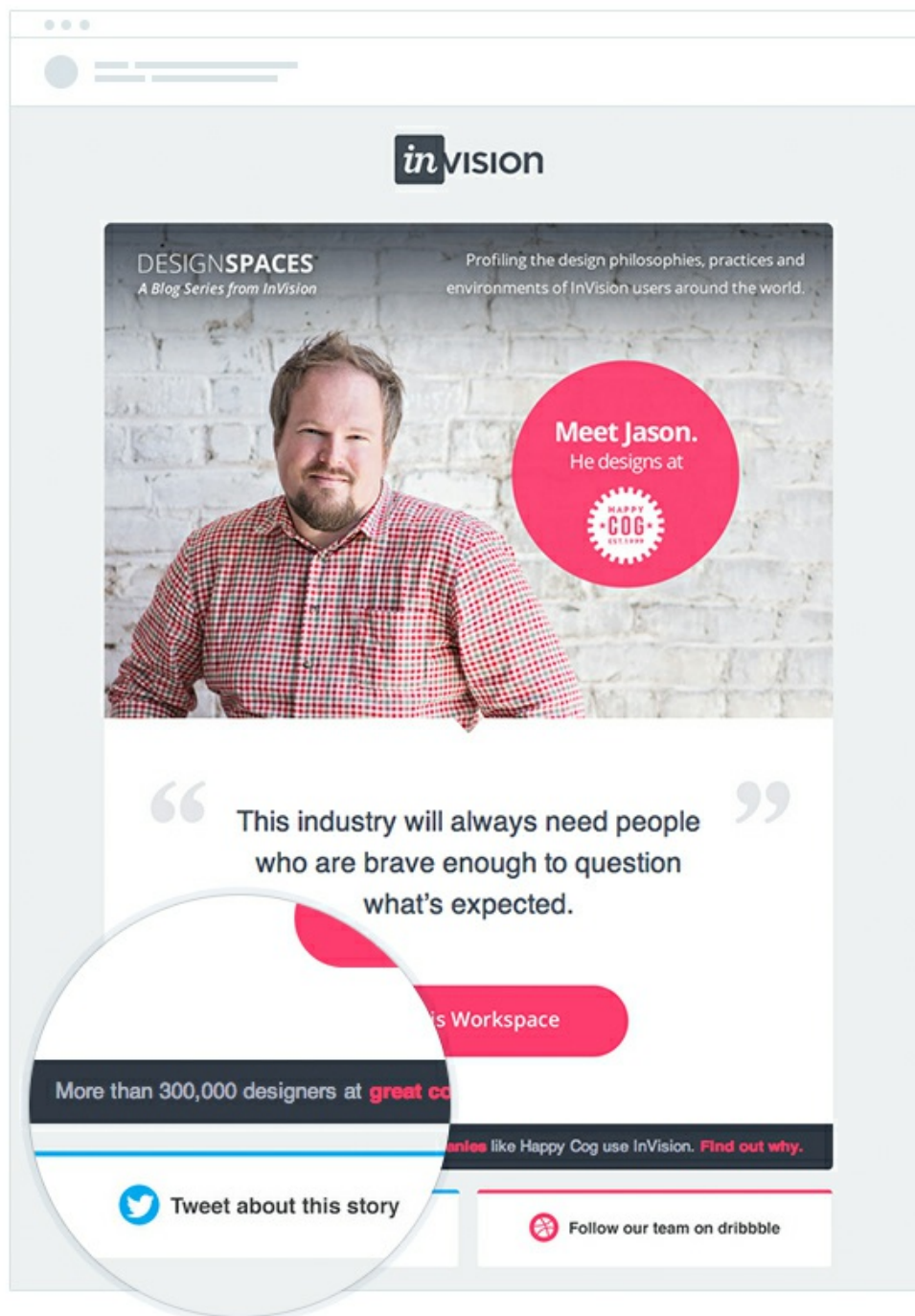
31. A link to your website

You're obviously going to include a CTA.

But you shouldn't stop there.

I recommend adding at least one link to your website, but three or four is completely fine.

This is a simple way to increase direct traffic and help people learn more about your brand.

32. A link to your blog

While you're at it, why not go ahead and link to your blog as well?

It's an easy way to increase your blog readership and create more buzz around recent posts.

33. Share buttons

Another reason I love email marketing is because it enables you to kill multiple birds with one stone.

Throw in social share buttons to popular networks to increase your following with virtually no extra effort.
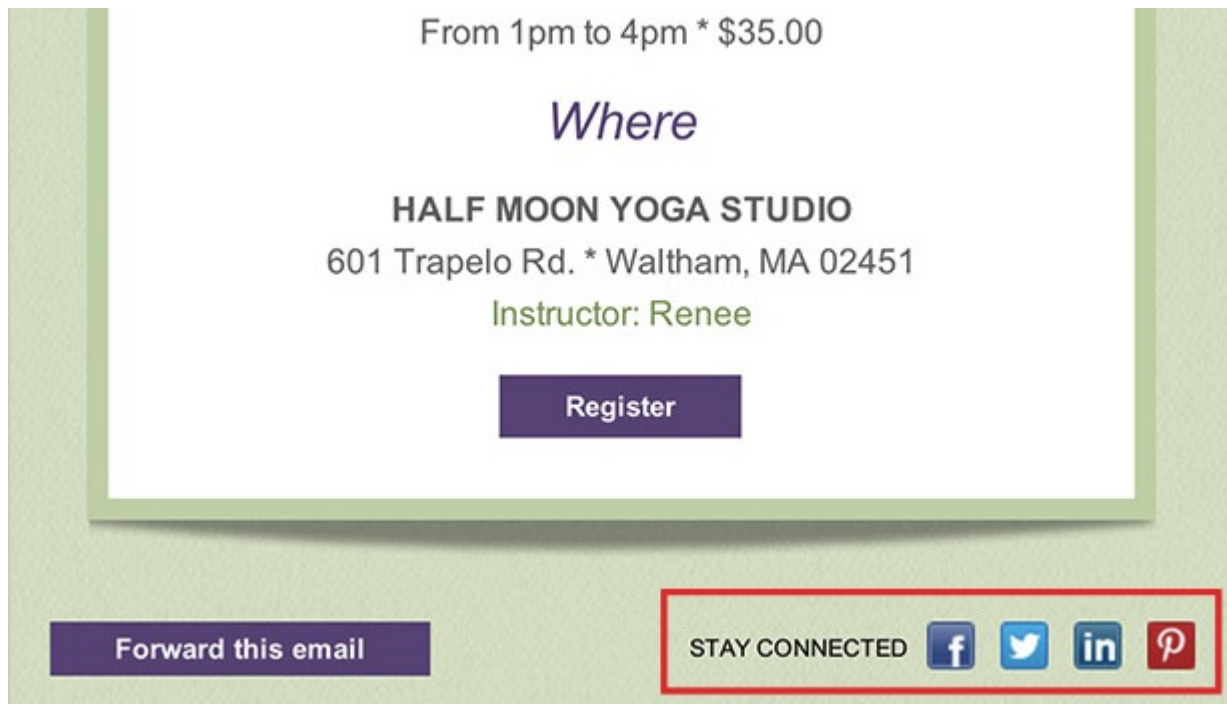
34. A forward link

Let's say a reader loves one of your emails and they want to share it with someone they know.

You can save them time and streamline the process by including a forward link so they can share it with a single click.

This is also a great way to quickly grow the size of your subscriber base without putting in a lot of extra work.

35. Signature

Don't forget the signature!

This is another way to reinforce your brand identity, and it can drive traffic to other resources you're trying to promote (e.g., your website).

Jed Albright
Marketing

On The Edge Interactive Games Inc.
Best Game Design of the Year 2014

e. jed@ontheedgeinteractivegames.com
w. ontheedgeinteractivegames.com

36. Business info in the footer

People get tons of emails.

Some may literally receive hundreds on any given day.

Be sure to include key business info in the footer (e.g., address, phone number, other contact information) so people know exactly who is sending it and how to contact you if necessary.

It also makes it look more professional and legit in my opinion.

37. An unsubscribe button

Here's the scenario.

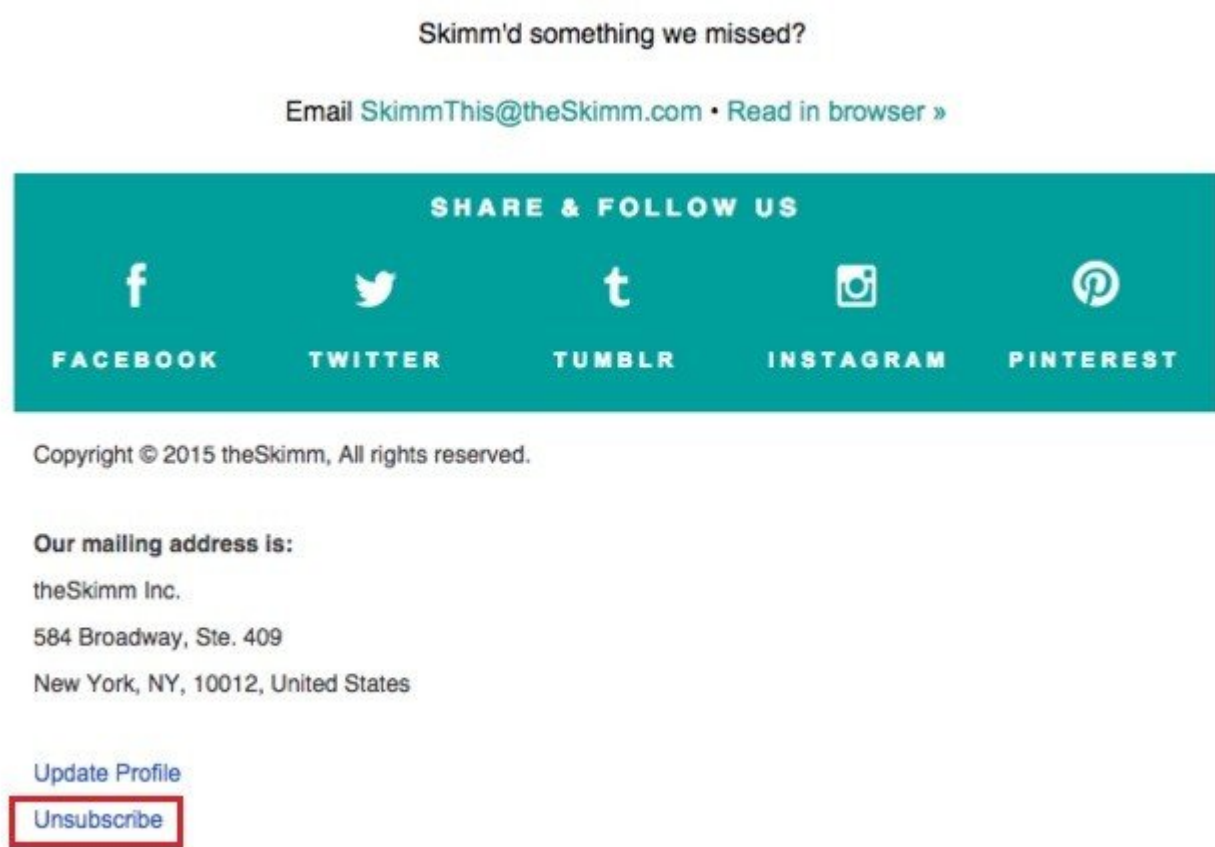You mistakenly signed up to a newsletter you have zero interest in.

All of a sudden, you're bombarded with emails and no easy way to stop it.

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It's incredibly annoying and can create feelings of resentment and even hostility toward the brand.

Make sure you're not doing this to your subscribers.

Give them a clear way to unsubscribe, ideally with only one click.

Skimm'd something we missed?

Email SkimmThis@theSkimm.com • Read in browser »

SHARE & FOLLOW US

f   y   t   ⌾   ⑪

FACEBOOK   TWITTER   TUMBLR   INSTAGRAM   PINTEREST

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Our mailing address is:

theSkimm Inc.

584 Broadway, Ste. 409

New York, NY, 10012, United States
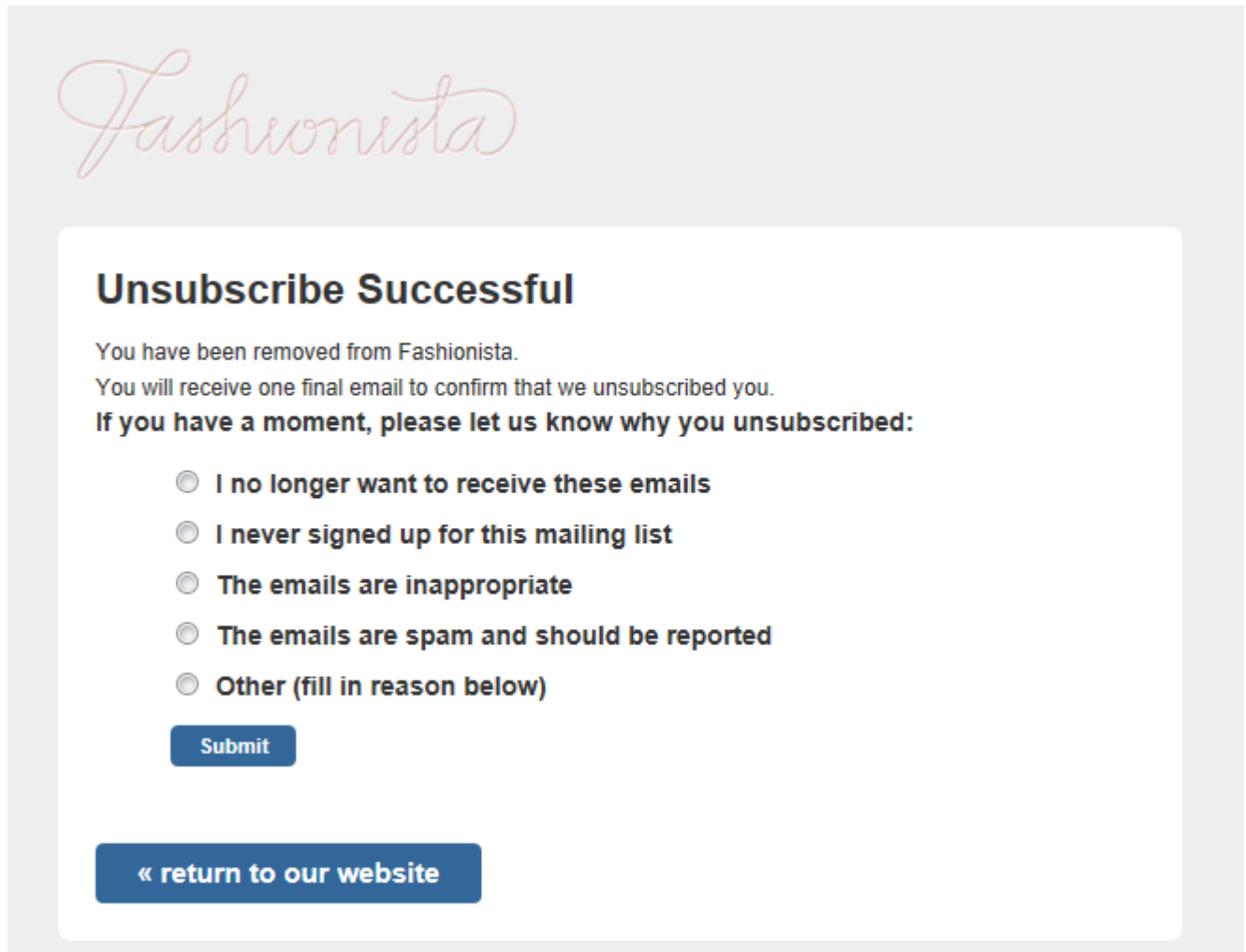
Update Profile

Unsubscribe

38. A means of feedback

Say that someone does decide to unsubscribe.

It's important you know exactly why they decided to do so.

Here's a good example of the types of questions you can ask to figure this out:

This will provide you with valuable intel so that you can improve your emails moving forward and prevent making the same mistake.
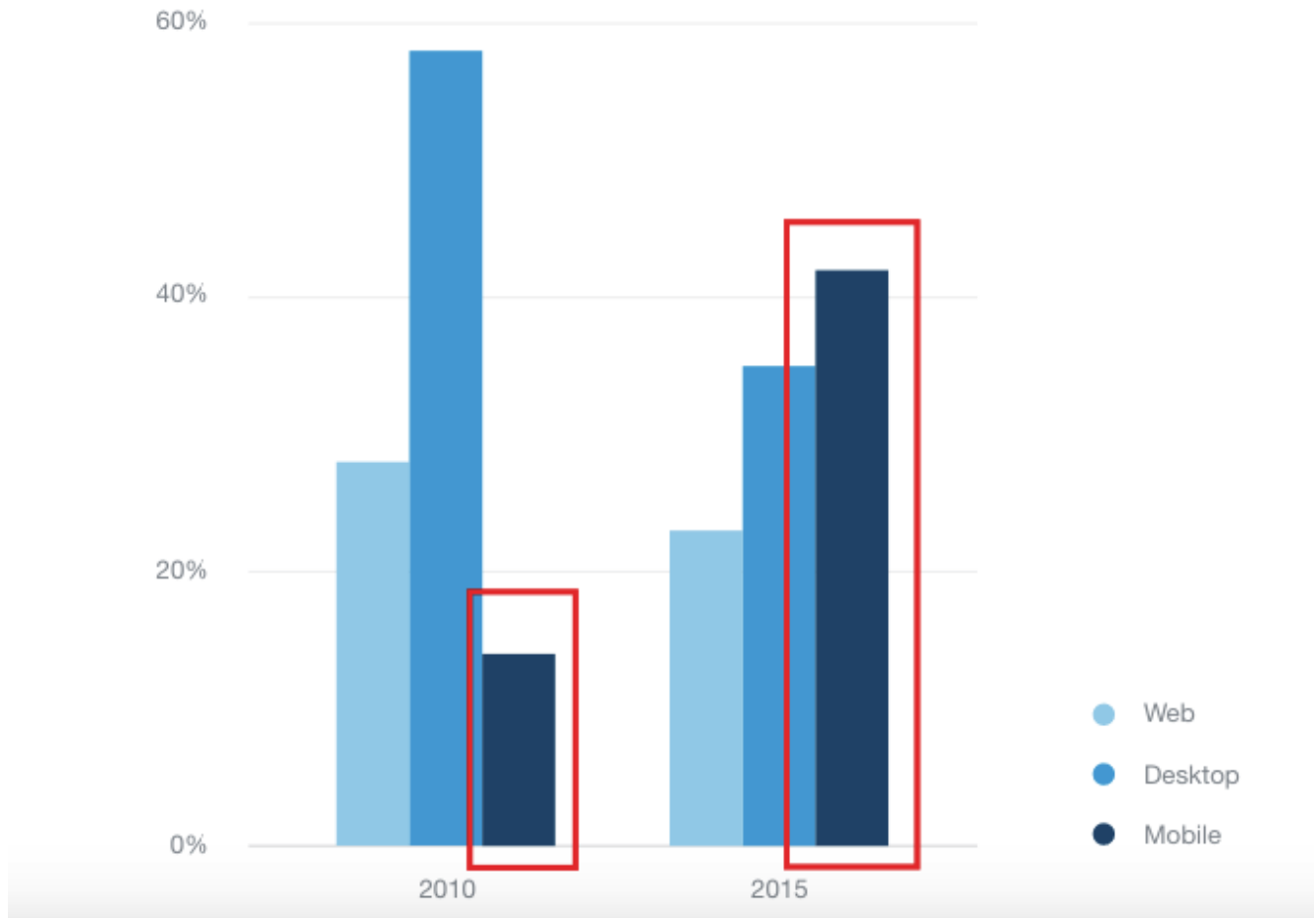
39. Mobile-friendliness

These days, over half (53%) of emails are opened on mobile devices.

Just look at how much email opens on mobile grew between 2010 and 2015:

Email opens on mobile grew 30%

It's dramatic!

If your emails aren't fully optimized for mobile, you're shooting yourself in the foot.

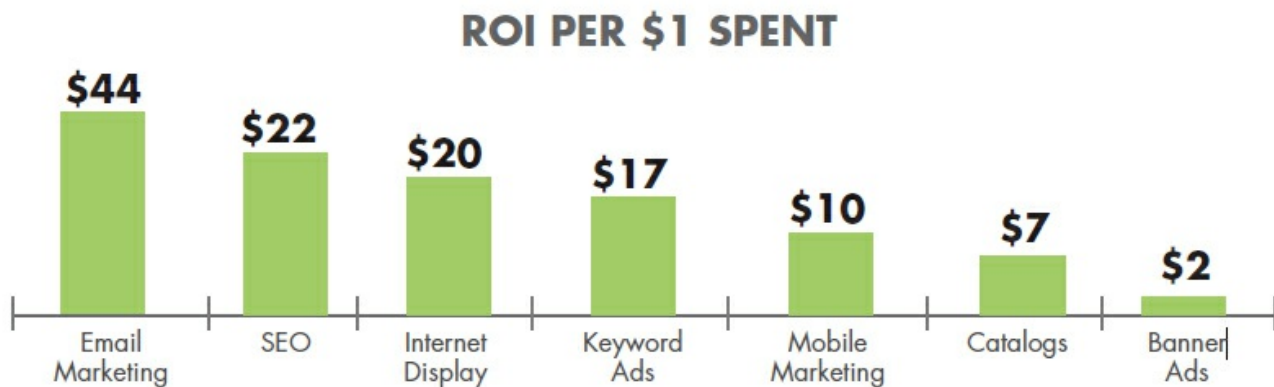A mobile-friendly UX is critical, so you should do everything you can to optimize this.

I recommend reading this post from Copyblogger for advice on this topic.

Conclusion

The potential is huge for brands that use email marketing effectively.

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Just keep in mind that the average ROI is $44 for every $1 spent.

ROI PER $1 SPENT

$44	$22	$20	$17	$10	$7	$2
Email Marketing	SEO	Internet Display	Keyword Ads	Mobile Marketing	Catalogs	Banner Ads

Not bad!

But to get the most out of your campaign, your sales emails need to hit all the right notes.

By ensuring they have all the elements covered in this post, you can boost both your open rate and your click-through rate for epic conversions.