

Email Test Wins/Best Practices

Introduction

First off, thanks for signing up for the 8020 Email Copy Crash Course.

I truly believe it'll be different than anything you've ever been through before and teach you email copy faster than you believed possible. I've said it before and I'll say it again. If someone erased all my knowledge and said I had 4 weeks to write an autoresponder and get really good at email copy I would do this course.

I personally use the subject lines and email formulas I'm giving you every single day in my own copy. I practice what I preach.

Second, I'm NOT a technical dude. I'm sure there are pre-teens with more technical skills than me. This guide looks a wee bit basic but I didn't want to fluff it up with images and borders and all that crap. It's just pure actionable info.

Now let's get to the guide.

This is not meant to be an extensive tome on the subject of email copywriting and marketing. It's a concise guide that teaches some incredibly powerful lessons I learned from testing hundreds of emails with thousands of variations.

I originally started writing this as a guide for my replacement at my old copy gig to allow them to hit the ground running. As I wrote it I realized that it had universal lessons that anyone could benefit from.

It's a very short read. I recommend you go through MULTIPLE times and engrain these principles in your brain.

That being said I want to say something that nobody seems to talk about...

There is no such thing as a "guaranteed winner." Test results aren't meant to be held as an "absolute." Just because something works in one niche doesn't mean it'll work in yours. The important thing about a test result is the ideas it gives you and the principles it teaches.

Email is weird. It's not an exact science. It's an art and a science.

However, that being said (again), these tests have all been run multiple times to a minimum of 20,000 people per variation. So it's not some bullshit test that other people publish that had 6 buyers on one variation and 3 on the other. These tests actually had real statistical variation.

Last thing: I didn't reveal any "classified" information in this guide. I am keeping my former company a secret out of respect for the owner. That doesn't dilute the quality of the guide, I just wanted to point it out.

That was a bit of a rant but I hope you found it useful.

Now go ahead and learn!

Link text same as subject line tends to win.

-This isn't always true but is best practice to write at least one link text with the subject line you think will win.

You will be worse at predicting winning subject lines than you think.

-Not really a win, but just know that you should test stuff you don't think will work just as much as stuff you don't think will work. People are weird.

Test dramatically different subject lines, link text, or body copy.

-We're not looking for 10% lifts. We want 50% to 100% lifts or more. This happens by testing dramatically different things.

Here's some stuff to test:

- Fun, edgier body copy vs. straight forward copy
- Big links vs small links
- Crazy subject line vs. simple "How to" subject line.
- Two completely different openers or leads.

Curiosity in general wins.

-People click on shit and buy shit that holds some kind of "secret."

**Don't answer the subject line in the email.
Answer it by having them click the link.**

-This is primarily effective for blog post emails or an email where you want them to click through to the next page as the main goal. i.e. high converting VSL, blog post with good adsense or that sells the product.

-This is essentially “selling the click” not anything else.

-This was one of the biggest shifts I had in writing these types of emails. I used to answer the subject line or question *within* the email which meant there was very little reason to actually click through.

Make sure the subject line is relevant.

-It could get great opens but that’s not the goal. Always make sure the email fits the subject line. This gets harder when you’re testing 4 to 8 subject lines but do your best to make sure it happens.

-A “pure curiosity” subject line is useless if it just gets people to open and has nothing relating to it in the copy or link. And it pisses people off which means more unsubscribes and spam complaints. Only use pure curiosity if the copy is relevant or you can tie something in.

People love secrets.

-Saying “little-known” or “secret” works really damn well. As I said before, people want to buy something or click something that seems to hold a “hidden truth” or something that only few people know. While there are very few true secrets in the world people want to think there is a solution that they haven’t heard of yet.

-What’s behind a closed door is far more interesting than something behind an open door. The pure fact that they don’t know what it is gets people to spend money and take action.

A Curiosity + Benefit subject line almost always wins.

- How Dumbo can improve your credit score
- “Piece of cheese” secret to boosting your credit
- How traffic lights will boost your score

You get the point. The curiosity gets them to open. The benefit gets them to buy. By taking two seemingly completely unrelated topics and combining them people get curious.

This also makes complex issues very easy to understand for the average person. You take something they understand like “having a stone in your shoe” and relate it to the benefit they’re receiving.

These are “correlation” emails. But the full explanation and formula of them is beyond the scope of this guide.

Neologism + Benefit is strongest form of Curiosity + Benefit.

- The secret “Brain Weapon” for skyrocketing your score
- How the “Credit Escalator” can boost your credit
- The “nuclear bomb drill” that eliminates fear

As you can see, I haven’t always used “will” over “can.” (I explain this in the “will” vs. “can” section.) And I won’t always use “will.” Make sure it follows through on the promise if you use “will.” I’d *assume* this would have done even better with “will” than “can.”

If you don’t know what a Neologism is, it’s basically a made up word or phrase that just describes something unique or boring. The “Credit Escalator” is what I call the process for boosting your credit with the program because it’s “as easy as stepping on an escalator.”

However the escalator concept could be compared to any product that helps guide them through the process.

Here’s the actual description of the escalator:

“Just take the first step onto the “Blank” Escalator and the rest is simple.

Think about it for a second...if you take stairs you have to make an effort to get up every step.

If you take an elevator, you have to know exactly which floor you’re going to...and if you get it wrong...you’ll end up in the wrong place.

However, with an escalator, all you have to do is step on it and the rest is done for you.

That’s why we call our process “The Blank Escalator” because once you take the first step...the rest is as easy as holding a handrail.

I know that may sound like a silly comparison...but it’s true.”

See? It’s not hard to do. Creative? Yes. But it’s simple. It’s not necessarily something new, it’s just a unique way of explaining something.

How about The secret “Brain Weapon” for skyrocketing your score?

Well first off, I would actually rewrite this as The secret “Brain Weapon” that skyrockets your score. (This is explained in the “use the letter S” section)

But the actual “Brain Weapon?” The email is just about the 3 parts of the “money mind” and how you can use that knowledge to boost your score and improve your finances.

The secret “Brain Weapon” for skyrocketing your score beat The 3 parts of the “Money Mind” by 178% in click through rate (CTR). That’s not a typo. 178% JUST from the subject line. You’ll see an example that beat a CTR by 445% by using a neologism in the email course.

That’s the power of Neologisms.

See the book “Great Leads” for more on Neologisms and an example of the amazing “Chaffee Royalty System” sales letter. It’s one of the best sales letters I’ve seen in my opinion. It takes boring dividends and makes them sexy and sells a shit ton of product in the process.

Use power words in subject lines.

- “Skyrockets” over “improves”
- “Weird” or “weird trick” works way better than you’d think. It seems old and played out but ads or subject lines with “weird” run for years and beat controls regularly.
- “Little-known” works great. Implies a secret that only the elite know.
- “Slashes” over “cuts”
- “Obliterates” over “removes”

You get the point. This isn’t an extensive list of power words, it’s just a guide of how to do it.

“Will” is better than “Can”

-I’ve tested this a few times and it’s won each time. “Will” implies that it works regardless of who you are, what you do, or how easy it is.

“Can” implies that it may not work and that it will take actual work to make it work.

Make sure that your promise actually delivers if you use “will.”

Curiosity + Pain

-This “Unknown Credit Destroyer” may be hurting you

This is another Neologism. If you can't tell, I make up a lot of phrases. They work really fucking well. People will at least keep reading until you unveil the meaning of the neologism.

I haven't really tested the "may be" vs. "is" but I'd assume that "is" works better. However, you need to be careful about the claim here because it may not be true. It's better to use "may be" if you want to play it safe.

Add an "S"

Weird "Brain Hack" eliminates stress.

Vs.

Weird "Brain Hack" for eliminating stress.

You see the difference? Eliminates is a powerful action word. The point behind this is that using "eliminates" implies that the "Brain Hack" does the work for you. It's sort of similar to the "will" over "can" thing.

"For eliminating" implies that you actually have to do the "Brain Hack" for it work.

Using an S "automates" the solution.

The rumored story behind this is that an old copywriter accidentally added an S to a direct mail headline and the ad out pulled the control by 400%.

I dunno for sure how true it is but it's definitely worth testing and it makes a lot of sense in my opinion.

No P.S. generally beats P.S.

-We've tested this quite a few times and No P.S. almost always wins. There are odd occasions where P.S. wins but it's rare.

This is a tough one because so many people say P.S. is so important but I think it depends on the niche AND what you have to say in the P.S. If it's really important that maybe it works. But only use it IF you feel it's a necessary addition.

That being said I just looked at a test result where the P.S. got a 125% higher click through on the winning subject line, but it lost on the other subject lines.

It just shows how weird email is. Like I said before, I'd only use when the P.S. is truly compelling, explains an important point, or builds massive curiosity.

This one truly is market dependent. Test it on your list. It's also a great place to add in open loops in an autoresponder sequence.

One link beats two or more.

-We've tested this one quite a lot. There is a popular method of emailing that has 3 links.

It pretty much goes like this:

1-2 paragraphs

LINK

2-3 paragraphs

LINK

Sign off

P.S.

LINK

I'm sure it works in some niches but one link almost always wins for us and there are some great marketers that only use one link. I think it has something to do with the fact that one link allows the copy to stay tight and focused on ONE BIG IDEA as opposed to scattering links into the copy just for the fuck of it.

It keeps your message clear and focused. You can test this with some more unique links like highlighting certain words or phrases but I haven't tested that.

What I do know is that one link works well and makes writing emails faster, more focused, and more fun.

When in doubt, "How to" it out.

-If you can't think of anything creative or just want something to test, go with a simple "How to" subject line or headline. With Video Sales Letter (VSL) headlines I've seen a "How to" headline out-pulled controls consistently.

It's market dependent but it's the backbone of strong "reason-why" marketing. It makes it very clear to the prospect what they'll be receiving.

"How to" subject lines don't always win but they tend to at least perform OK. They are the "safe" option.

"Read this if you" wins a lot.

- Read this if you've filed bankruptcy
- Read this if you own a home
- Read this if you own a business
- Read this if you have debt

You get the point. It directly qualifies the prospect and eliminates anyone who doesn't fit the profile. This is a great way to get people to opt in to a new list or have them "raise their hand" as a prospect for something specific.

"Read this if you own a business" beat all the other subject lines on numerous occasions.

The best part is it's the easiest subject line in the world. Simply think about whatever you are using as a qualifying factor and put in the subject line.

- Read this if you need to lose 10 pounds this week
- Read this if your husband spends too much money
- Read this if you eat bread

The important thing is to be specific. Don't say "read this if you like money." I mean you could try it but the power of these emails is the direct and clear nature of them. It disqualifies unimportant people immediately.

Other variations are "Open this" or "Watch this."

Do you hate me?

-This is one of the most powerful ways to do a survey. I'll explain more in depth in the actual email course. It helps you "deep dive" into your list's brain AND helps you identify weak points of your autoresponder that you can tweak.

The best ____ for YOU

-This works great when you have something unique to offer someone. Like a unique mechanism for picking the "best opening line for YOU" when talking to women.

Or in the credit niche it's simpler. The best credit card for YOU. You give them a way of selecting a credit card based on their unique situation.

Conclusion

This isn't necessarily a "finished" guide. This is something I actually use for myself in my daily writing to help refresh important things I've learned.

As I said before, I originally started writing this as a guide for my replacement but it turned into something universal with some extremely powerful lessons. Remember, discovering these principles took millions of dollars worth of adspend and software. Don't underestimate the value of these principles.

As I continue to discover new principles I may add them into this guide and send you updated versions.

If you have any questions feel free to email me at ian@8020copywriting.com, I'm a real person and I read my email. If you have feedback as to how I can improve the guide or just want to tell me how awesome it is send me an email.

I love feedback! It helps me help you.