

# USING EMAIL FOR ADVOCACY

Email is an efficient way to speak to your audience. Unlike people who wander to your website or social media, an email list is filled with subscribers who initially opted-in to hear from you on a regular basis.

The challenge in 2018 is getting people to open your emails and engage with them that's not purely transactional. More people are moving to mobile and social media to get people to take action, but for fundraising, email is still Queen.

Email is a direct line to core supporters and it's still an opportunity to tell longer, engaging stories. There's nothing more personal than hitting their inbox.



## ANATOMY OF AN EMAIL

### > 'ABOVE THE FOLD' – THE MOMENT STORY

'Above the fold' refers to everything in an email before the first ask. It is generally short, direct, and relates to a specific moment. It's important to ask the following in this section:

- > What's happening right now?
- > Why does it matter?
- > What should we do about it?

### > 'BELOW THE FOLD' – THE MOVEMENT STORY

The 'Movement Story' is the bigger picture of a campaign, including broader organizational goals, that builds out from the "Moment story." This section is key to deepening relationship with readers and your organization. After drafting an email, consider what can be moved to this area underneath the first ask.

### > THE P.S. LINE

The P.S. line is often one of the most read items in email. This piece can be effective at reinforcing the ask (putting in one final effort at getting people to act); adding a twist to the ask (instead of just "sign the petition," maybe it's "sign the petition and forward this to 5 friends"); and continuing the "Movement Story," allowing you to follow up on other priorities of the overall campaign (for example, "P.S. Did you see CANDIDATE'S email last week about our rally in YOUR CITY? Sign up now").



## CORE TENETS OF A GOOD EMAIL

### > **TIMELY**

Emails that are tied to real moments perform better than those that are fabricated. When drafting emails, keep in mind that you should not send an email just to send an email. If you're struggling to answer the following questions, reconsider if an email is necessary:

- > Why are you sending?
- > Why is it important?
- > Why right now?

### > **SCANNABLE**

Readers spend an average of 11.1 seconds reading an email. So when drafting, it's important to ensure copy is easily scannable and the most important information is easy to immediately identify.

Using clever formatting, such as bolding key information or using bulleted lists, can be crucial to improving emails.

### > **THEORY OF CHANGE**

A strong theory of change is crucial to writing effective emails. This is a cause-and-effect sequence that identifies a problem, clearly dictates something the reader can tangibly do, and ends with the resolution of the problem.

Identifying and leveraging a moment that creates a compelling opportunity to do take action and make a difference in real time will improve engagement.

This is typically the line or two directly preceding your ask in an email.

### > **THE ASK**

A strong ask in an email will trigger the theory and change and resolve the problem laid out for readers.

Your ask should be clear, direct, and easy to understand how taking action will make a difference in your campaign.



## OTHER TIPS FOR STRONG EMAILS

### > EFFECTIVE FORMATTING

Clever formatting can help drive engagement and better lead a readers eyes to the key elements you need them to see while scanning an email. Examples include:

- > Bolding important text—often the theory of change or the line right before the ask.
- > Including a button underneath asks
- > Including italicized sentences directly after the ask to further drive home why it's important.
- > Bulleted list of accomplishments

### > PERSONALIZATION

“Can we count on you?” vs. “Can we count on you, Alex?”

First name, city, or state, are all great pieces to include when it makes sense

Data on previous actions is also be very effective. Referencing past actions and commitments helps reinforce support and drive actions

But don't fudge this! Emails referencing actions taken by supporters who haven't actually done the action do not perform well.

### > SUBJECT LINES

Keep them short

Use personalization in them

Make them actionable

Don't use misleading or scary language



## AUTHENTICITY

Even if it's bad news for the campaign/organization, authenticity in these moments is important and will deepen the relationship you share.

Don't manipulate supporters - dedicated supporters will see through this. Avoid inflammatory/scary subject lines; fabricated deadlines; or a hysteric and fear-inducing approach.



## VARY YOUR EMAIL AUTHORS

Your supporters will form relationships with specific senders. Often, different (and relevant) voices will improve results, including open and action rates.

Asking supporters to volunteer? Send from the field director. Asking supporters to share a great news story? Send from the communications director. Asking supporters to give money? Send from the finance director.

At times, consider sending from the organization itself, not an actual person.



## USE A/B TESTING AND EXAMINE YOUR METRICS

Test, Test, Test!

- > Timing
- > Senders
- > Subject Lines
- > Hooks
- > Ask Format: Buttons VS Links
- > Use of a P.S.

Consider the open rate, click rate, unsubscribe rate, and how many people actually fulfilled the ask.

Keep an eye out for spikes in unsubscribe rate or dips in open and click rates, and evaluate how you've been engaging with subscribers and what can get better.

Segment your audiences: Pay attention to who is engaging with emails and completing ask, then target them for higher level asks.



## COMMON EMAIL MISTAKES

### ➤ THERE ARE TOO MANY ASKS IN ONE EMAIL

Making one clear ask is most effective.

### ➤ THE EMAIL IS TOO LONG OR DENSE

Assume that if the reader can't get through it quickly, they won't engage with it.

### ➤ THERE ARE TOO MANY PICTURES

Too many pictures can distract from the ultimate goal of the email.

### ➤ THERE'S NO SENSE OF URGENCY

Provide readers with a reason why they should take action now.

### ➤ THE LANDING PAGE IS NOT STREAMLINED

Landing pages should have the signup form, petition form, etc. front and center and should limit the amount of additional text a person must read after clicking from an email. It should also be mobile optimized.

### ➤ THE TIMING IS OFF

Optimize future emails by paying attention to the success in relation to time of the day and the week. Additionally, make sure emails are consistently sent throughout the month.

## EMAIL RESOURCES

### ➤ GOOD EMAILS TO SUBSCRIBE TO

ColorOfChange

Moveon.org

When We All Vote

Your favorite nonprofits/companies/brands that you like to follow

### ➤ OTHER PLACES TO LEARN

<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/nerdymail>

M+R benchmark reports: <http://www.mrbenchmarks.com/>