VIDEO 1: WHY IS EMAIL MARKETING STILL IMPORTANT?

Hi! I'm Isaac, with HubSpot Academy.

I want to start our session by answering a very important question, "Why is email marketing still important?"

With new technology coming out every day, it can seem like email is on its way out.
So, I want to make one thing abundantly clear: email is still an important part of marketing.

All the way back in 2004, PC Magazine ran a piece titled "The Death of Email." It started by asking the reader, "Has email peaked and become more useless?". As marketers, you want to be as effective and efficient as possible, so it's only fair that you ask yourself, "is email really worth it? Can it deliver the goods?"

As we get started, I think it would be helpful to clear up some of the misconceptions people have about email

First of all, many people believe that Email marketing means SPAM. Now, to be fair, 70% of all emails sent are categorized as spam. And some of that is sent by marketers, who purchase lists and send endless email blasts to people who don't want to hear from them.

People also believe that email marketing is old school. Email has been around forever, and people have started to wonder if email is still valuable. Isn't email like banner ads? Haven't people learned to tune email out?

That brings us to the question, is email still effective?

I would answer that with a loud and resounding, "Yes!" Here are 6 reasons why:

1) There are more than 4.3 billion email accounts today – that's a LOT of people using email. No other marketing channel has been adopted as universally.
2) 95% of online consumers use email, and 91% report that they check their email at least once a day. If people are checking their email every day, it's probably still a viable marketing channel, right? And since emails stay in your inbox unless you delete them, it has a longer lifespan than other marketing channels like social media.

3) Email is a channel that you own. While Google and Facebook can change the way they index search results and display content, you'll always have a 1:1 relationship with the people that open your emails.
4) 77% of consumers prefer email for marketing communications. Take advantage of that by connecting with people where they want to be reached
5) Email lets you be highly personal. You can create a highly targeted, contextual message that's unique to each person who receives it.
6) And lastly, we still use email because it has an ROI of 4300%. For every $1 you spend, you get $43 of returns. That's a pretty sweet deal.

In fact, email is growing. According to the Direct Marketing Association, 76% of marketers say they use email more than they did three years ago.

At this point, you're probably thinking, "I get it. I'm in. How can email help me?"

The best part about email is its versatility. When considering the inbound methodology, email is primarily used to close leads into customers, it can also be used to delight your customers as well.

When it comes down to it, the primary function of email is to nurture your leads into customers. Nurturing is all about sending the right email to the right audience at the right time.

Nurturing is exactly what it sounds like – helping someone grow.

Send your leads content that helps them do their job better, and they'll be more open to speaking to your sales team down the road.

Providing your leads with helpful, relevant content helps you build a relationships with them. It allows you to position yourself as a consultant, ready to help them with their challenges. Inbound is all about that combination of context and content. If you do that well, your leads will be more likely to interact with you.

As I mentioned before, you can continue to use email after someone has become a customer.

Inbound businesses recognize that the point of purchase is only the beginning of their relationship with a customer. They use emails to consistently delight people who have already bought their product or service.

It can be as simple as the occasional check in, or perhaps sending helpful resources and special customer-only extras. Attention is key to delight – and a happy customer can be your biggest advocate!

It's also a cost-effective way to delight your customers. You can strengthen relationships, upsell new products, and reduce churn – meaning, customers are less likely to stop using your products or services.

At the beginning of this session we asked, "is email still effective?" By now the answer should be clear - email can play an important role in helping you reach your customer and promoter goals.

In the next video, we'll walk through different best practices you should follow so you are sending the right email to the right person.

VIDEO 2: HOW DO YOU SEND THE RIGHT EMAIL TO THE RIGHT PERSON?

Since email has an important place in your inbound strategy, let's learn how to send the right email to the right person.

Here are four best practices that, together, will help you succeed with email.

When I think about the best practices to writing a great email, I use a simple formula.

1) Determine who your audience is
2) Segment your contacts database to match that audience
3) Send the right content at the right time to that audience
4) And use it to nurture that lead into becoming a customer

The question we are trying to answer with these best practices is: Who is getting your email, and why?

First up is determining your audience.

Email is all about CATS. No, not the cute, furry kind that power the internet. I'm talking about this cold, hard, scientific fact: The right content, served to right audience, delivered at the right time equals success.

Remember, inbound marketing is all about this marriage of context and content. When you divide your contacts into smaller groups based on similarities, it lets you use context to make your content more relevant and engaging.

So what do you segment by? An internet high-five if you saw this coming…You segment by our Buyer Personas.

Buyer Personas are so, so important to our inbound strategy, so it's no surprise that they've popped up again. But how does this foundational idea help you write better emails?

Here's an example. Let's say I'm selling washing machines. My ideal customers are middle-aged homeowners who live in the suburbs. They're interested in energy efficiency, but their pain-point is the higher cost of efficient washing machines. They tend to compare options online before making big purchases, since they want to be confident in their decision to buy such a big-ticket item.

A clear definition of your Buyer Persona helps you define your audience. I have a crystal clear picture of WHO will be on the other side of this email send, reading my message. Now you have to consider another question:

Where is your audience in the buyer's journey? Sending a great email to the right buyer persona at the WRONG time can be a HUGE problem.

Say, for example, our homeowners are still researching whether to even purchase a washing machine at all – never mind what type. The old machine works just fine, so right now they are just looking to learn more, not necessarily make a purchase.

If I start sending them emails for coupons, rebates or offers to trade in their old machine, it would be extremely pushy and may cause the lead to unsubscribe. And when someone unsubscribes, you've essentially lost them for good.

An email that is perfectly positioned for someone in the decision stage could be pretty jarring to someone who's not looking to buy anything right now. But an email with the right information that hits a prospect's inbox at just the right time, well, that could be a breath of fresh air!

Use Buyer Personas and the Buyer's Journey to guide you in slicing and dicing your contacts into the right segments. See how those two ideas play together? They're a great foundation to an effective segmentation strategy.

I can hear some of you saying, "Hold up Isaac, what's all this talk about segmentation. Do I really need to do more work beyond identifying my Buyer Personas? Do I need to segment more than where they are on their path to purchase?"

Don't worry, I don't expect your blind allegiance, so I came armed with a simple fact. Did you know that sending targeted content dramatically increases open rates and click through rates. In

fact, emails sent to segmented lists receive 62% more clicks than email sent to non-segmented lists.

We're talking about concrete improvements to your email sends.

If there's one thing inbound businesses love, its data. That's what this whole revolution is all about! Buckle up, because we're about to take a whirlwind tour through the different ways you can use data to improve your segmentation.

You can segment people by geography using criteria such as IP country, time zone, area code, and address.

You can use data about a person's company – such as its size, the nature of their business -- B2B, B2C, Non-profit, etc. -- and their industry.

You can also segment your leads by their role, seniority, what department they belong to, or their specific function within a department.

If you use a CMS that has the ability to track a lead's behavior on your website, you can use that to gauge how interested leads are and what they're interested in. For example, you can use conversion events (like downloading an eBook about Twitter), email opens, and page views.

If you have marketing intelligence software, you can go one step further and actually incorporate information about your lead and their company into your segments – how many followers and fans do they have on twitter or Facebook? What search terms do they use to find your website?

These are just some examples of different ways to segment your contacts, and it doesn't mean you have to segment by one criteria or another – the real fun happens when you combine some of these elements to really address a persona. For example you can target a lead who has a specific role in a specific industry by their location and how many times they've visited your website.

Now, one of the main reasons you segment is to preserve the health of your contact database. Consider this:

25% of your email list will decay, each year. By that logic, a list with 10,000 contacts will be reduced to just 5,625 viable contacts in 3 years.

You also need to watch out for SPAM.

Unfortunately, that's what email marketing is often associated with, due to bad practices like buying lists and emailing people who didn't opt in. This is not only annoying to the people getting your unwanted emails, it actually decreases the value of your brand and can get you flagged for SPAM. That hurts your deliverability and credibility.

You spend a ton of time building, cleaning, and nurturing a solid list of prospects, but that list is becoming less valuable by the second. As people change jobs, change emails, or hit the unsubscribe button, your list quickly loses its punch.

That's why you need to supplement your email marketing with blog posts and content to make sure your lists stay healthy and grow over time – following the inbound methodology means your marketing is interconnected.

How do you decide what type of content to send to your prospects and customers? Remember the equation folks, Content plus Context equals success. Here's a couple quick suggestions on different types of content you might send, and how it syncs up with the Buyers Journey.

In the awareness stage, keep your content easily consumable. Videos, blog posts, slideshares, free tools, and high level guides are great at capturing interest and educating prospects, which helps move them further down the buyer's journey.

In the consideration stage, you're answering the unasked questions that you anticipate are running through your lead's head. Some suggestions of content to email during this stage are webinars, case studies, FAQ sheets, product whitepapers, and third-party reviews.

And how about the decision stage? This is the time to send those free trials, ROI reports, product demos, consultations, and estimates or quotes, depending on your industry. You want to be upfront with what you can offer, and it's time to let the lead get up close and personal to your product.

But how likely is someone to buy based on just one great email? Not very likely. It often takes a series of emails to build trust and earn business. That's where lead nurturing comes in.

Lead nurturing is the process of building relationships with prospects with the goal of earning their business when they're ready.

You can't force your leads to buy from you. But you also can't afford to lose a lead because their lack of readiness doesn't match your desire to sell.

In fact, 73% of all B2B leads are not sales-ready. This means there are perfectly good leads in your database that are not ready to buy yet. It's up to you as a marketer to send them a series of helpful and relevant content to earn their business.

Any time you write an email, I want you to ask yourself one question before you hit send: Would I be excited to read this if it showed up in my inbox?

That's the golden rule: Emails should add value, not ask for it.

This is something I can't stress enough. Inbound is all about lovable marketing strategy – leads engage with you because they want to. Sending content that is valuable to your intended recipient is going to make your company more valuable to them. A world-class email, above all, does not ask a lead for anything – it provides them with something of value.

Before we dive into the details, I would like to suggest something simple: Emails that look bad and don't work aren't lovable.

That's right, we need to talk about mobile. According to the HubSpot's Science of Email 2014 Marketing Report, a massive 47% of all emails are opened on mobile.

Why take all that time writing an email if it's going to look terrible for half of the people who read it? I want to provide some quick tips and tricks to ensure that every reader sees your email in all its proper, responsive glory.

First, use responsive templates. This will ensure your emails look sleek and well-designed across multiple platforms: desktop, tablet, and yes, their phones.

Next, bigger is better. Be aware that some people will be reading your emails on smaller screens. If you are using a CTA or a button, make sure there is plenty of surrounding space and it is big enough to tap with a finger.

Also, don't forget to use clear and concise messaging. People are more and more inclined to scan your email, regardless of which device they read it on. Make it really easy for people to scan and comprehend your email.

Lastly, avoid using tiny fonts. At a minimum, use a 12pt font.

If you design your emails with those simple tips in mind, your readers will see a great email, on whichever device they decide to use.

Let's get into the details of how to make your emails rock. I call it the 4 step guide to email perfection. Here's an overview – these best practices fall into several buckets: goal-setting, personalization, optimizing for engagement, and making sure everything in your email looks great.

Best Practice 1: Defining a clear goal for your email

Let's start with tip #1: Defining a clear goal. Why are you sending this email?

It's awfully hard to write a great email if you don't have a clear idea why it's being sent.

Admittedly, it can be hard to pick an appropriate goal for your email send. Let's do an exercise to make sure you are feeling comfortable with the process.

Consider this question: Which of these is an appropriate goal for an email send?

You can definitely cross "Stay top of mind" off your list of potential answers. Nobody ever got promoted for the way they stayed on top of everyone's mind last quarter. How would you measure it? How would you really know? You want to stay away from goals that are not actionable or quantifiable.

"Promote your company" can go too. Why? Because it fails the golden rule of email. Remember, emails should add value, not ask for it. Would you be excited, and carve out time to read an email about how awesome another company was, with no clear benefit to you, the reader?

Increasing your click rate won't work as a goal, either. It's an empty metric. Who's to say that people didn't click on the email, only to bounce right off the page on the other side. You should care about conversions, leads - actionable things that drive value for your business.

Which leaves us with "Get people to register for a webinar." This is an example of a great starting goal for an email. It's a clear, actionable goal that you can quantify. Plus, you're either creating net-new leads or qualifying existing ones.

This goes beyond clicks and opens - You need to consider what action you want your recipient to take. You want to get really specific here. So something like "stay top of mind" won't cut it.

A couple examples of clear and effective email goals would be generating leads, collecting feedback, educating customers and nurturing existing leads.

Best Practice 2: Personalize Where Appropriate

Your second best practice is to personalize where appropriate.

Just because your email is going out to 100, 1,000 or even a million contacts, doesn't mean it has to feel impersonal.

You want to create the impression that you are speaking directly to your lead. You don't want them to feel like you're sending the same thing to hundreds or thousands of people – address them personally so it feels like a one-to-one conversation.

Here are a couple tricks to give that email a contextualized, personal feel.

First, consider sending your email from a real person, not the name of your company. Why? Because people like doing business with other people.

During several A/B tests we ran on over 50,000 recipients, we found that personalizing the sender's name and email address increased the open rate an average of 3%. Consider doing something like this: (show image)

Our tests showed that personalization works, but we've also found that using a person's name and a company name together as the sender works well too. You've just got to A/B test what works best for your particular company, brand, and industry as well as what's ideal based on to whom you're sending emails.

Any marketing software worth buying should allow you to personalize your emails based on information you know about your prospects. You can personalize any contact property - first name, last name, email, company name. Whatever helps you better target your contact database, use it!

Personalization can have a huge impact on your engagement. But don't listen to me, check out some of these stats:

- Leads who are nurtured with targeted content produce a 20% increase in sales opportunities.
- 40% of consumers buy more from retailers who personalize the shopping experience across channels.
- Personalized emails improve click through rates by 14% and conversion rates by 10%.

Best Practice 3: Focus on Engagement

Remember that first best practice where we discussed having a clearly defined goal for your email send? Having that clear goal in mind allows you to optimize for engagement. This is why you send emails after all, right? You want people to read them and act on the information.

So let's learn how you can optimize your emails so contacts actually take desired action.

Always keep this in mind when writing emails: Time is money, so get to the point! You need to be clear and compelling. Clear enough to understand and compelling enough that people will act. That goes for both your email copy and your subject lines.

You do NOT want to be misleading here. Tricking people into opening your emails is good for nobody.

A great way to be clear and compelling is to use actionable language. A question for you English majors in the crowd: What part of speech do I mean when I say actionable language? I'm talking about VERBS!!

People have short attention spans –Ask yourself: how many emails have you opened, scanned for two seconds, and then closed? I know I've done it. This isn't the time for fluff. Use actionable language to grab attention and convince leads to complete an action. Use verbs in your CTAs, such as "get", "start", or "reserve". You can also let your lead know what they can do by clicking your email's in-text-CTAs or buttons – they can save time, or generate more leads, or increase efficiency by x%.

Here's another reality of email marketing: You only get so much real-estate in an email – you want it to be short and sweet. This is especially important with the increase of mobile readers. You'll want to make use of every component of your email and use them all to achieve your goal by turning them into a CTA. Take that image you added and link it to your offer. Consider adding a P.S. to your signature that contains an enticing CTA.

Another way to increase engagement with your emails is to boost your reach! This can be as simple as allowing your recipients to share the content in your emails. Most email marketing tools allow you to enable social sharing buttons right in the editor.

In addition, you can encourage sharing in the text of your email, too. You might consider asking readers to forward the message to a colleague as well.

My final reminder for engaging your readers is to remember the details. Remember, not everyone sees emails in the beautiful HTML versions you created. Make sure you clean up the plain-text so it doesn't end up looking like…

See all those ridiculously long links and random sentences? Those are components of the email that got pulled into the main copy because there wasn't a separate area for it to exist in the email.

Best Practice 4: Test and Analyze

As is important to every stage in the Inbound Methodology, you want to be sure you test and analyze your emails.

Here are some things that are worth measuring:

Delivery Rate: This will answer the question: Did you even stand a chance at success. Is your email even getting to your contacts? If you dig in here, there are some specific metrics that will clue you in to the health of your email list. Both hard and soft bounces are good indicators of the shape of your contact database. Lots of hard bounces means fake or out-of-service email addresses, while soft bounces means your email is making it into the inbox but getting caught in a spam filter.

Open Rate: Yes, it's nice to track the open rate. But note that this metric only tells you the effectiveness of your subject line, not your offer.

Click Rate: Simply put, this metric will track people engaging with your emails? Remember that clicks aren't valuable just because someone clicked. It's what lies on the other side of the click that matters.

Also keep an eye on contact churn – these are people who unsubscribed after receiving an email.

It's also useful to see what links people are clicking on – are you doing a good job of driving people to click on the CTA that helps you achieve your goal, or are people getting distracted? Check URL click popularity, unsubscribe link clicks, social shares, and the CTA click rate.

The last best practice is all about results. Make the most of your emails by setting an A/B test. Use it to learn more about your emails/audience. You can improve your total clicks, too, by testing the email and then sending the winning version.

Take a deep breath and let that all sink in. Just remember, defining the goal of your email, personalizing, focusing on driving engagement and testing and analyzing your emails are all critical to your inbound success.

But what does a world-class email look like when you've put all of it together?

VIDEO 3: TOOL WALKTHROUGH

View the user guide or additional resources on the class page for a text version and instructions on how to use the tool.