

VIDEO 1: WHY CARE ABOUT SENDING GREAT EMAILS

Hey, I'm Isaac from HubSpot Academy. Welcome to "The Components of a High-Performing Email." I'll be honest, I'm pretty excited for this class. We are VERY lucky to have a guest expert joining us, Justine Jordan, VP of Marketing at Litmus.

Welcome Justine!

Thanks, Isaac! I'm super excited, too—together we're going to spread the email love. I even have the shirt to match!

Love it! Again, really psyched to have you here with us today. This class is all about creating great emails - and together, Justine and I are going to teach you how to create emails that are so effective, inspiring and compelling that your readers won't be able to resist the urge to engage with them.

Justine will be dropping by periodically throughout this class to share some of her in-depth knowledge about email.

Ready to get started?

You might be asking, "why should I care about people engaging with my emails?" Isn't it enough for people to open and read an email?

Turns out it's really important. One of my favorite email statistics found that email marketing has an ROI of 4,300%. Nope, that's not a typo.

The problem is, most email marketers interpret that stat to mean they are PROMISED results just because they click send.

In reality, there's serious work needed to realize that ROI from email marketing. To drive real results - results that are measured in dollars and cents - an email marketer has to send emails that both add value for their readers and benefit their own business. It's a delicate balance.

As an email marketer, you have to think bigger than clicks and opens! You need to think about email as a vehicle for growth. Each email send is an opportunity to generate leads, further educate your prospects, close customers and support your evangelists. It's a chance to move the reader out of their inbox and onto a path to read more, subscribe, sign-up or buy.

In the next video, you'll learn how to create and send great emails. The focus will be on:

- How to select an appropriate goal for an email send
- And How to optimize each part of your email to drive conversions toward that goal.

VIDEO 2: HOW TO CREATE AND SEND GREAT EMAILS

Here are the three best practices that will guide you towards creating and sending a high-performing email:

- First, you need to determine a primary goal for your email.
- Then, you should optimize your email for opens.
- Lastly, you should compel your reader to take action.

Let's start with the first best practice, selecting a primary goal.

The foundation of any successful email send is a good goal. You can't write a great email if you don't know why you're sending it. That sounds obvious, but it's remarkable how many marketers send out emails because "That's just what their company does every month." Just like the tides going in and out, that email newsletter always gets sent.

Justine and the folks over at Litmus have a pretty cool framework for determining the goal of an email send. Let's send it over to her so she can share that secret formula with you!"

Absolutely. Sharing is caring, right?

I like to use the classic journalism concept called “The Five W’s.” You might recognize it—it’s just borrowed and adapted for email.

It’s a clever yet simple reminder to ask yourself five important questions before creating an email: Who, What, When, Where, and Why. There’s also a bonus sixth question: How.

It only takes a few minutes, and taking the time to write down your answers to the Five W’s will go a long way toward creating a high-performing email.

First, let’s talk about Who. This is all about your audience—who are you emailing? You’ve heard by now that poor content gets ignored, but great content that isn’t relevant to the recipient won’t get read, either. Consider their habits, demographics, and behaviors. Take the time to make sure your content will be helpful and relevant to the people receiving the email.

Next up is What. What do you want your audience to do after they receive this email? You might be thinking you want them to click and open, but let’s be clear: Clicks and opens are not an appropriate primary goal for your email.

Crazy right? Marketers have been measuring clicks and opens forEVER. And they DO still matter. But they aren’t the reason you are sending your email. They are indicators and metrics of success—but they’re not the goal.

The “what” should be clear action that you can quantify, like registering for a webinar, downloading a whitepaper or subscribing to your blog.

The third question is When. When is it appropriate to send your email? And I’m not talking about the time of day or day of week you should send. Sure, this is important, but there’s not one rule that works for everyone—if that were the case, just think about how full our inboxes would be at that magical day and time! You’ll want to do some testing to see what time and day works best for you.

Instead, consider where your recipients are on their path to purchase. Sending the right content to the right person at the WRONG time is not a recipe for success.

Think about it this way. When you go to the store to buy clothes, sometimes you're just browsing. But other times, you're looking to make a purchase—maybe you've got an event or special occasion coming up. There's a clear purpose for why you're at the store. There's nothing more frustrating than an overzealous sales associate when you're just window-shopping, or an empty sales floor when you're ready to buy.

Number four is Where. Where is your audience going to read your email? Some people check their emails on the morning commute on their phones, while others open them on a desktop PC in the office or on a tablet in front of the TV at home. If you know your subscriber will be on their smartphone when they receive your email, making it look great on that tiny screen is a no-brainer, right? Choose a responsive template that will adapt to your reader's environment, use big fonts, and a clear, tappable call to action.

Lastly, ask yourself Why. Why is your company sending this message? This is the final gut-check on your campaign. Is the campaign mostly for your benefit, or does the recipient benefit, too? Ideally it's a win-win for both of you, but if the answer is purely promotional or self-serving, it might be time to rethink your strategy.

Let's not forget about the bonus question: How. How will you know if you've met your goals?

Open and click rates are two indicators of success, but they don't always show the whole picture. For example, you might look at web traffic, Twitter mentions, customer support inquiries, and other channels to see how an email may have impacted customer behavior.

For instance, Litmus ran a campaign where we emailed customers who hadn't logged into their accounts in more than 90 days. The open and click rates were both horrible, but when we dug a little deeper we found that nearly 15 percent of the people who received that email logged into their accounts within a month.

Thanks Justine. There you have it, The Five W's - a simple way to think about picking the goal of your email send.

The second best practice is to optimize your email for opens.

It can be helpful to think about delivers, opens and clicks as hurdles that each reader must jump over on their way to the ultimate goal of your email. Kind of like a funnel for each individual send. Before anyone can click, they have to open your email. If a reader doesn't open your email, it's safe to say they'll never click on your call-to-action.

Several things will determine whether someone decides to open your email - specifically, the subject line, sender name and email, and your preview text. Let's take a look at each one of these elements in detail.

First up, the subject line. The subject line is the gatekeeper of your email, which means it has a huge impact on your conversion rates, your brand perception and can provide valuable insight into what messaging appeals to your persona. Here are some things to keep in mind when crafting a great subject line:

- **As a general rule, shorter is better.** Studies have shown that 6-10 words is best, and open rates drop after 60 characters.
- **Avoid Salesy Language:** Most marketers realize that words like “free” and “percent off” tend to trigger spam filters, but there's human psychology to consider here too. Even if these emails manage to end up in the inbox, many readers mentally filter out these messages and never click to read more.
- **Keep it straightforward:** It's tempting to opt for peppy, exclamation filled subject lines, but simple copy, either in the form of a question or a statement tend to work best. The most successful subject line from Barack Obama's 2012 presidential campaign? A simple “Hey.”
- **Personalize when appropriate:** First name, last name, even location-based data like a recipient's city, have all been shown to have a significant impact on open rates. There's something about personalization that makes an email feel more like a real conversation.
- **Mix it up:** Creativity is key when it comes to your subject lines. Consider this: A common problem that plagues newsletters is a slow, consistent, decline in open rates. You can avoid this problem by testing out different types and styles of subject lines over time. Otherwise, you'll lull your subscribers to sleep.

Also consider your from name and email address. They are a critical part of establishing, maintaining and capitalizing on trust, since they are some of the first things a reader sees in their inbox. Some things to remember:

- Use a company address, not a free webmail account.
- Don't send emails from no-reply. By sending an email, you're inviting someone into a conversation. Don't make it impossible for them to respond.
- If you send both marketing and transactional emails, use the address to indicate the purpose of the send. Handles like newsletters@, support@ or billings@ work great for this purpose.
- A customer's lifecycle stage should dictate who the email comes from. A new lead might not know anyone at your company, so use the company name. If your customers have a dedicated account manager, though, the email should probably come from that person..

Ultimately, the from name and email address can indicate many things: An individual at the company, a department, a brand, or a product name. Take advantage of this opportunity to convey all the information you can!

The final significant part of your email that impacts open rate is your preview text. Preview text is the snippet of copy that is pulled in from the body of your email. It's typically displayed underneath the from name and subject line in a subscriber's inbox.

This is ESPECIALLY important on mobile since the preview text is such a large piece of what readers see in their inbox, so it plays a bigger role in their decision to open your email. Among other things, you can use the preview text to:

- Continue the theme of your subject line
- tease the content of your email
- provide a call-to-action
- add a personalized message
- demonstrate the value of the content inside the email
- Or if you are feeling particularly creative, add an emoji

Alright, the reader opened your email. The next goal is to convince your reader to act.

That's the third best practice of creating great emails, compelling your reader to take action.

Let's start by discussing effective email copy. The truth is, you can design the most beautiful email ever, but without great copy your readers are going to have a very hard time finding value in your emails.

Write with clarity, purpose, and your primary goal in mind. The copy should make it ABUNDANTLY clear why someone received this email. Writing for conversions requires a bit of tweaking from writing for entertainment. Here are some tips and suggestions:

- **First, write for scannability.** Consider your own reading habits. How long do you typically spend reading an email? Where do you read your emails? For many people, they read them On the train, in the car, in the hall between meetings. The best thing you can do for your reader, and for your metrics, is to do the work for them. Use short paragraphs, bolding, headlines, and bullet points to display information in a way that makes it easy to blink once and get the purpose and value of the email.
- **Second, use the right tone.** It all comes back to knowing your buyer persona. There's so little time and space when it comes to email, so every word counts. Before you send an email, always ask: Will this resonate with the persona I am trying to reach?
- **Personalize when appropriate:** The great thing about email is that it's super easy to tailor your message to each recipient. When you write a blog post or send a social media message, everyone sees the same thing. With email, you can reference the info in your contact database to personalize all sorts of things in your email. Consider using information like:
 - name
 - location
 - Interests
 - behaviors a user has taken
 - Content they have downloaded

to create an email that feels more like a 1:1 conversation than a marketing message. In fact, according to research done by the Aberdeen group, Personalized emails improve click-through rates by an average of 14% and conversion rates by 10%.

- **Proofread, proofread, proofread!:** Nothing will hurt your email more than not taking the time to spell check. Have a little respect for your readers and send yourself a test. Or at least read the thing out loud!

Speaking of testing—there’s more to test before you hit send! Let’s send it back over to Justine for some guidance on testing your emails.

You know that anxiety you feel when you finger hovers over the send button? We call that “the fear.” Any marketer that’s sent a typo or mistake in an email knows what I’m talking about. Mistakes can be embarrassing at best. At worst, they can prevent the success of your email.

Testing will give you the peace of mind to press send with confidence.

Here’s a quick checklist to help prevent errors before they happen!

- Send yourself a test and check it on your computer AND your phone. Review the subject line, sender name, and preview text in the inbox. Does anything get cut off? Does it all flow together nicely?
- If your email program turns images on automatically, see if you can disable them. Try to read your email without images—you should be able to understand the main message and click the CTA. This is also your opportunity to proofread your ALT text.
- Click on all the links, and verify that they’re all going to the right page. I’ve made the mistake of leaving in a placeholder URL or links to pages that aren’t live yet. Be sure everything works as expected and takes the subscriber to a page that makes sense. This is also the time to verify any tracking codes you’re using for web analytics.
- Make sure your unsubscribe link is working, and you’ve included everything you need to be CAN-SPAM compliant.
- Check to see if there’s a plain text version. Some spam filters won’t let you into the inbox without one! Users with screen readers also rely on the plain text version, so be sure it’s formatted nicely.
- You may also want to test your email in popular apps and programs like Outlook, Gmail, iPhone, and Android. Emails can look different in different inboxes—and sometimes end up looking completely broken.

- These checks can be done right in your browser using tools you already have, but also it's worth noting there's software out there that takes care of it for you. No matter what you choose, be sure to test!

Thanks Justine. Those are some serious pro-tips. No doubt you've saved at least one email marketer out there from making an embarrassing mistake.

Next up, and perhaps most important of all, is the Call-To-Action, or the CTA. The function of a CTA is to take the reader out of the inbox and on to the next step. Every marketer needs subscriptions, registrants, customers or even just better-educated prospects. That's the goal of the call-to-action. There are three simple questions to ask yourself every time you design a CTA:

- What do I want the reader to do?
- Why should they do it?
- How will they know to do it?

The way to answer these questions is with direct and clearly-stated language. So, instead of using vague phrases like click here and read more, say things like "start improving your conversion rates" or "I'd like to register now." As a reader, there's zero confusion as to what's going to happen if they click that CTA.

In almost every email it's best to have one CTA. Newsletters are an exception to this rule, since they often function to share multiple pieces of information in one email. Importantly, that expectation has usually also been set with their readers.

For most emails however, you'll want to stick to one CTA to promote the primary goal. I can't stress this enough. The term to remember here is attention ratio. Attention ratio is the ratio of links in an email to the number of conversion goals. One email, one purpose. Now, that doesn't mean that you can't turn multiple components of your email into a CTA. For example you can:

- Link images to your offer's landing page
- hyperlink the appropriate copy in the email
- Edit the alt-text of your images and cta's
- modify the preview text

All to bring the reader towards that one goal. Each link in your email should lead your reader down only one path. Not only will it make optimizing your emails

simpler, it will improve your results. Sendgrid analyzed 18 million email sends to see if there was a correlation between html links in an email and the click-through rate. They found that as the number of links in an email increases, the number of clicks decreases.

When you build that CTA, don't forget about your readers on mobile! People will be tapping your CTA with their finger, not a mouse. Which means the absolute smallest your CTA should be is a 44 pixel square, which is roughly the surface area of a thumb.

Ok, time to discuss the elephant in the room, using images in email.

Pictures are great. They can add context, color and creativity to your emails. But the reality remains that some of your readers will never see your images - whether it's because their email client blocks them by default, they've changed their settings, or they're looking at your email on their Apple watch.

I wanted to mention this before I discuss using images well in your emails. Remember to add alt-text to your images and to ensure that your email is legible and actionable even if...especially if, images don't render.

Take a look at this fascinating chart.

When asked, nearly 2/3rds of people say they prefer mostly image-based emails.

Now check this chart out. As the number of images in an email increases, the click-through rate of the email tends to decrease. Note that there's nearly a percent drop in CTR just from no images to one image.

What's going on here? Why do people say they prefer image-based emails when image-based emails perform much worse?

The answer can be found in two places.

First: Actions don't lie. Data based on how people actually do will always trump what people say they do

Second: Sometimes your data just isn't segmented enough. This stuff starts to make MUCH more sense when you break things out into different business models, B2B vs. B2C. If you are selling consumer products, people want to get up-close and personal. They want to see features, colors, textures and more. Images let people really SEE the product. Check out this example from X. It's the perfect example of why click rates spike dramatically at 5 images per email.

B2B emails tend to be much more effective with one or zero images. In most cases, the images end up distracting people from converting and don't actually add much value to the reader.

Hope you enjoyed our look at the different components that make up a successful email.

In the next video I'll show you some examples so you can see these best practices in action.

VIDEO 3: WHAT A HIGH-PERFORMING EMAIL LOOKS LIKE

What does a great email look like before it's opened?

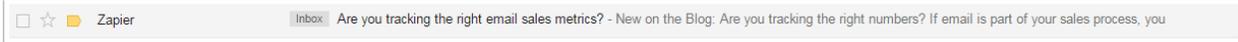
The first type of successful email are simple, no nonsense ones. Like this receipt I received from Uber, a ride hailing company, the other day:



Let's run through what makes this a great email before it's even opened. First, it's sent from Uber Receipts, using the email address receipts.boston@uber.com. It's clear why I received this email and I can respond if I need to. Now imagine how confusing it would be if this email came from my uber driver.

Uber is keeping it about as simple as it gets with this email. The subject line tells me when I took the ride, uses the company name again in case I missed it, and they've really packed a ton into the preview text. They put the date, price, AND a CTA with a cliffhanger. Very impressive.

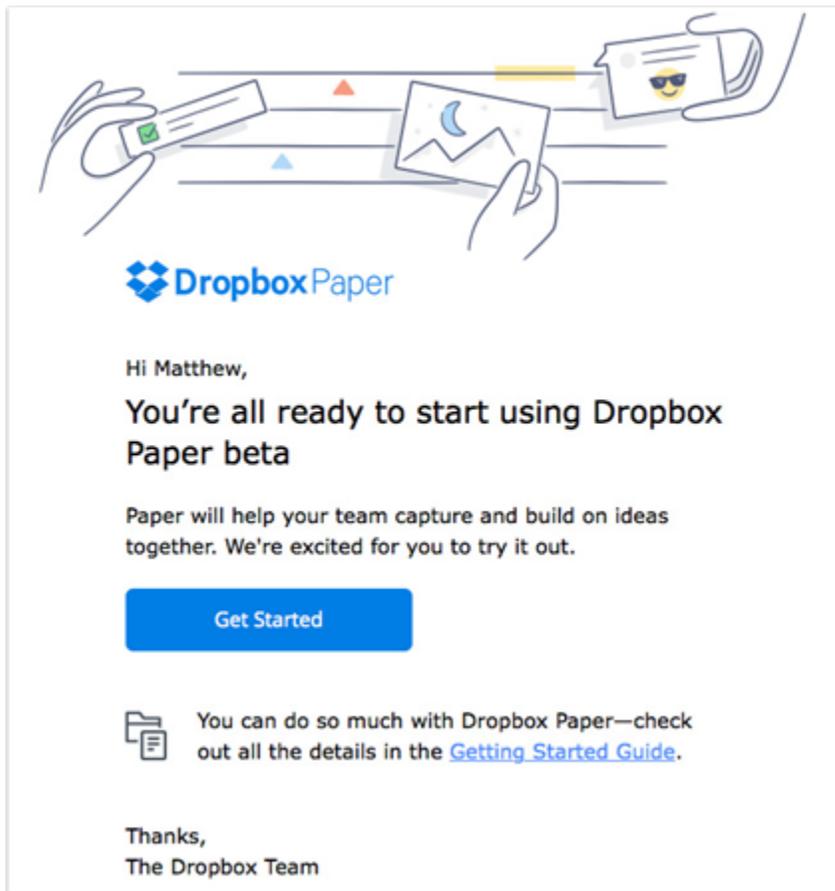
Another great strategy is to use questions to pique your reader's curiosity. Here is an example I love from Zapier, an automation company, They have a great blog that I subscribe to, and this was an update email I received:



I LOVE this example. It is impossible to ignore that subject line. They've used a question, combined with the opportunity to improve the way I do my job, to entice me to click on the email. Their preview text informs me that the email contains a blog post and prompts me again to consider whether I am tracking the right numbers. Notice how they continue to tease the reader with the line "If email is part of your sales process..." What sales process doesn't include email?! All around a great example from Zapier. WE SHOULD DO SOME COMARKETING HERE!

Now let's look at some examples of well-optimized emails and what makes them great. I feel confident that I'd open and click any of these emails if they landed in my inbox.

First up is an email from Dropbox promoting their new service, Dropbox Paper. Dropbox Paper, as you can tell from the email, helps make your team more productive by allowing them to capture and build on ideas together.



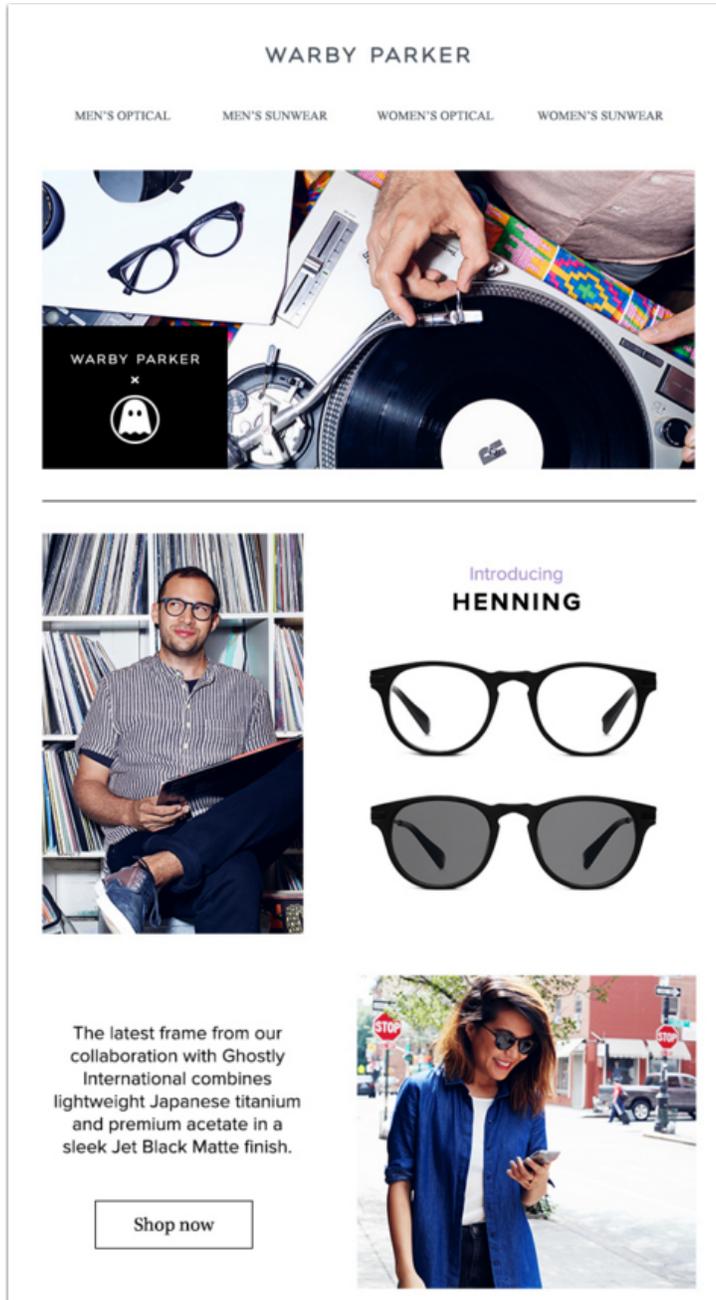
I've purposely picked an example that is nice and simple. It makes it really easy to see each best-practice in action.

From top-to-bottom, Dropbox has done some great things here. First up is a really simple and compelling image to grab your attention. Then, a logo to contextualize everything and remind the reader WHO the email is from.

And it starts with the recipient's name. Yes, it's the most basic form of personalization around, but you know what they say, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" Seeing my first name certainly gets my attention.

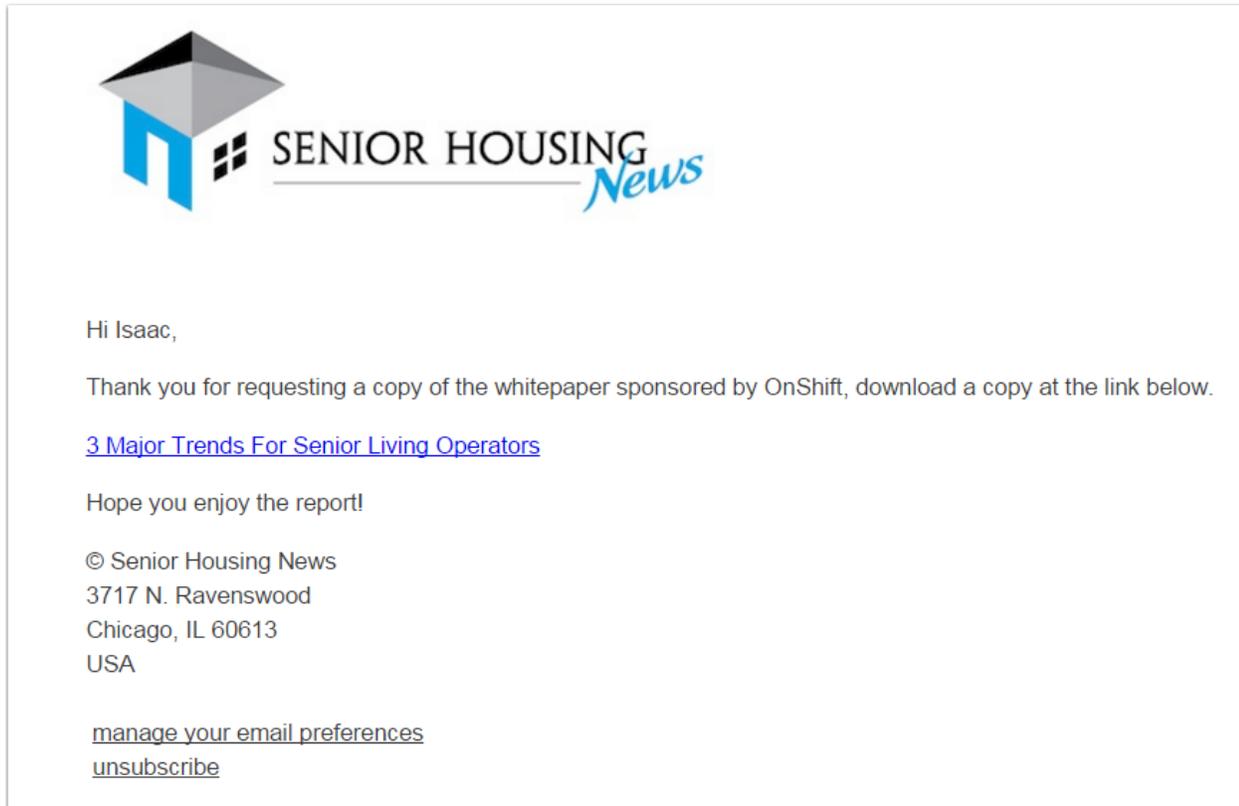
Then, using sizing and bolding, they've brought the most relevant information to the forefront. With only a blink I know that this email is from dropbox, I've been approved for the beta group, why I should join, and that I can click to get started. On top of that, they've included the same link below, just in case someone's email client doesn't render the CTA image. It's simple and quite effective.

Here's another one I love, this time from Warby Parker:



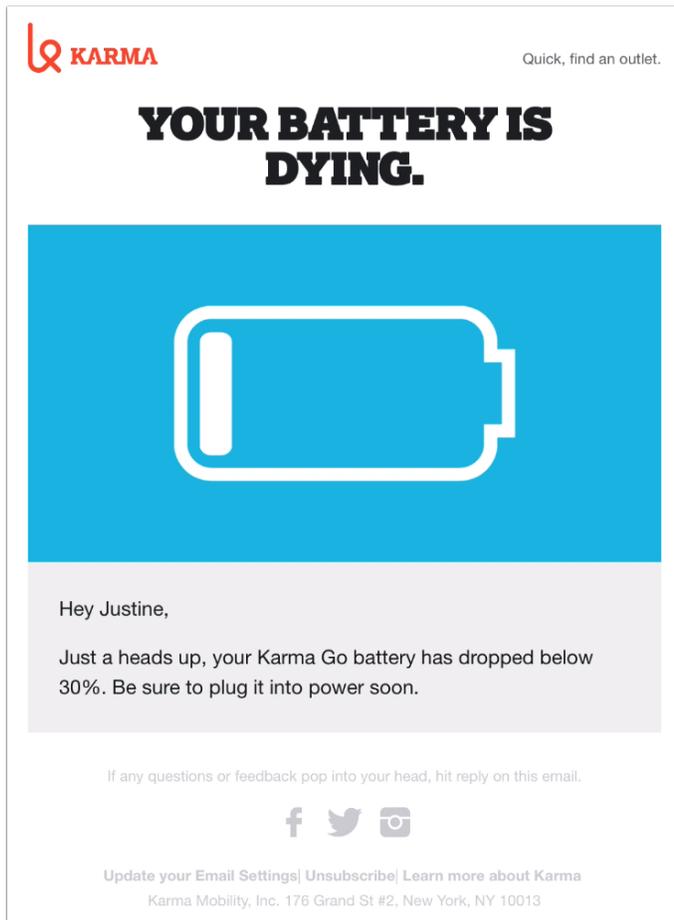
It's no coincidence that the principles remain the same, even if the design is different. Pay attention to the extra work that images do in a product-focused email. The reader gets to see the glasses in a lifestyle context, on real people, and also as a stand-alone product. There's some short, compelling copy and a clear Call-To-Action that makes it crystal clear why the reader got the email.

This one might be the simplest of them all. Take a look.



I put this example in here to display how little you need to create a successful email. Sometimes short and sweet is the answer. This is an exceptional lead nurturing email because there's nothing but value. Someone requested a whitepaper and this email delivers it. No nonsense.

To wrap up, let's send it over to Justine one more time to tell us about her favorite email ever. Justine, take it away.



Thanks Isaac I think this email from Karma may be one of my favorite emails of all time. I'd just received my brand-new Karma wifi hotspot, which would allow me to use the internet anywhere. I was totally psyched to work outside in the beautiful weather that day—so I used it a ton. A few hours in, Karma sent me an email warning me that the battery was running low, and I needed to plug in to charge it back up.

It's simple, genuine, and mutually beneficial. Karma united my needs (to charge my device) with its needs (getting me to use the hotspot) to be useful and enhance my experience. What I love about this email is that it's quietly brilliant—it's not an overt sale. There's no visible CTA, and it even uses an animated GIF, which makes my inner email nerd happy.

Thanks Justine, there's nothing like seeing some real world examples to shed light on what it actually takes to create and send great emails. Thanks for tuning in folks.

