CALL TO ACTION GUIDE

FOR EMAIL MARKETING

When you email your subscribers, you're usually looking for a response from them.

You may want them to make a purchase, to respond or simply to click through to your site. Whatever it is, when subscribers finish reading your email, they're going to ask, "What next?"

That's when you hit them with your **call to action**: your request, straightforward and impossible to miss.

Your call to action is a key component of your campaign. It's where you ask for a response from your subscribers, and where they choose whether or not to give you that response.

That's a lot for a little bit of text to handle. But with the right wording, design and placement, your call to action can get the job done.

How to Write Effective Calls to Action

Words like "click here," "read more" and "buy now" are how you tell subscribers that you want them to do something else after reading your message. Those words, your call to action, are where people will click to respond.
v
While the rest of your offer will have a lot to do with whether or not your readers are interested, your call to action is the point of decision. So the words you choose are critical.

> *Make your call to action short and sweet - we tend to glance at sentences so if folks can get the jist of what are you asking them to do in a few words they are far more likely to digest it.*
>
> *Christy Jordan, <u>Southern Plate</u>*

To make a strong impact, you may want to **incorporate some [power words](#)**. These are words that prompt specific reactions and clarify exactly what you're asking readers to do.

Be careful, though, that those words create the effect you're looking for. Try **considering them from your readers' point of view**. What effect do they have? How does it feel to be asked to "submit?" How about "subscribe?" "Donate?" "Join?"

Finally, it's important that your call to action **reflects your usual brand voice** the way you write in your emails, on your site and in any other business communication.
Your brand voice is familiar to your subscribers. They like it – that's why they stick around – so use it.

> *Brands need to take great care in ensuring their calls to action in marketing emails reflect VALUE with every offer and click. Otherwise, the brand's "voice" will suffer in present and future perceived value by the recipient.*
>
> *In turn, the brand will no longer be "audible," which is an unaffordable cost to endure these days with so many other competing voices vying for that recipient's attention.*
>
> *80% of CEOs believe they deliver a superior customer experience. Just 8% of their customers agree. So in evaluating your brand's "voice" for email CTAs, continually be mindful of whether or not the value is being presented, and how effectively it is being communicated.*
>
> *~ Orlando Tirado, <u>Acxiom</u>*

Apple sticks with its no-nonsense, straightforward brand voice when it calls readers to shop for a Mac.

What Format Should Your Calls to Action Take?

Once you design that powerful combination of words to spring subscribers into action, you can use design to **draw attention to it**.

Format

First, you'll want to choose a format that coordinates well with the style of your email:

Do you send plain text, conversational notes?

Dropping a text link at the end of a paragraph might be the most appealing presentation for your readers.

Do you send glossy HTML emails?

You may want to display your call to action on a button designed especially for the message.

> AWeber makes it easy to create things like buttons, coupons and featured products in the easy-to-use [drag-and-drop message editor](#).

Do you send HTML, but most of your audience chooses not to display images? You may want to layer a text link in front of a pretty box.

If you're not sure which option is right for your emails, take a look at AWeber's [button vs. text link experiment](#) for ideas on how to test out formats for yourself.

> *Some people will be inclined to click on a "button" within a graphic. <u>Others will respond better to an underlined sentence</u> that says something about the content they'll get if they click it. Others have a need to be directed where to go, with a clear understanding of where they'll be taken. ("What are you waiting for? Go to <u>Chocoley.com</u> right now and place an order to save today!").*

> *~ Nicole Leffer, <u>Chocoley</u>*

Size

Once you've decided your format, you'll want to consider your call to action's size.

How large is it compared to other elements in your design? Is it obnoxiously huge? Is it so tiny that it gets lost?

And if you have several calls to action, which should you make more prominent?

Color

Finally, if you're sending HTML emails, you've can choose whatever background or text colors you like for your call to action.

Your first instinct might be to just make the colors match the rest of the email. That can look classy, and there's nothing wrong with it, but you may want to consider all your options before committing to that plan.

Consider the following:

- Every color has a different psychological effect. <u>This article</u> explains the repercussions that each of six colors can have on how your readers respond to your call to action.

- Many sites recommend designing your calls to action with <u>colors that contrast significantly</u> with your background so they're easily visible.

- You can even try a trick <u>like this one</u>, where a red border changes to green when someone hovers over the call to action.

Though we encourage you to explore different colors for your calls to action, we do, however, certainly suggest choosing shades and tones of those colors that coordinate nicely with the rest of your email design.

Piperlime's calls to action are in a larger blue font than the message copy, making them stand out against the white background, and they conclude the item descriptions in a logical fashion.

PIPERLIME

FREE SHIPPING AND **FREE RETURNS**

WOMEN *Shoes & Accessories* · *Apparel* | **MEN** | **KIDS** | **BRANDS** | **SALE** | **BLOG**

the new classic.

Neutral platforms: They're the new black pumps.
In pretty shades of taupe, beige and apricot.
They go with everything from bellbottoms to floral dresses.
And make your legs look miles long.

Get yours

Denim!
(Under $100.)

Hard to believe? Well, it's true. Get skinnies, leggings and more from brands like **Blank Denim** and **Joe's Jeans**.

Pair up

We're flipping for…

New flip-flops!
We love these summer staples in bold prints and colors.
Find your new favorites.
Shop: Women   Men   Girls   Boys

Vanguard uses simple text links throughout their email to call their readers to the page where they can register for a webcast.

The red text matches their logo and headline nicely, while standing out from the white background and plain black body text.

Note that the "register now" link appears near the top and bottom of the message...read on to find out why.

View this e-mail as a webpage

Vanguard®

Live video webcast:
Answers to your questions about bond investing

Register now ☑

Whether you're an experienced bond investor or someone who's just getting started, we hope you'll join us for a live video webcast featuring Greg Davis of Vanguard's Fixed Income Group. Greg will:

- Explain how bonds can help you reach your financial goals.
- Discuss current trends in the bond market.
- Answer questions from investors around the country.

Date: Thursday, June 10, 2010
Time: 7 p.m., Eastern time
Register now ☑

You'll have a chance to submit a question during registration. Space is limited, so please register soon.

Have questions about online security for this event?

Event speakers

Greg Davis
Vanguard Fixed Income Group

Rebecca Katz
Webcast Moderator

Learn more about our speakers.

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All investing involves risk. Investments in bonds are subject to interest rate, credit, and inflation risk.

Because you are a valued client, we thought you would be interested in this information. If you prefer not to receive e-mails of this type, simply e-mail us.
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Where To Place Your Calls to Action

Whether you use a text link or a button, once it's ready, you need to figure out where to put it in your email.

When you're deciding on placement, you'll want to consider:

The Location of Your Offer

Usually, a call to action follows any text in the message that describes your offer and states a good case for the reader to respond.

There's a good chance, though, that many readers will skim right over that copy. So in addition to coming after the rest of the message, your call to action should also look slightly different and be set apart. Then it's easy to find even if the message goes unread.

And in some cases, it might even be appropriate to put the call to action above the main message body:

> *It's okay to ask for the order in the opening of an email when the subject line carries the value proposition. "Little Black Dresses starting at $39 - FREE Shipping" as a subject line states what's being sold and carries a value proposition of a low entry and free shipping. Having a call-to-action of "Start Shopping Now" in the opening of the accompanying email would be appropriate if it linked to a page with a selection of little black dresses.*

> *~ John Caldwell, Red Pill Email*

The Location of "The Scroll"

The scroll, like "the fold" in newspaper journalism, is the point where readers need to scroll down to see more.

Positioning your call to action above that point gives you the opportunity to draw response from those who just look at the top of the message and move on. With your call to action up high, they can just glance and click.

However, some marketers argue that you'll get better response if you call readers to action *below* the scroll – after they've made the decision that they're interested. Otherwise, you may be jumping the gun.

Remember, different email providers, preview panes and mobile devices have different points of scroll, so test to see where your call to action falls.

Your Layout

When you position these calls to action, consider your layout. Place your call to action **directly in readers' visual path**. Use the other elements in your email to guide readers' eyes and surround the call to action with plenty of white space so it stands out.

Multiple Placements

If your message is long, you may want to provide multiple calls to the same action. Then readers can click through whenever they feel ready.

Scatter them strategically through the email – perhaps one above and one below the scroll. And keep your wording consistent so readers don't feel they're being overwhelmed with multiple offers.

Generally speaking I recommend one offer with a few calls-to-action. This will ensure that it appeals to all different types of subscriber/prospect personalities. For example, for "the skimmer" you might use a large above-the-fold button. For the more fastidious subscriber you may also use in-content links which can placed lower. And if the offer supports it, a succinct summary which touts benefits and/or the incentives.

~ Scott Hardigree, Indiemark

In Summary: Your Call to Action

1. Use positive action verbs like *shop, click and order* to make it obvious that you want readers to click through.

2. Limit each message to only one or two action requests. Any more than that and subscribers will be overwhelmed and abandon your message completely.

3. Split test calls to action over a certain length of time to see if text links, buttons, location or different language work better for your campaign.

4. Carefully consider the placement of your call to action – keeping in mind that the alignment, approach and appearance can significantly impact your end result.

About AWeber

AWeber is an easy-to-use email marketing tool that allows business owners and entrepreneurs to cultivate relationships with their customers. Since 1998, AWeber has been the email engine powering the growth of organizations around the world, including leading sites like Social Media Examiner and ProBlogger and industry influencers such as Peter Shankman and Ann Handley.

Today, more than 120,000 small- and midsize-businesses, entrepreneurs, agencies and nonprofits are making the most of AWeber's sophisticated segmentation and analytics capabilities, split testing applications, extensive template libraries and industry-leading deliverability and live support.

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