



# How Industrial Companies Can Engage With Their Leads And Customers

10 Tips To Create And Optimize Your Email Channel (for B2B)

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by Jennifer Jäger from Steel Available

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# Introduction

*In this guide, we will walk you through the entire process of creating your email channel so that you can acquire leads and generate sales, 24/7.*

Do you want to learn how to use emails efficient to get more sales? Email is still the most direct and effective way of connecting with your leads, nurturing them, and turning them into customers.

This guide is for those who're ready to commit to email marketing, either they are beginners or experienced industry professionals. By following some pretty simple concepts you can dramatically improve the generation of new leads.

We will walk you through our **10 best practice solutions to create and optimize your email channel**. How can you improve the performance of your emails? About what kind of topics should you write? And why is your email going into spam? You will find the answers in this paper.

At the end of this white paper you will find a list of recommended tools for your business, to boost the productivity of your email channel as well as two email templates from our business.

## Don't forget about GDPR

On May 25, 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into force, impacting how businesses collect and process data from individuals. It is very important for email marketers to ensure that their programs are compliant.

## Email is not dead

Some may have 520 unread messages (daily) in their inbox and don't care about it - email seems dead for them. But in spite of what some may think, email is not being killed off. In fact email is not dead, it's just getting harder to do well!

Statistics, extrapolations and counting by the Radicati Group from February 2017 estimate the number of email users worldwide was 3.7 billion, and the amount of emails sent per day (in 2017) to be around 269 Billion.



**85%** of US retailers consider email marketing one of the most effective customer acquisition tactics

**44%**  
of people who received targeted emails acknowledged buying at least one item because of a promotional message



We therefore must not forget that **more than 90% of internet users are checking emails at least once a day on their smartphones**; the number 1 daily activity after text messages, social networking or even playing games! (MarketingCharts)

## Why email marketing works

# 1 Find Good Content



## Getting started

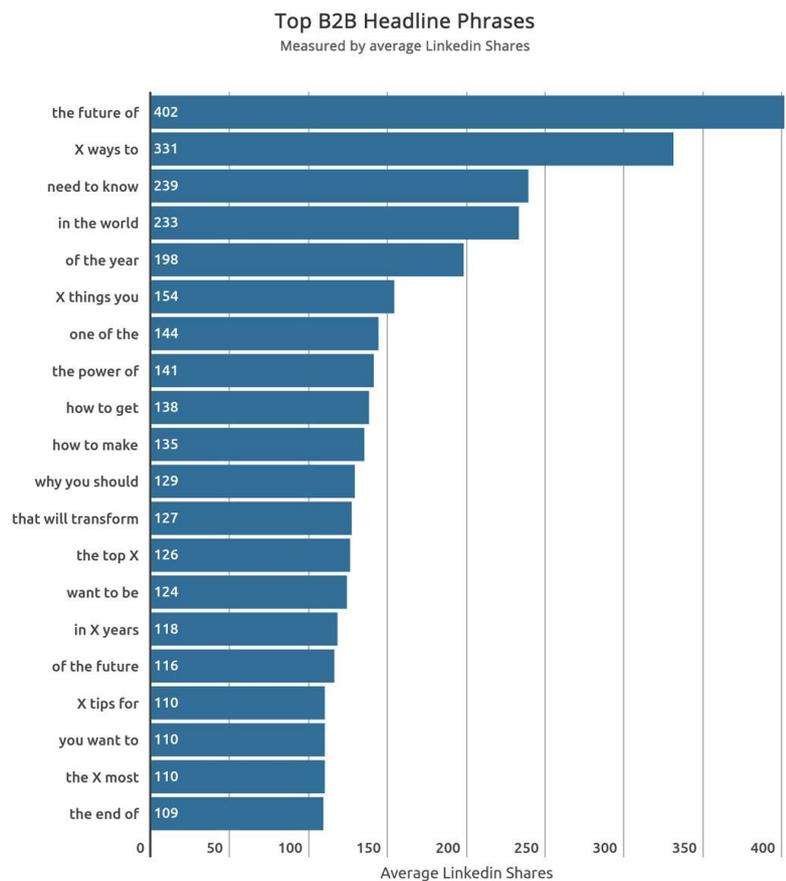
One of the first questions in your mind when it comes to emails might be: What should I write about?

A look at LinkedIn could help to find some inspiration. LinkedIn is becoming a social media platform that you shouldn't overlook, especially if you are a B2B marketer. On LinkedIn in particular, there is some great advice on what types of content do well:

## Industry trends and how-tos

To find out the topics that resonate with people on LinkedIn, Buzzsumo analyzed *the headlines of 10 million articles shared on LinkedIn*. They looked at the top phrases used in the headline of the most shared articles, and two types of content stood out: Industry trends and how-to articles.

- » Industry trends and news: *"the future of", "in the world", and "of the year"*
- » How-to articles: *"X ways to", "how to get", and "how to make"*



2017 Most Shared B2B Headlines Study  
[buzzsumo.com/blog/how-to-write-engaging-b2b-headlines](https://buzzsumo.com/blog/how-to-write-engaging-b2b-headlines)



## EXPERT TIP

Give informative and educational content a try.  
Test sending a newsletter with the headline:  
“All you need to know about [your product / your industry].”

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# 2 Build Your Database

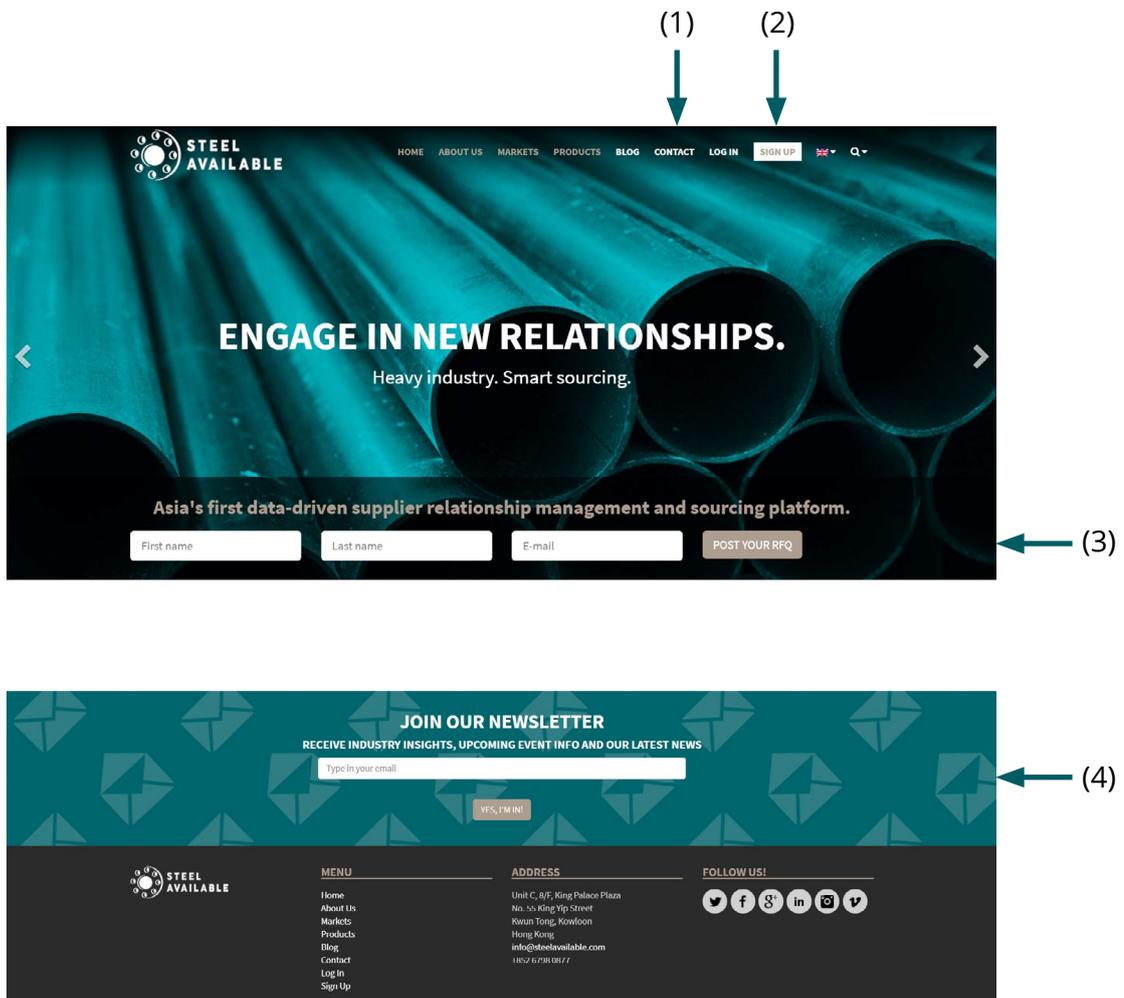


## Getting started

We build our database through several different methods:

- » Website Contact Form (1)
- » Website Platform Sign Up (2)
- » Website RFQ's (3)
- » Website Newsletter Sign In (4)
- » Contacts from Events
- » Partnerships / Collaborations with other

Be sure that your website is optimized for new email subscription capture. If you don't have a "Subscribe" button on your website – now would be the time to set it up.





## EXPERT TIP

How to get 100 more subscribers?  
Put a more interactive text on the subscribe button like:  
“Let’s do this!” or “Yes, I’m in!”.  
Try it out!

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# 3 Clean Your Database



## Getting started

You can create contact lists in Excel or in a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) of your choice. However, while you might be tempted to focus on building the biggest list possible, Brian Dean (SEO and Email Marketing expert) said that it is more important to focus on quality instead of quantity.

The goal is to have a list of people who have an interest in your business and are not just on the list to become an orphan.

## Quality over Quantity

*"You can have the best newsletters and the best offers, but if your contact list isn't a good fit your emails are likely to fall flat." (Brian Dean - SEO and Email Marketing expert)*

In addition, the bigger the list becomes, the more difficult the challenge of keeping it clear will be. Keeping your database clean will ensure better quality contacts and better results for long-term.



## Step by Step

### 1. Consolidate your lists

The more lists there are, the higher is the chance to have duplicate information in different forms. In this case, the same user appearing in multiple lists might be getting too many emails from you.

### 2. Ensure all information is correct

Check for data entry errors, data losses or data anomalies and correct them. Here is an exact step by step guide on [how to build an email list right now](#).



## EXPERT TIP

Later on you should add more data for each user.  
This allows for rich and accurate segmentation.

For example: Person A is more interested in “Interest A” and Person B likes “Interest B”, then Person A should only receive information related to “Interest A” and Person B only to “Interest B”.



# 4 Focus On Engagement



## Rule #1: Focus on Engagement, not on sends.

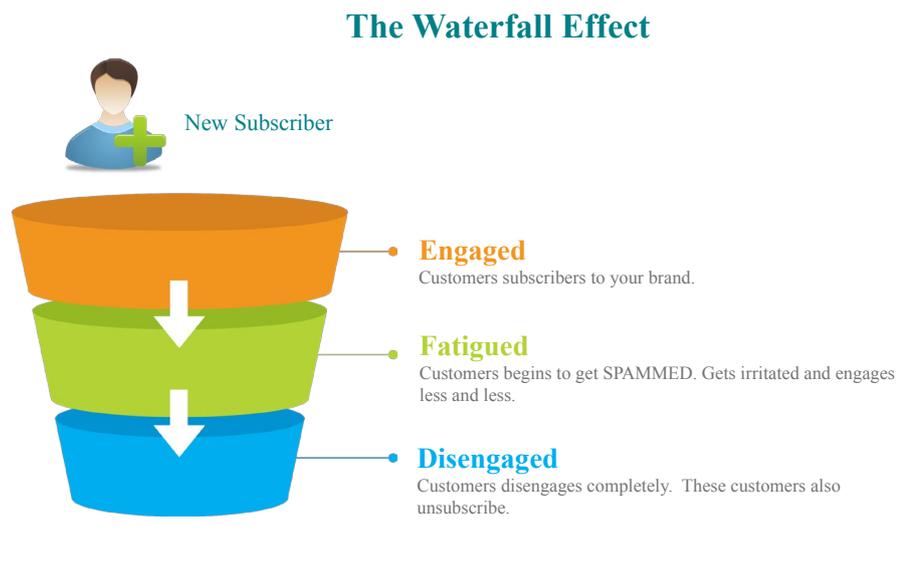
Just because 10.000 Emails have been send out, the revenue will not follow automatically.

*"Customers who are emotionally engaged are more likely to complain less, compliment more, buy more and contribute more than those who are not." (Research by Gartner Inc.)*

## The Waterfall Effect

When you get a new subscriber, he will typically go through 3 different stages; **Engaged**, **Fatigued** and **Disengaged**. The purpose of your email strategy should be that the person stay within the first two phases.

When getting a new subscriber, the first week is the most crucial. The most engagement that any customer will provide, happens in that first week. If you miss that window, you've lost a huge opportunity for increased revenue. (*Paper by Ematic Solutions*)



You should create different email templates for every step that a customer takes if he subscribe. Has the person opened the first email or clicked in the last 30 days? Should he get more information or are you becoming a spam for him? The bigger the list become the more you should use an AI to manage the frequency of emails (like *Ematic Solutions*).

Reduce subscriber fatigue, send personalised campaigns and increase the lifetime value of every customer. Remember, Email Marketing delivers **1:1 customized customer experience** to billions of subscribers at scale.



## EXPERT TIP

Prepare in advance email templates for different stages of your subscribers.

**(1)** Directly after subscription  
(after clicking on “Subscribe” button)

**(2)** 1-3 days after subscription if no interaction  
(if subscription was for a service or product)

**(3)** 3 month after subscription if a person didn’t open any email, check if they are interested in other information



# 5 Re-Engage Cold Leads



## Getting started

Again, the goal is to contact people that are not just on your list to become an orphan. Without proper lead nurturing in place, they will lose interest, they will feel that their needs are being left unmet, or worse, they will begin to forget about you entirely.

*“What is your business doing again?”*

Follow up and send emails with other content to leads that didn't open the first one. Focus on being helpful, keep your message relevant, try the nine-word email and remember that timing is important (read more about [7 Strategies For Re-Engaging Cold Prospects](#)).



- » Focus on Being Helpful
- » Keep Your Message Relevant
- » Remember That Timing Is Important
- » Try The Nine-Word Email
- » Change the Communication Channel
- » Disarm Them With Honesty
- » Know When to Let Go (Strategically)



## EXPERT TIP

After 6 months, send a “special” email asking subscribers who haven’t opened recently if they want to unsubscribe or take advantage of a special offer just for them.

If your special outreach effort is also left unopened by these subscribers, delete them. The numbers they add may put you over certain payment tiers anyway.

You may see a dip in numbers, but you will know that each subscriber on your list is interested in what you have to say and cares about your brand.



# 6 Time Your Emails



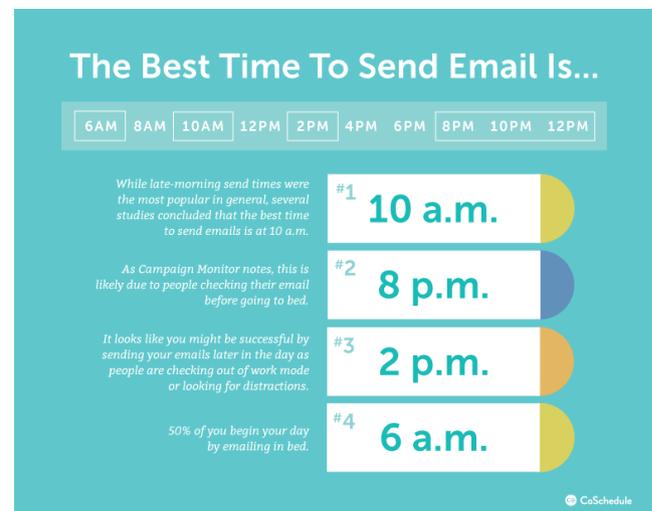
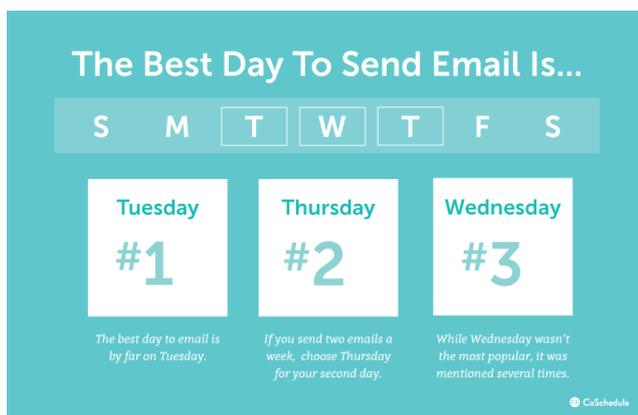
## Getting started

There are plenty of studies online about the best date and time of day of sending out emails. Here is [\*what 10 studies say about the best time to send email\*](#) conducted by [CoSchedule](#).

## Best Day to send an email

Regarding to these 10 studies, these are the best days:

- 1. Tuesday:** This is the best day to send emails according to the majority of the data from these studies.
- 2. Thursday:** If you send two emails a week, choose Thursday for your second day.
- 3. Wednesday:** While no single study showed that Wednesday was the most popular, it came in second place several times.



## Best Time to send an email

While many of the studies found varying results, here is how you could prioritize your send times based on data:

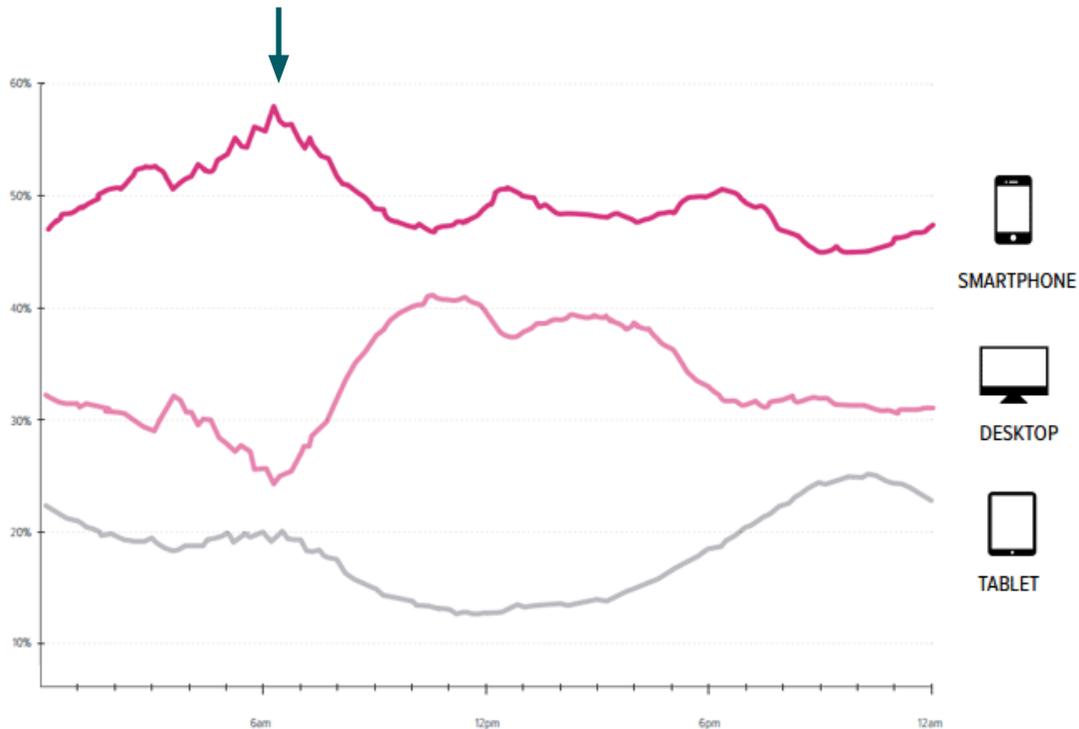
- 1. 10 a.m.:** People check their email when they arrive at work.
- 2. 8 p.m.-midnight:** This is likely due to people checking their email before going to bed.
- 3. 2 p.m.:** People are checking out of work mode or looking for distractions.
- 4. 6 a.m.:** A lot of people are checking their emails on phone before staying up.

# 6 Time Your Emails



## When people check their email (different devices)

A good way to understand these findings is to take a closer look at the device usage of internet users.



Smartphone use for reading email dominates throughout the day, especially on 6 a.m. (this time was place #4 in study from further up). Desktop use peaks during the mid morning hours and tablet use spikes at night and increases on the weekend according to Movable Ink "US Consumer Device Preference Report: Q3 2014" (2014).

You should always conduct tests to find out which date and time of the day works best for your business regarding the open rate and click rate (more in tip [8. Track Your Emails](#))



## EXPERT TIP

Don't do everything last minute!  
Start preparing your content in a calendar.

Once you found out the best date and time of the day to  
send your emails, plan them in a regular period  
(like weekly Tuesday 10 a.m.).

Don't send your emails disorganized and erratic,  
that looks confusing to people.



# 7 Conduct A/B Testing

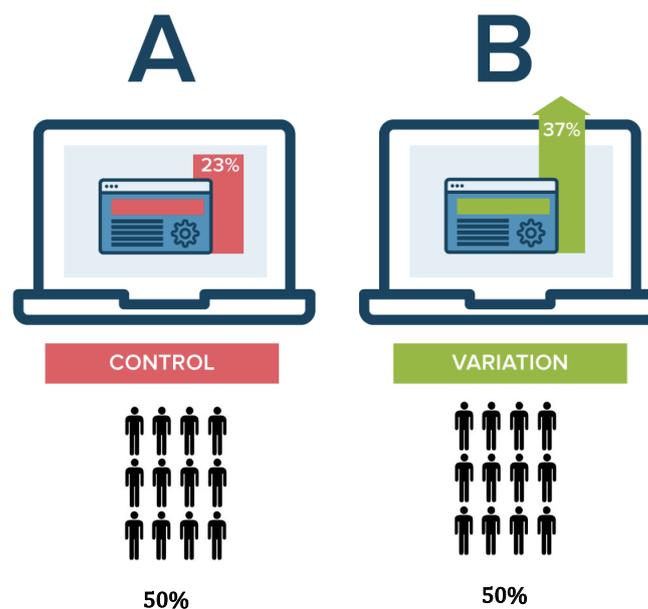


## The key to success is testing!

A/B testing (sometimes called split testing) is comparing two versions of a web page to see which one performs better. You compare two web pages by showing the two variants (let's call them A and B) to similar visitors at the same time. The one that gives a better conversion rate, wins! (*Definition*)

The principle of A/B Testing can be applied for many other areas, in that case for emails. Try within your email different subject lines and various texts for attractive CTA's (*Call To Action*).

If you want a more information on how to do A/B testing, check the well explained [Guide of Optimizely](#).



## What to test

Some aspects you can try experimenting with are:

- » Subject lines
- » Time of day
- » Day of week
- » Types of content such as informative content or offers
- » Email creative and layout
- » Personalization, tone, etc
- » Sender address (but don't change it too often)



## EXPERT TIP

Choose between short or long subject lines,  
but not in between.

Subject lines fewer than 10 characters long had an  
open rate of 58%.

Subject lines 49 characters and below tested well with open  
rate.

Subject lines of 60 to 70 character can be seen as the  
“dead zone”.

Subject lines 70 characters and up tested to be most benefi-  
cial to engage readers in clicking through to the content.

*Research conducted by Buffer*



# 8 Track Your Emails



## Getting started

The old process for sending an email was: send an email... and that's it. It was not clear what happened after that email was sent. Did the client receive it? Did it get lost in their inbox? Did they click on the links? Or open the attachments?

We had no idea.

Until now. Now we have softwares that let us know how many people open an email, if they clicked on a link and if the email even arrived.

## Email Tracking Software

Email tracking notifies us when an email we've sent has been opened or clicked. Unlike read receipts, email tracking software works in the background without interrupting us or our recipient.

Again, you will find some of the most recommended email tracking softwares at the end of the white paper.

## What Can You Track?

### WHAT CAN YOU TRACK?

|  |  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| <b>CLICK THROUGH RATE</b><br><i>The percentage of email recipients who clicked on one or more links contained in a given email</i> | <b>CONVERSION RATE</b><br><i>The percentage of email recipients who clicked on a link within an email and completed a desired action, such as filling out a lead generation form or purchasing a product</i> | <b>BOUNCE RATE</b><br><i>The percentage of total emails sent that could not be successfully delivered to the recipient's inbox</i> | <b>LIST GROWTH RATE</b><br><i>The rate at which your email list is growing</i> | <b>EMAIL SHARING RATE</b><br><i>The percentage of email recipients who clicked on a "share this" button to post email content to a social network, and/or who clicked on a "forward to a friend" button</i> |
|--|--|--|--|---|

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## Why Is It Valuable?

**WHY IS IT VALUABLE?**

| <b>CLICK THROUGH RATE</b>  | <b>CONVERSION RATE</b>  | <b>BOUNCE RATE</b>                             | <b>LIST GROWTH RATE</b>   | <b>EMAIL SHARING RATE</b>  |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| <i>Allows you to easily calculate performance for every individual email you send, as well as determine the results of A/B tests</i> | <i>Because it's directly tied to the call-to-action in your email, and your call-toaction should be directly tied to the overall goal of your email marketing</i> | <i>Shows the validity of your address list</i> | <i>The rate at which you add new people into your database is an indication of the quality of content that you have on your digital platforms</i> | <i>Indicates whether your content is relevant to the people that are a part of your email database</i> |

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Keep an eye on your Bounce Rate, if it's too high you can be seen as spam in the inbox of your recipients. Also, it shows the validity of your address list.

## What is a good open rate? And what is a good click through rate?

Across all industries the average results for UK SME email marketing campaigns were:

- » Open rate: 24.79% (2016: 24.88%)
- » Click-through rate: 4.19% (3.42%)
- » Unsubscription rate: 0.49% (0.52%)
- » Click-to-open rate: 11.88% (10.88%)
- » Unsubscribe-to-open rate: 2.59% (2.72%)

This data shows that open rate has had a slight decrease, click-through and click-to-open rates have slightly increased. While unsubscribe-to-open rates showed a slight decrease.

The 2017 report has a relatively small sample of 1.5 billion emails sent by SMBs during 2016.



## EXPERT TIP

Take also a look at the List Growth.

How many new subscribers did you had 6 month ago,  
3 month ago and in this month?

Is it increasing or decreasing?

Was there any special event or email campaign that could  
have cause these changes?



# 9 Check Spam Score



## Why is my email going into spam?

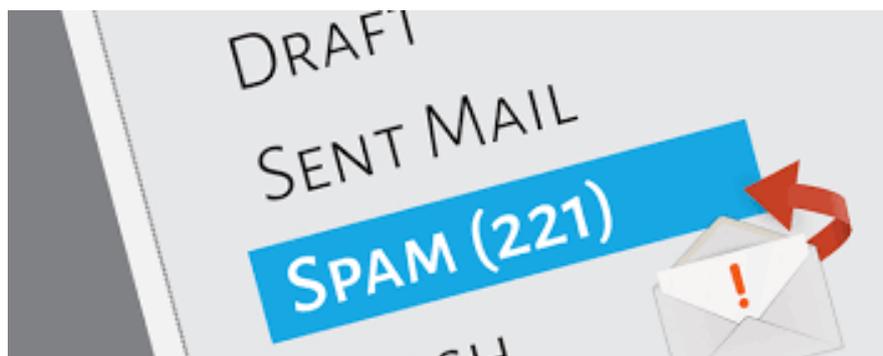
With any list of contacts and any email service you will always have some mail end up in the spam folder. Every receiving ISP (Internet Service Provider) is using different spam filtering techniques and some ISP's utilize some unpredictable and creative ways of combating spam.

For example Gmail has his own algorithm to put an arrived email into "Inbox" or "Promotion". So you will undoubtedly have some mail filtered at some point when sending email campaigns.

## Focus on your reputation

We list here some of the recommended suggestions of marketing experts that can dramatically reduce the chance of your email being filtered.

- » Never send emails to anyone who has not agreed to receive your emails.
- » Keep your volume of emails low to avoid being seen as a "bulk email sender".
- » Ensure that those who have unsubscribed do not receive email from you.
- » Don't send emails from *sales@[your\_company].com* for email campaigns.
- » Use always the email address of a real person like *jennifer@steelavailable.com*. We do not suggest changing your "send from" details often.
- » Check your Email Deliverability (f.e. provided in tool: *Mailchimp*)
- » Keep the amount of pictures low to avoid been seen as spam by ISP.
- » Never send emails that contain just a single image/graphic.
- » Don't use link shortening services like bit.ly.
- » If you use a software, be sure it's whitelisted.





## EXPERT TIP

Keep in mind that your primary focus should be to maintain a healthy list of contacts, send content they truly want, engage your contacts, and encourage them to interact with your campaign.

If you keep your focus on these items  
great delivery will follow.



# 10 Try Email Tools



## Top Of The Line

Finally, as a small treat, we want to list some email tools.

These are tools only recommended by marketing experts from the event:

*Email Marketing Forum November 2017* organized by *Entrepreneur* (Supply Chain Management).

## Email Marketing Automatisation

- » [Active Campaign](#)
- » [Aweber](#)
- » [Campaign Monitor](#)
- » [Drip](#)
- » [Intercom](#)
- » [Mailchimp](#)
- » [Marketo](#)
- » [Salesforce](#)
- » [Sendgrid](#)
- » [Sendinblue](#)
- » [Sumo](#)

## Insider Tips

- » [Typeform](#) - making surveys more interactive and well designed
- » [GrowthHackers](#) - connects different softwares and keeps testing ideas organized
- » [Buzzsumo](#) - finds related topics based on keywords, good for finding content and evidence
- » [Neverbounce](#) - tests if the email will go to spam, shows bounce rate, clears email list
- » [Mailtester](#) - tests if email will go to spam, but just 1 email address each time



## EXPERT TIP

Don't forget besides the Email Marketing the power of LinkedIn in general and LinkedIn Groups.

“Being an active participant in a Group can help you and your business network with other professionals and businesses in your field, especially those outside of your immediate circle of current and present colleagues, classmates, and employers.”

*Research conducted by Hootsuite*



# Bonus

## Email Templates

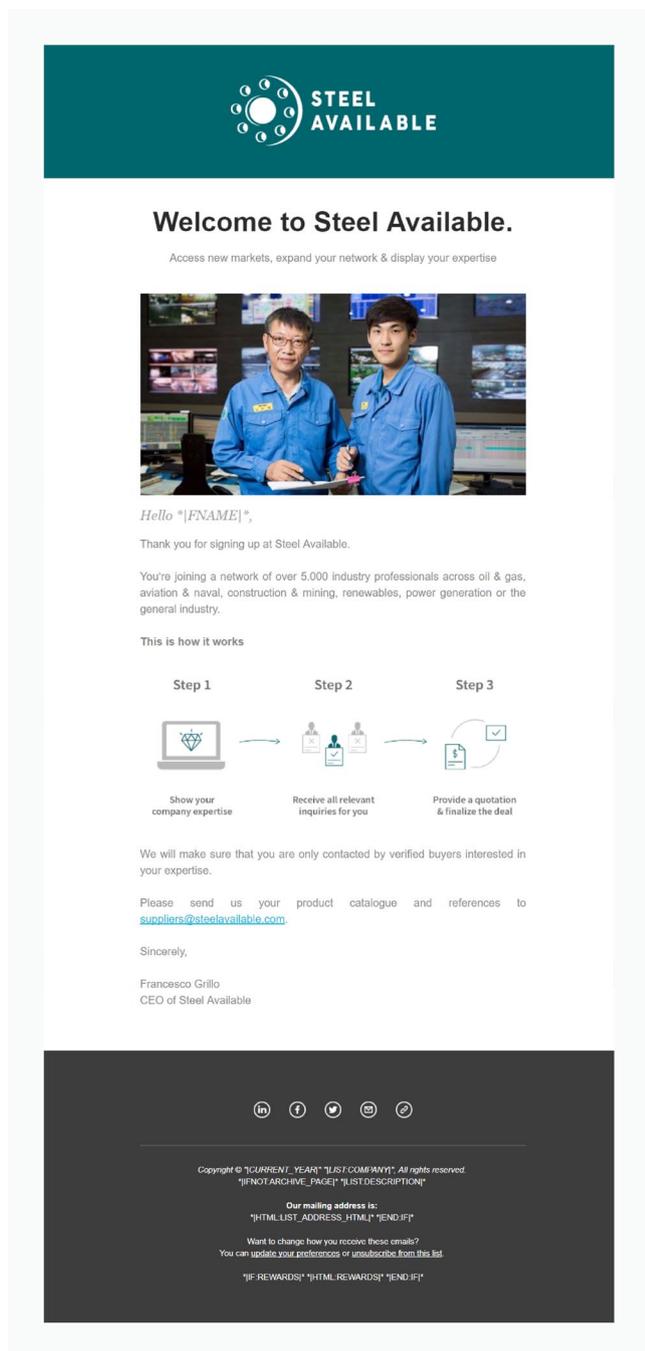


## Real Examples for B2B

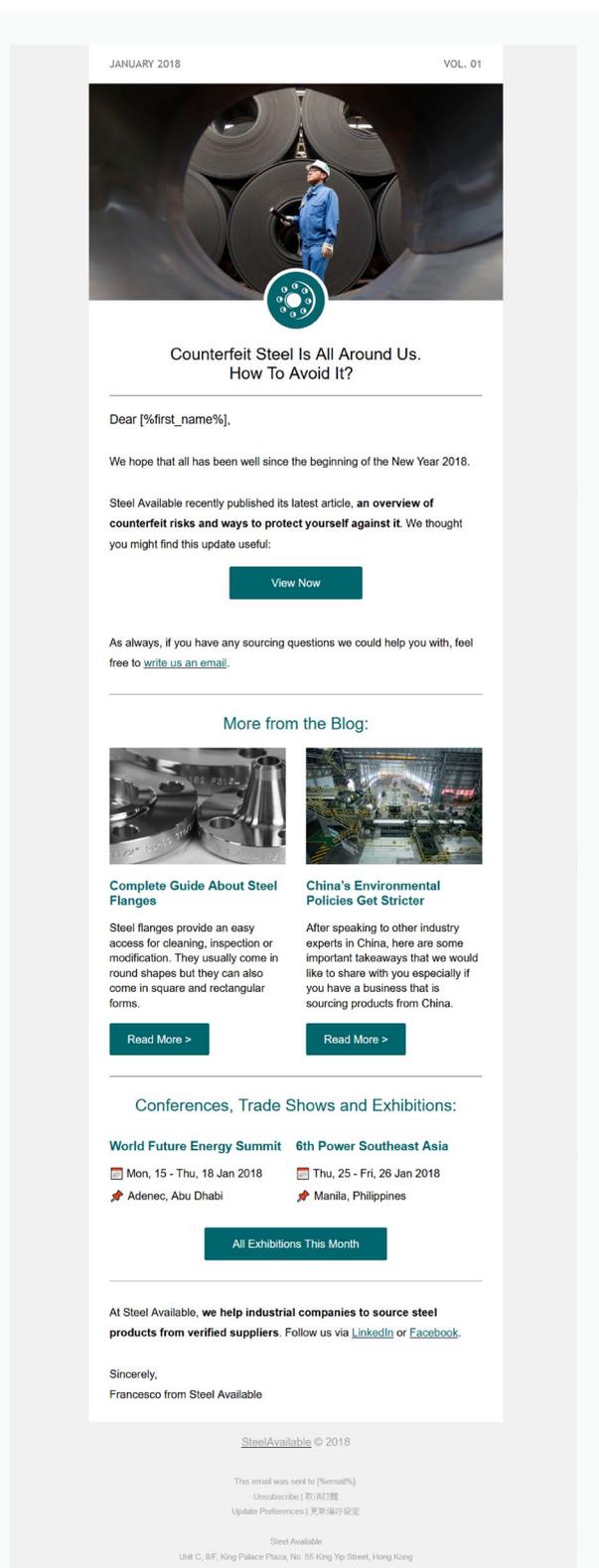
These are exclusive email templates of Steel Available for:

(1) After Subscribing To Platform

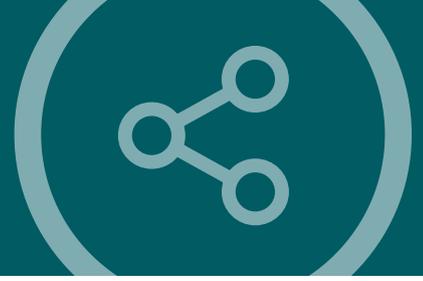
(2) Monthly Newsletter



(1) Created with Mailchimp



(2) Created with Sendgrid



## Steel Available

At Steel Available we help industrial suppliers of steel products to increase global visibility and reach new customers in the Automotive, Aerospace, Oil & Gas, Shipbuilding, and so on.

On the other hand, we help buyers to understand “who’s really able to supply a specific steel product” and “how professional is each vendor” and match his specific requirements with the expertise of trusted suppliers.

To get more information you can [view our product catalog](#).

## Support

We can help you to create and optimize your email channel.

For consulting, getting a quotation or any other request, please contact Francesco Grillo of Steel Available by email at [francesco@steelavailable.com](mailto:francesco@steelavailable.com).

## 10 TIPS TO CREATE YOUR EMAIL CHANNEL



Find Good Content



Build Your Database



Clean Your Database



Focus On Engagement



Re-engage Cold Leads



Time Your Emails



Conduct A/B Testing



Track Your Emails



Check Spam Score



Try Email Tools