

Subject Lines Tested: How to write subject lines that double your clickthrough rate

ABSTRACT

In this Web clinic transcript, Dr. Flint McGlaughlin and fellow presenters from the MECLABS team discuss how you can increase your clickthrough rate and create subject lines that convert attention into interest by following the four steps in our checklist.



Subject Lines Tested

How to write subject lines that double your clickthrough rate

[Note: This document is a transcript of a live Web clinic, "Subject Lines Tested: How to write subject lines that double your clickthrough rate," that originally aired on May 16, 2012. A [full video replay](#) is also available.]

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Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Good afternoon, this is Flint McGlaughlin. We are at it again. This is yet another MarketingExperiments web clinic. For all of these years we have been doing this research and then releasing to you all of these findings.

Today, it is 'Subject Lines Tested'. How to write subject lines that double your clickthrough rate? We will be getting into case studies and experiments, but I was, sort of, caught unawares. I was looking at a Twitter feed and it is from Devon, and Devon, it said, "So excited. I'm ready to learn how to optimize the shiz...s-h-i-z out of my website." I don't know if that is a real word, but I applaud your enthusiasm, and it brought a smile to my face Devon as it got time to start.

You can see on the screen how to talk about this on Twitter. I'm joined today by Daniel Burstein, who is the Director of Editorial Content. Daniel was one of our best hires. He has been, sort of, a superstar here. I'm really proud to have seen his growth and progress as he keeps rising up and becoming responsible for more and more. He is joined by Ashley.

I think the optimization unit took a look at me and a look at Daniel and decided that we needed something on the stage to, sort of, counterbalance all of that, let's say...

Daniel Burstein: Masculinity.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: ...visually challenged masculinity. Ashley is going to be joining us. She is a research manager in charge of some very complex projects and is another rising star in the MECLABS family. She will be helping you in just a bit.

We are going to start the way we always start in just a moment looking at case studies, but may I talk about subject lines? They are easy to talk about. They are easy to theorize about, but we struggle mightily with something so simple as three or four words that can change the entire impact of a campaign.

Daniel is going to help us in just a moment to sort of walk through a case study. You, the audience, have been submitting ideas, and I will let him fill in, sort of, the

details on that, and then, I'm going to drill down walking through, sort of, four key ways you can improve the force of your subject lines, but first, I will ask Daniel to come up. I will take you to an experiment from our library. I will let him explain the background, and then, we will step in and go. So, go ahead, Daniel.

Experiment: Background



Experiment ID: *Audience Subject Line Test*

Location: MarketingExperiments Research Library

Research Notes:

Background: Copyblogger and MarketingExperiments Blog audiences competed in writing high-performing subject lines. Three subject lines were chosen from each audience.

Goal: To increase clickthrough rate

Primary Research Question: Which email subject line will generate the highest clickthrough rate?

Approach: A/B split test

Daniel Burstein: Thank you, Flint, and I am going to go through this case study rather briskly because we were in a content meeting yesterday, and I saw how many slides Flint has to go through today.

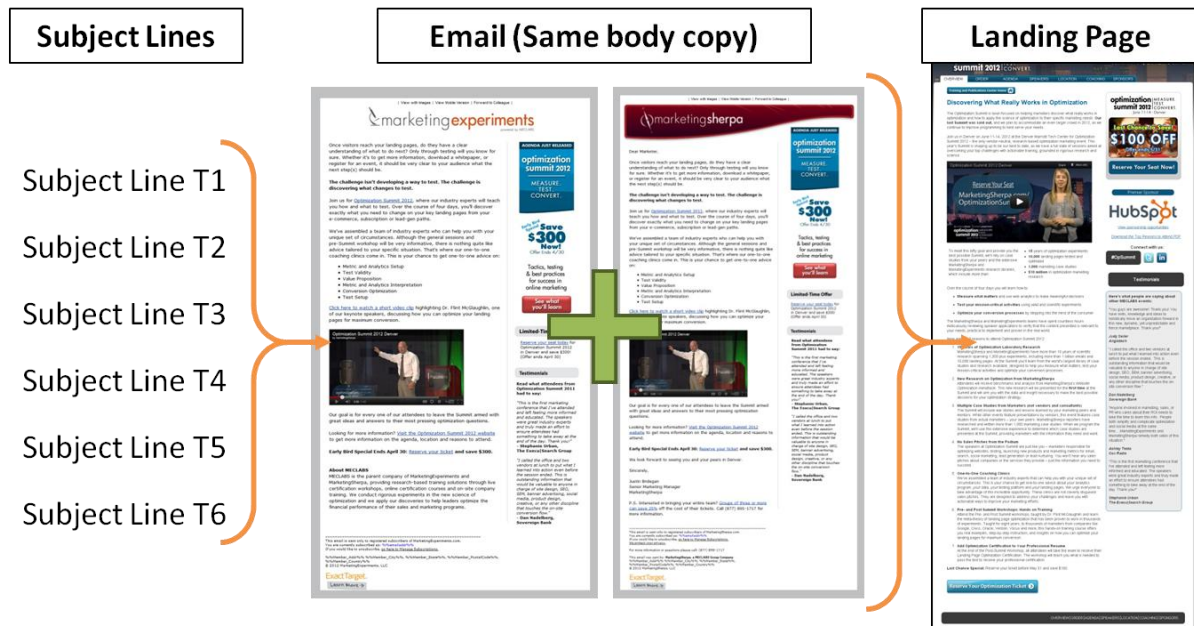
Dr. Flint McLaughlin: 173 slides.

Daniel Burstein: If he can do it in 60 minutes, I will be impressed.

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: Only going to be two hours, all right?

Daniel Burstein: I said that because right after this, I'm going to be hopping on Twitter #webclinic. I am going to tweet through a link where we wrote up a lot more about this case study if you are more interested in it. Let's take a look.

Experiment: Design



Daniel Burstein: As Flint said, you, the audience, were a big part of this case study. We partnered with Copyblogger, and what we did was we took one of our marketing sends for Optimization Summit 2012 in Denver. That is happening next month in Denver. Flint is going to be there. He has got a lot of good information. I will be there. A lot of great people will be there.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Is this a commercial, sort of, a nuance commercial?

Daniel Burstein: It is all about that. So, let's focus on the test. So, for Optimization 2012, and frankly, we send a good amount of marketing e-mail sends from MECLABS, and so, the marketing team was struggling, but sometimes, it is hard to come up with new ideas for a subject line, and when that happens, a great thing to do is reach outside of your marketing organization. You know, for the audience who might be sales or IT or even, you know, someone outside of work, and find some new ideas to test.

So, what we did, we went to the MarketingExperiments blog audience. We partnered with Copyblogger. We went to their audience as well and we held a little contest. We said, take a look at this e-mail, and what do you think the best subject line will be?

Experiment: Treatments

Copyblogger
Subject Lines

MarketingExperiments Blog
Subject Lines

Treatment #1:

Quarterbacks aren't the only
changes being tested in Denver

Treatment #2:

A scientific way to increase your
conversions

Treatment #3:

Do your landing pages pass this
test?

Treatment #4:

[Optimization Summit] 3 Days to a
Better Website (\$300 Off Coupon
Inside!)

Treatment #5:

Learn 3 Tips that made 10,000
landing pages extremely successful

Treatment #3:

Optimization Summit 2012 --
Speaker's List Up Now! + Save \$300
Today






Daniel Burstein: At the same time, the team over at Copyblogger, lead by Sonia Simone, they read each and every subject line, and they chose different hypotheses to test.

Daniel Burstein: What you see on the screen now is the subject lines that Copyblogger picked and the subject lines that we picked, and personally, I just hope the best subject line wins, but I got to say Nathan and team got a little competitive and they felt like okay, we want to outgrow Copyblogger's audience.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Oh.

Experiment: Results



Subject Lines	CTR	Rel. diff	Stat. Conf
T1 – Quarterbacks aren’t the only changes being tested in Denver	0.32%	-	-
T2 – A scientific way to increase your conversions	0.51%	57.9%	 99%
T3 – Do your landing pages pass this test?	0.73%	105.9%	 99%
T4 – [Optimization Summit] 3 Days to a Better Website (\$300 Off Coupon Inside)	0.37%	14.8%	 69%
T5 – Learn 3 tips that made 10,000 landing pages extremely successful	0.66%	105.2%	 99%
T6 - Optimization Summit 2012 – Speakers List Up Now! + Save \$300 Today	0.40%	24.9%	 90%



What you need to understand: By clarifying the value of the next steps in the process, treatment #3 generated a 106% higher clickthrough rate than treatment #1.

Daniel Burstein: Here is what happened.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Oh.

Daniel Burstein: The winner right here: “Do your Landing Pages Pass This Test?” So, from the look of it, that subject line happened to be from the Copyblogger audience, and there you go, we had our winner. We gave him a free Optimization Summit ticket.

We gave him a free on-demand landing page optimization course, but if you look at the statistical confidence numbers over on the right, you see that was not significantly different than subject line number four, “[Optimization Summit 3 Days to a Better Website (\$300 Off Coupon Inside)”, and so, here is the good news. We had two winners. Since they are not significantly different, we chose one winner from the Copyblogger audience to win an Optimization Summit ticket.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: I think it is 5 actually. T5 was the winner, Daniel.

Paul Cheney: It is T5.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: It is T5.

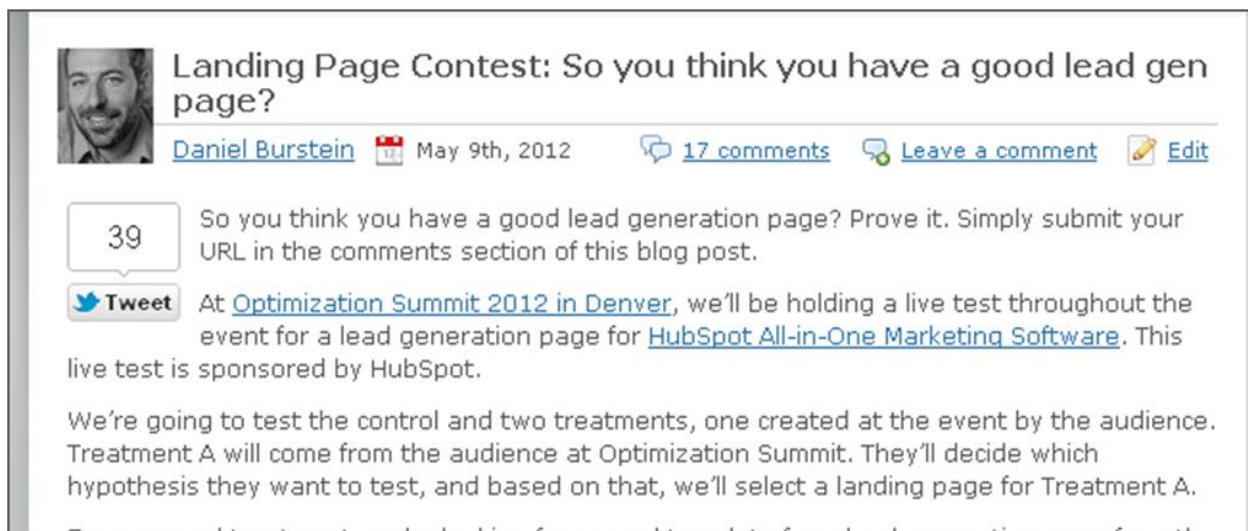
Daniel Burstein: T5? Oh!

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: They actually caught Daniel on something. I'm enjoying this moment, yeah.

Daniel Burstein: T...and that is a problem...that is right.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: T5.

Daniel Burstein: That is a problem. Those numbers were so close, right? Those numbers were so close that we couldn't tell. We couldn't tell the winner. So, those numbers were so close, 105.9% difference and 105.2% relative difference that we awarded to two winners for that. So, with that, I just want to mention that was 106% higher clickthrough rate, and we are having other contests going on right now. Do you have a good landing page? Do you have a good lead generation landing page?



[Note: [The Landing Page Contest](#) ended on May, 17th, 2012.]

Daniel Burstein: We wanted you to submit your lead generation landing page, and what we are going to do at the Optimization Summit, we have got a live test coming up. Flint is going to be running it over the two days we are there. We are going to take a hypothesis that the audience there comes up with. We are going to take a control from HubSpot, who is our sponsor, and we are going to take a landing page from you, the audience. We are going to pick one, and we are going to see which one wins in a test, and we have got a nice little prize there for the audience. I will also be tweeting this link through #webclinic on Twitter. Right now, let me turn it over to Flint, so he can talk about this test.

Section 1: The purpose of a subject line

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: So, you have just tuned in. We have got less than 60 minutes. We have 90 slides. You need something that will help you get a result. It is not enough to see a win like this. It is our job to translate that win into transferrable principles. There are three keys, I think, that will help us do that and

the first is understanding the purpose of a subject line. If that seems self-explanatory, then that is probably why you might want to listen to what comes next because it might surprise you.

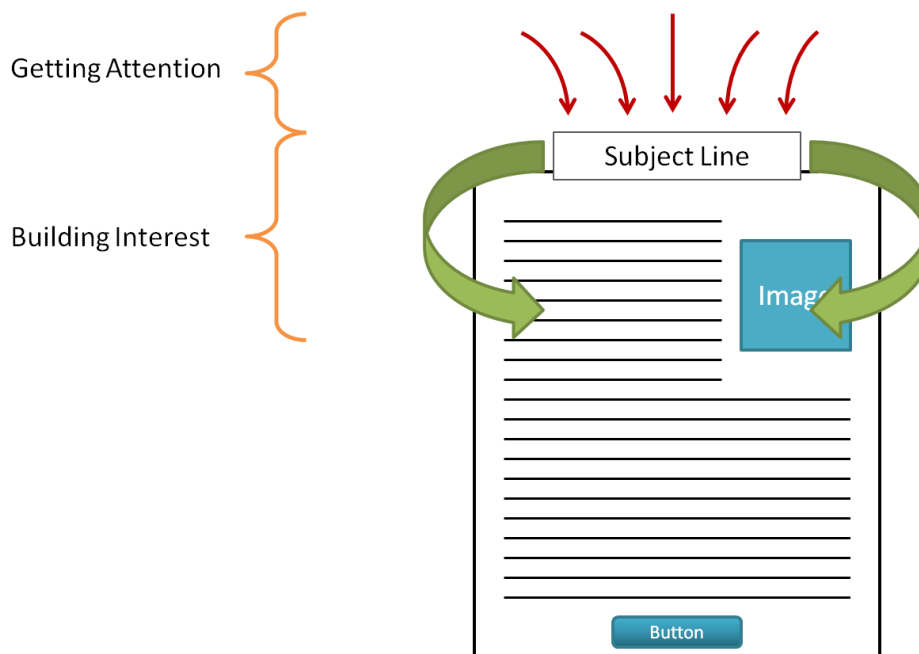
What We Learned

Key Principles

- a. Simply getting the viewer's attention with a subject line will not produce a significant result. ***We must understand the functional purpose of our subject line: converting attention into interest.***

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Simply getting the viewer's attention with a subject line will not produce a significant result. We have to understand the functional purpose of a subject line, and it is about converting attention into interest.

Converting Attention into Interest



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now, you can take, sort of, a look at the way this works in this representation. If we get attention with the subject line, if people see our flashing image, if people see our colorful subject line or our giant caps or our superlatives and our words, and they stop with that attention, but that attention doesn't go further converting or being converted into interest, then the subject line is underperforming. This is essential, and it will, sort of, cash in, as we start to look at those that were submitted in the original test.


Also, while I'm talking to you, please note that all over the world, we have been getting submissions. You have been sending your own examples for us to optimize. We are going to optimize them live on this particular broadcast together as we work through the principles. So, we will get to the principle. We will get to your version, and then, we will try to see it applied in real life.

Attention-getting Subject Lines

Not this ...


Quarterbacks aren't the only changes
being tested in Denver

Attention captured with Tim
Tebow reference



[Optimization Summit] 3 Days to a
Better Website (\$300 Off Coupon
Inside)

Attention captured with
brackets and parentheses



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's look at an example of "Not this". This is from the submission in the case study. "Quarterbacks aren't the only changes being tested in Denver". Now, a quarterback, the notion of Denver and the Super Bowl and the implied reference to Tebow might be something that would gather attention, but it doesn't actually galvanize interest and drive them into the copy that follows. In fact, what it does is it has a clarity lapse because the audience, the reader, is left to make meaning, trying to understand what the connection is. Every time, you do that, you sacrifice conversion rates.

Look at it again. You will see another example. "[Optimization Summit] 3 Days to a Better Website (\$300 Off Coupon Inside)". Now, there is an attention caption with the brackets and the parenthesis, but it doesn't convert properly, number one because it is, sort of, lost between all of those connections. There is no single thought flow and meaning can't be made or transferred directly into attention.

... but this

Learn 3 tips that made 10,000
landing pages extremely successful

Attention converted into
interest with “Learn 3 tips”

Do your landing pages pass this test?

Attention converted into
interest with “pass this test?”

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Take a look at this example. “Learn 3 tips that made 10,000 landing pages extremely successful”. This was a winner. Attention converted into interest with the Learn 3 tips. “Does your landing page pass this test?” One of those rare occasions where an interrogative can help someone. Attention, again, converted into interest and, sort of, moving forward.

Section 2: The connection between subject lines and value propositions

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now, that is the simplest point we have to talk about. I have to warn you that each point gets more complex. The third will involve force and calculations and some new thoughts about subject lines that you’ve probably never heard, but it can’t even get there without touching the second, and the second is understanding the connection between your subject line and the value propositions in your messaging.

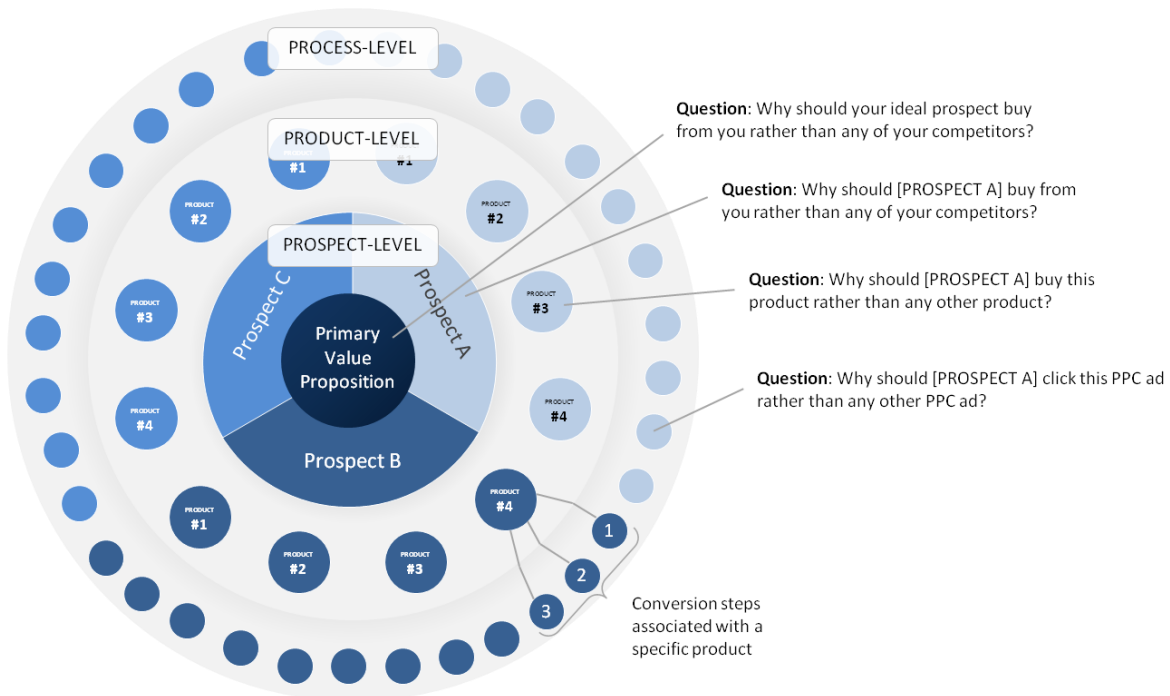
What We Learned

Key Principles

- a. Simply getting the viewer’s attention with a subject line will not produce a significant result. ***We must understand the functional purpose of our subject line: converting attention into interest.***
- b. To build interest, ***we must understand the connection between our subject line and our value proposition.***

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: This brings me to a second key principle. To build interest, we must understand the connection between the subject line itself and the value proposition.

Process-level Value Proposition



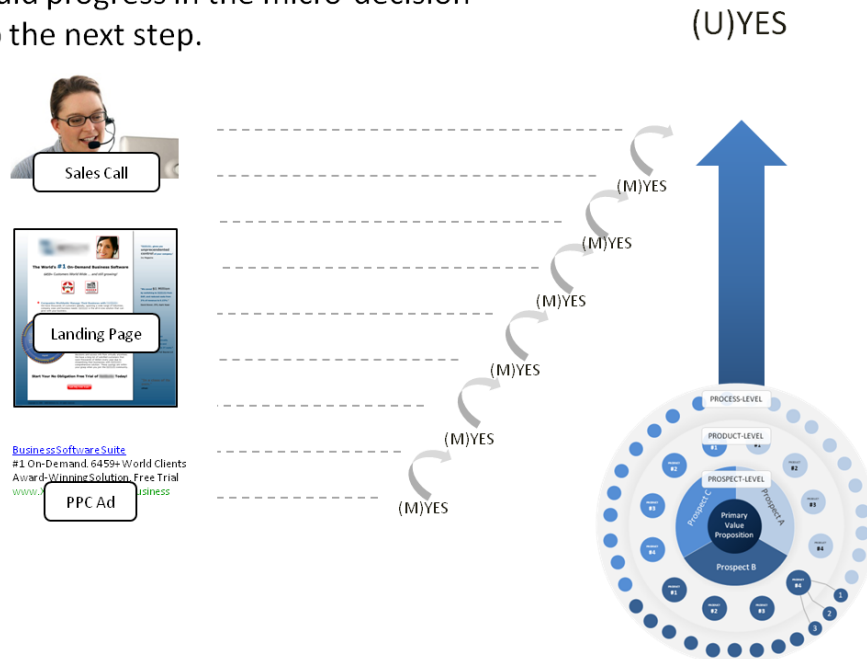
Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now, if you have done training with us in the past, you have probably seen the value proposition spectrum. We have spent 15 years researching what you see on this particular screen. We have analyzed 1,100 academic journals. We have worked through all our academic references and every single commercial title and constructed historical timelines and tried to discover a functional definition for the value proposition that the marketer can use to get a result.

In doing so, we have discovered that every organization has a, sort of, fundamental or primary value proposition, but that there are also iterations, prospect level, product level, and process level value propositions. I can't re-teach that content, but you can go to that link. All of this is free. We are just trying to get you where you can [learn more](#). I spent some time teaching about this just recently, and if you will go to that link, you can [watch the video](#) and dig down and get a deeper understanding about how all of those work together.

In the end, as you will see here, the key in your value proposition is being able to answer this question. At the core, it is this. "If I am the ideal customer, why should I purchase from you rather than any of your competitors?" Now, that flows all the way down to the process level and it is the same formulization, but it is over a different set of choices, and at a process level, we are trying to move people forward and you will ask a question like you see here. "Why should whatever the prospect is, Prospect A, click this page search ad rather than any other?"

Process-level Value Proposition

The process-level value proposition is the reason they should progress in the micro-decision funnel to the next step.



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: An in a sense you are essentially moving through a series of micro-yes's towards a macro-yes, and at every micro-yes. Should I read this headline? Should I get into this subject copy? Should I read the benefits list? Should I respond to the Call to Action? Each of those requires you to demonstrate a sort of value associated that outweighs the perceived cost.

Now, [process of a value proposition](#) is about getting someone to take the next step in your process. They are different than the product value proposition or the value proposition that is designed to serve the prospect. Again, there is a link up at the top. You can read and see more about that here.

Process-level Value Proposition

Button Example



V-

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Instead of dwelling on that because we have lots of content, I want to give you a clean example of a process-level value proposition.

On your left, you will see a button, sort of, the button we see often on many websites. We would call that Value Negative. You are asking me to submit. That is fall on my knees before the lords of marketing and admit that I have been defeated by their superior abilities at persuasion. That would be a value negative. The button is asking me to do something and promising me nothing in return.

Button Example



V-

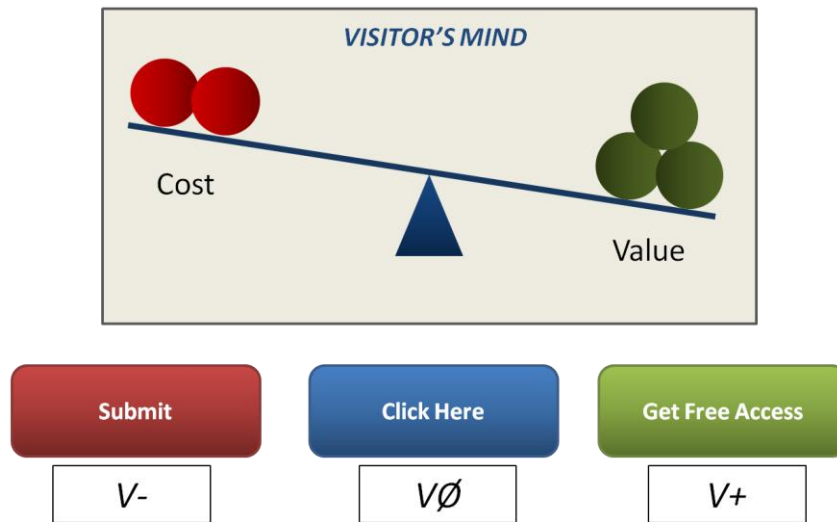


VØ

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now, here is a, sort of, value neutral button. It says click here. It is giving me something to do. It is promising me nothing in return, but it is especially negative in its implications.

Process-level Value Proposition

Button Example

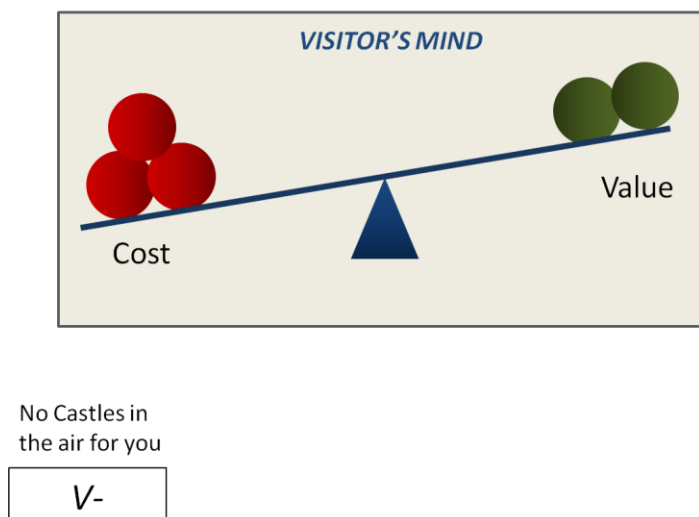


Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: What you really need is a value positive, for instance, this button. Get free access.

Now, I'm just using the buttons to try to communicate to you a simple concept, and that is, every single time you ask me to take an action. You have to give me a good reason to do so, and that good reason will always be translated into a simple formula. The perceived value must be greater than the perceived cost associated with the action.

Process-level Value Proposition

Subject Line Example



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: And so, as you think about that, the same thing happens with a subject line example because the goal of a subject line is not to sell a product. The goal of a subject line is to get someone engaged in the conversation being presented in the e-mail. The goal of the subject line is to

convert your attention into enough interest to get you to consider at least the top portion of the e-mail. Open it, look at it, and start to engage.

Too often we try to use a subject line to sell something or try to use a subject line to communicate an important point. The goal of the subject line is very simple. Now, to think about this, you need to, sort of, think differently. You are actually competing with your subject line, and your competing gets something you may not have thought of. It is not your competitor's product. We will get to that in just a moment, but let me just give you an example of three subject lines. "No castles in the air for you" - value negative.

Process-level Value Proposition

Subject Line Example



No Castles in
the air for you

$V-$

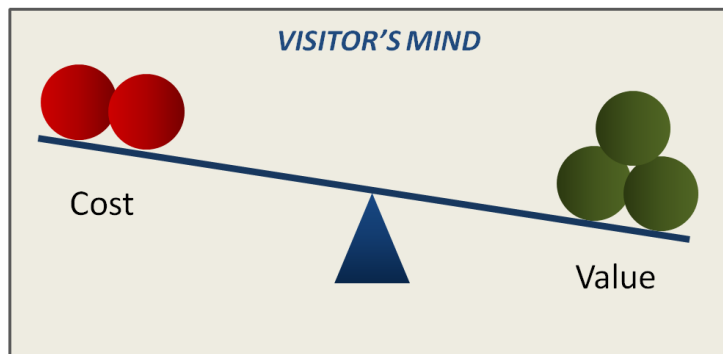
Mobile can help
manage your money

$V\emptyset$

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: "Mobile can help manage your money" -maybe...maybe, there is some value there, positive.

Process-level Value Proposition

Subject Line Example



No Castles in
the air for you

V-

Mobile can help
manage your money

VØ

Enjoy Over 2,000
Internet TV Channels!

V+

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: “Enjoy over 2,000 Internet TV channels” -there is a bit of value positive. Now, the value positive on the right is high, but so is the cost because it feels like sales language, and it makes me wonder what you are going to sell me and my guard goes up. So, you have got value, but you have also got a high cost. You have got to learn how to mitigate the cost and at the same time, achieve the value.

Process-level Value Proposition

Inbox Example



*Which would
you open first?*

Inbox Screenshot

<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Google Voice	New voicemail from (904) 810-7054 at 12:15 PM
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	American Express Persona.	Learn about online banking benefits
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Groupon	Half Off Color Me Rad 5K Race Entry
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	ANDREW BUTLER	Paul Cheney Listings Cart Update
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	service@paypal.com	Your eCheck payment cleared
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Google Voice	New voicemail from (904) 810-5617 at 4:15 PM
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Google Voice	New voicemail from (904) 810-6813 at 4:11 PM
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Andrew Butler	Listing
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Groupon	Limited Time Only — Save \$10
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Good Samaritan Health Ce.	HUGE Yard sale for the Wildflower Clinic May 19th
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Groupon	Up to 61% Off Online Language Course from Livemocha
<input type="checkbox"/>	☆	Apple iPod Antitrust Adm.	In re Apple iPod iTunes Antitrust Litigation

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: So, take a look at something because this is what you are up against for the subject line. This is a snap of Paul Cheney's Inbox. I wish you could see Paul today. He is particularly distinguished. He is wearing a vest. He looks like a riverboat gambler, and he is one of the writers of this piece and he has taken a screenshot of his inbox and you will notice on the right-hand side, there are a whole series of subject lines.

Please understand that a subject line is also in need of a, sort of, process-level value proposition because it is competing. But it is not competing with some other ones where there is an offer. Say, another company's e-mail that might be competing with your offer. It is competing with the other subject lines in the Inbox, and I tell you think that way. You can't craft the subject line that will get people to click and open.

Remember something, people go through their e-mail, not looking for an opportunity, but to eliminate, to delete, to eradicate. It is like when you have been away on vacation and you get a big stack of mail, and you have got to go it through, think about the pattern. You start tossing things to the side, trying to cut through the pile, eliminate as much as possible, so that you will deal and can deal only with that piece, which demands your attention.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now, direct response marketers have worked for years, trying to figure out how to get you to open their letter. It is very similar. In fact, they will print that letter in such a ways that it looks like a check in the mail or they will give it to you with handwritten address at the top left and no return name, and since it is handwritten, you might think it is from a friend or someone, and so, you will open it. They try all sorts of curious ways to get you to open their letter, and again, it is exactly the same, sort of, phenomena that occurs when we send out an e-mail.

We need a subject line that will compete effectively against the other subject lines in the Inbox, and that is what drives our success.

Value Proposition Session at Optimization Summit

Learn about value proposition with Dr. Flint McGlaughlin at the pre-Summit Workshop in Denver.

MECLABS.com/OptSummit



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: I feel a little concerned because I am talking about the value proposition, and many of you have not heard the structure and the teaching on this piece, but you need to, and we will try to get that to you. You can learn more at the summit, but you could also learn from some of the links that we have given you, and with that sort of foundation, we move into the most important piece.

Section 3: The checklist for maximizing the force of a subject line.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now, the problem with the checklist is that it sounds trite. This is a pretty in-depth piece. There are probably 60 slides. I'm going to move rapidly with lots of examples. The value of the word checklist is that it promises something actionable, and that is what is at the heart of everything we are doing today. It is not enough for our scientists to discover something new. It is not enough for our analyst to craft it or our writers to put it into some sort of entertaining format.

The goal here isn't to entertain you and the goal here isn't to impress you. The goal is to give you something that you can take back and use that will make a difference immediately in your results.

Marketers, you have a tough job. You are being hurried with frantic deadlines and bosses are continually demanding more, and people are trying to fix product problems with marketing instead of going back and innovating the essence of the product itself, and no matter what you do, it seems never to be enough. And no matter how hard you work, there is never enough time in the day. You need to be able to take and learn from your something that will make your day easier tomorrow, and that is where we are going next.

What We Learned

Key Principles

- a. Simply getting the viewer's attention with a subject line will not produce a significant result. ***We must understand the functional purpose of our subject line: converting attention into interest.***
- b. To build interest, ***we must understand the connection between our subject line and our value proposition.***
- c. To intensify the force of the process-level value proposition in our subject lines, **we can employ a useful set of research-based criteria ...**

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let me just take you to this third key principle. To intensify the force of the process-level value proposition in our subject lines. We can employ a useful set of research-based criteria. We are distilling four elements that will give your subject line more force. These same elements

drive the force of all value propositions across all categories in every business. This is what we have learned from patterning 10,000 tests over the last 15 years.



How can I consistently write subject lines that double my projected clickthrough rate?

*To help us write effective subject lines, we developed this **four-part checklist** of elements that impact the force of a subject line's process-level value proposition.*

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's answer that question with this checklist.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Here is the first, and again, it sounds so simple, but in most subject lines that I read, with limited number of letters, we can fit in that line. We often create phrases that do not have instant meaning.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Is the main point emphasized?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must first **comprehend the intended message**.

To ensure they understand, we can utilize the following clarity checklist:

☐ **Is the main point emphasized?**

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: The word, is it clear, here isn't talking about a subject line that you can read and think about and understand. It is talking about a subject line that instantly connects with the main message, converts to interest that requires zero effort to understand. And for the ideal prospect to act on your subject line, they have got to instantly comprehend the message. Here are some of the ways to affect that.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

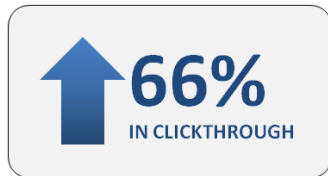
Is the main point emphasized?

To emphasize the main point in any subject line, we must utilize point-sensitivity

By making our subject lines **point-first** or **point-last**, we utilize the psychological principles of primacy and recency.

Not this ... (point middle)

Optimization Summit 2012 - **Speakers List Up Now!**
+ Save \$300 Today



... but this (point last)

Do Your Landing Pages **Pass This Test?**

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: The first one is this. Is the main point emphasized? And to emphasize the main point, we must utilize something called point sensitivity or point-first. Typically, we want to put the main point of the phrase at the beginning of the subject line. We have tested this over and over again. You also want to be careful. Sometimes, you can build towards a main point at the end of the subject line. What you never want to do is to put the main point in the middle of the subject line, and we see this all the time.

Making our subject lines point-first or point-last will help us capitalize on instant clarity and a payload being delivered at the earliest part of the presentation. Now, by making our subject lines point-last, you can, sort of, see an example here. This is the wrong way. “Optimization Summit 2012 – **Speakers List Up Now!**” That is hard even to understand, and what is in bold is in the middle of the subject line. I think it meant the list of speakers is on the website, but this is not clear, and not only is it not clear, it is structured improperly in the subject line itself.

Take a look at this better version. ‘Does your landing page pass this test?’ Marketers everywhere are curious how well their landing pages might do against some sort of criterion, and so, the payload is delivered with clarity and point-last at the end of the sentence. What is the difference? A 66% increase in clickthrough.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

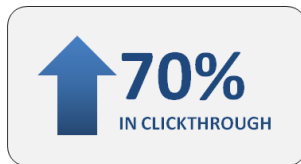
Is the main point emphasized?

To emphasize the main point in any subject line, we must utilize point-sensitivity

By making our subject lines **point-first** or **point-last**, we utilize the psychological principles of primacy and recency.

Not this ... (point middle)

[Optimization Summit] **3 Days to a Better Website**
(\$300 Off Coupon Inside)



... but this (point first)

Learn 3 tips that made 10,000 landing pages extremely successful

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's take another example, Not This again, "**3 Days to a Better Website.**" I know when I talked about this earlier, you might have thought well, that sounds like a good way. I mean, people are interested in a better website, and they want it fast, but it is lost in the middle, and it is not clear, especially between the wording on the other side and the brackets.

The subject lines are better when they feel like a sentence, like a complete thought. "**Learn 3 tips** that made 10,000 landing pages extremely successful". Do you see the difference? The three tips is right at the front. The point-first structure gets more attention and it helps people get to a result. What is the difference? A 70% increase. Again, it is just science.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Is the main point emphasized?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must first **comprehend the intended message**.

To ensure they understand, we can utilize the following clarity checklist:

- ☒ Is the main point emphasized?
- ☐ Are the qualifiers precise?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's go to the second criterion to help you with clarity. Are the qualifiers precise? Now you say, what is a qualifier? That is the word that modifies your nouns or your subjects. Is the adverb or the adjective or the prepositional phrase precise?

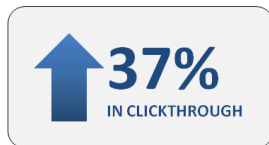
ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Are the qualifiers precise?

Precise qualifiers help to cement the value of the subject line into the mind of the customer.

Not this ...

[Optimization Summit] 3 Days to a **Better** Website
(\$300 Off Coupon Inside!)



... but this

A **scientific** way to increase your conversions.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: It is critical that you, sort of, see this in action. "3 Days to a **Better** Website." Better is not precise. It is a, sort of, adjective that implies an improvement, but with no intensity and no specificity.

Look at a better example. "A **scientific** way to increase your conversions." This implies something altogether different. It talks about a, sort of, high standard. It touches something that our audience is particularly interested in, so the word is particularly potent. Look at the difference. A 37% increase in clickthrough.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Are the qualifiers precise?

Precise qualifiers help to cement the value of the subject line into the mind of the customer.

Not this ...

Ernie, A **Special** Offer for REAL SIMPLE readers*

... but this

Get An **Instant** AdWords Performance Report
(It's On Us)*

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: I want to stop. I have a lot more to say. I'm trying to be as practical and as clear as possible, and I'm only on the first of four points. Is this working for you? Is this helping you? Are you following or am I going too fast? Give me some feedback using the Q&A feature. Yes, yes, I'm watching.

All right, by the way, I always get some that says go faster and some that says too fast. I'm doing my best to satisfy everyone. I'm like the marketer's ideal customer is more than one person and so, I'm a bit confused. I have a customer theory gap, but let's keep going.

All right, so precise qualifiers help to cement the value of the subject line in the mind of the customer. Not this, "A **Special** Offer for REAL SIMPLE Readers" but this, "Get an **Instant** AdWords Performance Report." By the way, this was submitted by our audience for optimization and what you are seeing at the top is something that looks promising, but the word, special is too generic, too general, and too, you might say, unspecific to reach the point that we need.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Is the language simple?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must first **comprehend the intended message**.

To ensure they understand, we can utilize the following clarity checklist:

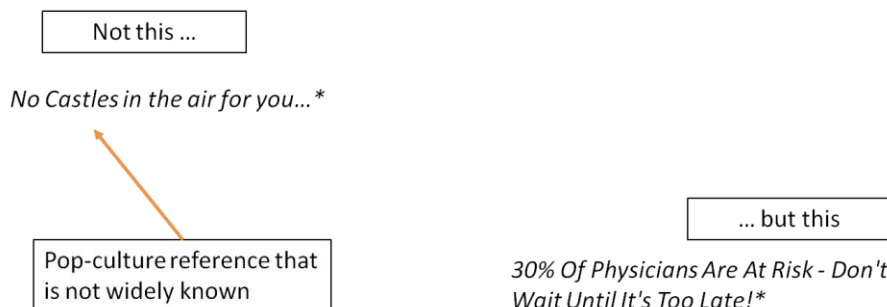
- ☒ Is the main point emphasized?
- ☒ Are the qualifiers precise?
- ☐ **Is the language simple?**

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's look at another example. You can see is the language simple? We are talking about simple Saxon as opposed to Norman language.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Is the language simple?

For maximum clarity, we must use words that can be instantly understood by our ideal prospect.



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: This again helps you achieve clarity in your subject line. “No Castles in the Air For You” – What is this? That is a pop-culture reference that is not widely known. What is this? “30% Of Physicians Are At Risk – Don’t Wait Until It’s Too Late!” – Again, clarity, clarity, clarity. Simple language laid down on the page in the best order.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Is the language simple?

For maximum clarity, we must use words that can be instantly understood by our ideal prospect.

Not this ...

Turn your iPads into **clickers**
with LanSchool*

“Clickers” should be replaced
with “remotes”

... but this

Don't Forget Mom! – Free Mother's
Day Shipping*

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: All right, let me keep going. “Turn your iPads into clickers with LanSchool.” – Not this. Clickers should be replaced with remotes or something else. People aren’t certain what you are talking about. It is language that may not be particularly clear, and look at the difference. “Don’t Forget Mom! – Free Mother’s Day Shipping.” That is potent. It is potent if it is sent to the right audience because this is what happens. Many of us forget or order too late in the process. It has urgency. It is very clear.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Is the wording concise?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must first **comprehend the intended message**.

To ensure they understand, we can utilize the following clarity checklist:

- ☒ Is the main point emphasized?
- ☒ Are the qualifiers precise?
- ☒ Is the language simple?
- ☐ Is the wording concise?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Here is another way to get your clarity. Is the wording concise?

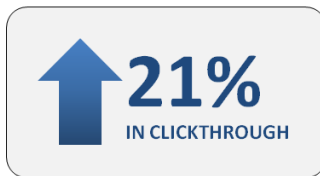
ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Is the wording concise?

Concise wording is critical to producing clarity in the minds of our customers. It is important that we use the correct amount of words — no more, no less.

Not this ...

Our gift to you -- FREE Shipping or No Service Charges



... but this

*Free Shipping or No Service Charge!
Limited time offer!*

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: “Our gift to you - FREE Shipping or No Service Charges.” Look at the difference between that and this. “Free Shipping or No Service Charges Limited time offer!”

Now, the “Our gift to you” might be okay, but it often feels and sounds like the sort of sales language that arms me and Ashley you will have to help me at the right time. Am I bringing you up when I am supposed to bring you up? I’m looking at Ashley and she is going to help me.

Ashley Hanania: Yeah, yeah, I’m fine.

Paul Cheney: You have got Live Optimization at the end of every slide.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Okay, all right.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Good, all right. So, she is going to be joining us in just a moment. What is the difference? A 21% increase in clickthrough.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Is the wording concise?

Concise wording is critical to producing clarity in the minds of our customers. It is important that we use the correct amount of words — no more, no less.

Not this ...

Quarterbacks aren't the only changes being tested in Denver



Too many words

... but this

Denver's testing more than quarterbacks

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Not this. "Quarterbacks aren't the only changes being tested in Denver." Too many words. But this. "Denver's testing more than Quarterbacks."

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Is the wording concise?

Concise wording is critical to producing clarity in the minds of our customers. It is important that we use the correct amount of words — no more, no less.

Not this ...

Denver's testing quarterbacks...



Too few words

... but this

Denver's testing more than quarterbacks

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now, let's look at another example. "Denver's testing Quarterbacks" Not this, because the words are too few. They actually make sense. So, there is a line between being too many, too concise. You are looking for that clarity which leads for that simplicity, which leads to clarity, and let's go on and, sort of, summarize, but let's apply this.

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must first **comprehend the intended message**.

To ensure they understand, we can utilize the following clarity checklist:

- ☒ Is the main point emphasized?
- ☒ Are the qualifiers precise?
- ☒ Is the language simple?
- ☒ Is the wording concise?

ITEM #1: Is It Clear?

Subject Line:

No Castles in the air for you

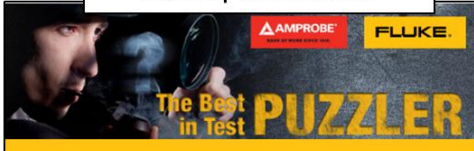
Audience:

Distributors of the products

Objective:

Get recipients to click the link to the PuzzlerPromo


Live Optimization




Because the prizes are real! Behave like Rick Castle and follow the clues to win!

Kate Beckett and Rick Castle bounce ideas back and forth and use a white board to test their theories. But you can solve the Puzzler in no time.


This week's Puzzler includes:




62Max



421D



568



IR-720

A novelist could write a book using everything you know about test tools: start solving the mysteries today!

www.PuzzlerPromo.com

Congratulations to our Recent Winners!

\$250 Weekly drawing:	Zach S.
\$150 AMEX:	Carl H., Laura H.
\$100 AMEX:	Nate D., Thomas M.
\$75 Amazon:	Stephen D., Thomas F., Mark L.
\$50 Amazon:	Dave P., Jermaine O., Patrick B.
\$25 Music:	Christy C., Craig P.
\$25 Coffee:	Rob H., Jacquelyn G., Richard G., Steve S.

Don't miss a day of the Puzzler and a chance to win! If you would like a daily reminder, please click on the link below to provide your MOBILE number and you will receive a daily text message.

<http://bit.ly/thebestintest>

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: You saw the subject line. This was submitted by someone in our audience. We are going to go from the subject line to the key landing page or sorry the e-mail and I'm going to ask Ashley to come up and help us.

Ashley Hanania: Yes.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Everyone, this is Ashley.

Ashley Hanania: Thank you.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: All right.

Ashley Hanania: Yes. So immediately when we are looking at the subject line here, **“No Castles in the air For You”**, as was mentioned earlier, it is a pop-culture reference. I think it is from that movie, *“Castle”*, with Rick Castle in it.

But this is making the assumption that visitors understand the subject line and you are enticing them with a reference, but by changing that to write that clarity and really be concise in what you want the visitor to do once they reach that e-mail will really help increase the clickthrough and then, trying to reach that objective of having them click that link of the PuzzlerPromo. You can make the eye path, direct them to an action-oriented call-to-action, you know, asking them to take the puzzle challenge today on something that lets them know what they are going to be getting themselves into at the next step from the e-mail.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Excellent, excellent.

Ashley Hanania: Yeah.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: All right, thank you, Ashley.

Ashley Hanania: Thank you.

Item #2: Is It Appealing?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: I appreciate it. All right, so let’s keep going. Here is the second criterion. You are looking for, sort of, organic natural appeal in the subject line itself.

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

Is the message relevant?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must **find the offer appealing**.

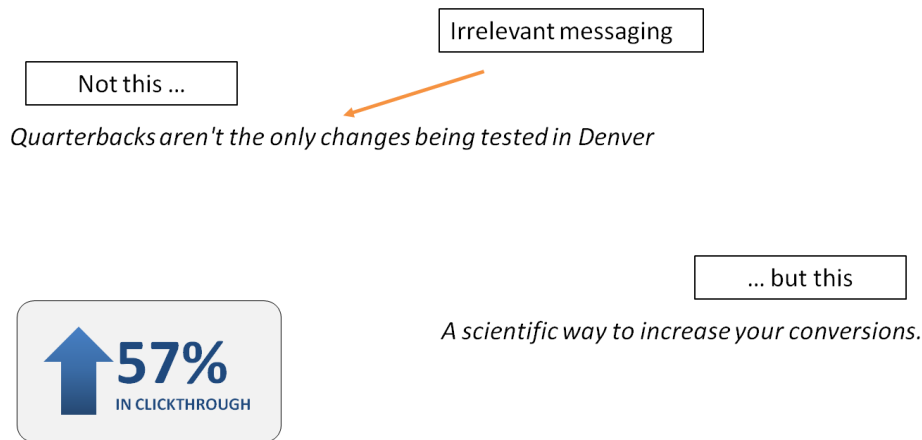
To ensure appeal, we can utilize the following checklist:

☐ **Is the message relevant?**

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: The first question you want to ask is, “Is the message relevant?”

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

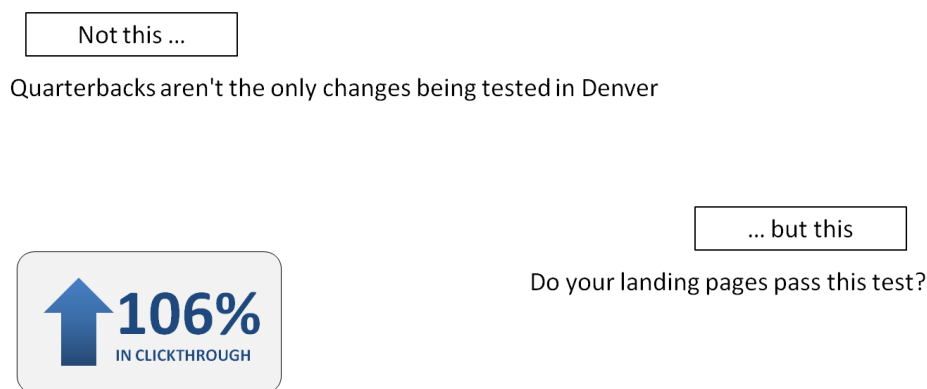
Is the message relevant?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Here again is that same example. “Quarterbacks aren’t the only changes being tested in Denver”, and here is the competing example that we talked about before, and again, there is the difference, 56%.

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

Is the message relevant?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Here is another example with 106% difference, and we could go on.

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

Is the desire urgent?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must **find the offer appealing**.

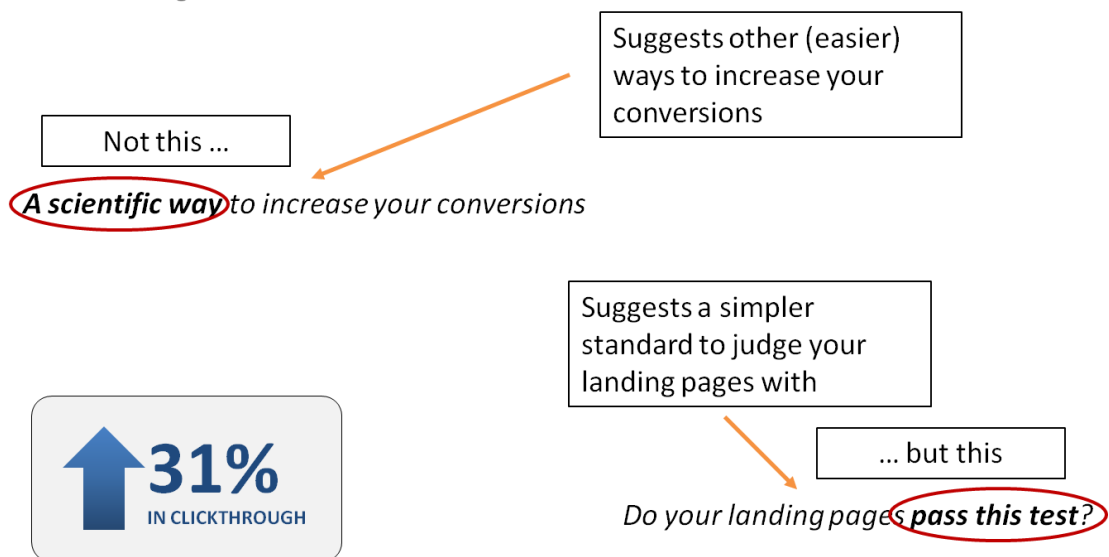
To ensure appeal, we can utilize the following checklist:

- ☒ Is the message relevant?
- ☐ Is the desire urgent?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: The second question is not only is the message relevant, but the desire associated with the appeal factor. How urgent is this appeal factor? That is a critical piece.

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

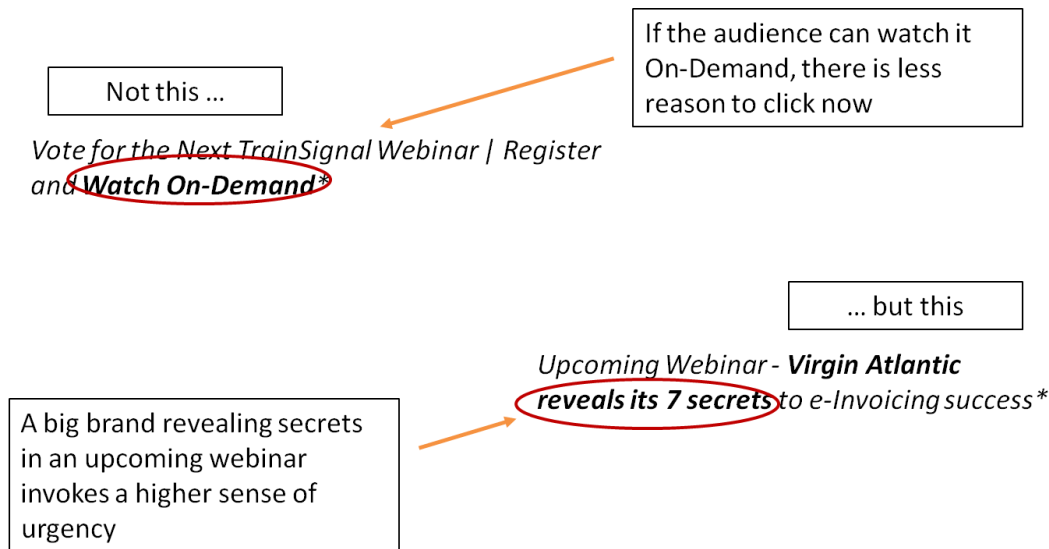
Is the desire urgent?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: And it is Not This. **"A scientific way"** to increase your conversions compared to "Do your landing page **pass this test?**" That was better. That one on the top than others in the mix, but the one at the bottom was still better because it was closely connected to something critical and urgent and it suggests a simpler standard to judge your landing page with. There is a 31% difference.

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

Is the desire urgent?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Not this. “Vote for the Next TrainSignal Webinar/Register and **Watch On-Demand.**” If the audience can’t watch on-demand then there is less reason to click now. If that is possible then they don’t need to, but this “Upcoming Webinar – **Virgin Atlantic reveals its 7 secrets** to e-Invoicing success”, and what it is what you can, sort of see here, and then this is submitted by our audience. We are going to be reviewing it later. A big brand revealing secrets in an upcoming webinar invokes a higher sense of urgency to understand.

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

Is the issue important?

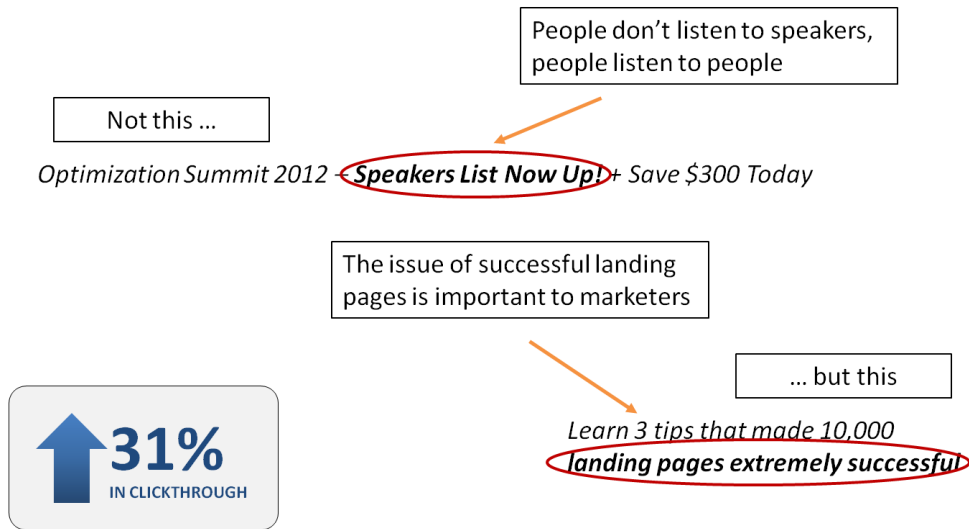
For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must **find the offer appealing**.

To ensure appeal, we can utilize the following checklist:

- ☒ Is the message relevant?
- ☒ Is the desire urgent?
- ☐ **Is the issue important?**

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

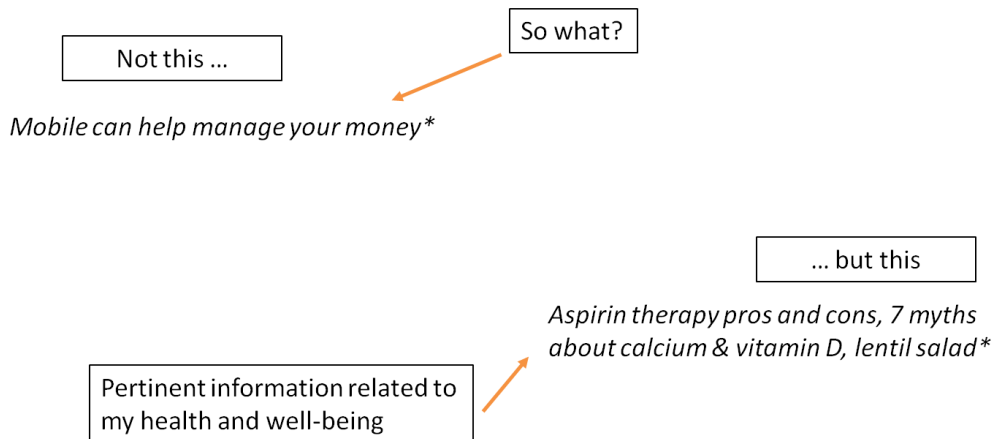
Is the issue important?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Is the issue important? Look again at Optimization Summit. Not this, but this. The issue is far more important to get your landing page successful than to review the speakers list. It is directly associated with a benefit. An increase of 31%.

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

Is the issue important?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's keep going, all right. Another example and because we have a lot of teaching here, I want to see this rapidly and move on to a summary.

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must **find the offer appealing**.

To ensure appeal, we can utilize the following checklist:

- ✓ Is the message relevant?
- ✓ Is the desire urgent?
- ✓ Is the issue important?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Is the message relevant? Is the desire urgent? And is the issue important? It is the combination of these three things that will help you make certain that you are factoring towards appeal.

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

Subject Line:

Vote for the Next TrainSignal Webinar | Register and Watch On-Demand

Audience:

IT Professionals, previous TrainSignal customers, previous webinar participants

Objective:

To get recipients to vote for a preferred webinar topic

Live Optimization

Powered by

TRAINSIGNAL

Free Webinars for IT Pros. Register Now or Watch On-demand

TrainSignal Webinar Update: May 2012

We Want to Hear from You!

Help us decide on our next webinar topic -- [Vote now for the next TrainSignal webinar!](#)

- iPads in the Enterprise: Printing and Remote Control Options
- Getting Started with Windows inTune and Windows Thin PC
- Taking off with B.Y.O.D. (Bring Your Own Device)
- Mobile Device Management Basics for Android, iOS and Windows
- How to Implement Self-Service IT through the Cloud to Save Time and Money
- Windows 8 for Clients, Servers and Tablets

Which one of these topics would you like to see in an upcoming webinar? [Vote Now!](#)

Register for Upcoming Events:

- [Why All Toolbars Are Evil: What IT Pros Need to Know about Browser Security](#)
- [Exchange High Availability: Eliminating Disaster in Disaster Recovery](#)
- [Top 3 VMware Certifications You Must Get And How To Pass the First Time](#)
- [First Look at Windows Server "8" Beta](#)
- [Conquering the IT Cover Letter](#)

Top 5 On-Demand Webinars:

- [Networking Fundamentals: Master the OSI Model and TCP/IP in Under 1 Hour](#)
- [Top 25 Free Tools for VMware vSphere](#)
- [Best New Features in Exchange 2010 SP2](#)

<http://bit.ly/trainsignalemail>

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: It brings me to the page that has been submitted. **“Vote for the Next TrainSignal Webinar/Register and Watch On-Demand.”**

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Ashley.

Ashley Hanania: Yeah.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Just come on right up here and I'll let you comment on that.

Ashley Hanania: Thank you.

Ashley Hanania: Yeah, so when looking at the subject line, it seems very general, and we are not sure exactly what sort of audience you are talking to. So, if you bring in some specificity and really a feel to that targeted audience of IT professionals, let them know that there is a webinar out there on TrainSignal, that is good for you. I think it will really help increase that specificity and appeals your audience.

ITEM #2: Is It Appealing?

Is the message relevant?

Subject Line:

**Mary Potter Hospice Invites
"Name" to take the \$100
Challenge**

Audience:

Business owners in same
geographical area as Mary Potter
Hospice


Objective:

To get recipients to click on “Take
the Challenge”

Live Optimization

is % email address correct?
show this ad browser
forward to a friend

**Take the.
\$100 Challenge.
For Hospice.**




Hello %Subscriber:CustomField11%
Get some work mates together and have some fun.

May and June are the months of the \$100 Challenge, where your office or business can raise \$100 or more for Mary Potter Hospice.

Run a raffle, have a cake sale, organise a special morning tea or come up with a unique fundraising idea and raise as much as you possibly can.


Did you know that nearly one-in-four Wellingtonians will have some contact with Mary Potter Hospice? We are here to provide the best quality specialist care we can to people living with a terminal illness and to give their families the support they need.

Every dollar you raise makes a difference.
Our service is free - let's keep it this way! [Take the Challenge >>>](#)



Hospice was there for us.
**Be there.
For Hospice.**
Donate today.

Street Day Collections
11 + 12 May www.forhospice.org.nz



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Not interested anymore? [Unsubscribe instantly.](#)

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<http://bit.ly/hospicechallenge>

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Excellent, excellent. All right, I have got another one in front of me for just a moment. Audience, take a look at this subject line, and I would like you to tell me how you would fix it. Use your Q&A feature and let me see which one of these could help this subject line get better?

I'm watching for your invite, says Lisa. All right. I'm watching again. I know you are crafting these subject lines and they will come in across these pieces. All right, there is some good thinking. "Learn why a BSN is Easier Learned as an Adult." "Get \$100 by taking this challenge." Someone says, "What challenge?" Someone says, "It is too passive." Someone says, "Take the \$100 challenge today." Someone says, "Take the \$100 challenge." "Change a Life in your Community for \$100." Here is a different approach.

Someone says, "Put the Personalization First." Orra says, "It is weird to have your own name like this." Ronald says, "Take the Challenge – Get \$100." Carl says, "You Matter, (name). Get \$100.", and Jennifer says, "100 bucks for just a few minutes of your time."

For the person that submitted this, Campbell, I think what is happening is they are drilling down on a subject line that might meet some of the criterion that we have just talked about and what we will do is help you craft the best subject line from all of these ideas from the audience and in particular from the analysts and researchers at MECLABS.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now, I'm going to do something here in just a moment that is a bit different, but take a look at the headline on the actual e-mail, and I'd like you to evaluate the e-mail. Audience, how would you improve the e-mail itself? And is there a direct connection between the subject lines you are proposing and the subject line you would put there? And would you, I wonder, make the subject line identical to the headline of the e-mail?

Show me what you might do to improve this e-mail. Someone says, "Get some work mates together and have some fun." Someone says, "Make a difference with our \$200 challenge." Jennifer says, "Raise \$100 to keep this service free." Someone said, "I would make the two identical", talking about the subject line and the headline. "I would definitely have a tight commonality between the subject line and the headline on the landing page." It is a very good point.

Anything else you would see on this e-mail that you might want to use to improve it? I am looking at "Keep the same headline and subject line." "There are too many periods in the headline." I think that is right. "We need a clear prominent Call to Action." I think that is absolutely right and let me ask you a question.

What is the goal of the headline? I mean, some of you know that the goal of the headline from these previous clinics you have attended is to get people deeply engaged or to begin to engage with the text underneath, into the conversation, but what is the goal of the e-mail?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Campbell, if it is like most e-mails, the goal of the e-mail is to get a clickthrough to a landing page where you can actually do some, sort of, transaction or establish more relationship. If that is the case, do you need all of this text to win a clickthrough? Do you need that big image to win a clickthrough? What could you do that would be enough information only to get people to clickthrough and read about this on the landing page?

The danger you have is that the e-mail is giving away so much information, they don't need to go to the landing page, and if they don't go to the landing page, can you generate any revenue from them eventually or can you achieve a success? I doubt it.

Make certain that just like we said, the goal of a subject line isn't to sell your product. The goal of the subject line is to get people to click and open your e-mail, and that it is not competing with your other competitor's e-mails as much as it is competing with whatever else...I'm talking about the subject line, whatever else is in the Inbox, that might steal their attention away.

That being said, if you look at the e-mail that we have here, the question then becomes what is the goal of the e-mail? Well, the goal of the e-mail is to get a click. If you are not careful, you are going to actually repel clicks. You are going to say so much that they don't need to click, and it is going to cost you conversion.

ITEM #3 Is It Exclusive?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's look at a third criterion that we can use to measure the effectiveness.

ITEM #3: Is It Exclusive?

Is the only-factor apparent?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must **know the offer is exclusive**.

To ensure exclusivity, we can utilize the following checklist:

☐ Is the only-factor apparent?

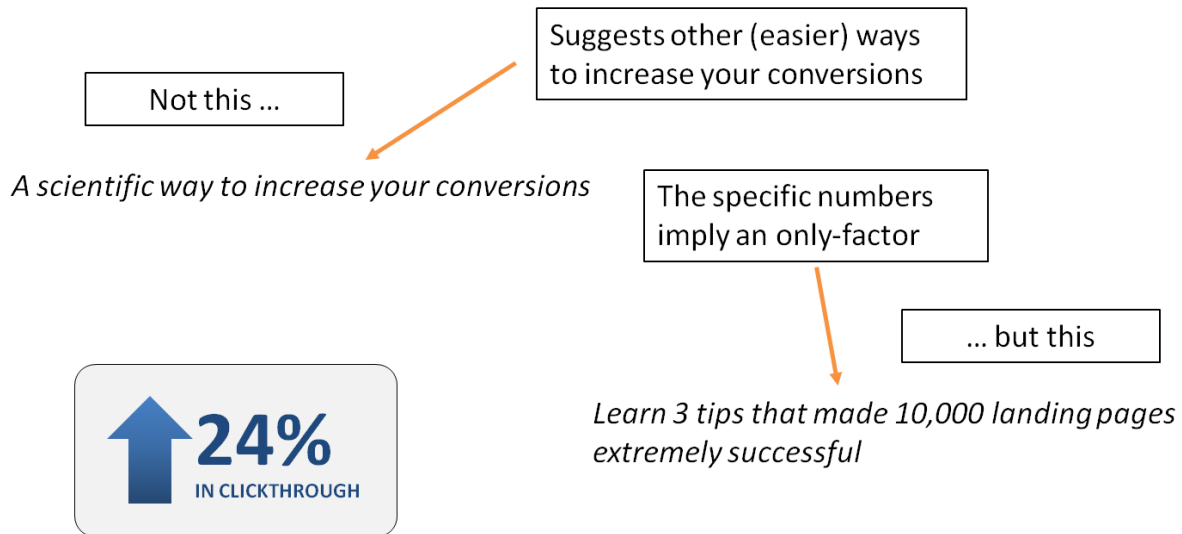
Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Is it exclusive? Is it exclusive? This is critical because appeal is mitigated by essentially a lack of exclusivity. For the ideal prospect to act on the value proposition of this subject line and clickthrough there has to be something about it that is unique.

Now, we know that is a part of what we talk about when we talk about a value proposition for a product, but how does that imply to a simple process-level value proposition associated with the subject line? To try to help you answer that, let's just look at some of the keys.

You will see there is the only factor apparent in the subject line. Is there something about this subject line that distinguishes the actual e-mail from the others in their Inbox, and in terms of the other subject lines you are competing with? Or is there something about this subject line that is talking about the product in a way that presents the fact that it also has some sort of only component?

ITEM #3: Is It Exclusive?

Is the only-factor apparent?



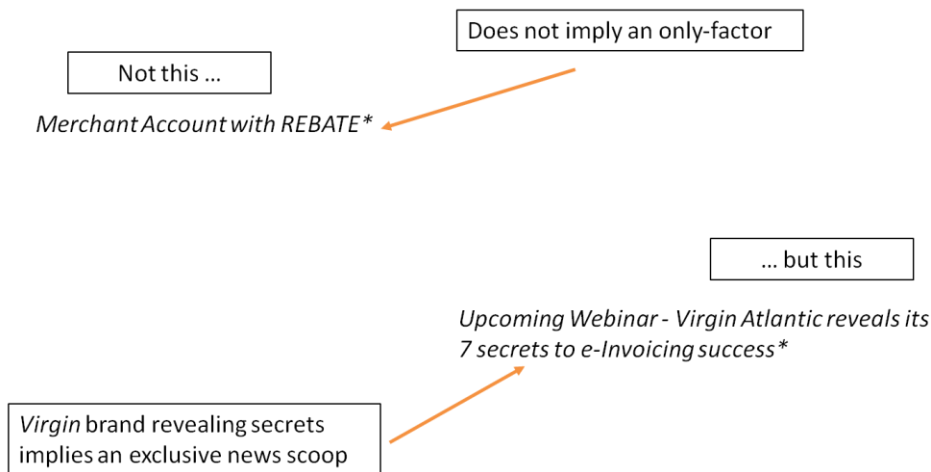
Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: So, let's take a look. "A scientific way to increase your conversions." It suggests other ways that you might be able to increase your conversions and I like the way Paul noted easier ways. There might be something easier than science. A lot of us are intimidated by science and so the fact that there is a way to increase your conversions has no only-factor but look at the difference.

"Learn 3 tips that made 10,000 landing pages extremely successful." You have got specificity. You have got something very, very, clear and it feels like an only-factor because who else is claiming that they have had 10,000 landing pages tested in order to present 3 tips? Do you see how there is an imply-only factor here? It makes a dramatic difference.

Someone has asked me if personalization distinguishes it? Well, remember something. You are competing with every other e-mail in the Inbox that might be in view at that time, and if other people are using personalization and especially, if they are using it in a, sort of, form-driven way, then it is not giving you all that much differentiation. There are only factors here that are difficult to match by any other competitor or subject line, and there is a difference in performance.

ITEM #3: Is It Exclusive?

Is the only-factor apparent?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's look at again another example. Not this. Does not imply an only-factor, but this. "Upcoming Webinar - Virgin Atlantic reveals its 7 secretes to e-Invoicing." Again, there is an only-factor associated with this. First of all, it is the brand, Virgin. Where else can you learn about what Virgin did? Secondly, it is 7 secrets. Now, I know the word secret, maybe, positive or it may be negative. With some audiences, it would be very negative. With others, it could be positive. But the bottom line is the idea that there are these seven specific things associated with an understanding of something remarkable achieved at Virgin gives this subject line a bit of exclusivity.

ITEM #3: Is It Exclusive?

Is the brand familiar?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must **know the offer is exclusive**.

To ensure exclusivity, we can utilize the following checklist:

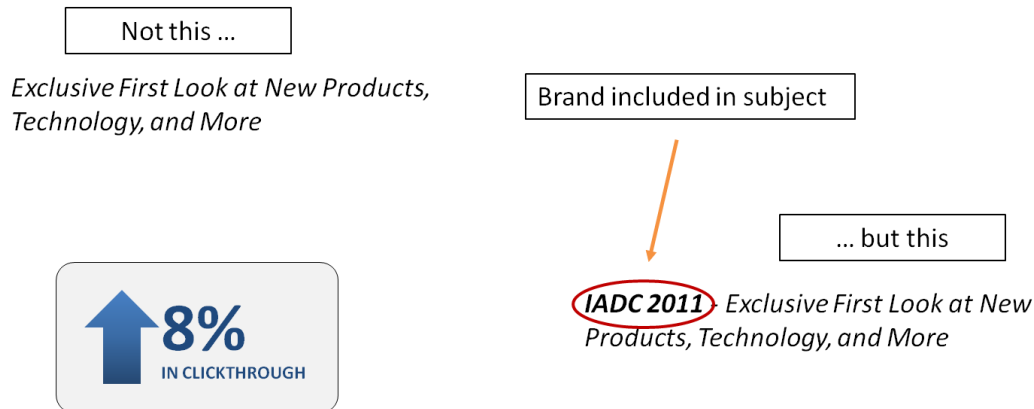
- ☒ Is the only-factor apparent?
- ☐ Is the brand familiar?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: This brings us to a second criterion about exclusivity. Can we derive specificity or can we derive exclusivity by understanding that the brand itself is powerful and familiar? Clearly, an e-mail from Apple has the attention of some people much quicker than the e-mail from some spammer promising a new dose of illegal Viagra from Mexico, and so, you might have appeal there depending on

the situation, but you certainly don't have the exclusivity because they probably got 11 others just like it. They are competing with lots of spam. They don't have time for e-mails like yours and there is no connection with the brand whatsoever.

ITEM #3: Is It Exclusive?

Is the brand familiar?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: All right, so think about that and let's look again at an example. "First Look at New Products, Technology, and More." Compare that with this one on the right. "Exclusive First Look at New Products, Technology, and More", and the difference is the event in a brand and the promise associated with it and then, of course, there is a difference in performance. And listen, don't underestimate 8%. We often show improvements or differences of hundreds and hundreds of percentile points, normally, not on a subject line. They generally don't have that big a span. It is difficult to get 100% improvement in a subject line. We saw an example like that at the beginning of this.

Secondly, 8% can be really significant with the right campaign and could translate into far more money if the list is the right size or the product that is being eventually purchased is right. It could be far more impactful than a 300% conversion rate with something that doesn't have the same upside.

ITEM #3: Is It Exclusive?

Is the brand familiar?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must **know the offer is exclusive**.

To ensure exclusivity, we can utilize the following checklist:

- ✓ Is the only-factor apparent?
- ✓ Is the brand familiar?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's look again. We have said it is the only-factor apparent and is the brand familiar.

ITEM #3: Is It Exclusive?

Subject Line:

Learn how to improve your establishment's web presence


Audience:

Small Business Restaurant and Bar Owners

Objective:

To get recipients to click on the "Get Started Now!" button

Live Optimization



A 360° marketing solution that creates long lasting loyalty between you and your customers.

The Bar & Restaurant Marketing System from CLS is a **360° marketing solution** that creates long lasting loyalty between you and your customers while being easy on your pocket.

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- Unlimited Service and Support
- Email, Hosting/domain setup and Social Marketing Tools
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- [Schedule a demo](#)

The Bar & Restaurant Marketing System enables bar and restaurant owners to control their website through a user friendly interface that controls the website's events calendar, emails, menus, specials (daily and weekly) and social media. Check out the system by [Signing Up for a Free, No Commitment Demo Today!](#)

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800 988 8850


Get Started Now!

Our Complete 360° Solution!

"52 percent of dining customers have selected a restaurant solely because of an online advertisement or email offer."

According to a study commissioned by ParTech, in New Hartford, New York

Powered by



<http://bit.ly/establishmentspresence>

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's look at an example. I think Mike submitted the page. You are going to see it is an e-mail and it is a subject line. Let's get some help up here from Ashley. Ashley, again, is an analyst

at MECLABS, works on lots of important projects, and I'm going to let you talk to us about this particular subject line Ashley.

Ashley Hanania: Of course.

Ashley Hanania: Yeah, one thing we really see in the subject lines is to really bring out that exclusiveness as Flint has been talking about and really let that visitor know, your audiences, those small business restaurant and bar owners, bring that out into your subject line, and let them know this isn't potentially the only place you can improve your web presence within this particular field and within this particular audience, let them know, maybe, how many tips you have, how many studies you have done or how many studies the company has done that can let the visitor know exactly what they are in for. And then, once you get that click, you know, even if that increase is like 8%, like Dr. McGlaughlin was saying, once you reached the e-mail, that continuity piece and letting the visitor know what they are expecting on that e-mail can really help drive that traffic further into it.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Thank you, Ashley. That is a very good point and listen, so you are asking some very good questions. One of the questions it is not so good comes from, I think, sort of a smart aleck, Gregory, and I'm just teasing you. So, "How did you know that Viagra comes from Mexico?" he said. Clearly, I opened the e-mail and read it. What do you say on a comment like that?

Good question. Someone says, Brand in the subject line even if it comes from the brand depends on the brand, depends on what it looks like in the Inbox, and again, there is a lot of sub-brands associated with some of the big. It just really depends. I have found that a lot of people don't see or pay attention to some of the times the form field, and they are looking right at the subject field depending on how they are reading their browser. So, it is a point that if it is clearly emphasized on the one, you may not need the other, but you are looking for some way to differentiate.

Let me look at another piece. Oh, there is Greg. "I wanted to see if you are paying attention. Yes, I am reading all these comments. There are hundreds that come in. We have staff, a room all around me. They are studying these but I try to keep my eye on the screen because there is so much content and I feel this heavy weight when I'm teaching. I want you to learn something you can really use and I'm trying to measure your comments against my pace, the depth of the content, and all that we are teaching. This is a pretty comprehensive criterion. We are still trying to work our way through.

ITEM #3: Is It Exclusive?

Is the only-factor apparent

Subject Line:

Enjoy Over 2,000 Internet TV Channels!

Audience:

Consumers 60+ years old, more rural than urban

Objective:

Click the “Internet TV/Radio USB Stick” link

Live Optimization

Harriet Carter
Distinctive Gifts Since 1958

1-800-377-7878
Shop Online NOW

Follow us!
f t p g+

TV on your PC!
No Monthly Fees!

Internet TV/Radio USB Stick \$19.98

Instant internet tv/radio usb stick lets you enjoy over 2,000 internet TV channels and 9,000 radio stations on your computer ... with no monthly fees! All you need is a PC or laptop with a USB port and internet connection. Plug in this handy, pocket-size device, and you're ready to go with virtually unlimited streaming access to music, news, sports and entertainment from around the world. Compatible with Windows Vis

<http://bit.ly/harrietcarteremal>

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's keep going. This is a submission. It says “**Enjoy over 2,000 Internet TV Channels!**” Sounds familiar? We talked about this one earlier. Audience, what do you think? Can you improve on this?

Let's take a quick look. Someone says that “I have always heard that subject impacts open rate while the quality of the e-mail body impacts clickthrough rate.” There is some truth to that, and I think. But if there is a disconnect between the subject line and the body text, you still have something we call site-flow interrupt and you will see a drop in conversion.

Really, there needs to be a harmony between all three. But while I answer that question, tell me how to improve the subject line for this e-mail – “Enjoy over 2,000 Internet TV Channels.” What would you say? “TV on your PC - no monthly fees.” That is a pretty good headline. Here is another one that was, they are all moving so fast, I can't tell you who said that, but you are smart. Here is another one. Matthew says “Get over 2,000 Internet TV Channels.”

Now, I just want to stop with what Matthew said. You know, there is a lot coming in here but the thing I have to point out is that when he says it that way, it doesn't feel like sales. I don't like the exclamation point at the end. I don't like the fact that it feels like an ad. I think when the language is honest and direct and carries the same content or even more powerful content, you are doing better than to ensconce your message in any thought pattern that feels like sales because when that happens, people

put their guard up. They realize you are trying to overcome resistance. You are trying to persuade them, and there is a natural reaction to that, a pushback.

I'm looking at some other ones. "TV on your PC with no monthly fees.", and I'm looking at another one. Someone said and I think I'm being challenged by Julia who says yes, but "Enjoyment worked better for the 60 plus audience." You know what we would say in the lab, Julia, if someone brought that up and it is perfectly fine to do so. I'm teasing you when I pointed it out.

Julia, that is why we test. You know, there is a zone you can get copy, but once you get to that zone, the only way you can know for sure is to test it. Yes, for specific demographics, the word, enjoy, might help. It is certainly a powerful phrase. It is an emotional phrase. Unfortunately, a lot of its core meaning has been stripped by its overuse in sales. There are words that have lost their potency because of the way they have been used in culture and the connotation and denotation start. The denotation may stay the same, but the connotation starts to change.

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's keep going. I'm on the fourth key criterion, and here it is. Is it credible? Now, this might seem like a simple piece, but how many subject lines promise something that doesn't sound credible? In fact, that last ad started not to sound credible. A part of it was the sales language.

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

Is the promise believable?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must **believe the offer is legitimate**.

To ensure credibility, we can utilize the following checklist:

☐ Is the promise believable?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's look for a way to understand this. First of all, is the promise associated with the subject line in any way believable?

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

Is the promise believable?

Not this ...

This is likely NOT a gift,
and it undercuts the
credibility of the offer
that follows

Our gift to you -- FREE Shipping or No Service Charges



... but this

Free Shipping or No Service Charge!
Limited time offer!

The stand alone offer of "Free shipping or No Service Charge" is more credible

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: "FREE Shipping or No Service Charges – **Our gift to you.**" People don't think of this as a gift. They think of it as a savings and you got to be careful because you don't get anything unless somebody buys. It is not exactly a gift, but "**Free Shipping or No Service Charge! - Limited time offer!**" The limited time offer scares me too. It is sales language but the idea is good. There is some urgency in it. Yes, yes, all right, keep going.

The stand-alone offer of 'Free Shipping or No Service Charge' is more credible than the original, and you can see that with the results at 21%.

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

Is the promise believable?

Not this ...

Use of fear tactics without
qualifying information causes
unbelief ... *At risk for what?*

30% Of Physicians Are At Risk - Don't Wait Until It's Too Late!*

... but this

Aspirin therapy pros and cons, 7 myths about calcium & vitamin D, lentil salad*

Pros and cons of aspirin therapy implies a balanced piece of useful content

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: “30% Of Physicians **Are At Risk** – Don’t Wait Until It’s Too Late.” There is a fear tactic here. Sometimes that works, sometimes it doesn’t. We have tested moving with positive or moving from a negative.

In this case, “Aspirin therapy **pros and cons**. 7 myths about calcium & vitamin D.” That is a good headline. Pros and cons therapy, now this is submitted by someone in our audience but the value here is if you are talking to a physician community, you are doing so in the language that might appeal to them. We might be able to improve it. We will see.

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must **believe the offer is legitimate**.

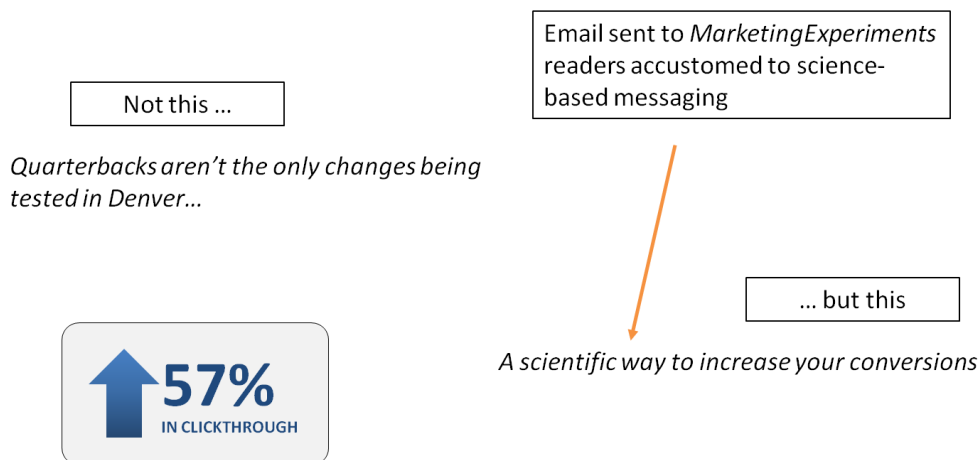
To ensure credibility, we can utilize the following checklist:

- ☒ Is the promise believable?
- ☐ Is the tone appropriate?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Is the tone appropriate? That is a second question. A lot of times we have been talking a lot about this. We craft a subject line. The tone itself has a sales vernacular and people don’t trust what you are saying because of the tone.

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

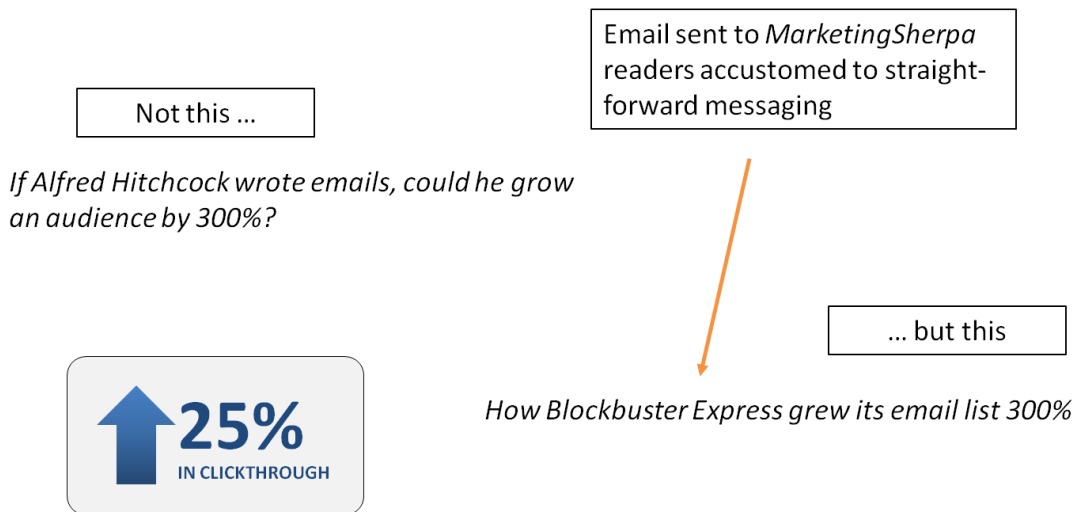
Is the tone appropriate?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: and we have examples of this that we have talked about.

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

Is the tone appropriate?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: “If Alfred Hitchcock wrote e-mails, could he grow the audience by 300%?” And here is another one. “How Blockbuster Express grew its e-mail list 300%?” And there is the difference, a 25% improvement on the right. That top one is interesting. It is, kind of, an interesting piece of copyrighting, but the reality is the tone sounds too gimmicky, too hype-driven compared to what you have below which is just short, direct, clear, and yet you have the point-last expression and you have Blockbuster at the front. It is well crafted. It produces a lift.

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must **believe the offer is legitimate**.

To ensure credibility, we can utilize the following checklist:

- ☒ Is the promise believable?
- ☒ Is the tone appropriate?
- ☐ Is the value specific?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Here comes another point. Is the value specific?

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

Is the value specific?

Very little specificity

Not this ...

Quarterbacks aren't the only changes being tested in Denver



... but this

*Do your landing pages pass **this test?***

The specificity in "this test" credibly implies a test in the email to judge a landing page

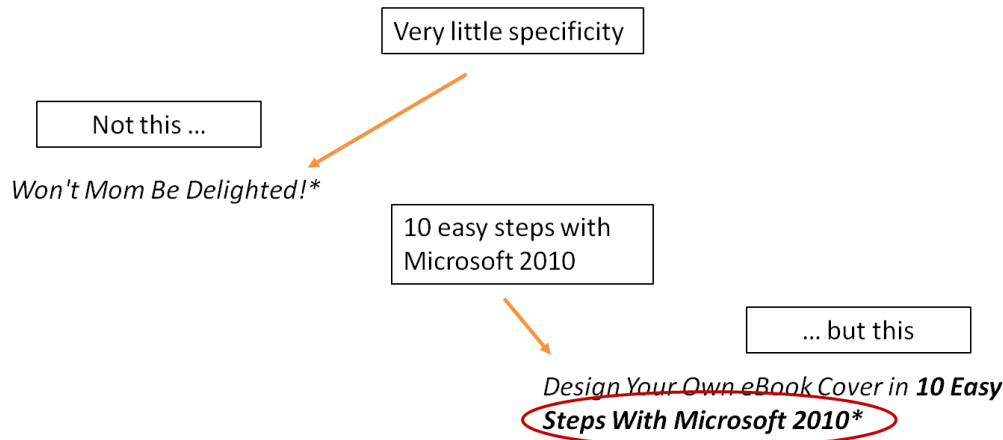
Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: By the way, people say these subject lines seem long. Listen, I'm not afraid of long copy and I'm not afraid of long subject lines. I'm afraid of words without meaning. I don't want my subject line to be any longer than it takes to express a complete thought, but many of us would do better off to write a subject line that is just a little bit longer if it expresses a complete thought and brings meaning to the actual message.

So, often, in the name of short copy or writing short subject lines, we have put together some, sort of, terse looking bullet point or some short offer that doesn't fully maximize my need to know and we found that if you don't lay a complete thought down, a lot of times, the subject lines underperform, and we are running tests like this constantly, and so, these are just things we are learning, not so much as our opinion here, but it is from patterning the experiments and tests that we are running.

Someone said, "It is a question." Do questions work? Only if it is the right question. 98% of the time we ask an obvious question in a rhetorical way that helps no one, and it would be much better off to build a more potent, but in this case, it is a, sort of, question with a real meaning. It tells you there is a test. You can take the test and discover if your landing pages meet a standard, and so, it worked. And, of course, the difference was 106% between the top and the bottom. That is pretty dramatic.

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

Is the value specific?



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's look at another example. "Won't Mom Be Delighted!" This was just submitted. Anything you see with an asterisk gives something our audience who has recently submitted. That is why we are not giving you back feedback or results. The reason is we haven't run any test. This is an audience-submitted subject line connected to a landing page. We want to come back to this one because it will probably show up in what is coming next.

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

For the ideal prospect to act on the process-level value proposition of your subject line, they must **believe the offer is legitimate**.

To ensure credibility, we can utilize the following checklist:

- ☒ Is the promise believable?
- ☒ Is the tone appropriate?
- ☒ Is the value specific?

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Let's just review what we say about credibility. Is the promise believable? Is the tone appropriate? Is the value specific?

ITEM #4: Is It Credible?

Subject Line:

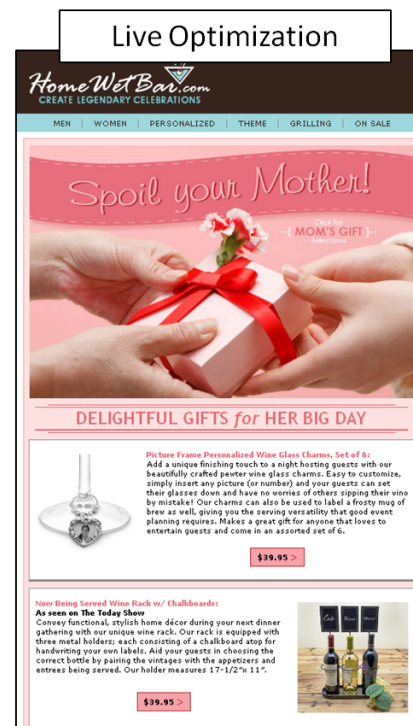
Won't Mom Be Delighted!

Audience:

Married couples 35+ with no children

Objective:

To get recipients to "Shop Now"



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Now, let's look at this particular example. Audience, look at the headline. Tell me how you would fix it. This was submitted by Tracy. Tracy, there is an audience here with hundreds of marketers who are experts and they want to share with you their best thoughts, and then, I'm going to ask Ashley to come up.

The benefit that someone like Ashley has is this. We say, at MECLABS, there are no expert marketers. There are only experienced marketers and expert testers. Ashley lives in an environment where tests are going on constantly around us. We learn every day. She just ran a test. I can't say the name. I can't tell you more than this, but I want to tell you on my, I don't know if I have to say on my honor, but it sounds, maybe, like it would stretch your credibility, but it is true.

We just ran a test. Ashley was the one who oversaw the project. It was a series of tests over a 16-month period...how many tests were they, Ashley? 16 or something like that?

Ashley Hanania: Yeah, we ran about 16 tests.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: We ran 16 tests. The research partner that Ashley worked with on those tests made somewhere approaching and these are not our numbers. These are their numbers as represented to us visiting our offices and I of course would never tell you who, but they made somewhere approaching 100. In fact, the first word we had was \$73 million or \$76 million, and then, we heard overall it was about a \$100 million in association with those tests.

Now I am telling you that because Ashley is this sweet beautiful girl who steps up here and you may not realize if you are watching this video. If you are in the audience, you will just have to use your

imagination. I feel like Howard Stern now and I mean it. I don't want to be creepy, but this sweet, Ashley I might ask...no, I can't ask you that. Ashley in her 20s, That is all I'm going to say all right? But she oversaw that project.

So, you are listening to her and she may say it quietly. She may not excite you with the authority of Dr. so and so or a Professor X, but she lives this stuff and we are learning every day from being right in the middle. We have the world's largest library of case studies and experiments now, and so, from that testing process, Ashley, tell us what you think you might do, but before you do, I...well, let me just have you go ahead. All right, tell us.

Ashley Hanania: Yeah. With the subject line that **“Won't Mom Be Delighted!”**, as you know, there is a lot of competition in the industry. Everyone is trying to get the Mother's Day sale out. So right here you are trying to sell the audience, but it leaves them with asking themselves with what? **“Won't Mom Be Delighted with what?”**, why should I open this e-mail?

So, to add some credibility really, I am trying to put in some information of how many products you potentially offer? Why should she purchase from you? Or why should you purchase a gift from them? Will it be here in time for Mother's Day? I think there are a lot of questions that are going through someone's mind. So, maybe providing a little bit of that urgency factor, but I would be also be careful on using urgency within all your subject lines because then you dilute the continuity and the urgency.

If everything is urgent, then they are not going to be attracted to that subject line because everything seems instant. So, by providing some credibility into this subject line and then going into the e-mail with perhaps **“Spoil Your Mother”**, providing a headline that is more distinct in telling them where they are at and why they should purchase from you, given all the other competition in the industry and then answer what you would you like them to do next, you know. I see the recipients to go shop now. There is not a clear path to that, given the distinct picture just at the top.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: Thank you, Ashley. Very good.

Ashley Hanania: Yeah.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: By the way, I'm watching the Twitter feed where Ashley is talking, and I sent a note to somebody on here, named Tia. I don't know if you have received it, but thank you for all your kind tweets, Tia. I appreciate that, and I'm looking at one from Jerry Everett, who just put a very good quote there. Thank you, Jerry. You know, what drives MarketingExperiments and its parent group, MECLABS, is the desire to transform the way people think about marketing and communication.

We are trying to understand why people say yes, and all of these little pieces like the subject line we are talking about today is just one part of this, sort of, grand understanding that we are trying to achieve overall in these years, and every time, you in the audience, give us feedback and communicate with us and, sort of, help us build this community of evidence-based marketers, you are bringing us one step closer, and I'm so grateful, and I want to point out that while she was talking, I was reading all of the

different feedback from the audience on key pieces and I think you have had some good thoughts about this particular subject line, but let me ask you about the e-mail, okay?

Take a look at the e-mail, “Spoil Your Mother!” it says and tell me what you might do to make that e-mail better? I’m watching. Someone says, “Over x gifts, just to, sort of, a blank number, to spoil mom with this Mother’s Day.”

Let me give another one. “Delight Mom with gifts under \$50.” There is another one. Someone says, “The sub-head is good.” “Delightful Gifts for her Big Day”, but it is down too low.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: One of my concerns about the e-mail is the size of the image, which takes up so much time before it actually gets into any action and the image itself doesn’t early convey much. I know there is a gift being passed, but you cannot tell what it is, and you wouldn’t really understand how that connects with the title at the top of what I think is a home wet bar room. It is a little far for me to see that as I’m trying to see it up at the top the way it is covered with some of our graphics, but how does that connect?

Let me hear from the audience again. “Let mom know how much you love her this Mother’s Day”, said Gary. It is a good headline. “There is no real value proposition or why these gifts are particularly great.” That is absolutely right, Carma. “It could be your wife and not your mother.” Brad, that is an excellent point. “We don’t need full product descriptions and we should add large Calls to Action,” says Susan.

Here is a key. Don’t we want to get them to the site? We did this with an experiment in Italy with an Italian cosmetic dealer, and what we discovered was that not trying to present a few products when we were trying to communicate that there were many products because we couldn’t put them all in the e-mail, actually, drove up conversion rate.

The e-mail, instead, tried to get them to the landing page where they could see all of the products instead of trying to present just a handful, which, sort of, felt like it was the total selection, and this was a very useful e-mail. These were direct response experts. It had been their best e-mail for many years, but the minute we changed the strategy of the e-mail, we saw a major increase in conversion.

Summary: Putting it all together

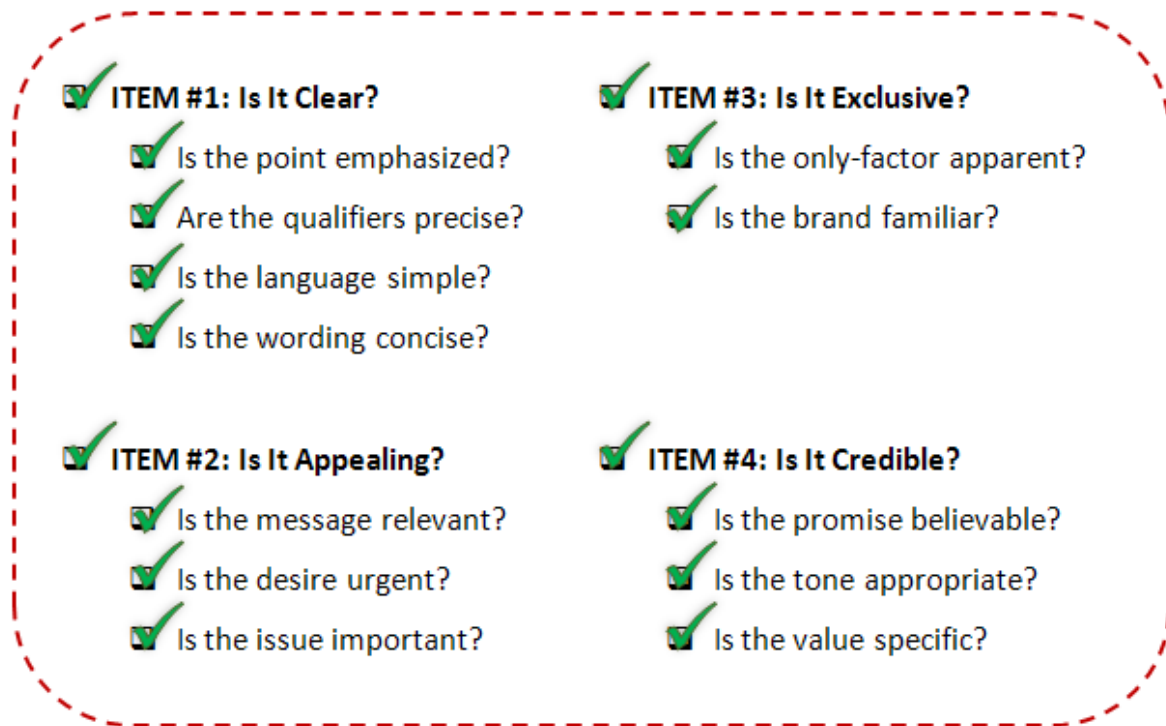


Key Principles

- a. Simply getting the viewer's attention with a subject line will not produce a significant result. ***We must understand the functional purpose of our subject line: converting attention into interest.***
- b. To build interest, ***we must understand the connection between our subject line and our value proposition.***
- c. To intensify the force of the process-level value proposition in our subject lines, ***we can employ a useful set of research-based criteria ...***

Dr. Flint McLaughlin: All right, you are thinking very well. Let's, sort of, put this all together. We have talked about three critical issues. We need to understand the functional purpose of the subject line. It is about converting attention into interest, and we need to understand the connection between our subject line and our value proposition, and also, we need to employ, sort of, useful set of research-based criterion for measuring the effectiveness.

Summary: Putting it all together



Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: In doing so, we laid out a series or a checklist of critical pieces. Each of these checklists can be, sort of, apply to that subject line, so that you can determine whether or not it is as effective as can be.

You will be able to get this slide and a transcript of everything plus watch the video on marketingexperiments.com at no cost. I think they post these about a week afterwards because they have to go into editing and production, and we will get it up there live where you can use the checklist, read the transcript, and learn from all of this.

Dr. Flint McGlaughlin: I just want to take a moment because our time is up. I want to remind you that you can, sort of, give us some feedback about this particular piece, and also, that we will be in Denver soon at the Optimization Summit. I hope to meet many of you there.

Before you log off, just take a moment if you would...while we are watching and give us some feedback on today's event. There was a lot of content. I felt I went faster than normally with less story and we are experimenting with the format that was prepared here by our writers.

Tell me if you found today helpful or if you didn't, and I had a couple of comments about Ashley. Please note that I mean no disrespect to Ashley. She is a wonderful employee and we are very, very proud to have her.

So, just let me hear your feedback. I'm watching carefully. We will read every single thing you submit here, and I'm seeing a lot of rich feedback. Thank you so much. We will be back in about a week, I guess, two weeks, with more of our research, more of our learnings, more of our discoveries. If today was helpful, the best thing you can do for us is just tell a friend. We want to build this community as we all learn together. Thank you.

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Welcome to the MarketingExperiments Journal email for March 17, 2011. Every three weeks we send this high-level update of our research to 98,000 marketers. Today you'll find:

- The on-demand replay of [Do You Have the Right Value Proposition?](#), where we taught five simple steps to determine your optimal value proposition
- An invitation to our next Web clinic, where we will discuss proven strategies for [Converting Leads to Sales](#)
- An opportunity to [share your optimization and testing discoveries](#) with your peers at the 2011 Optimization Summit and receive a complimentary ticket to this inaugural event.

Our job is to help you do your job better. [Let us know](#) how we can help.

Daniel Burstein
Director of Editorial Content
MECLABS Primary Research

Resource #1

Do You Have the Right Value Proposition?
How to test, measure, and integrate your Value Proposition online

According to Dr. Flint McGlaughlin, there are five simple steps any marketer can take to identify their optimal value proposition. During this dense, yet very practical, Web clinic, he reviewed two recent experiments aimed at discovering value propositions that increase customer response.

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