

## BEST PRACTICES

# Calls to Action

We often find that an email campaign's success hinges on one characteristic of the message: the call to action. A carefully-designed call to action will increase sales, while a poorly constructed CTA will sink your campaign. Though the CTA is often only a small part of an email, there are several things to consider during its creation to guarantee success.

## PRESENCE

The first important tip regarding CTAs is that they must be present. It's absolutely important that every message you send contains at least one call to action. This provides a means for metric evaluation and encourages activity from the potential customer.

## LANGUAGE

Use active and direct language. Since the goal of a call to action is to engage with the recipient, it's necessary to use active language. For instance, using CTAs such as "Download Now," "Speak to an Expert," and "Get Free Trial," will not only connect the consumer to the product, but also command action, rather than suggesting it. Suggestive CTAs don't contain a sense of requirement and are less successful. Some examples of these are: "Learn More" and "Check Out." This is also true of more commanding suggestions like "Shop Here," which encourages perusal, unlike the more active "Buy Here."

Make the CTA relevant to the content. The language used in the CTA must be reflective of the email's content. If the language stands out or is unrelated to the email, then it will appear unwelcome to the viewer.

Answer the question “why?” Make sure that the content and focus of the message explains “why” a customer should be interested in responding to the call to action. For instance, a CTA that says “Read Our Blog,” needs to include information about what the customer will gain from reading.

## DESIGN

The first rule for designing a call to action is to make it immediately noticeable and catchy. Other considerations include:

- The CTA should be big enough to be easily seen. Don’t hide it within a bulk of text.
- It should use contrasting colors. The scheme of the CTA should be different from the color scheme of the rest of the message.
- If you use an image, be mindful of the following:
  - Be sure to have a text version of the CTA in case the image doesn’t download.
  - The image should measure 44 pixels.
  - Consider mobile views and touch screens. Make the CTA square-shaped for easy touch-screen selection and leave plenty of space around it.
- Consider using bulletproof buttons. HTML and in-line CSS bulletproof buttons not only offer a visual, clickable option for the CTA, but also still work if images are disabled.
- Use appealing alt text for images. Catchy alt text for an image encourages viewers to download the email if images have been disabled in the message.

## POSITION

The CTA needs to stand out from the rest of the message and should be clearly identifiable within the text. It's a best practice to have your first CTA "above the fold," meaning that the CTA should be seen in the initial viewing screen of the email. Having a second CTA within the message is also helpful. Having a second CTA near the end of an email will remind readers what action you're requesting.

## AUDIENCE

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You should also consider A/B testing the calls to action, especially in an initial campaign, to understand which CTAs are receiving the best response.

## LINKS

There are several kinds of CTAs: direct responses through email or phone, links to home sites, and links to landing pages. If you choose to use links as your main CTA, be sure that at least one leads to a landing page rather than a general website. This leads customers to exactly where you want them to go rather than encouraging a blind search, which often happens with home site links.

The final step in creating a call to action is perhaps the most important: deliver on your promises. If your CTA offers a free gift, give it. If it offers a limited-time free download, provide it immediately. Reneging on a promised offer in a CTA is a surefire way to lose both current and potential customers.

While the CTA is often one of the smallest components of a marketing email, it's one of the most important. A CTA gives your email a purpose, in addition to streamlining communication between your company and your audience. Follow these tips to create a successful CTA to increase engagement and sales.