

# DEFINING YOUR B2B EMAIL SWEET-SPOT

## Hotsheets

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With the explosion of newsletters, webinars and seminars, business media audience engagement continues to evolve and become increasingly similar to communicating with consumers. While the comments below are derived from a B2B audience perspective, many hold true for consumer audience engagement as well.

The internet allows people to get information and entertainment from many sources. You have the opportunity to make your brand the preferred source when you keep email messages clear and interactions “moderately frequent”. It is an admittedly strange term, but defining what this means for your specific brand can have long term implications on your success.

### “MODERATELY FREQUENT” INTERACTIONS

The number of times you reach out to your audience may be influenced by the magazine frequency, the number of products you have (webinars, print and/or digital magazines, events, specialty newsletters, etc.), and how often new information should be expected for your particular industry.

Every time you communicate with your audience you add a “touch opportunity” where you remind the audience of your brand and what it has to offer. This means they also have the opportunity to “unsubscribe” from everything you have to offer. You must establish a frequency that is consistent with the flow of your industry and falls in the narrow range between being absent and being overwhelming.

### KEEP THE TONE FRIENDLY AND INVITING— RIGHT TO THE BOTTOM

While it is mandatory to have sender information and unsubscribe functionality in your emails, you are not required to present these as the only functions of the email footer and state them in strict legal wording. Comments advising the reader that your communication is CASL compliant will often appear to

be a challenge to the reader and put them on the defensive. Use the same area to provide subtle opportunities to engage your audience—to update their preferences or visit your website(s).

### ONE PIECE AT A TIME

Overcovers and snail-mail subscription forms are all but history for most industries. The object was to gather as much demographic information as possible in a single shot—the theory being, why not ask them about the products they intend to buy in the coming year when they are requesting a magazine? Today’s audience is paranoid of revealing too much information. Ask what you *have* to know and present opportunities to gather what you want to know.

### KEEP YOUR MESSAGE FRESH

Find ways to ask the same questions or inform about the same products in different ways. As an event approaches and attendance needs a boost, resist sending the same email to the same audience. If the balance of your audience has not acted or is not interested, you increase the chance of them marking the email as spam or unsubscribing entirely. A small change (such as a new reason to participate) will help, but you still risk providing an opportunity for the recipient to exercise their option to be removed from all future emails. Use caution and variety.

### TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EMAIL PERMISSION LEVELS

Permission to email is gold—protect it well. If you haven’t already done so, explore the options of various opt-out levels for your emails. For example, a customer may want to simply stop receiving emails about events, but would be fine with an annual reverification or digital edition notification email. If your only option is “all inclusive” (“unsubscribe from all”), you could lose valuable opportunities. Provide the potential unsubcriber with multiple clear



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opportunities to tailor your communications to their needs.

## KNOW WHEN TO CAPITALIZE ON YOUR CONTACT OPPORTUNITIES

There are times to get your audience to focus (renewals) and times where you are expected to offer varied opportunities to engage (newsletters).

Renewal (or reverification) emails should be just that. Keep your audience focused on the task at hand and don't offer links that will distract them. Sending renewals a day or two after a well-read newsletter is often an optimal time.

Newsletters are expected to offer opportunities to learn and engage—add a “quick vote” question to the email, or links to surveys or other stories of interest, feedback opportunities, magazine archives, videos, event coverage, etc. First and foremost, you must encourage and track engagement.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

If you are sending a reverification email, a single click should take the reader to a renewal page, not a page with where they may be able to further select “Renew” as one of their options. Ideally, the click should take them to a form that has applicable fields as prepopulated as possible. (If your product is audited, check with your audit board to confirm current rules on what can and cannot be prepopulated.)

## SALUTE YOUR AUDIENCE

Convey to the reader that you know and respect them. Determine the level of respect or casual salutation most suitable for your publication or product (“Dear Dr. Smith” or “Dear Bob”). Avoid “Dear Valued Reader” or similar generic salutations where possible, and remember that personalization is case sensitive: “Dear Bob”, not “Dear BOB”.

Thanks to communications evolution, it's never been easier to lose a member of your audience. Protecting and respecting them and their expectations can mean the difference between dismal and **successful** viral engagements with your brand.



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