

# How to Create an Email Newsletter That Converts

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# How to create an email newsletter

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## Understand opt-in form dos and don'ts

Just because you're in email contact with someone doesn't mean you can automatically put them into your mailing list. Users have to opt in under their own free will.

That's why you need some sort of disclosure informing readers that by filling in their email address, they are making themselves eligible to receive future email communications.

**This is a regulatory requirement.**

It's also best practice for your company because a form fill weeds out spam and bot submissions.

By doing so, your final mailing list will be more intent-driven – not just some robot address that will cause a bounceback.

Our standard boilerplate is usually something along the lines of:

By filling out this form, you'll also be subscribed to Braffon's weekly newsletter and be alerted when we share new content like this.  
You may unsubscribe from these communications at any time.

## Set baseline conversion goals

You know you need a newsletter, but do you know how to measure its success (or failure)? Your conversion goals are your benchmarks. They help guide your newsletter campaign, informing you on whether future adjustments are needed or if you're on the right track.

The core metrics to be mindful of are:



You can use industry averages to start out. Here's what you might expect numbers-wise from your newsletter:

- Open rate: **20-30%**
- Click-through rate: **15-20%**
- Conversion rate: **1-3%**

# Brainstorm optimized newsletter content based on audience needs

You know your industry. You know your readers. What do they actually want to learn more about? What would they gain from having another email (yours) in their inbox?

**Your newsletter content is the crux here.**

Traditional newsletters may contain a mix

of text-based links and images that direct readers to a blog page. Other newsletter styles may be heavy on authentic photography or design. Here's a rough sketch of one of our newsletters where we first listed out the content that would go into the email, before we began formatting:

## Newsletter Lineup

### Headliner:

HERE'S PROOF THAT PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS FOR BUSINESS DON'T HAVE TO BE BORING

### Additional articles:

AVOID THESE 5 CRIMES WHEN BLOGGING FOR BUSINESS (INFOGRAPHIC)

6 INTRODUCTORY TYPES OF LINK BUILDING THAT ACTUALLY WORK (AND WHY YOUR CONTENT IS NOTHING WITHOUT LINKS)

4 EXPERT CONTENT STRATEGISTS GIVE THEIR TIPS FOR CONTENT MARKETING SUCCESS

A GUIDE TO EVERY 2018 GOOGLE SERP FEATURE]



**Choose what best represents your audience.** For the B2B professional with no time to read long-form content, perhaps shorter industry opinion pieces or an infographic could work best to grab their attention without forcing them to commit too much of their time.

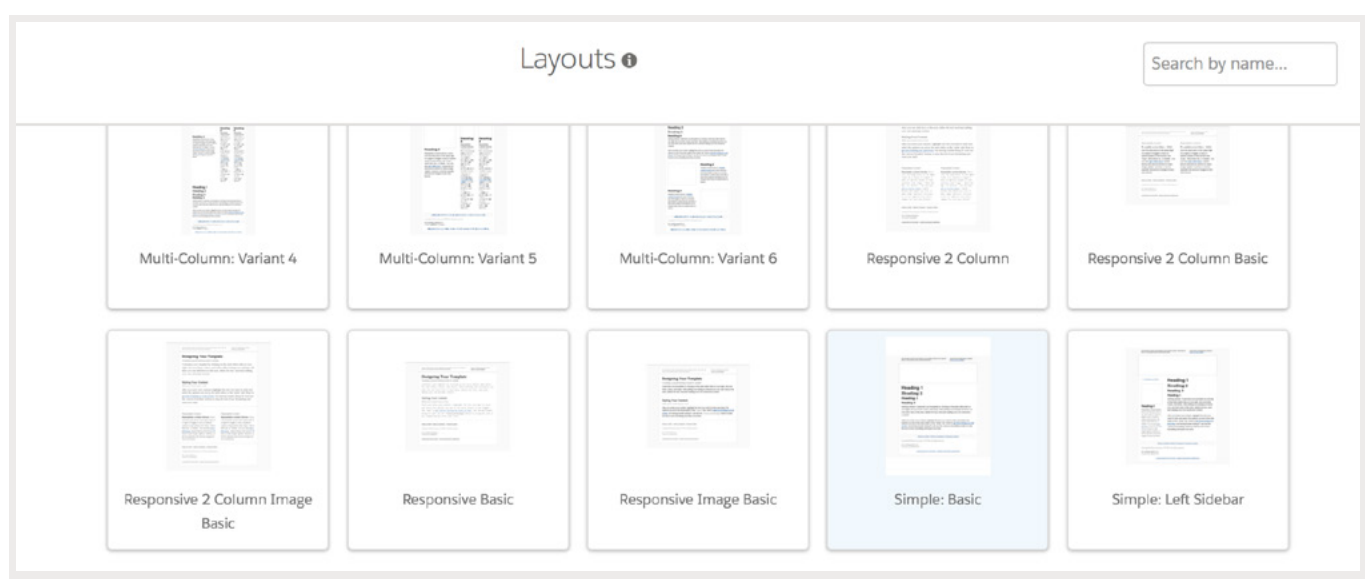
Conversely, a newsletter is often the platform for giving readers in-depth content they need but may not find immediately around the web: You're sending them high-quality, authoritative content that resonates, that's data-driven, that's waiting right in their inbox.

Also, your newsletter subscribers are deeper in the funnel than an average blog reader. They, at some point, filled out an opt-in form and chose to receive your emails. So follow through on that conversion by matching their newsletter expectations.

# Experiment with default newsletter templates within your email platform

Email automation platforms often come pre-set with several email templates you can choose from.

Pre-made templates may be your best, most convenient option starting out. They default to today's accessibility and responsive design standards so you can be sure your emails are adapted to a desktop and mobile audience. Templated newsletters can also make it easier to sync your content with its HTML version, so that some variation of your email is properly rendered and accessible to all readers and their email clients.

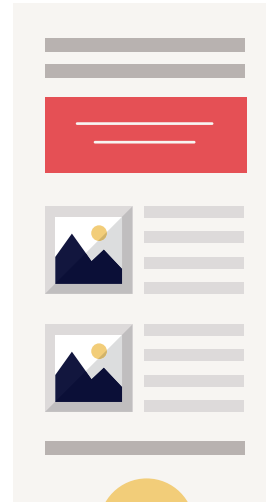


If you don't expect to dive into interactive content or animations that require advanced coding and custom design, start with a template and **brand it to your company's specifications**.

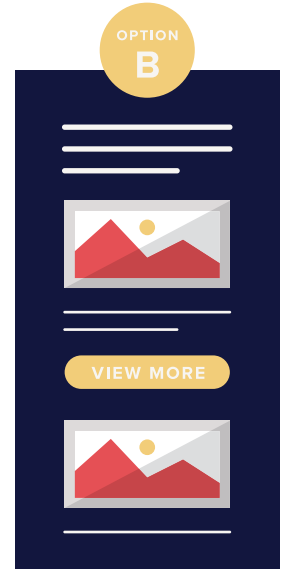
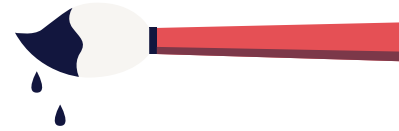
## Custom-design your template, if needed

You can use several different types of newsletter formats depending on your audience, time of week, stage of the funnel, campaign, etc. This is to say, that subscriber A may not prefer the same layout or content mix as subscriber B even though they both fall under the umbrella of “newsletter subscriber.”

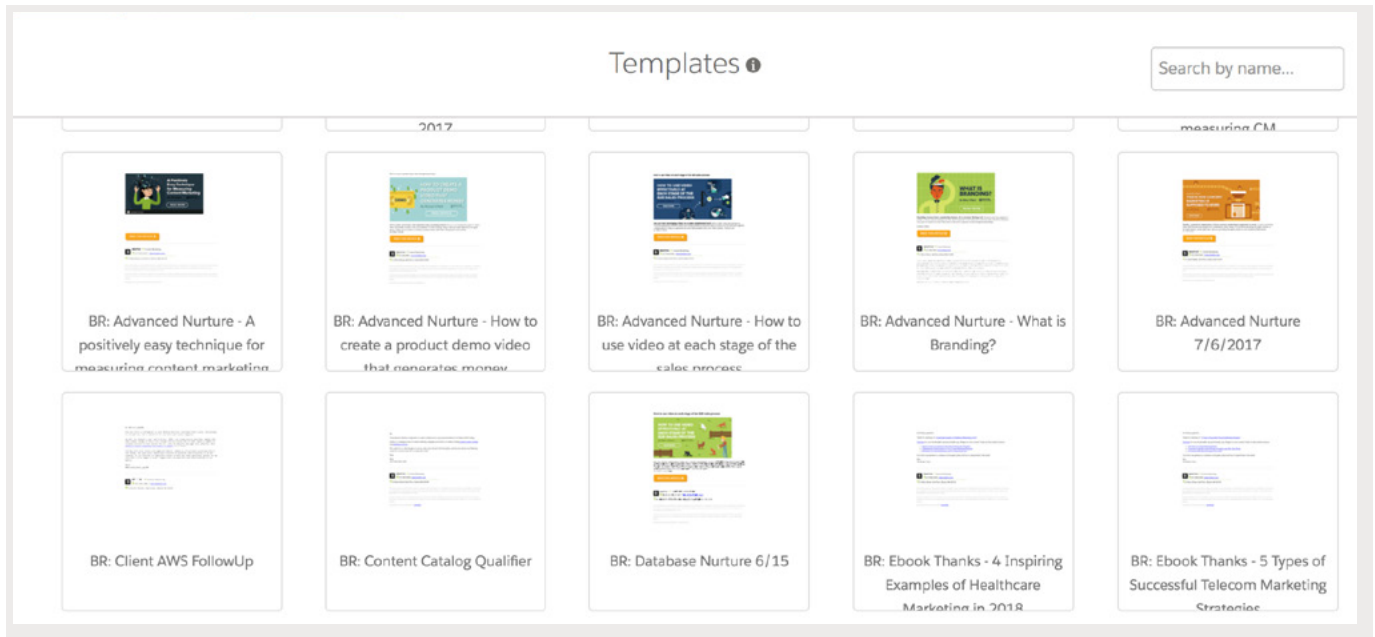
That’s why your web dev team can assist in creating an email newsletter that goes beyond what a default email platform can provide. Here are several types of newsletters that we had custom-designed and templated for future use:



OPTION  
A



OPTION  
B



When creating a newsletter for an upcoming email marketing campaign, having this inventory of templates to choose from makes your job **way easier**. Nothing has to be built from scratch and you likely already have some idea of which templates previously performed well.

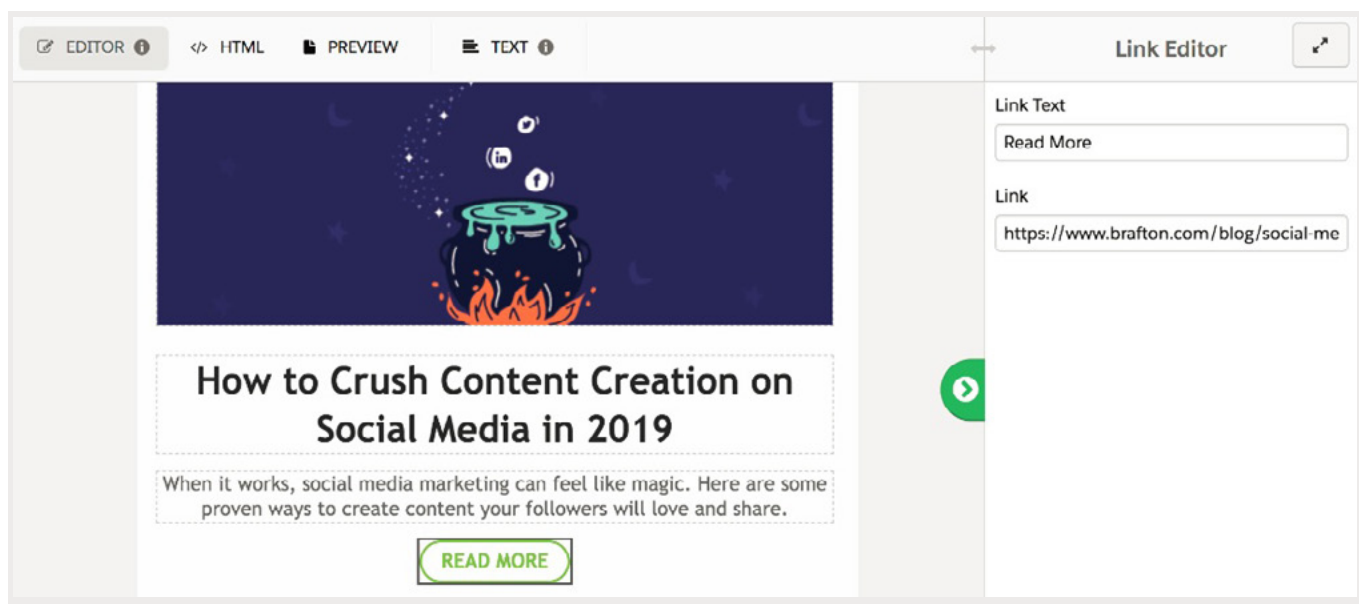




## Drop in clickable CTAs and proper hyperlinks

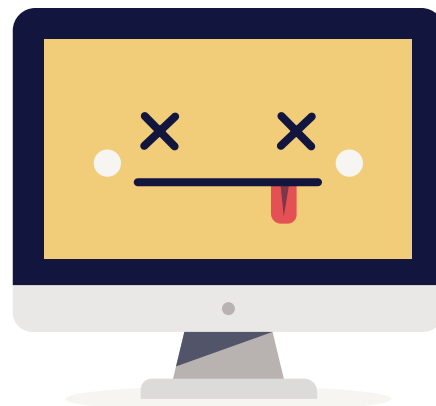
This step may seem intuitive in thought, but, depending on your email automation platform, your newsletter may not automatically include things like metadata, links that open in new windows, CTAs that direct readers to a gated page, etc. These are often tasks you need to manually insert, double check and test for.

Here's how Pardot enables users to easily adjust text, graphics and links:



With CTAs, opt for **clickable buttons** that follow your branding guidelines, rather than a simple blue hyperlink. For clickable images and article titles, ensure that you're plugging in the **right links**, which can be done within your platform's text editor.

There's nothing worse than putting together a top-notch newsletter with beautiful visuals only to find out that it's practically useless to readers because there are dead links and incomplete conversion pathways.





## Write your subject line (now redo it a few times)

Subject lines are very much a zero-sum game. They're either very good, or they're entirely unclickworthy. And in the realm of email marketing, **subject lines cash your checks.**

Here are a few quick guideposts when coming up with your subject lines:



**35%** of emails are opened due solely to the subject line.

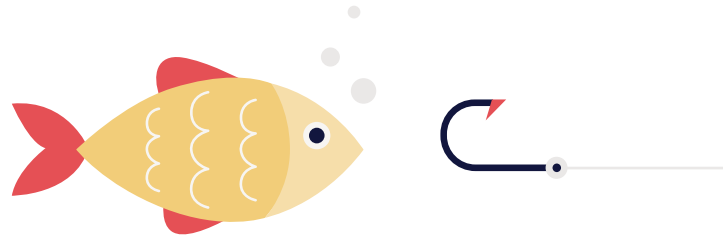


The average subject line is **7 words** long.



**Numbers and Title case** typically perform best; symbols and spam words perform worst.

In general, make sure your subject lines are truly representative of what the email contains; no bait and switch. Below are a few of our more recent newsletter subject lines, which, as you can see, are often how-to, best practices or list-based formats:



5 of the best types of content to post on LinkedIn in 2019 ▷ Inbox x

How the evolution of handheld technology affected content marketers (infographic) ▷

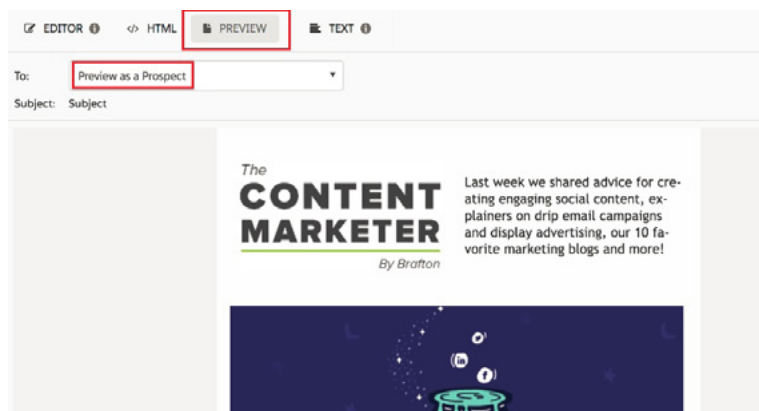
How BuzzFeed mastered content creation ▷ Inbox x

When you think you have a great subject line, spend five more minutes tweaking it. **It's worth it.**

## Preview your newsletter template as your audience will see it

As you round out your newsletter and begin putting the finishing touches on it, put yourself in someone else's shoes. You may actually be too close to the content and unaware of how it's perceived by others, especially your prospects.

Use the **“Preview”** function in your email platform to accomplish this. In Pardot, you'll see:

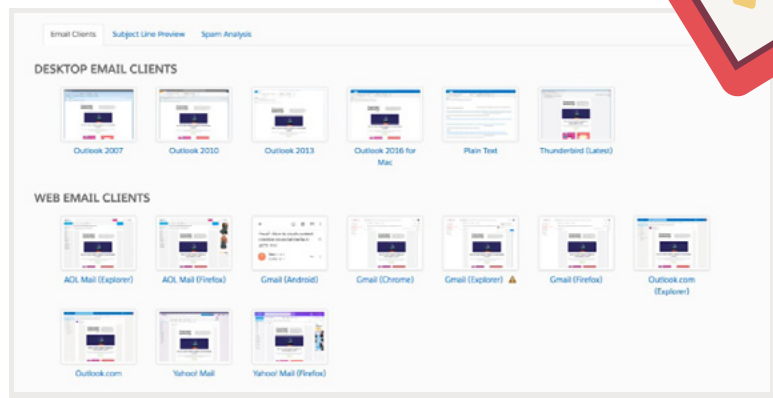


What's cool is that you can click on the dropdown menu and view your newsletter from the vantage point of various subscribers, such as an official prospect tied to your Salesforce database. With this view, you virtually become your reader. This should help you catch any lingering but previously invisible personalization issues, text formatting issues or typos.

## Verify responsive design and rendering across various email clients

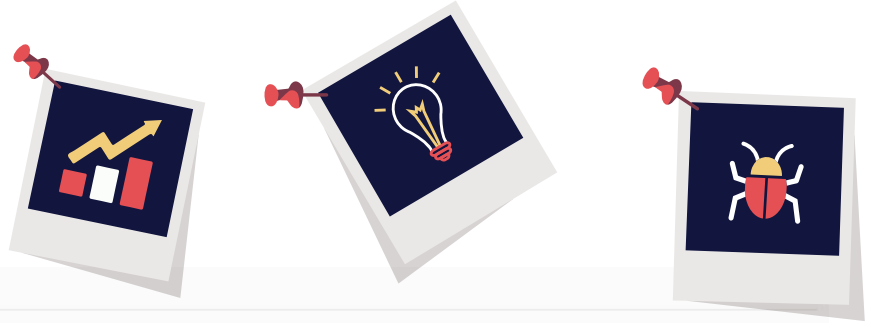
In addition to a preview, you should also send a **test email to yourself** to see the final product before it becomes truly final.

Your subscribers will be using many different types of email clients, and not all of them will feature your newsletter exactly as it appears on your screen. Running a “new render” test shows you how each email client in your email list will display your newsletter, as seen to the right:



# HOW TO CREATE AN EMAIL NEWSLETTER THAT CONVERTS

You'll also receive some free suggestions for how to improve your email and to avoid getting caught in spam filters:



Email Clients Subject Line Preview Spam Analysis

**RESULTS**

Barracuda	Passed with a score of 0.17
Gmail	Failed
GMX	Passed
Mail.com	Passed
Outlook	Passed
Sender ID	Passed
Sender Policy Framework	Passed
SpamAssassin	Passed with a score of 0.8

Below are some suggestions provided by the various filters:

- Barracuda - Your email has lots of images but relatively little text. Consider adding more text content. If your email is made up of one singular image, considered slicing that image up and add system text to the body rather than all text as part of the image.
- SpamAssassin - Your email has lots of images but relatively little text. Consider adding more text content. If your email is made up of one singular image, considered slicing that image up and add system text to the body rather than all text as part of the image.

This is also the stage where you'll want to “sync” your HTML and plain text proofs. Send yourself a copy of each version, open them and take a look to see that they're conveying the same information, even if one is more visualized than the other:

» The Content Marketer Text Proof - How to crush content creation on social media in 2019 - Last week we shared advice for ...

» The Content Marketer HTML Proof - How to crush content creation on social media in 2019 - Last week we shared advice f...

Within your text editor, you should have some variation of “sync,” which keeps your proofs aligned. For context, here's the difference between our HTML and plain text newsletters, despite them being created the same way within Pardot:

HTML Proof - How to crush content creation on social media in 2019

The Content Marketer to me - 1:29 PM (3 minutes ago)

**The CONTENT MARKETER**  
By Brafton

Last week we shared advice for creating engaging social content, explainers on drip email campaigns and display advertising, our 10 favorite marketing blogs and more!

<https://www.brafton.com/blog/social-media/how-to-crush-content-creation-on-social-media-in-2019/>

How to Crush Content Creation on Social Media in 2019

When it works, social media marketing can feel like magic. Here are some proven ways to create content your followers will love and share.

Read More

<https://www.brafton.com/blog/social-media/how-to-crush-content-creation-on-social-media-in-2019/>

<https://www.brafton.com/blog/email-marketing/email-drip-campaigns-explained/>

Text Proof - How to crush content creation on social media in 2019

The Content Marketer to me - 1:31 PM (1 minute ago)

Last week we shared advice for creating engaging social content, explainers on drip email campaigns and display advertising, our 10 favorite marketing blogs and more!

<https://www.brafton.com/blog/social-media/how-to-crush-content-creation-on-social-media-in-2019/>

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<https://www.brafton.com/blog/email-marketing/email-drip-campaigns-explained/>

## Select the email list to send to

Now it's time to decide which group of people should be so lucky to receive your newsletter. This ties back to your original marketing strategy and larger business goals.

Your email marketing mailing list, unfiltered, might be an unhelpful, unanalytical behemoth. But by segmenting your email list out by **who**, specifically, you want to target, you can increase your chances for hitting your conversion benchmarks while refraining from unnecessarily spamming low-quality leads with content that's not relevant to them.



## Decide completion action (conversion) to measure

When we first started this eBook, we spoke of the importance of knowing which metrics to track. Before officially launching your newsletter, you'll need to select, within your email platform, the metrics you want it to measure and report on.

These are referred to as **completion actions** in Pardot.

Depending on what action a subscriber takes once receiving your email in their inbox, it could subsequently trigger a different event, such as a sales rep reaching out to them via email, or maybe an unsolicited web demo.

Carefully curating these actions and events automates much of the manual back and forth between you and subscribers, which is a good thing when you're sending to tens of thousands of people at once.











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