



The human touch in email:

Personalizing emails in a noisy digital world



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Generic emails: Do they always work?

"Hey! We've launched the summer collection at our store in Sydney—so stop by! We've got great discounts, too."

Imagine reading an email like this one, sitting in Chicago, overlooking your snow-covered balcony. Feels like you received a wrong email—but nah, you were just part of another email blast from a brand that's clueless about email personalization.

What can we do to make our recipients feel like our emails were written just for them? How can we make our emails stand out in a crowded inbox? The answer: email personalization.

No matter how big or small our business is, our contacts expect emails that aren't merely promotional material. They want information that's relevant to them—but they don't just want to be addressed by name; there's more to email personalization. And that's exactly what we'll discuss in this ebook.

Speak to the recipient, not the list

Imagine you're on a busy street full of shops, trying to spot the perfect pair of shoes. You come across multiple vendors trying to sell their products. But among all of them, one recognizes what you're there to do and strikes up a conversation. He learns your name and uses it, and tells you about his store's current deals. Of all of these vendors, his shop is the one you're most interested in visiting.

Why? Because he did something none of the other vendors did. He engaged with you as an individual, took the time to learn about what you wanted, and sweetened the deal with a discount. He made you feel like you mattered, and not just like some random person in the crowd.

In email marketing, this sense of recognition is what we call personalization.

When you send a personalized email, you:

- ◆ Address the recipient by their name.
- ◆ Know when to send them what information.
- ◆ Tailor content based on their preferences and past behavior.
- ◆ Earn their trust by showing that you know and understand them.

Make it personal and see the difference

There are certainly plenty of marketing tactics that can improve email performance. So why go the extra mile with personalization? Because you can:

Learn a lot about your recipients

By personalizing email campaigns, we're not just grabbing the recipients' attention; we also get to learn about them in greater detail. Every email open, link click, and purchase gives us insight into what each recipient truly cares about. Even unopened emails can tell us a lot. Over time, we can build a solid profile that conveys who the recipients are, what they want, and how we can serve them more effectively.

Encourage recipients to explore different channels

A thoughtful, personalized email that makes the recipient feel seen can spark genuine loyalty and serve as the nudge that gets them to download your app, follow you on social media platforms, or turn into a repeat customer. In short, personalization can organically pave the road to all of your brand's touchpoints without being pushy.

Avoid spammy or off-topic content

Let's face it—no one wants weekly deals on bakeware when they're using their oven as extra storage space. Personalization helps one escape being labeled as "that annoying marketer". When we send useful information consistently, recipients are less likely to unsubscribe from our mailing list. Also, if we notice our most thoughtful emails aren't hitting the mark anymore, that's a sign that the recipient's needs have shifted. Then we must realize that it's time to experiment with new content, pay attention to what gets a response, and categorize contacts into new segments based on these insights.

Make your brand stand out

If recipients recognize that a brand is consistently sending them relevant emails, it then becomes an irreplaceable presence in their inboxes—and they may actually look forward to hearing from it. For example, if a recipient is into hiking and we're the first to tell them about new hiking gear and interesting trails, this signals that we understand their interests in a way that feels personal and thoughtful. When people see emails that always match their interests, they'll open, engage, and choose you over brands that send them generic content.



Stop blasting and start connecting

When our email campaign sounds like made-up content sent by a bot to a huge crowd, it's often difficult to establish connections with recipients. Personalized email campaigns afford more possibilities to strike the right chords with recipients. Here's why:

You're sending what they actually want

Email personalization is all about making content relatable to the recipients. It'll tempt them to open, read, and act upon it. The trick is how to find what they need. Closely analyze their recent purchases, past behaviors, and the types of emails they've been opening. If there's a product lingering in their cart for a while, give them a gentle nudge and slip in a small discount. Who doesn't love a sweet deal on something they want?

You can catch them at the right moment

It's your birthday. Your favorite brand sends a wish and an exclusive offer to celebrate the day. How sweet of them—or how smart? You bought a camera last Sunday. A week later, you get an email with accessories suggestions like tripods and lenses. How thoughtful—or how strategic? These are classic examples of sending personalized emails to recipients at the right times—not too early or too late.

You can inform, and not just promote

Emails don't always have to push for a sale. Sometimes, people browse a website to learn what's out there, not because they're ready to buy. Take gadget lovers, for example, who often visit electronics websites just to check out what's new—like the online version of window shopping. Use emails to tap into that curiosity. When emails share useful or educational content, people start taking them seriously. Not everyone likes being sold to all the time. But when a brand is known for sending personalized helpful information, it earns respect. Once that happens, recipients are more likely to take even their marketing emails seriously. The brand is no longer seen as just another marketer, because now their emails offer something more.



From subject line to send time: Personalization in action

Now that we know personalization is key in making emails stand out, let's see how we can achieve it.

Subject line

mail subject lines are our first chance to make the best impression. It's always better to ditch the monotonous "New collection out" and try something more personal like, "Hi Nora! Ready to upgrade your wardrobe?" Sounds more inviting, right? Adding a name or personal touch based on someone's interests makes your email feel special right from the start. It's like a handshake you give before starting the conversation. It's also good to throw in phrases like "only for you," "just for you," "today only," and so on to show a sense of urgency.

Pre-header text

Don't we all enjoy a great teaser before a movie release? That's exactly what an email pre-header is. It's that tiny but mighty piece of text that the recipients see right below the subject line, even before they actually open the email. Personalized pre-headers can complement the subject line for double the impact. For example, if the subject line reads, "Hi Mark! Your summer reading list is ready," the email pre-header could be something like, "Books picked just for you from all your favorite genres." This kind of pairing shows the recipient that the brand genuinely understands their needs and preferences, which makes them much more likely to follow their emails further.

Body content

The email body is where we can unleash the true potential of email personalization. Don't stop with just adding the recipient's first name. Make use of all the details and preferences that we know about them to craft that irresistible email. For example, if you've noticed that the recipient has been checking out a particular night cream on the website quite often and has left it in their cart, then acknowledge it in the email content by saying, "Ready to make your night time routine next-level?" Or if a recipient often shops for

fancy scented candles, inform them each time you stock up on a batch of fresh fragrance. Try to make the email content more informative by sharing tips related to a recent purchase. For instance, if someone has bought cat food from you, then remind them that it's the "purrfect" time to get some toys for their feline friend.

Images and videos

Visuals matter. They not only grab attention, but can be personalized, too! When an email thoughtfully matches images and videos to its recipients' preferences, it sounds warmer and more relevant. These efforts subtly say, "We see you, and we get what you love." For example, if a customer regularly orders coffee from your online store, the next time you email them, try adding images of coffee beans, brewing techniques, and coffee mugs rather than unrelated images. Wouldn't it be equally delightful for them and you if they could almost smell the coffee and feel the caffeine kick just by looking at the email?

Offers

Sometimes some offers sound out of place—like being offered a huge discount on a snow shovel, but you live in Dubai. You open the email and instantly lose interest. Nobody wants to be that brand. We can do better with email personalization. Tap into

what you've learned about your recipients and give them offers that feel like they were created just for them. For example, provide loyal customers with early access to new products and celebrate milestones—like customers' birthdays—with special perks.

Timing

Drafting the perfect email isn't where effort ends; timing them right is equally important. Let's say you run an online store that sells gym essentials. One of your customers, Micheala, tends to read her emails after lunch, while another customer, Paul, usually scrolls through his inbox during his breakfast. This is where personalization can make a difference. Rather than sending an email blast to all your contacts at 6 PM, you can schedule one to be sent to Micheala at 1 PM and another to Paul at 8 AM. But how does one find the best time for each recipient? Not by guesswork, but by closely analyzing email metrics to understand when each recipient is most likely to open and engage. When emails align with recipients' routines, they tend to see, read, and act upon them.



The more you know, the more effectively you can personalize

Personalizing emails starts with one thing: collecting accurate information. And how do we get that? Part of it comes straight from recipients' purchases and website behaviors, and the rest comes from paying attention to how they interact with our emails. Let's look at a few simple ways to gather the right kind of information to send personalized emails that actually click.

Signup forms

Collect relevant information like names, birthdays, locations, and other preferences through signup forms. Ask basic questions and collect details that you'll actually use. But let's not overwhelm them by asking too much.



Website analytics and tracking

Use tools to monitor what people check out on your website to send them emails that really match their interests. Make sure to get consent before collecting this data to respect privacy laws.



Customer feedback and surveys

Occasionally, we should ask our recipients what type of content they'd like to receive through quick surveys and encourage them with discounts or giveaway prizes to get them interested.



Purchase and engagement history

Sync your email platform with your online store to send relevant offers based on purchase patterns. Never let a cart stay abandoned. Always send that follow-up email with a tempting discount to encourage your customers to complete their purchases.



Email interactions

Track the types of emails your recipients open and the links they click. This can help fine-tune your messaging and enables you to customize content.

Keep these points in mind while personalizing emails

Personalized emails are no longer optional—but it's important not to overdo it. Maintain the right balance so that messages don't come across as trying too hard to grab attention. Keep the content helpful, not creepy. For instance, avoid saying, "Hi, we saw you scrolling through our website and looking at gaming laptops for half an hour last night." That can sound a little too invasive. A better way to put it could be, "Based on what you like, we thought you'd enjoy these laptop models we've newly launched."

Also, try not to send the same content over and over again, as this makes emails seem way too pushy and increase the chance they'll be marked as spam. Make sure your emails are actually benefiting your recipients by offering something useful, timely, or relevant to them. And most importantly, respect your recipients' privacy.

Be like a thoughtful friend having meaningful conversations with them, and not like a spy tracking their every move. Always remember that your emails have the power to build relationships—so make them count.



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