Net Atlantic :: Visual Guide

What's Wrong With Your Email Template

And What Simple Things You Can Do To Fix It

Net Atlantic
Email Marketing for Experts

Let's just face facts, shall we?

We could all be sending better email to our subscribers. We should be. You know it. We know it. And, really, we owe it to the many people who have not only opted-in to joining our mailing lists but who are also the same people that we hope opt to *stay* on our mailing lists.

Higher quality emails are not only more enjoyable to read but optimizing the very experience of reading your email messages leads to overall higher engagement. And it makes sense, when you think about it. A reader shouldn't have to work to read your messages and they definitely should never have to hunt down the salient bits of your mailing when they get them (especially your important calls-to-action that drive your conversions). If they can get your message with ease—and even enjoyment—that's a win for everyone.

Moreover, every interaction you have with your subscriber-base is an opportunity to reinforce your brand identity. Each message you send to your list is a chance for you to come off as completely polished and professional. And why would you ever want to appear as anything otherwise to your audience?

In this visual guide, we've put together a couple examples of poorly made email newsletter templates for your review. They're pretty bad. Now, while the companies and messaging depicted are completely fictitious (*they're made-up, we swear!*), the problems that plague them are, unfortunately, quite real. Not only that, the very things that mar them are the kind of common issues you can find all over the email marketing space.

As we examine some of these crimes committed against email marketing best practices, we'll also go over the reasons why these are problematic and provide you with some strategies to get around them and otherwise address the very issues they bring with them.

With this bit of knowledge in your pocket, maybe we can all start sending better mail.

EXAMPLE ONE

No obvious organization to the content

This header and splash area is WAY TOO BIG

DYNAMO
Health and Wellness Center

The standard Lorem Ipsum passage

Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium doloremque laudantium, totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt explicabo. Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laboriosam, nisi ut aliquid ex ea commodi consequatur? Quis autem vel eum iure reprehenderit qui in ea voluptate velit esse quam nihil molestiae consequatur, vel illum qui dolorem eum fugiat quo voluptas nulla paria. dolorem eum fugiat quo voluptas nulla paria. Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium oloremque laudantium, totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt explicabo. Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Atem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Ut quis nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laborio. quis nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laborio. exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laborio. Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium doloremque laudantium, totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt explicabo. Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laboriosam, nisi ut aliquid ex ea commodi consequatur? Quis autem vel eum iure reprehenderit qui in ea voluptate velit esse quam nihil molestiae consequatur, vel illum qui dolorem eum fugiat quo voluptas nulla paria. dolorem eum fugiat quo voluptas nulla paria. Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium oloremque laudantium, totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt explicabo. Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Atem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt.

WOW! This is so text-heavy!

Oh, come on! You know this is WAAAAY TOO MUCH CONTENT!

Learn More!

Your logo • 1788 Avenosky Ave. Fallsfield MA 08765 • 877-547-9216

No one's going to see this button all the way at the bottom like this

EXAMPLE ONE

LACK OF ORGANIZATION
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
Messaging without a readily apparent way it should be read can be frustrating as there are no visual cues provided to guide the reader through it.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Make disparate sections of content. Use paragraphs with headers. Divide your content into columns. Guide the reader through the layout with the deliberate use of spacing and contrast.

OVERLY LARGE HEADER/SPLASH AREA
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
The taller this is, the more the actual content of the email is pushed down the page. Some email clients have a preview pane that allows users to see the top 200 or so pixels of a message before opening it. This is valuable real estate as it helps determine whether or not the reader considers your message worth clicking on. You like Opens, don't you?

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Make better use of the area by populating it with intro text (embedded in the image or by simply putting in text in place of an image) and engage the reader immediately at the top. Also, you could just use a shorter image.

TEXT HEAVY
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
No one wants to be greeted by a wall of text when they open an email. Besides the visual monotony, reading too much text on a screen can be uncomfortable for the eyes.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Whether or not you have a lot of text, organization (as mentioned earlier) goes a long way to making it manageable. Break up the content and make it visually interesting with elements such as images or bulleted lists. These are great ways to elaborate on the content without having to write more.

TOO MUCH CONTENT
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
Email that scrolls and scrolls is rarely welcome in anyone's inbox. No, really. Stop doing this. If your email already scrolls for forever, guess what it'll do on a mobile device.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
If the amount of content you have in your email runs as long as something that belongs on a web page, then take users to such a web page. Incorporate truncation links and bring them there. Not only will these make your messaging concise but now you're driving traffic to your site. Score.

CALL-TO-ACTION PLACEMENT
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
If you bury your calls-to-action (a.k.a. The Reason You Are Sending The Email) under a ton of content or fail to make them easy to find, you're not going to get a lot of clicks. They might not even know there was a CTA in there at all.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Always place your calls-to-action in a place of prominence and, in the case of your primary CTA, definitely in a location that doesn't require scrolling to get to. Make them big and bold and hard to miss.

EXAMPLE ONE

WAY MORE ORGANIZED!

It's clear where the reader's eye goes from element to element

Images break up all the text and just make the email nicer to look at

The content begins higher up on the page

DYNAMO
Health and Wellness Center

The standard Lorem Ipsum passage

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, voluptatem natus sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna architecto beatae.

The Standard Loreum Ipsum Passage

"Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium doloremque laudantium, totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt explicabo. Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt. Neque porro quisquam est, qui dolorem ipsum quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia.

Read more »

The Standard Loreum Ipsum Passage

numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore et dolore magnam aliquam quaerat voluptatem. Ut enim ad minima veniam, quis nostrum exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laboriosam, nisi ut aliquid ex ea commodi consequatur? Quis autem vel eum iure reprehenderit qui in ea voluptate velit esse quamnostrum exercitationem ullam corporis suscipit laboriosam, nisi ut aliquid ex ea commodi consequatur? Quis autem vel eum iure reprehenderit qui in ea voluptate velit.

Read more »

Learn More!

"Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium doloremque laudantium, totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto beatae vitae dicta sunt expli quia dolor sit amet, consectetur, adipisci velit, sed quia non numquam eius modi tempora incidunt ut labore.

Read more »

Your logo • 1788 Ave Gasky Ave. Fallsfield MA 08765 • 877-547-9216

Can't miss this beautiful CTA up here!

Using truncation links means less content in the email as well as a chance to bring subscribers to your web site or blog
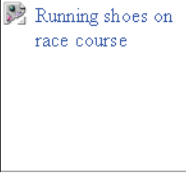
So much more concise!

WIN!

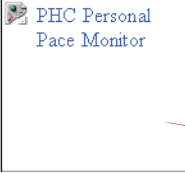# EXAMPLE TWO

Plus Health Clinic
Your Wellness, Our Promise

Summer Wellness News

10 Things You Can Do To Prepare For Your First 5K Race
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Quisque sed tortor sit amet nulla malesuada sodales eget sit amet nisi. Fusce diam arcu, euismod at blandit at, egestas in nisl. Pellentesque rutrum mi nec neque accumsan placerat. Cras sed purus enim.

Integer euismod, augue non malesuada dignissim, turpis libero posuere nisi, a tincidunt felis velit ac quam. In at enim ut sem auctor facilisis in nec augue.

12 Safety Tips For Endurance Running In The Outdoor Heat
Pellentesque porttitor lobortis tortor, non laoreet neque auctor eu. Pellentesque porttitor lobortis tortor, non laoreet neque auctor eu. Proin viverra feugiat mauris, quis fringilla nunc fermentum in. In id lorem eget augue pellentesque euismod nec a quam.

Pellentesque ullamcorper aliquam nisi nec eleifend. Nulla libero augue, aliquet vel dapibus eget, sodales quis purus. Maecenas consectetur tincidunt nisi in feugiat. Morbi ac urna at velit imperdiet pretium vitae at leo.

Donec sodales lobortis erat, sed tempus quam ultricies a. Etiam hendrerit mauris rhoncus erat fermentum rhoncus. Mauris ac risus nisi, ut pharetra velit. Nullam ultricies laoreet eros. Sed sagittis, orci sit amet cursus tincidunt, mi ante semper nisl.

The Plus Health Clinic Personal Pace Monitor Keeps Pace With Your Active Runner Lifestyle
Nullam placerat placerat lectus, sit amet tincidunt erat volutpat ut. Aenean eleifend pretium felis id sagittis. Phasellus iaculis vestibulum mattis.

Sed dolor lacus, rhoncus sit amet euismod ac, commodo et quam. Donec hendrerit nisi urna. Ursat sit amet dor nomen.

Save The Date: The 2012 PHC Tennis Open Labor Day Weekend
Sed pulvinar, mauris ac euismod semper, tortor lorem ullamcorper magna, a consequat diam lectus ut leo. Donec lectus metus, placerat id facilisis at, accumsan eget velit.

Duis euismod justo magna, at commodo nisl. Vestibulum rutrum aliquam tortor, ut congue orci faucibus tincidunt. Nulla rhoncus laoreet est sed tempus.

$10.99/lb Fresh Lobster Special
Maecenas consectetur tincidunt nisi in feugiat. Morbi ac urna at velit imperdiet pretium vitae.

Mauris ac risus nisi, ut pharetra velit. Nullam ultricies laoreet eros. Sed sagittis, orci sit amet cursus tincidunt, mi ante semper nisl.

Integer euismod, augue non malesuada dignissim, turpis libero posuere nisi, a tincidunt felis velit ac quam. Nulla libero augue, aliquet vel dapibus eget, sodales quis purus. In at enim ut sem auctor facilisis in nec augue. Sign Up For Membership Today »

[Annotation: Broken images? Seriously?]

[Annotation: What happened to the ALT text here?]

[Annotation: Unrelated to everything else – IRRELEVANT]

[Annotation: What does this even say?]

EXAMPLE TWO

BROKEN IMAGES
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
Sending an email with a broken image in it pretty much communicates to your subscribers that you just sent them a broken email. How embarrassing. And what's worse is the broken image itself will no doubt compete with the actual content of your mailing in terms of what made the biggest impression on your subscribers.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Always test your mailings before they go out to your lists. That way you can make sure to catch any of these otherwise preventable issues from making it into any of your subscribers' inboxes. And don't just check to make sure images load; be sure to check your links, too!

MISSING IMAGE ALT TEXT
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
All the graphics you make use of in your email should have ALT text specified for them in their HTML. For images that fail to load or load slowly, this allows a message to still be communicated to the reader in place of the actual graphical content. This is especially important since a lot of email clients do not display images by default. And if you have text embedded in the images and they fail to load, you can forget about your messaging coming across. And those nice call-to-action buttons you made? No one will know they're even there if images don't render for whatever reason.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Pretty straight-forward solution here: include ALT text with your images. To make things easier, fold it into your process: as soon as you insert an image in an email, immediately add its ALT text in the same step.

RELEVANCE
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
Throwing every possible message that you can into a single email is less than ideal. For one thing, doing so contributes to the email's overall length unnecessarily. Secondly, it diffuses the overall tone and muddies up the point of the communication.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Keep your messaging somewhat focused. Address the primary objective of the mailing with little to no digressions in order to keep engagement and interest high. Relevant messages targeted effectively lead to higher conversions and open rates. If you have other items to communicate to the subscriber, consider sending another separate mailing.

LEGIBILITY
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
This should be pretty self-evident: if your readers can not read your message, then your message failed to be communicated.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Ensure that your content is legible by only using elements that provide contrast when juxtaposed against each other. Additionally, consider having your email reviewed by other people on your team before it is sent out to your list. A fresh set of eyes may spot something glaringly obvious that you are overlooking.

EXAMPLE TWO

Email focused on a single topic or a single message increases relevancy and leads to improved overall engagement

Plus Health Clinic
Your Wellness, Our Promise

Summer Wellness News

Integer euismod, augue non malesuada dignissim, turpis libero posuere nisi, a tincidunt felis velit ac quam. Nulla libero augue, aliquet vel dapibus eget, sodales quis purus. In at enim ut sem auctor facilisis in nec augue. Sign Up For Membership Today »

10 Simple Things Every Runner Should Do To Prepare For Their First 5K Race
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Quisque sed tortor sit amet nulla malesuada sodales eget sit amet nisi. Fusce diam arcu, euismod at blandit at, egestas in nisl. Pellentesque rutrum mi nec neque accumsan placerat.
Read More »

The Plus Health Clinic Personal Pace Monitor Keeps Pace With Your Active Runner Lifestyle
Nullam placerat placerat lectus, sit amet tincidunt erat volutpat ut. Aenean eleifend pretium felis id sagittis. Phasellus iaculis vestibulum mattis.
Read More »

12 Safety Tips For Running In The Outdoor Heat
Pellentesque porttitor lobortis tortor, non laoreet neque auctor eu. Proin viverra feugiat mauris, quis fringilla nunc fermentum in. In id lorem eget augue pellentesque euismod nec a quam.
Read More »

Integer euismod, augue non malesuada dignissim, turpis libero posuere nisi, a tincidunt felis velit ac quam. Nulla libero augue, aliquet vel dapibus eget, sodales quis purus.

Making sure that images load before sending out the email will ensure your readers will get the look and feel you intended

Adding ALT text to your images helps communicate your message even when the images can't - so make sure they're in there!

Text is legible

Links are legible

Email is meant to be read so why make it hard to read?

EXAMPLE THREE

What?! Is this entire email just ONE BIG IMAGE!?

All the text in this email is not only ALL-CAPS but it's all embedded in the image

This email actually has NO TEXT in it!

Why are the logos inconsistent?

Where are the calls-to-action and links?

Northern Health Clinic will provide you the best best in the New England area. **health care**

THE STANDARD LOREM IPSUM PASSAGE USED SINCE THE 1500S

- LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT
- LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT
- LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT
- LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT
- LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET
CONSECTETUR ADIPISICING ELIT, SED DO EIUSMOD TEMPOR INCIDIDUNT UT LABORE ET DOLORE MAGNA ALIQUA. UT ENIM AD MINIM VENIAM, QUIS NOSTRUD EXERCITATION ULLAMCO LABORIS NISI UT ALIQUIP EX EA COMMODO CONSEQUAT.

DUIS AUTE IRURE DOLOR IN REPREHENDERIT IN VOLUPTATE VELIT ESSE CILLUM DOLORE EU FUGIAT NULLA PARIATUR. EXCEPTEUR SINT OCCAECAT CUPIDATAT NON PROIDENT.

NORTHERN HEALTH CLINIC • 1788 AVENOSKY AVENUE, FALLSFIELD, MA 08765 • 877-547-9216

EXAMPLE THREE

ALL-IMAGE EMAIL & EMBEDDED TEXT
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
Email that is one big image is one big, bad idea. From an inboxing perspective, ISPs will likely flag it as spam. Besides that, the more images the email needs to download, the longer it may take to render on mobile networks. And if your messaging is embedded in the images and those fail to load, then your email may reach your audience without *any* message. Also, remember that embedded text can't be selected for convenient copying and pasting by readers.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Design your email in such a way that it has distinct regions that are entirely one color. Additionally, ensure that the areas that text appears in are against a single color background and not against a texture or an image. With these in place, the design can be "sliced" (ask your favorite web designer how) in such a way that the aforementioned regions can be made entirely in HTML and, more importantly, with live, selectable text.

ALL-CAPS TEXT
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
All-caps text has its place and, when implemented sparingly, can be used to great effect. However, if the entirety of your message is in caps, realize that your text is being made less legible. All-caps produces characters that are not as visually distinct from each other and, taken together, are harder to read. Plus, there's that whole thing about how everyone hates it when people write in all-caps.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Don't write everything in all-caps. Just don't.

INCONSISTENT BRANDING
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
By inconsistent branding, this refers to the branding within the email but it can also refer to inconsistencies between what the email uses and what the company normally uses. Inconsistent branding makes your communications come off as less professional. Standardized branding helps establish trust with your email and communicates that it is a genuine message from the company it claims to be from.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Refer to your company's brand standards and follow them. Otherwise, always default to the look and feel as it's been established by the company web site. The transition between the email newsletter and the site it points to should be seamless when it comes to its branding.

CALLS-TO-ACTION & LINKS
WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM
While the lack of calls-to-action isn't a problem in and of itself, their absence in email communication with your audience is a missed opportunity. Used correctly, calls-to-action compel recipients to engage further with your brand and to go and do something (i.e., use your service or purchase your product). Their inclusion also provides a clear point to your message.

SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES
Re-evaluate your communications strategy. See if you can rework the topics of your mailings in such a way as to make particular CTAs the point of each touch you make with your audience. This way you give them a goal and empower them to make a choice to take action. And don't forget that calls-to-action can also be utilized to drive readers to other related content. When it comes to successful CTAs, relevancy is key.

EXAMPLE THREE

Email is a mixture of both images and live, selectable text

Calls-to-action help communicate the point of the email message

Northern Health Clinic will provide you the best best in the New England area. health care

Lorem Ipsum Dolor Sit Amet Consectetur Adipiscing Elit Quisque Sed Tortor

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Quisque sed tortor sit amet nulla malesuada sodales eget sit amet nisi. Fusce diam arcu, euismod at blandit at, egestas in nisl. Pellentesque rutrum mi nec neque accumsan placerat.

Cras sed purus enim. Integer euismod, augue non malesuada dignissim, turpis libero posuere nisi, a tincidunt felis velit ac quam. In at enim ut sem auctor facilisis in nec augue. **Learn More »**

Sign Up Now »

- Enim ut sem auctor
- Pellentesque porttitor
- Proin viverra
- Feugiat mauris
- Lorem eget augue
- Quam euismod

Consistent use of logos helps make the email come off as professional and genuine

Northern Health Clinic • 1788 Avenosky Avenue, Fallsfield, MA 08765 • 877-547-9216

The world is a better place because this is one fewer message with all-caps

About
Net Atlantic

Net Atlantic is an industry leader in email marketing. Since 1995, Net Atlantic, Inc. has been assisting organizations of all sizes communicate effectively online. As an Email Service Provider (ESP) Net Atlantic offers clients the most feature-rich email marketing solutions at a cost-effective price. With unparalleled email marketing capabilities, expert deliverability management and responsive technical support, Net Atlantic's solutions provide you the ability to create, send, track and manage your email marketing campaigns successfully.

www.netatlantic.com | **sales@netatlantic.com** | **(877) 263 8285**

Net Atlantic
Email Marketing for Experts

in net-atlantic-inc.

🐦 @netatlantic

f NetAtlanticInc

g+ +Netatlantic

📢 blog.netatlantic.com