



# B2B Email Marketing Best Practices

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More than 130 best practices, strategies,  
and tips for business-to-business email  
content marketing

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**Proteus**<sup>B2B</sup>  
MARKETING

## About this eBook

Hello, Fellow B2B Marketer!

Email marketing remains one of the best ways to reach business-to-business prospects and nurture those contacts as they progress through the buying cycle.

If you're just starting B2B email marketing, I hope this eBook provides a framework for understanding the relevant issues and increases your chances of success.





If you've been doing B2B email marketing for some time, my hope is that you'll find several new things to think about.





This eBook:

- **Features more than 130 best practices, strategies, and tips for B2B email marketing**
- **Focuses on the most popular type of B2B email marketing—content marketing, such as email newsletters**
- **Goes beyond the email itself, discussing how to integrate and leverage social media, web analytics, and search engine optimization**
- **Covers general email marketing issues as well as those specific to B2B marketing**

**Note to readers:** Early in this eBook we cover more universal issues of content and design (although there are some specific B2B issues in there, too.) While we could have just included those practices that relate to B2B, doing so would have ignored many other factors important in the success of email marketing. As you progress through the eBook, you'll find more and more related to issues specific to B2B email marketing.

I hope you enjoy this eBook and that it helps you hone your strategy and tactics. If you find it valuable, please share it with your friends and colleagues by using the options below.

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All the best!



Galen De Young  
Managing Director  
Proteus B2B



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# Landing Pages

## Have an Email Sign-up on your Landing Pages

If your email marketing content continues on your site, be sure to include a way for people to sign up for the newsletter. Perhaps your email got forwarded to someone else who happened to click through to your site. That person isn't a subscriber. Make sure you have an easy way for her to become one.

Also, if your email's landing pages are linked into your site's navigation or can be otherwise crawled by search engines, people will find these landing pages, either via your navigation or through search engine referrals. Ideally, you'd like to make sure these people understand the content is part of your email marketing, and that they can also easily subscribe.

## Integrate General Site Navigation on Landing Pages

If the goal of your email is not a single, focused conversion action, make sure your site's general navigation is accessible on your email's landing pages. While the goal of B2B pay-per-click landing pages may be to remove options and distractions in the conversion funnel, that's not necessarily the case in B2B email marketing. Many times, B2B email marketing is about lead nurturing, getting subscribers more acquainted with your company and its offerings. In most B2B cases, you want subscribers to continue to explore what you have to offer, not only the product or service you're trying to sell, but your company as well. That's because one of the key factors influencing B2B purchasing decisions is perceived risk. In providing general site navigation on your landing pages, you allow subscribers to dive deeper into other areas of interest or concern they may have.

## Link to Other Content on Your Site

Many email marketers make the mistake of treating click-through to an article as the goal. While that's a good starting goal, you should be thinking about easy ways to let the reader jump deeper into related content on your site. While readers may be able to jump to other areas of your site through your site's general navigation, it's far better if your content contains occasional text links in the article's body copy that point to other highly relevant pages on your site. Also, make sure your landing pages promote other relevant content marketing vehicles available for download, like white papers, podcasts, or case studies.

# On Your Site

## Remember SEO

Most email marketing newsletters carry abstracts or snippets of the stories. Readers then click through to a website to continue reading. If you've got good email marketing content you're going to post on a public part of your site—content for which you'd like to get found via organic search—optimize your content for the search engines. Make sure your email copywriters understand SEO. All the best practices for website SEO apply here—keyword-rich content, title tags, alt tags, headings, meta descriptions, URLs, etc.

## Specify an Appropriate URL for Each Page

Don't let your web team choose some abstract URL. Ideally, copywriters of your email content understand SEO and the keyword strategy for the article/page, and can specify a keyword-rich URL consistent with that strategy.

## Don't Post All of Your Content to a Single Page

Every once and a while, we'll get an email in which all of the articles link to a single web page containing all of the email's content. Keep page content focused. If you have multiple articles in your email, put them on individual pages on your site. This will help with SEO.

## Link to the Content of Your Email

If you've got good email content that continues on your site and you want that content publicly accessible, make sure you link to that content from other areas on your site. If you don't link to that content from elsewhere on your site, site visitors and search engines aren't going to find it.

Also, intra-site linking is important. It's not too hard to remember to link out from the body copy of your content to other pages on your site. It's a lot harder to remember to review body copy on other site pages and insert links with good anchor text that point visitors to new content on your site.

*On Your Site continued*

## Remove Tagging from the Web Version

If you offer an html version of your email on your site, make sure you remove any tagging related to subscribers. Also remove links to your profile center, forward-to-a-friend, and other similar links.

## Create an RSS Feed of your Email Newsletter

If you post an html version of your email on your site, consider having an RSS feed for the section where you post these versions. Savvy people who may not be ready to or may not want to subscribe could still get notified. Sure, anonymous people, including competitors, could get a feed of your email-marketing newsletter. But assuming you're not uptight about requiring an email address and more interested in getting your message out, then there's no reason not to do this.



## Consider Onsite Sub-Nav of your Email Content

If your email has several pieces of content that continue at different URLs on your site, subscribers click through to various pages on the website. Each is a destination. The problem is, once they're on your site at a given article, subscribers can't navigate to other content in the email without going back to the email.

An onsite sub-navigation menu, on the other hand, provides links to the other articles. Think of it as a mini table of contents in a sidebar on every page. Subscribers can easily click to the next article of interest without returning to the original email. It's not only a convenient and user-friendly format, it promotes and encourages more click-through to other content of interest.

*On Your Site continued*

## Promote Email Sign Up on your Website



There are lots of ways to promote sign-up on your site. What you choose to do depends on what real estate is available within page layouts, the content on your site, the nature of your industry and prospects, and the overall roll and importance of email marketing.

One option is to put sign-ups on every page. You never know which page someone will land on (especially via search engine referrals), and you may miss a sign up opportunity if they don't they continue deeper into your site. Some may think this is overkill. You know your customers, prospects, and industry and what makes the most sense. Perhaps limit sign ups to the pages relevant to the pages most likely visited by those in various stages of the purchase cycle. Certainly, the home page and news pages, and also pages with educational and information content.

# Forwarding

## Forward-to-a-Friend with Opt-in Capability



Provide a forward-to-a-friend option. Make it prominent and easy to find. When subscribers forward content to friends, it increases your visibility and reach. Make sure the people to whom the email is forwarded can opt-in (subscribe). It's a great way to grow your subscriber base—and the functionality is critical to reaching and engaging all parties potentially influencing the B2B buying process.

Be sure to tell your subscribers when the secondary recipient's information becomes available to you. Subscribers will be more likely to forward your email if they know the secondary recipient's contact information only becomes available to you if they opt in.

## Brand Your Forward-to-a-Friend and Profile Pages

You want people to keep their profile information up to date, and you want them to forward your emails. So be sure to brand your Profile Center, Forward-to-a-Friend, and other "account" pages. At least put your logo on these pages. Generally, these pages have long URLs that don't contain your company name—and if your identity isn't clearly shown on these pages, your subscribers may have second thoughts about providing personal information. By branding these pages, you give people assurance that they're sending information to you, not some unknown third party or shared service.

## Encourage Forward-to-a-Friend, Not Forwarding

If subscribers simply forward your email to another person rather than using a forward-to-a-friend feature, the links in that email are still tagged for the original subscriber. The secondary recipient (friend) can click on the "profile center" link, altering the contact information and profile settings of the primary recipient (subscriber). Let your subscribers know the forward-to-a-friend feature is the best way to forward content to others. Also tell them if the secondary recipient's email address is disclosed to you when they forward content or only if and when secondary recipients opt-in and subscribe.

*Forwarding continued*

## Allow Forwarding to Multiple Friends

A surprising number of email service providers allow subscribers to input just one friend's email address, requiring you to repeat the process to forward to another friend. Other ESPs have just one field, but allow you to enter multiple addresses separated by commas.

If you have a choice, use a forward-to-a-friend feature that has separate fields for each friend's address. If you provide a single field, they're more likely to provide only a single friend. The presence of several blank fields on the forward-to-a-friend interface will prompt subscribers to consider whether they have more than one friend who should receive the email, an especially important consideration if you're trying to influence multiple parties involved in the purchase decision.

## Include a Forward-to-a-Friend Comment Box

Consider the option of a comment box for subscribers to offer a brief message or commentary regarding the materials they're forwarding to friends. They'll often add a short, personal endorsement of the content they're forwarding. You may also consider a pre-written personalized comment that the sender can either choose to use or alter, such as, "(Senders Name) thought you may find the attached article from (Your Company Name or Newsletter Name) interesting."

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# Leveraging Social Media

## Promote your Email Newsletter on your Blog

Feature your email newsletter on your blog and provide a way for your blog readers to subscribe to it. Promote it in the sidebar of your blog near the top of each page. Be sure to include a link to a sample issue.

## Link to your Blog

Somewhere in your email—either in the sidebar, header, or footer—promote a link to your blog. Have options for them to subscribe to the blog, either through RSS or via email. That way you can gain people as both email and blog subscribers. Not only does this give you two media through which you can reach your contacts, but it provides a back-up conduit, in case people for some reason unsubscribe from your email or your email is later blocked (e.g., change in recipient's spam filtering).

## Link to your Social Media Profiles

Put links to your social media profiles in your email marketing. Email marketing goes out whenever you send it. But you're not going to send it every day. Perhaps only once a month. But if you promote links to your social media profiles, email recipients can connect with you on LinkedIn or Facebook, or discover and follow you on Twitter, where you can have additional and more frequent touchpoints.

## Post Email Content to Your LinkedIn Groups

LinkedIn is one of the most popular social media sites for people in the B2B realm. Assuming your email marketing content continues on your site, you should promote that content in the LinkedIn groups to which you belong. Members of LinkedIn groups choose to get either a daily or weekly digest of activity within the group. That activity includes members' postings of news, discussions, and other information. If you have good content that continues on your site, you should submit that content and its URL as a news or discussion item within relevant groups.

In posting to LinkedIn groups, you can link to either the web version of your newsletter or to individual stories within it. Either way, however, you want readers to understand that the content came from an email newsletter and they can subscribe to it. For that reason, it may be best to link to the web version of the email. Just make sure the web version has a clear and obvious button that allows readers to subscribe. Also, if you're trying to point people to, let's say, the third story in the web version of your email newsletter, be sure to insert named anchors in the web version and use URLs with named anchors as links to that content. That way, people who click through won't have to figure out which of the four articles in your newsletter you're trying to reference.

In posting to LinkedIn groups, however, remember to also post and cite others' content. It's good social media etiquette. If all you do is promote your own content, you're really not contributing to the group. You're simply using it as a sales platform. People can easily see the difference.

## Post Great Content to Forums & Bookmarking Sites

If you have really good content, be sure to submit that content to relevant forums in which you participate and to relevant social bookmarking sites. Don't submit marginal content that will disappoint those who click through to it. Again, as noted in the previous tip, make sure those who do click through understand the content came from an email, and they can subscribe to it.

## Provide Social Bookmarking Options

Give your subscribers an easy way to submit your content to social bookmarking sites, like Digg, Del.icio.us, StumbleUpon, Reddit, Mixx, Yahoo Buzz, and Propeller. These are general bookmarking sites, but there may also be some B2B sites specific to your industry. Include social bookmarking icons at the bottom of your content that continues on your site. If your content comes from your blog, an easy way to provide these options is through plug-ins, such as Sociable for WordPress.

## Tweet your Newsletter to your Followers

If you post a publicly accessible html version of your email newsletter on your site, be sure to tweet new editions to your followers on Twitter. Be sure to tag the shortened URL you tweet so you properly attribute the source of traffic to that page. Many Twitter clients don't pass along the referrer string. Unless you tag the shortened URL, any click-through from Twitter clients like TweetDeck will show as direct load instead of visits referred from your email.

## Tweet with Hashtags

If you tweet editions of your email newsletter on Twitter, be sure to use hashtags when appropriate. Hashtags are a way of tagging your tweets so others can follow tweets relating to a particular topic. For instance, in TweetDeck, you may want to set up a column to track all the tweets with the #b2b hashtag. In doing so, you can track all tweets that include #b2b within the 140-character tweet, regardless of whether you follow those users.

WeFollow.com lets you search for hashtags and lets you see how many people have indicated on WeFollow.com that they follow a particular hashtag. You can also see how many followers are following those people. For instance, we went to WeFollow.com and searched for the hashtag #b2b. As of the day we are writing this, there are 117 Twitter users who have signed up as following #b2b. (There are likely many more, but this is the number registered at WeFollow.) It also shows that these 117 Twitter users have, in total, more than 60,000 users following them. Note: There certainly is some duplication of followers, so the cumulative number of unique followers will be less than that 60,000, but it's still a big number.

Well, you can do the math. You tweet something that includes the link to the web version of your newsletter and a relevant hashtag. Five people following that hashtag retweet your tweet. Those five people have 200 people that follow them. And so on. As people click through to your site, they have an option to sign up for your email newsletter—and they may also follow you on Twitter.

All this, however, is predicated on having great content that someone wants to read and retweet.

A few things to remember. Make sure the hashtags you use are relevant to your content. Tweet different content to different hashtag followers when appropriate. Sometimes you might tweet the same content to different hashtag followers and adjust your tweet for relevancy to that audience. Lastly, don't load up a tweet with four or five hashtags. It looks spammy.

## Let Subscribers Easily Tweet your Content

Provide recipients with a way to easily tweet your newsletter or any article within it simply by clicking a button. The easier it is to do, the more likely they are to tweet it. Plus, the mere presence of a button will spur them to think about tweeting your content when they otherwise may not have considered it.

## A little information about us...

### About Proteus B2B

Proteus B2B is a marketing consulting firm specializing in repositioning B2B companies and their brands. We help our clients identify and migrate to positions of market leadership where their brands have few credible substitutes in the marketplace.



Our services relevant to this eBook include:

- [B2B Email Marketing Audit](#)
- [B2B Email Marketing Strategy](#)
- [B2B Email Marketing Design](#)
- [B2B Email Marketing Coaching & Consulting](#)



Named to BtoB Magazine's List of Top Agencies for 2009, Proteus B2B is located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Our clients serve multiple industries and include small to medium size businesses as well as those in the Fortune 500.

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### About Galen De Young

Galen De Young is Managing Director of [Proteus B2B](#) and [Proteus SEO](#). Galen is a recognized expert in B2B marketing and in B2B search marketing. He's a frequent speaker at conferences, colleges and universities, and other industry events. He's also a regular columnist for Search Engine Land, and a periodic contributor to MarketingProfs.

