

# Designing the perfect email marketing campaign



dotdigital  
engagement cloud

# Designing the perfect email marketing campaign

How do you create email marketing campaigns that look awesome and convert?

With nearly 300 billion emails being sent every day, making an impact in the inbox is vital. So how do we do that? Immediately, most of our minds will go to email design. Design a visual, eye-catching email and half the battle is over. And, you're right to an extent. With only five seconds to grab the reader's attention, the look and feel of your email makes a huge difference.

But, as people skim over new emails, it's got to do more than simply look nice to capture attention and convert readers to shoppers.

The perfect email campaign will grab the reader's eye, keep them engaged, and give subscribers a reason to convert.

In this guide, we've broken the email into three sections:

<div>1</div> <div><b>The basics</b></div> <div>Everything you need to create fully optimized email marketing campaigns.</div>	<div>2</div> <div><b>The template</b></div> <div>How to create the perfect email template that'll grab and hold readers' attention.</div>	<div>3</div> <div><b>The content</b></div> <div>What you need to do to create content that drives customers into action.</div>
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By following the simple steps we've outlined in each of these three sections you'll be creating email campaigns guaranteed to convert.

# The basics

What works for one campaign may not work every time. Optimizing every send is essential to keep open rates high and you do this by continuously testing.

## Testing

There are several key variables you should be testing to maximize your campaign's performance, including:

- subject lines;
- friendly from names, and
- content and layout.

With subject lines, there are several elements you can test. Try changing the length, including personalization, using emojis, or urgent language. There is no golden formula waiting to be discovered when it comes to subject lines. Testing should be a constant part of your email set-up to ensure full optimization.

Your sender name can also have a big impact on open rates. Vary between brand, team, or personal sender names to see what drives readers to open. For instance, if you're providing shoppers with a service, they might prefer to receive emails from 'Kate from aBrand' rather than 'aBrand Sales Team'.

You can also play around with your design and content by going heavy on the images and light on text and vice versa. You'll never know unless you test, so get testing.

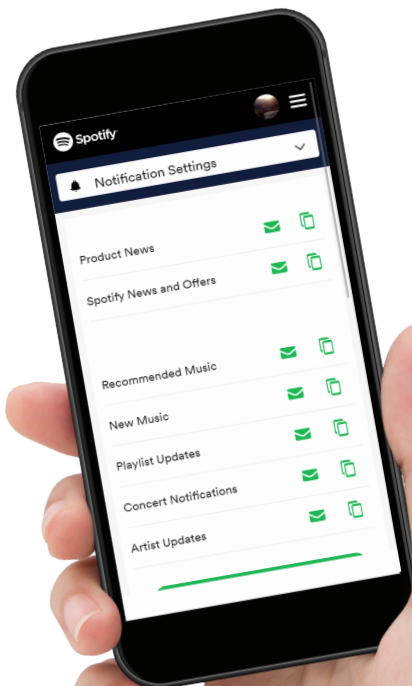


## Preference center & unsubscribes

If you really want to send subscribers content that'll engage them, you need to know what they want. And, the best way to know what they want is to simply ask. That's the beauty of a preference center.

There's no point sending a male contact images of women's shoes or sending a shopper just interested in Jewelry content about wallets. You can discover all this with a simple preference center. If you empower customers to pick what they want to hear from you about, then you'll always be able to send them relevant and engaging content.

This is also a great tool to prevent unsubscribes. By offering alternative email frequencies, you're offering readers another option that keeps them connected to the brand but without clogging the inbox.



## Preheader

Preheader text is an important part of your email. As mobile open rates continue to grow, preheader text is only set to get more important as a preview for what's to come. Alongside the subject line, it gives readers valuable context which can help encourage them to open.

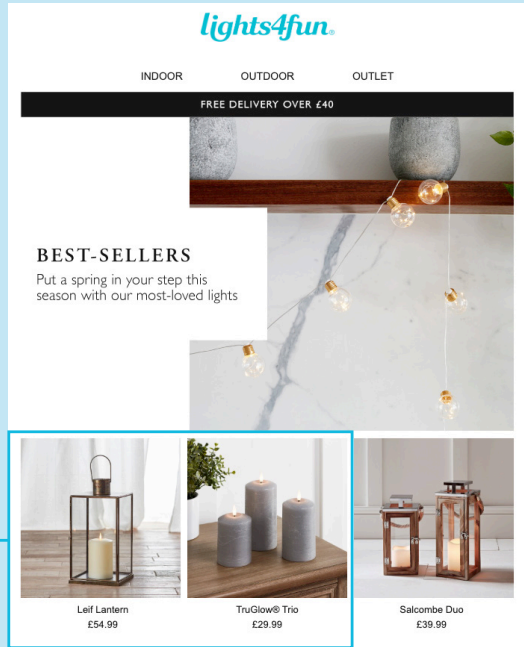
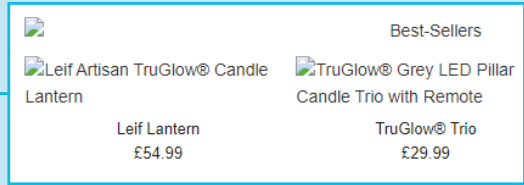
Your preheader should be short and attention grabbing, but with more insight than your subject line. The average adult's attention span is only about eight seconds, so if your text is too long, you've already lost them.

Try enticing customers to open using free shipping or samples in the preheader. Or tell them exactly what they can expect inside the email. It's even a great place to express some brand personality. Whatever you decide to do with yours, make sure you're testing and optimizing.

## Alt text

Alt text is simply some alternative text that is displayed with an image. Its purpose is to provide context about what your image is when images are blocked, turned off, or customers are using screen reading technology.

Beyond the obvious accessibility benefits, when a new subscriber receives their first email from you, many email clients will disable images by default. Alt text helps ensure your message is still clear and actionable even with images off.



## Your basics checklist

- ✓ Subject line testing – e.g. emoji vs. personalization
- ✓ Link to preference center included
- ✓ Unsubscribe button clear and easy to find
- ✓ Preheader text
- ✓ Alt text for images



# The template

So, once you have the basics down, it's time to work on your email design. There are three tips we believe every email should follow:

1

**Keep it simple**

2

**Lead the eye**

3

**Power-up  
your CTAs**

## KISS

In other words, 'keep it simple, stupid'.

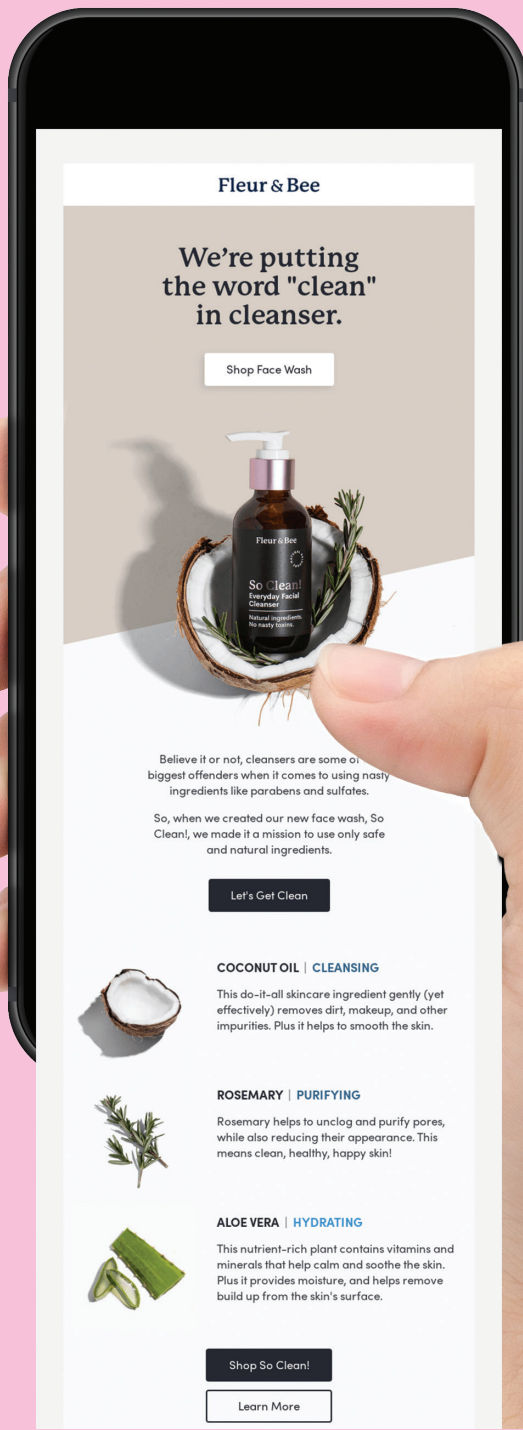
This basic design principle has been around since the 1960s and still rings as true today as it did back then.

Your email design needs to be simple so the reader can consume it quickly. You only have a few seconds to hook the reader. Five seconds. So, how are you supposed to get your message across?

Before you start designing any email, you should be asking yourself what you want your email to achieve and how you will measure its success. Use the answers to these questions to help you simplify, focus your message and choose your audience wisely.

A single focused message is easier to process and digest. Clear headings and simplified body copy make the message obvious and easy to digest. Even if your email needs to contain a lot of information, ensure the above the fold content is to-the-point and engaging enough to convert without the rest of the message.

Above everything else, a simple email is far more memorable than a busy one. It helps build a positive association with your brand and increases the likelihood of conversion.



## Lead the eye

Good email design doesn't have to be a work of art. It has a job to do and that's to increase opens and clicks.

You should think of your email marketing as a shop window. You need to give readers a peek into your store, just enough to entice them in to explore further. Pick a few key products and show them in a focused and eye-catching way. Featuring less products, articles, and stories in fewer columns means less visual overload.

We already covered how overloading emails can lead to customers switching off. The same principle stands for how many images you use in your email.

Your emails need a hero image to engage the reader. Readers are time-poor, so you have to catch their attention immediately with engaging above the fold content. Carefully consider the imagery, heading, and copy you include in this area.

Know the action you want the reader to take. Whether it's an immediate click or to keep scrolling, think about how you're going to achieve this. If you want them to click, place a CTA clearly above the fold. If your aim is to get them scrolling, break up your main heading to entice readers to keep going.


# THIS *is worth the* SCROLL

(OR JUST CLICK HERE)






Always remember that white space is your friend. It gives your copy and imagery room to breathe and gives your readers space to process what you're saying. Don't be afraid to get creative with it. Just because we say white doesn't mean we mean white. All we really mean is to create defined sections for all the content in your email.



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Tan Suede



SADIE TASSEL SLIP-ON  
Royal Navy Suede



SADIE TASSEL SLIP-ON  
Beaumont Suede

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## Sadie Knit Ballet

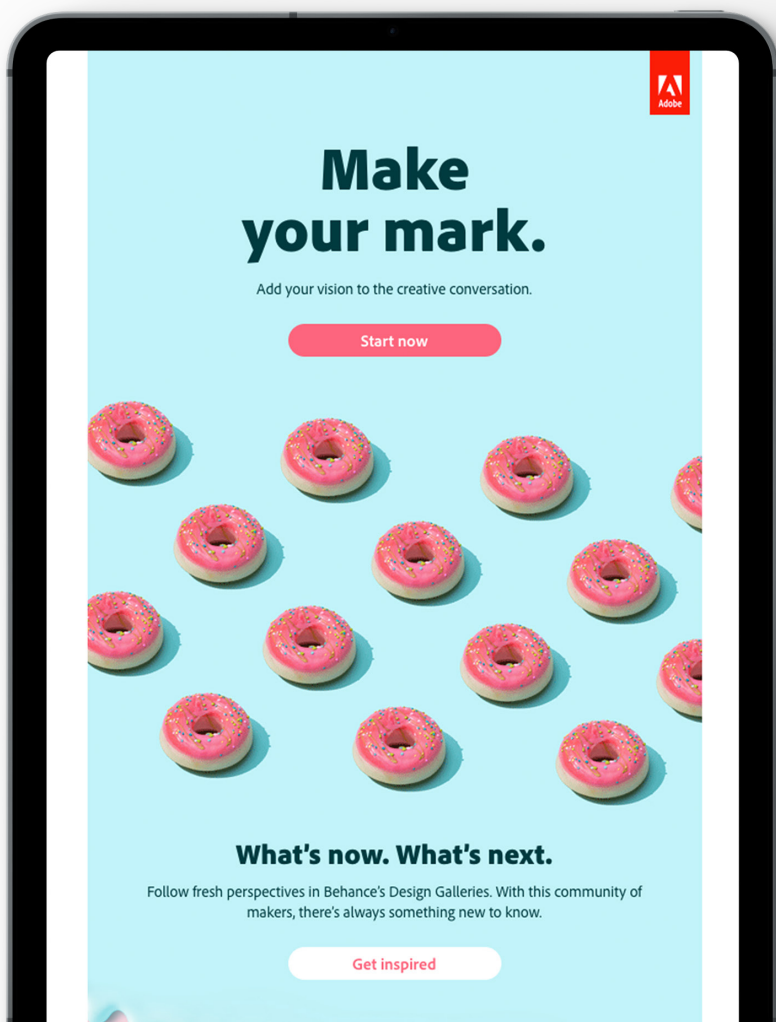


Another way to encourage this action is to try the 'funnel' principle. Start your email with heavier or wider content and gradually narrowing things 'funneling' the eye towards the CTA.

## Power-up CTAs

If you've followed the points above, you've now cleared the way for the reader to convert. Now you just have to make it as easy as possible.

Firstly, you need to ensure your message works with images off. Even if you opt to go for an image-heavy email, the message shouldn't be lost if the email provider blocks automatic downloads. As well as alt text, your text should always be a separate HTML box alongside your image. If you put all your text in the image then the message will be entirely lost and customers won't know what action to take.



Think beyond basic 'click here' messages and use actionable text in your email marketing campaigns. Positive action verbs are more likely to encourage a response from your readers. Make sure they are clear and accessible on multiple devices, especially mobile. But, be careful not to cram too many into the body copy of your email. Too many underlined hyperlinks mid-text not only make the design look messy, but is also hard to click on a mobile device. By placing your main CTA above the fold, using contrasting colors, and separating it from your main body copy, you will improve the accessibility of your call to action.

Repeat your main CTA to finish your email. This not only reinforces your key message, but makes it even simpler for shoppers to convert. After all, what good is encouraging readers to scroll all the way to the bottom of your email if they have nowhere to go from there?

## Your template checklist

- ✓ Decide your key message or action for readers to take
- ✓ Attention-grabbing hero image above the fold
- ✓ Clear, punchy headings
- ✓ Above the fold CTA with positive action verbs
- ✓ Combine images and HTML text
- ✓ Ensure 'white space' between blocks
- ✓ End email with final CTA
- ✓ Preview with images off
- ✓ Preview on mobile for image stacking and accessibility



# The content

Writing content for emails can seem like a big challenge for many marketers. Whether or not writing comes naturally to you, the pressure of producing concise but engaging copy at short notice can feel overwhelming. But that doesn't have to be the case.

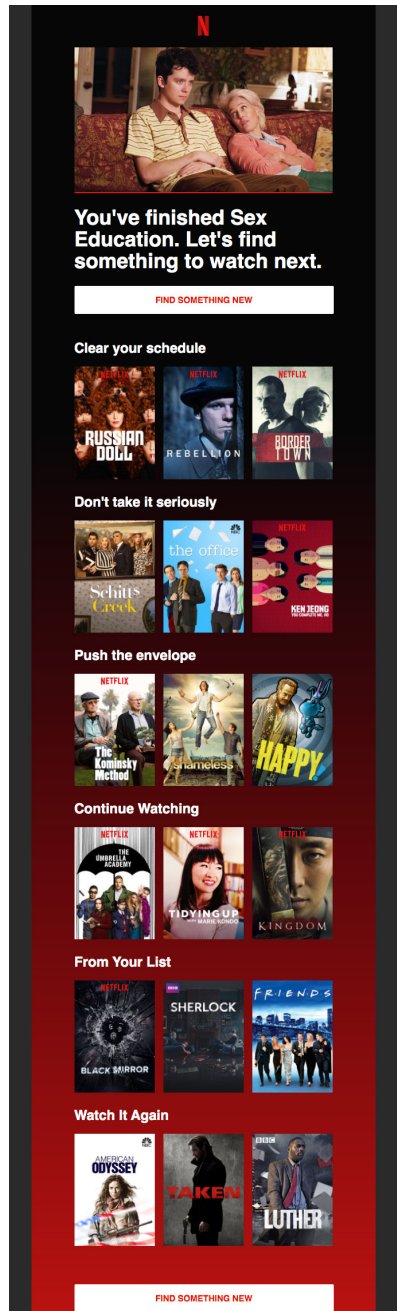
The real secret behind truly good email content lies in your data and how you use it. Customer data should be the backbone of every campaign you run. By paying attention to your results, the data will inform which campaigns you should be creating to connect with your audiences. Using it in the email itself will allow you to create the perfect marketing campaign.

## Personalization

Think deeper than first name personalization. Use the data you have on your customers to demonstrate just how well you know them. Drawing on data you have in your CRM, ecommerce store, or preference centers, you can add a deeper level of personalization to your campaign.

While first name personalization works well, particularly in subject lines, there's so much more you can do with the data at your fingertips.

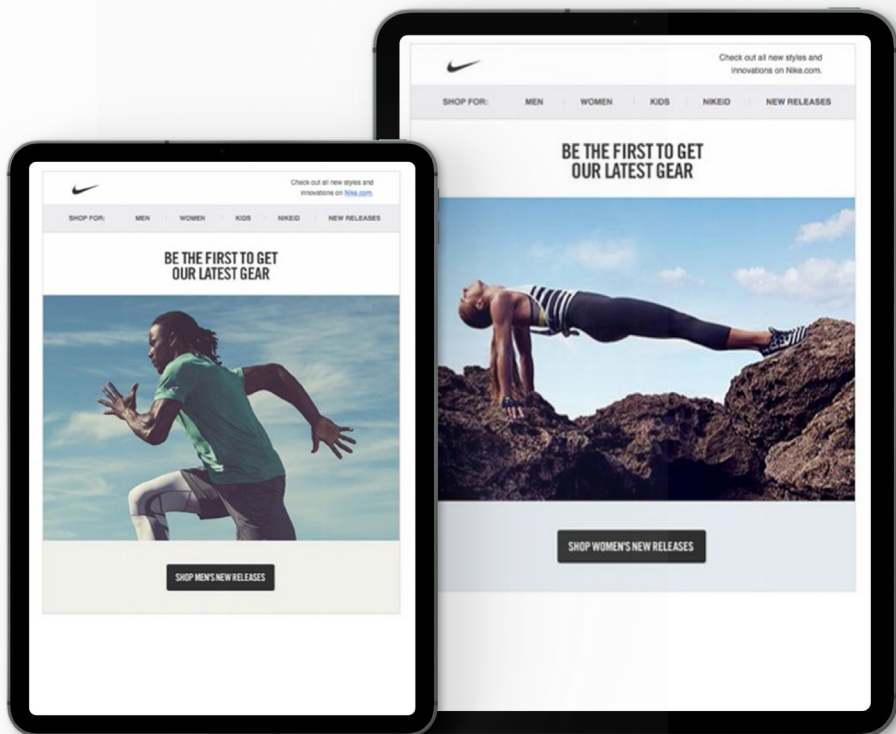
Pull in shopping or online browsing behavior to populate emails with highly targeted recommendations. Segment your audiences based on gender, age, location or interests. These simple steps will help you deliver engaging, personalized experiences.



## Dynamic content

If you're confident enough using your data, it's time to step up your tactics by introducing dynamic content to your marketing efforts.

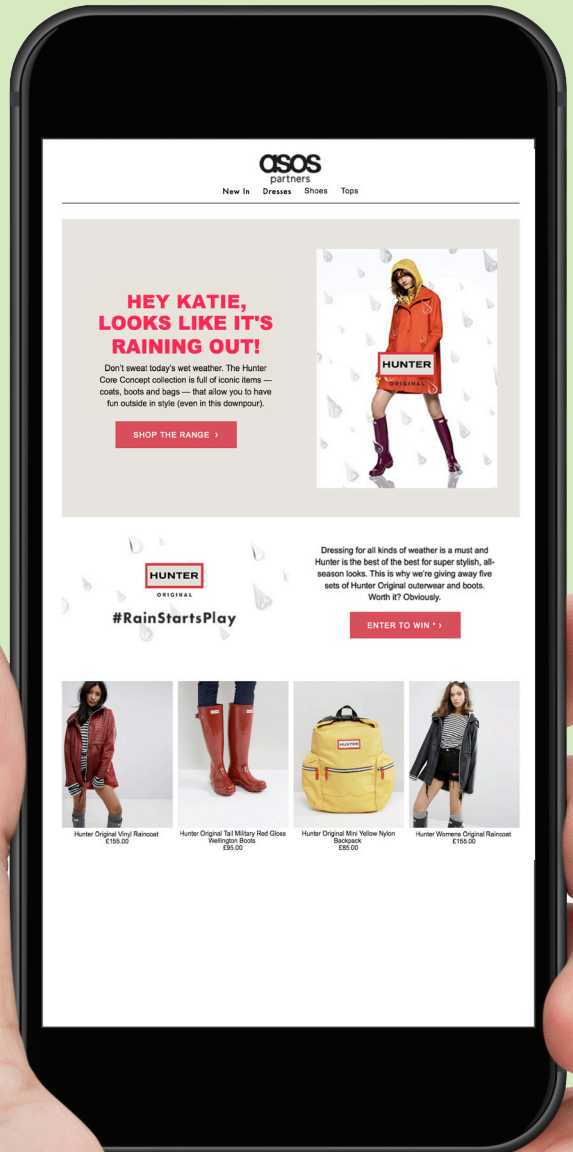
Dynamic content allows you to use different data sets to create different variations of the same email. For instance, if you're a travel brand, you could dynamically change the header image based on your customer data by showcasing either stay-cations or long-haul holidays. No matter your sector or industry, dynamic content is the fastest way to deliver highly targeted messages without building a new email every time.

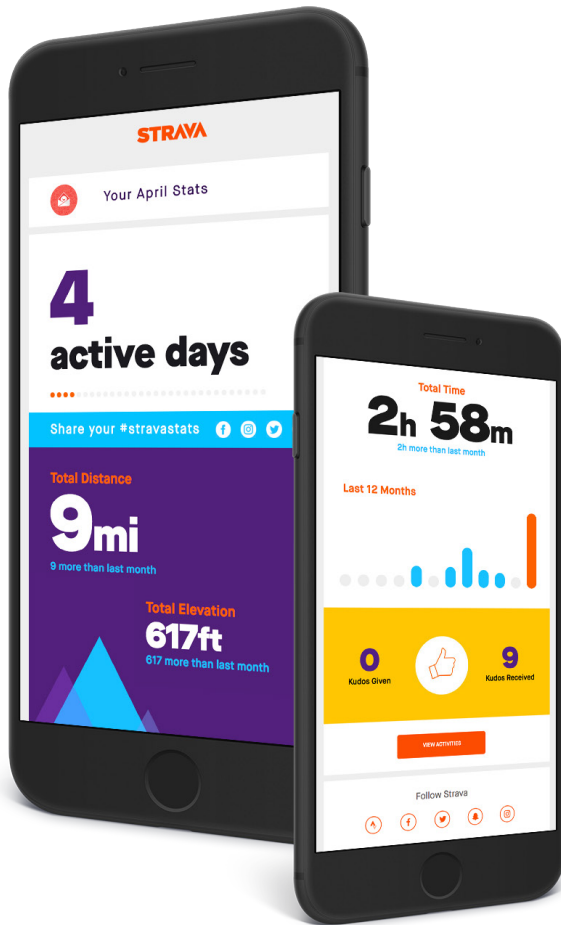


## Contextualization

Drive relevancy and urgency by introducing real-time content into your marketing campaigns.

By adding context to your emails, you're giving readers even more reason to convert. Countdown clocks, especially during sales periods, urge shoppers into action. Tech solutions such as Movable Ink and Kickdynamic allow you to contextualize emails by drawing on data such as live local weather. This is particularly good for brands in the travel, hospitality, or food sector to encourage spontaneity.





Another way to include relevancy is to pull in customers' behavioral data. This allows you to serve up hyper-personalized content. Readily available information such as purchases, spend, and usage (in hours) can be pulled into your marketing campaigns to deliver content that engages readers better. The end result is a deeper, more personal connection between them and your brand.

## Your content checklist

- ✓ Basic first name personalization
- ✓ Build segments based on gender, age, or location
- ✓ Identify in-email areas that would benefit from dynamic content
- ✓ Consider context – can you add urgency or increase the relevancy of the email?



# The dotdigital difference



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