

## Writing Short: How to Write Better Email Subject Lines, Headlines, Social Media Updates and More



### Step 1: Dial-In

U.S.: 866.740.1260  
Access Code: 9492105

*OR You may also now use  
your computer speakers.*

### Step 2: Web Login

<https://www.readytalk.com>

enter passcode 9492105

\*6 to mute \*7 to unmute



## Writing Short:

How to Write Better  
Email Subject Lines,  
Headlines, Social Media  
Updates and More



## The Voice You're Hearing



**Kivi Leroux Miller**

Nonprofit Marketing Guide.com

**Tweeting?**  
I'm @kivilm



**There is no  
secret  
formula that  
works all the  
time.**

**Sorry!**



## Consider This

**80/20 Rule.** 80% of people will read the headline and nothing else. Only 20% read the whole thing.

Therefore . . .

**50/50 Rule.** Spend half the time it takes you to write a piece on drafting a persuasive headline.

Source: Copyblogger.com

UPWORTHY

### Upworthy's Editorial Process



1. You **HAVE** to crap out 25 headlines for every piece of content
2. You **WILL** write some really stinky headlines.
3. Once you start getting desperate, you start thinking outside the box.
4. So you **HAVE TO WRITE 25 HEADLINES.**
5. #24 will suck. Then #25 will be a gift from the headline gods and will make you a legend.
6. Accept that not every headline will be perfect.
7. Then write 25 headlines.
8. With practice, you'll be writing 25 in 15 minutes. Then I will give you permission to lower your limit.

**SO PLEASE WRITE 25 HEADLINES**

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<http://www.slideshare.net/Upworthy/upworthy-10-ways-to-win-the-internets>

## Small Spaces in Need of Sticky Microcontent

- Subject Line
- Headings
- Subheadings
- Bolded and Linked Text
- Tweets
- Facebook Updates, Captions, Share Text
- Taglines



## Make the Short Version Work.

## Your Facebook Status

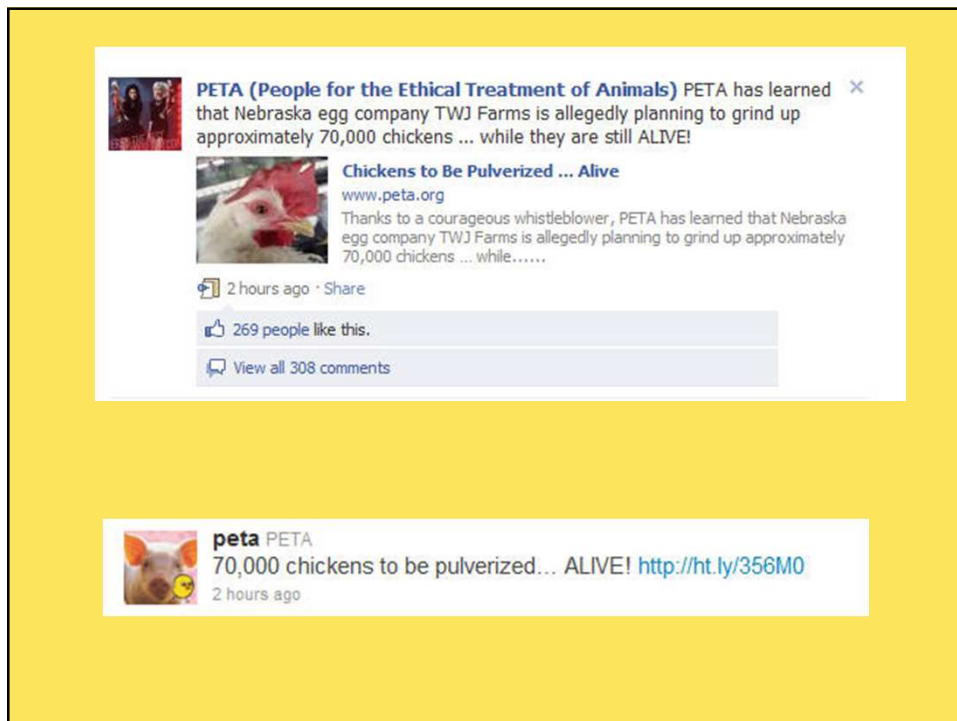
- No longer than 4 lines.  
1-2 is better.
- Can use caption if you really must go on longer.
- Make it “Like” – able. There is no “Dislike” option yet.
- What text can you put on top of a photo or turn into a graphic?



## Your Twitter Updates

- 140 characters
- Leave room to retweet and perhaps #hashtag
- Shorten URLs (e.g. bit.ly)
- RT – says a lot about you!
- Share good links!

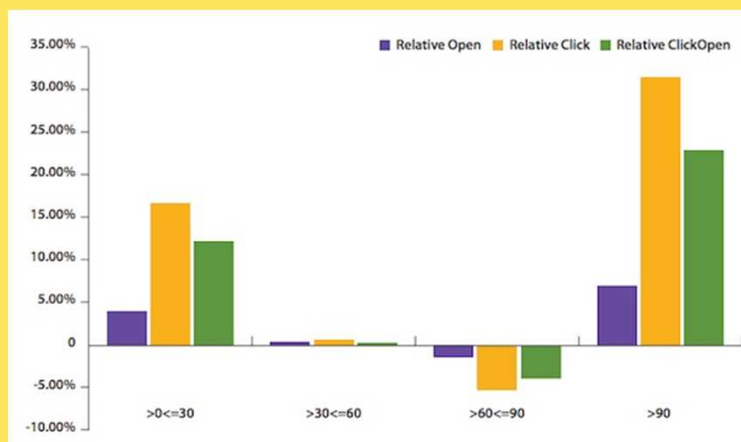




## Your Email Subject Lines

- Long subject lines often get cut off
- Put most important words in first 30 characters
- Short works, but so can long (I said there was no magic formula)

## Short or Long Better Than in the Middle?



<http://www.webpronews.com/heres-whats-working-in-email-subject-lines-2012-11>



**Highlight Everything  
and You Highlight  
Nothing.**

### **Be Selective!**

- Don't resort to abbreviating every word.
- Highlight short phrases (maybe 5 words at a time)
- If I only read headlines and what's bolded or underlined with links, do I get it?



## What's a Better Subject Line?

Bad Subject Line: **Wkshop, New Staff, Reg. Deadlines, Thanks, and MORE!**



### Headlines from Articles in the Newsletter:

Certification Workshop Scheduled for May 15

Jane Princeton Joins Staff as Counselor

Conference Registration Closes Friday

Thanks to Our Volunteers

Connect with Us on Facebook!

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Include Your  
Response Words.

## Common Response Words

- Save, money, results, love, new, easy, free
- Right now, today, urgent
- Subject line analysis from Lillian's List:  
"success" words like Victory, Congratulations,  
and Celebration did well

**Beware negative response words too . . .**

## Another Response Word Test

- **Sale** worked far better than discount, free, save, or voucher.
- News, update, breaking, alert, and bulletin all worked better than "newsletter".
- **Latest** worked better than special, exclusive, or innovate.

<http://www.webpronews.com/heres-whats-working-in-email-subject-lines-2012-11>





## **Eco News: Volume 5, Issue 4**



## **10 Ways to Lower Your Energy Bill**



## Agency Schedules Series of Parenting Workshops



## How to Discipline Your Child, Pack Healthy Lunches

## What Are Some of Your Response Words?



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**Emphasize the Personal  
Value or Relevance of  
Your Content.**






### Is My Message Relevant?

Try to check off at least two of the Six R's of Message Relevance with each of your messages.

<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>It's Rewarding</b> The <b>benefits</b> to following through on the call to action are clear.
<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>It's Realistic</b> The <b>barriers</b> to following through on the call to action are addressed.
<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>It's Real Time</b> It makes sense given the <b>context</b> and what else is happening right now.
<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>It's Responsive</b> They can tell we are <b>listening</b> and taking what we hear into account.
<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>It's Revealing</b> We are sharing or showing something <b>new or interesting</b> .
<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>It's Refreshing</b> The style and tone are <b>authentic</b> and maybe a little <b>surprising</b> .

This checklist works a lot better when you are clear and specific about your target audiences and your calls to action!

  
Nonprofit Marketing Guide.com

Note: all names have been changed in the subject lines.

Subject Lines With Top Open Rates		
Subject Line	Open Rate	Comment
Preliminary Floor Plans for Southern Village Neighborhood Circle Members	93%	Timely information. Implied benefit for quick action. Over 50 characters in length
Your April Website Stats	92.6%	Timely and useful information
Idlewild Camp - Important Travel Information	90.1%	Information I need now.
Invitation for Murdoch, Brown, Rove & Johnson's Snow Ball	89.7	Party invitation. Personal and timely
MotorCycling Magazine Reader Survey	88.1%	High affinity to activity/experience
Announcing Paige Elizabeth Sullivan	82.6%	Birth Announcement: Personal and useful information.
Ship's Log #5: Parus Arrives in Phuket	82.1%	Personal and timely
Nautica in Rutland Opens Soon!	79.9%	New condos - valuable information to be first in line.
Updated Time Zones & Log On Information	79.1%	Required information
MICHAEL DRUCKMAN 1949-2007	77.4%	Obituary: Personal
Inside Football: Summer Training Camp Preview Issue	74.3%	Timely and useful information

<http://kb.mailchimp.com/article/best-practices-in-writing-email-subject-lines>

Subject Lines With Low Open Rates		
Subject Line	Open Rate	Comment
Final reminder for complimentary entry to attend the West Freelands BCI Cluster Conference 2006	0.5%	Reminder and subject is too long
Tempting August NUSA Specials!	0.9%	Special. Exclamation mark
SALE ends soon - up to 50% off all bras at Kara!	1.9%	Percent Off
Help Baylor create the ideal college experience	2.5%	Help - means ignore
Printers World Offers 100% Commission Up Front	7.5%	Too good to be true
3% Commission For You, \$10,000 in Upgrades For Your Client	7.8%	Bait & Switch
Help Spread The News !	10.8%	Help
Don't Let 2006 Slip Away Without a Tax Deductible Donation To the Children & Families of Omire	11.6%	Donation and too long

<http://kb.mailchimp.com/article/best-practices-in-writing-email-subject-lines>



**NOT ABOUT ME:**

States Challenge Federal Drinking  
Water Regulations in Court

**ABOUT ME:**

Is Slightly Dirtier Drinking Water  
OK with You?

**Use the Words *You* or *Your***

- You Still Have Time
- It's Your Choice
- A Video That Will Make You  
Laugh and Cry

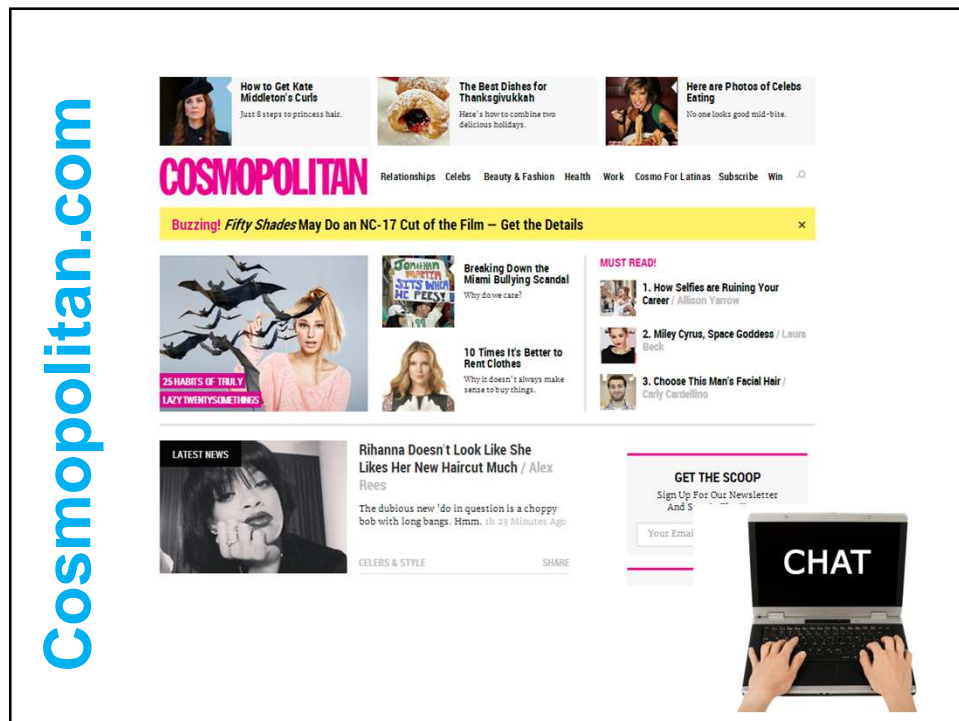
## Use the Word *My* for a One-to-One Feel

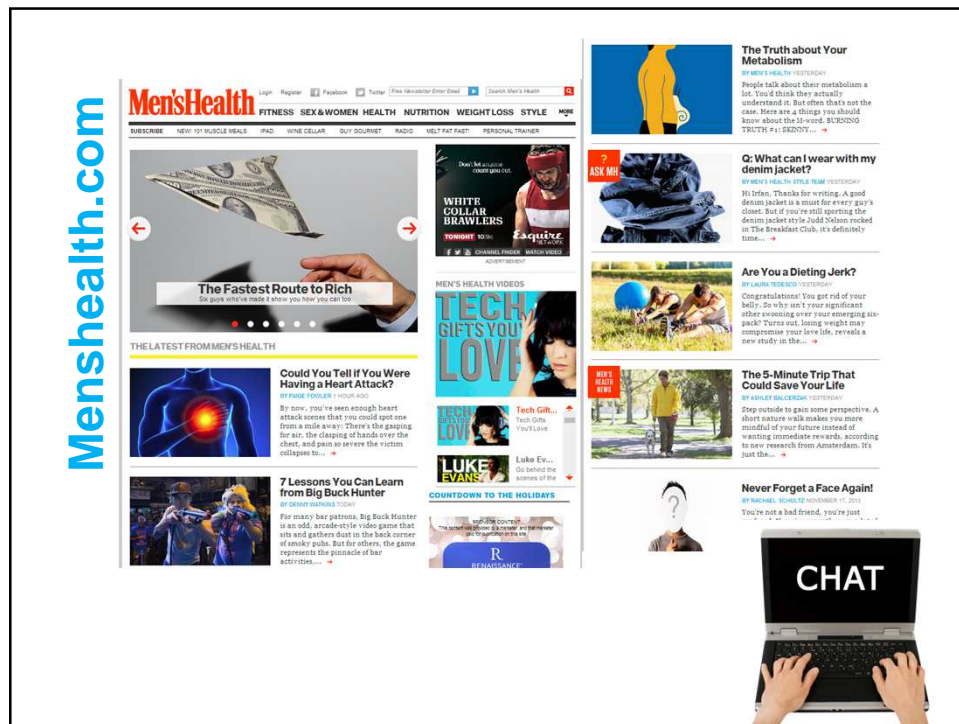
- My Reason for Giving In
- My Favorite Way to . . .
- How I Made My Decision

## Ask a Question for a Conversational Feel

- Do You Know What Your Kid Ate at School Today?
- What's Next for Billy Joe?
- Can You Spot the Mistake in This Video?

There are people who  
do nothing but write  
headlines they believe  
are relevant to you.  
**Let's steal from them.**





## Be Specific!

- Flowers > Daffodils
- Ran fast > Sprinted
- Child > Toddler
- Facebook updates with adjectives and adverbs didn't perform as well as those with more descriptive nouns and verbs. (Dan Zarella)

## Too Many Words Blur the Picture

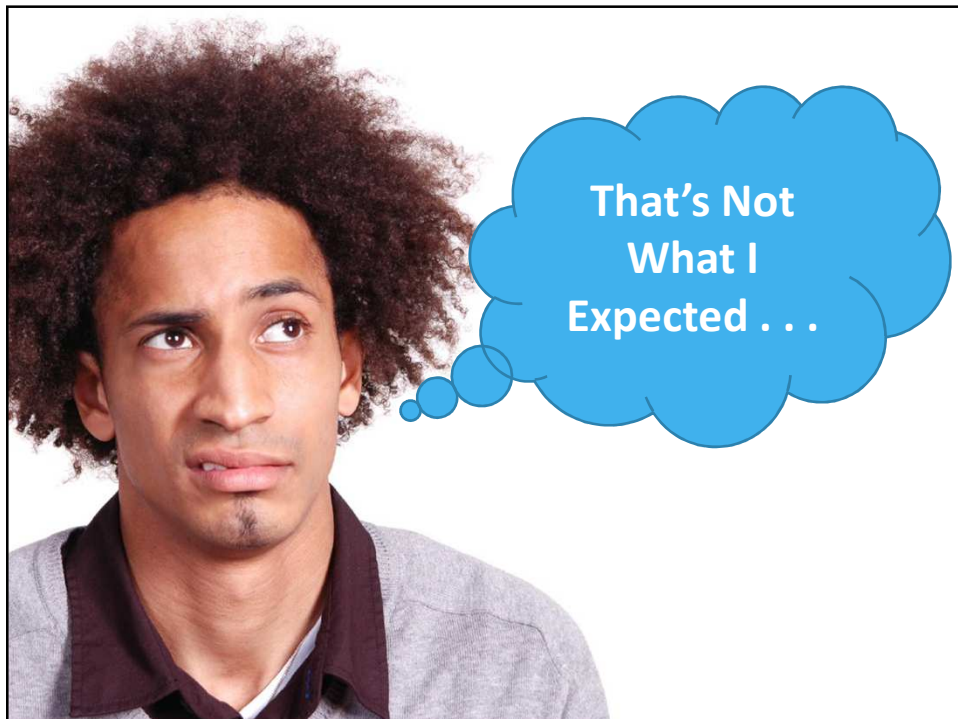
- Help us provide assistance to the people who are living on the streets so they can figure out where they can sleep for the night.

OR

- Help the homeless find a bed tonight.

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**Sometimes Clever or  
Coy Works . . . Except  
When It Doesn't.**





## Which Will Work Best?

- “Straightforward” usually beats “creative” in subject lines
- Clever and fun often works better in social media.
- Gives It Away:
  - 75% of Seniors Don’t Like the Program
- Piques Interest:
  - The Program Most Seniors Love to Hate

**Test: Clarity vs. creativity in email subject lines**

Subject lines written to appeal with creativity were identified, as well as subject lines written in a clear, straightforward manner.

Subject lines written creatively included:

- AWeber's AWesome Anthony A.
- Getting Earth-Friendly Beyond Email
- Threadless' Frequency Alert: Hot or Not?

Subject lines written with clarity included:

- Grow Your Email List 99% Faster: How One Site Did It
- 43 Free Animated GIFs For Your Email Campaign
- Email Timing: A Look At 6 Marketers

The test was run across 20 subject lines, sent to a list of over 45,000 subscribers. The clear, straightforward subject lines gathered far more response than their creative counterparts, surpassing them by:

Comments	1,107%
Tweets	315%
Facebook Likes	331%
Traffic	617%
Email Subscriptions	366%

<http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/email-marketing/aweber-subject-line-test/>



**Be Direct and  
Timely, But Not  
Pushy**





**TELLING ME WHAT TO DO:**

Register for Our Dance-a-Thon

**MAKING ME WANT TO DO IT:**

Where You Can Dance All Night  
with Your Best Friends

**OVER-SELLING IT:**

Last Chance to Help Flood Victims

**TELLING IT:**

Urgent! Families Fleeing  
Floodwaters Need Transportation



**Avoid ALL CAPS and  
\*Crazy\* Punctuation!?!**

## Best Punctuation: The Colon



- Colons let you put your most important info first, followed by the details.
- Flu Shots: Get Yours Now While There's No Line



## Test and Track

## Split Testing is Easy

- Send A to 10% and B to 10%, then winner to other 80%.
- Send A to 50% and B to 50% and learn for next time.
- Splittestcalculator.com (if you care about statistical significance)
- Whichtestwon.com (to see how good you are!)



### One Day Inside a Fundraising Machine

Before firing off a fundraising plea to Obama's tens of millions of supporters, the campaign would experiment with different versions of a single message to see what got the most clicks.  
A snapshot of the e-mail team's work on June 26

#### THE SUBJECT LINE

The team tested numerous subject lines by sending fundraising e-mails to small groups of supporters

#### THE HAUL

Based on the donations those e-mails raised, the team projected how much the pitches would bring in if sent to the full Obama list

#### THE DIFFERENCE

They then projected how much less money the campaign would collect if they used anything other than the most successful e-mail

THE SUBJECT LINE	THE HAUL	THE DIFFERENCE
I will be outspent	<b>\$2,540,866</b>	n/a
Some scary numbers	\$1,941,379	\$599,487
If you believe in what we're doing...	\$911,806	\$1,629,060
Last call: Join Michelle and me	\$894,644	\$1,646,222
Would love to meet you	\$755,425	\$1,785,441
Do this for Michelle	\$714,147	\$1,826,719
Change	\$711,543	\$1,829,323
The most popular Obama	\$659,554	\$1,881,312
Michelle time	\$604,813	\$1,936,053
Deadline: Join Michelle and me	\$604,517	\$1,936,349
Thankful every day	\$545,486	\$1,995,380
The one thing the polls got right...	\$403,603	\$2,137,263

**THE WINNER!**

The winning subject line wound up leading the projections: it raised **\$2,673,278**

Subject: I will be outspent

Friend --

I will be the first president in modern history to be outspent in his re-election campaign, if things continue as they have so far.

I'm not just talking about the super PACs and anonymous outside groups about the Romney campaign itself. Those are just about the underlying problem.

## It Never Ends . . .

“It quickly became clear that a **casual tone was usually most effective**. . . Another unexpected hit: profanity. Dropping in mild curse words such as “Hell yeah, I like Obamacare” got big clicks. But these triumphs were fleeting. **There was no such thing as the perfect e-mail**; every breakthrough had a shelf life. “Eventually the novelty wore off, and we had to go back and retest,” says Amelia Showalter, director of digital analytics.”

<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-11-29/the-science-behind-those-obama-campaign-e-mails>

## The Most Successful Subject Line of the Campaign?

# Hey

**Real Lesson Here:  
The “From” Line Matters**

<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-11-29/the-science-behind-those-obama-campaign-e-mails>

## What To Test

- Length
- Special characters
- Specificity
- Personalization
- Sender name
- Exclamation points
- Discount-speak
- A Question
- Relevancy (or irrelevancy)
- Urgency
- Capitalization
- Gratitude

List Suggested by Emma Email Marketing  
<http://myemma.com/blog/article/12-subject-line-split-test-ideas>

## The Bottom Line . . .

**PROMISE**  
and **DELIVER**

## Fill in Blank Headlines

[Number] Miracles You've Created for \_\_\_\_\_ This Year

How Your Support Changed \_\_\_\_\_ into \_\_\_\_\_

Why We Can't \_\_\_\_\_ Without You

[Number] Little \_\_\_\_\_ That Will \_\_\_\_\_



## Fill in Blank Headlines

If I'd Only Known: Lessons from \_\_\_\_\_

How Many of These Early Warning Signs of \_\_\_\_\_ Do You Recognize?

[Number] Myths that \_\_\_\_\_ Believe

How to \_\_\_\_\_ When You Really Want to \_\_\_\_\_





**Kivi Leroux Miller**  
**@kivilm**  
**Fb.com/nonprofitmarketingguide**  
**kivi@ecoscribe.com**





## DECEMBER Master Coaching: What To Do AFTER They Give

**Thursday, December 19**  
11 AM Central





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*Quick Survey:  
Please share your feedback  
on today's session  
with Kivi Leroux Miller.*

*Thank you!*

