

# The Ultimate Subject Line Swipe File for Prospecting Emails



Your email's subject line is the most important part of your prospecting email.

Why? Because it's a teaser. And, if the prospect senses that the message is not relevant or valuable, he or she will delete it without even reading the email.

So, in order to have your message opened and read, you need a great subject line. Period.

Writing powerful subject lines is an art. It takes practice to do it consistently well. In this guide, you'll get ideas and techniques that will greatly accelerate your progress.

## You Need a Different Approach

Crafting subject lines for warm emails is not the same as writing them for traditional email marketing. You're not writing an email broadcast, a newsletter or a lead generation blast. Rather, you're crafting a very personalized, one-to-one message.

This shift can be difficult for copywriters who are used to a very different set of subject line rules and guidelines. For instance, pure-play "promise" subject lines such as "The only designer you'll ever need" don't work well with warm emails. Neither do "numbered list" subject lines such as "3 reasons why my case studies get results."

Your goal is to make everything about your email (including the subject line) so relevant and personalized *that your prospect can immediately tell this email was sent **only to them***. And to do this well, you have to stick to subject line styles that lend themselves to personalization and a high degree of relevance.

**Here are 5 guidelines to keep in mind when creating warm email subject lines:**



**Keep it short.** Shoot for 40 total characters or less, 50 at the most.



**Capitalize the first word only.** I've found that using a "headline style" subject line (where you capitalize the first letter of every word) doesn't work as well. It comes across as a marketing message, not a one-to-one email.



**Use a strong element of relevance and personalization in the subject line.** You can do that by including an element of the “meaningful connection” you’re going to be making in the body of the email. Here are some examples:

*Congrats on the book deal!*  
*I helped Whole Foods rebrand*  
*Pellham collateral headache*  
*The white papers on your Resources page*

All of these examples are very relevant to the prospect to whom they’re being sent. They hint at the topic you’re going to discuss in the email—something that’s important or relevant to that individual. Also, notice how short they are!



**Don’t give away the whole message in the subject line.** Notice how all the previous examples hinted at something relevant and important *without* giving away the whole message. You want to tease the prospect into opening the email. But you obviously don’t want to trick her by saying one thing in the subject line and then talking about something completely different in the email body. That can quickly come across as “bait and switch.”



**Create curiosity without losing that one-to-one tone.** At the same time, you have to make the subject line intriguing. However, you have to do that without it coming across as a marketing message. It should retain that one-to-one feel of a personalized message (because, after all, it IS a personalized email). There’s a fine line here, and this is where much of the art of subject line development comes in.

Rather than give you even more guidelines, I’d like to *show you* examples of subject lines that follow these guidelines.

What follows is a list of 51 subject line ideas, organized by type. Think of these examples as a starting point—as a source of ideas and inspiration. Obviously you’ll want to substitute your own (or your prospect’s) information in the appropriate places.

## Acknowledge a Specific Item Related to the Prospect

So glad you're supporting St. Jude Children's Hospital

Your "Together Now" campaign looks fantastic!

About your "B2B Marketing University" concept

I saw that you're doing a lot of video

The post this morning on your ABC Co. Facebook page

Just read your Network Forensics white paper

Your expansion into South America

Saw that you're now at Chemco

Sorry about the recent layoffs

Excellent press coverage this morning in the WSJ!

Congrats on the VPI award!

Saw that you hired Marc Bennett

The UPS deal – congrats!

Your new Data Cleansing offering

Stratix account win – way to go!

I may be able to help with ABC Inc.

FDA 510(k) clearance for BioLite

## Leverage a Mutual Contact

Tasha Perkins sent me your way

We both know Steve Elliott

Used to work with Charlie Wilkes

Maria Acevedo suggested I email you

Referral from Tony Spinelli

Larry Kona suggested we connect

Audrey Johnson asked me to contact you

I'm a good friend of Mary Swanson

## Be Mysterious

Vitafoods Europe...

Don't hire another freelance copywriter

This is what a VP at Turner Corp said about me

I've been eyeing your work for 3 years

The design that turned heads at Parker Co.

This white paper caused a stir at Colonial

Had lunch at your bakery on 56th Street

Heads up – declining usage projected

This is no way to do lead scoring

I can better explain PMX to your prospects

Klein didn't want me to contact you

I thought about contacting you and John Gerber before

An idea for your next PLM product video

Here's my view (as one of your retail customers)

This worked really well at ABC, Inc.

## Point Out a Big Credibility Element

This is why Oracle hired me

I've written white papers for Microsoft, Unisys and Red Hat

22 years in retail ops = a better white paper

I do all of Sterling's content marketing

This campaign helped Acme land Sony

I helped B&G revamp their website

A writer who actually knows the logistics biz

I wrote this report for Acme

## Ask a Question

What's your video case study strategy?

Have you considered this topic?

Have you seen what Sterling is doing with this?

Tired of freelancers who don't meet deadlines?

Ever consider this angle?

Who's writing your blog posts?

Are you writing your marketing content internally?

Ever use an outside writer?

Again, use these examples as a starting point—as a source of ideas and inspiration when you're stuck, or when you're trying to come up with something more enticing.

I've found that having a subject line swipe file like this really helps get the creative juices flowing. Once I start reading some good examples, it's not long before I come up with something new, original and powerful.