



Cold Outreach Quickstart

Subject line crash course

with Jeff Molander

Founder 

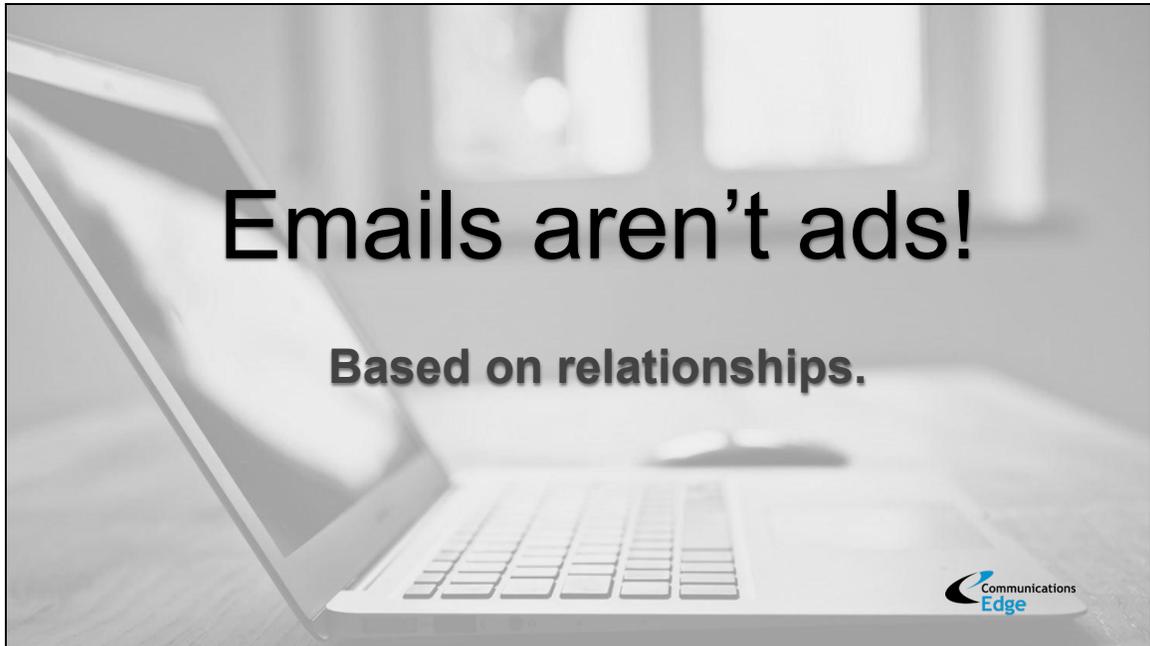


Markus Spiske

Welcome to the next lesson in our quickstart... a Subject line crash course. What you're going to take away from this lesson is a reliable way to create subject lines that encourage prospects to open your messages. But you'll also take away a totally different view on subject lines. One based on behavioral psychology. But first we need to address the elephant in the room: Open rate. Because the job of the subject line is to get your email opened. However, this does not mean we should obsess on open rate. Knowing the percentage of time customers are opening our emails is useful. But it's increasingly less useful and you need to know why. So there are two common misconceptions you need to know about: The first is open rate. Everyone knows subject lines drive open rates. A strong Subject Line is the best way to create a high open rate. Right? Wrong!

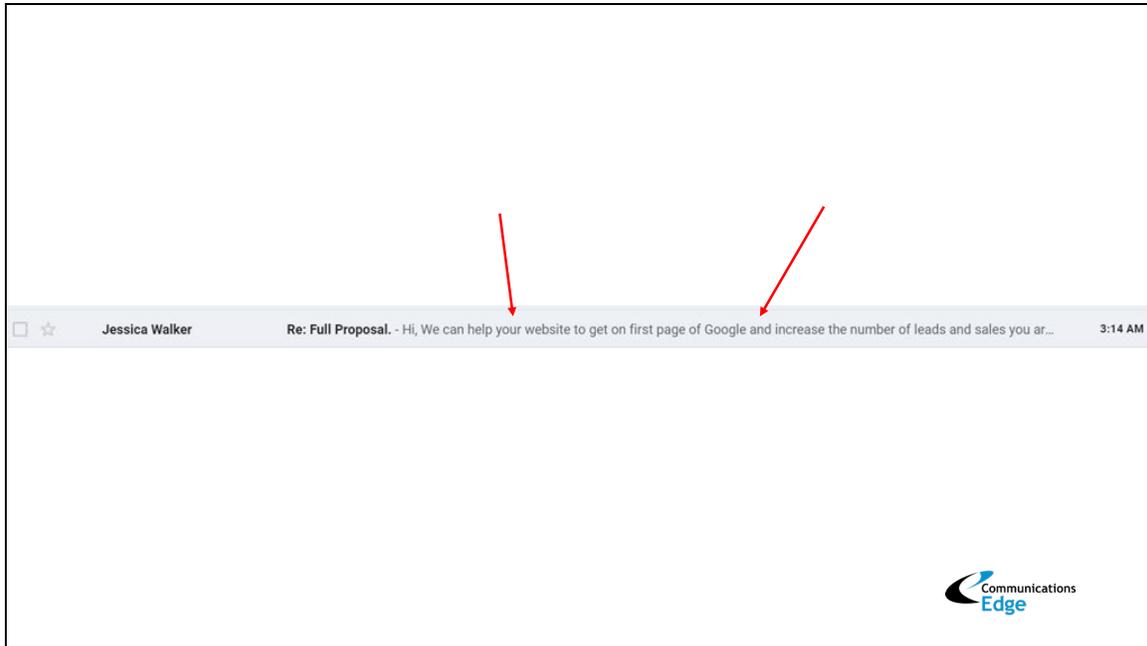


The sender's name has a bigger impact on open rate than subject line. It's true in most cases. Litmus reported this and explains this way. They say because "Subject lines seem like the equivalent of the headline for an ad". And David Ogilvy tells us, "Five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. So when you write your headline, you have spent eighty cents out of your dollar." Ok. These arguments are pretty smart. But here's the thing: Your outreach emails are not ads.



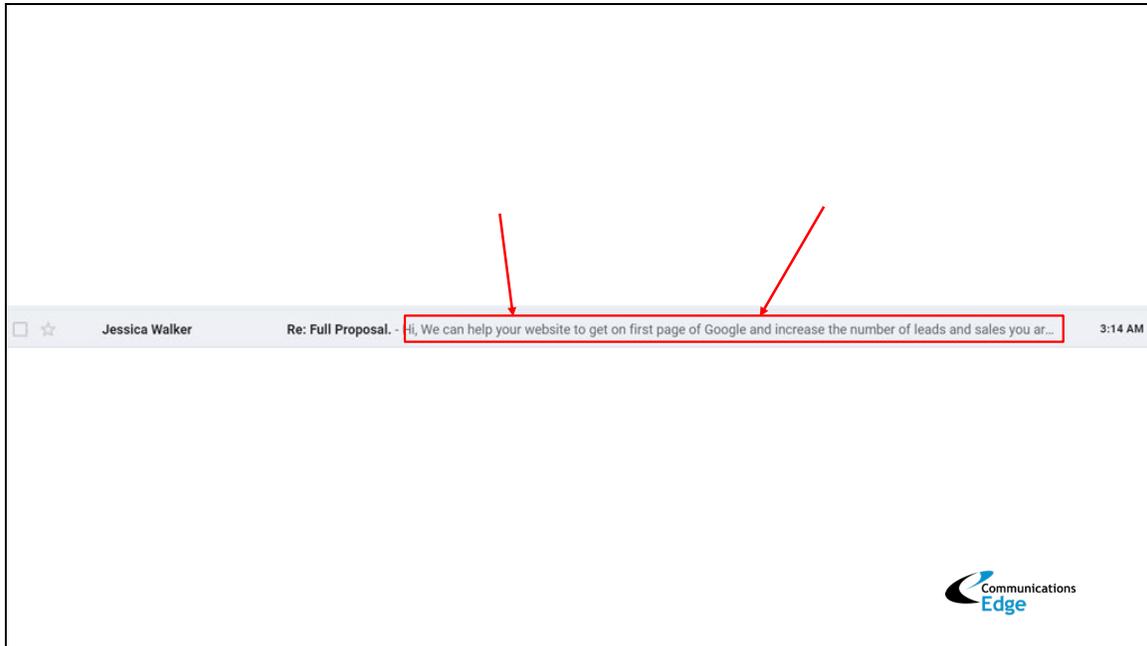
They're coming from you. They're permission-based messages... based on relationships. So who is sending the message will always be more important than what the subject line is. That's why more people look at the sender name first when receiving an email. Maybe you already know this. But are you keeping it in mind -- every day -- and acting accordingly? Also... I'll challenge your "Open rate belief system." Which is probably causing you to overthink subject lines.

Slide 4



Example: Are you bearing in mind how email Open Rate is influenced by the first few words... and/or the first sentence of your message... based on the what the recipient's email client shows -- without having to open the message? See that here?

Slide 5



This “window” -- if you will -- is larger... longer... on desktop, shorter on mobile. Maybe you already know this. But are you keeping it in mind -- every day? And are you making the most of it? Because this is very important... equally if not more important than your subject line. It also gets to the most valuable tip I can give you on subject lines: Length. Less is more. I’ll go deeper on that in a moment.

Slide 6



Got this one from a surprising source -- Copyblogger. These cats have taught me more about good copywriting than just about any other resource. But here's a great example of truly poor email copywriting... in a marketing context. I'm on their list. So, this isn't sales. But the problem here is common in both contexts.

Slide 7



First, the “Reminder” is likely not necessary. If you want to remind -- just do it. Remind. No need to say you’re reminding. Remind. The subject line and first sentence should be maximized. Ok. Here’s the real problem with this message.

Slide 8



This is the message. The meat.



And this is the exact same message... repeating. The same message... it's a totally wasted opportunity. This would be a great space to quickly, and dramatically, tell me why this workshop is not to be missed. This is the space in which to provoke my curiosity. I know the folks at Copyblogger can do better than this. That's for sure. So why did this happen? Why would you make this mistake too? Because, in this case, I think just plain laziness... Copyblogger perhaps has someone new on the job Not sure. But usually it's because we're using the wrong mindset.



Wrong mindset = wrong tactics



Because if you approach this using the wrong mindset, you'll suddenly start applying the wrong tactics. It's easy to do. I screw up all the time. Habits are difficult to form... and breaking old ones is tough. This is why I created our private community of sales copywriting geeks... the Spark Selling Academy. We're constantly helping each other form the best habits possible... keeping ourselves accountable to what we know is true. Now when we talk about subject lines, generally, the first thing that pops to mind is open rate.



Everyone knows: The goal of a good subject line is to get opened. But beyond that there's a lot of confusion. Here's my analysis after studying it deeply. Open rate isn't terribly useful these days. And here's why. Two reasons. One, open rate is a marketing metric which -- in the world of sales -- can... can be an emotional trap. Feeding our sense of wanting to be needed, wanting to be successful, wanting to see a sign of life after we press send. It plays on our emotions. So it's a risk. #2 Open rate technology is fundamentally flawed and presents too many false positives to be useful. It ends up being a vanity metric.

I have never understood why people report on open rates or point to open rates with excitement or worry.

For example if the open rate is 80% and nobody takes action what is the difference between that and 1% open rate and nobody takes action?

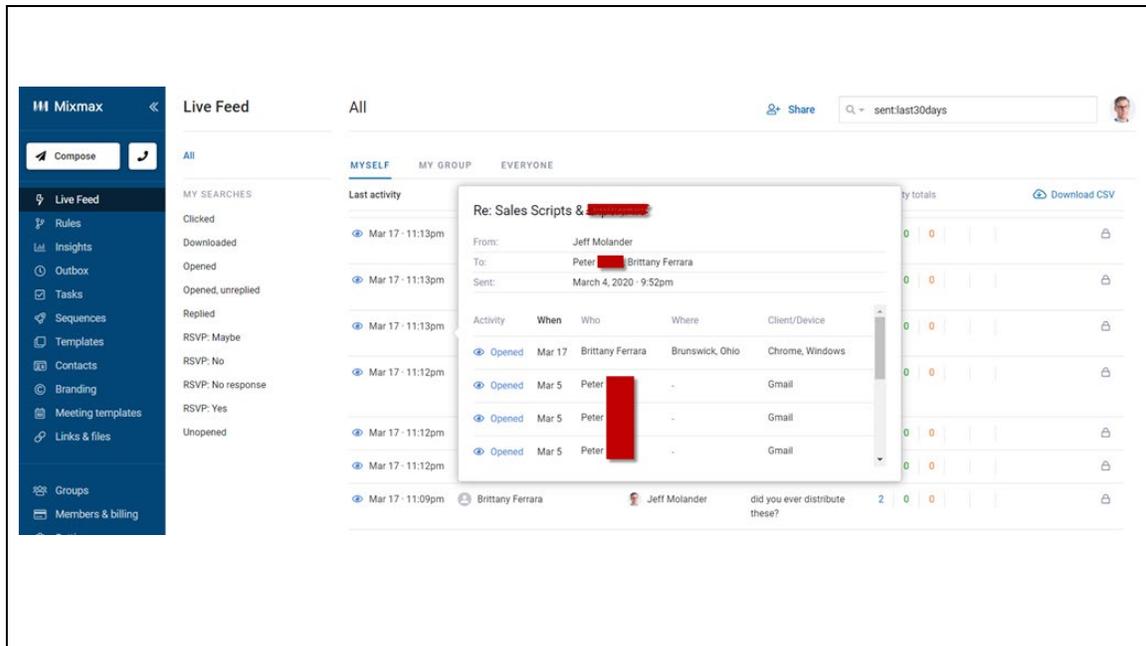
Building awareness? Maybe...

Shawn Sease

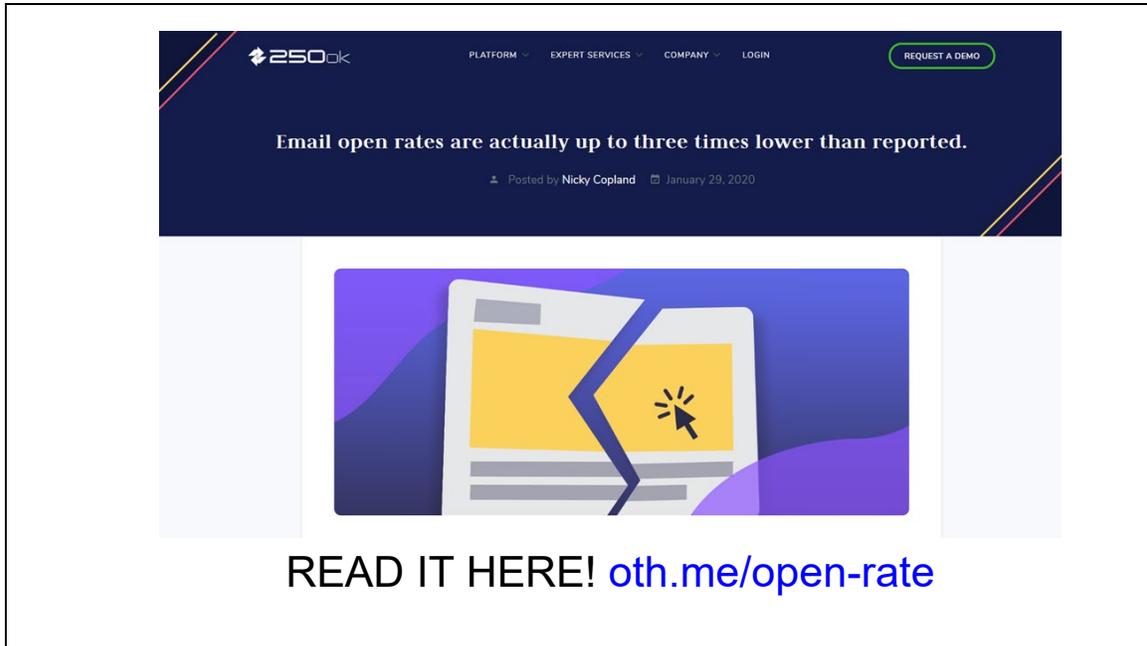


Maybe you follow Shawn Sease (a really smart experienced guy) who puts it this way...

Slide 13



I use open rate tools. We all do. You do too I'm sure. My tool of choice, which boosts productivity beyond Open Rates, is Mixmax. I can't get enough of this tool. However, pixel-based open tracking technology is imperfect and at times is unreliable. In theory knowing if and how often the email is opened is great. But in practice you may not see "opens" from prospects who HAVE opened. Likewise, many tools report "opened" when the recipient has NOT opened. Technical reasons why include: 1. The recipient isn't connected to the Internet. If someone opens the email while not being connected to the Internet, the piece of tracking code cannot call the sender's server. In that case the open isn't measured! 2. Some mobile phones and email clients download images by default. A 1x1 pixel image is used by tracking tools. Thus, the tiny tracking image is downloaded by default even if no human being actually opened that message. Consequence: even if the recipient has not opened the message, you will see it as a false positive -- "opened." 3. Some web-based email clients, corporate email clients and Android-powered phones block images by default. If the recipient didn't change the default settings, when the message is opened the tiny tracking image isn't downloaded. In such case, that tracking is blocked, and no download request (of the tracking image) is received by the sender's server. Consequence: even if the recipient opens the message, the sender's server doesn't count the email message as being opened. Ok. At risk of making your head explode... we're just scratching the surface. Beware of the open rate trap. Don't get hung up on it. And don't let your boss make you get hung up on it. Educate him or her.



This in mind, I have an even more shocking article for you from a great company, 250ok. This article explains how Email Service Provider data is usually up to 3 times greater than actual engagement. I've placed the link to this article in the transcript and, also, a shortlink here on screen. Ok. All of this in mind... it gets even more crazy...

<https://250ok.com/blog/email-open-rates-are-actually-up-to-three-times-lower-than-reported/>



Because most recommendations about “subject lines that really work” in sales prospecting come from a marketing context. The same with most subject line research and studies. They’re mostly marketing focused. And the authors of these reports and blog articles aren’t actual sales practitioners. They are often people who are heavily invested in inbound marketing. They’re not conducting outreach themselves... and are not using the subject lines they’re promoting as effective. I’m not saying these people are bad. I’m saying they’re not practicing sales outreach. Therefore they have no business handing out killer subject lines that don’t perform. Bottom line: Salespeople... people sending cold email to start conversations with potential new customers... need a sales prospecting subject line strategy. Most advice about subject lines is, frankly, no good. So your first problem may be ...



you've been given Bad Advice. There's a ton of bad advice on cold outreach available on LinkedIn and especially Google. These are all good people. Don't get me wrong. And good companies. Like LinkedIn's Sales Navigator. LinkedIn provides email and Inmail message advice and templates. None of which perform. Likewise, Hubspot, Outreach, Salesforce, Autoklose, SugarCRM, we use Pipedrive.. and have used Insightly. There are countless software companies providing good sales engagement, CRM and outreach tools. But when it comes to Sales Copywriting know-how... not so much. It's not part of their business model. It's part of their marketing effort.

Catchy, compelling email subject lines will **vastly** increase your email open rates and engage prospects.

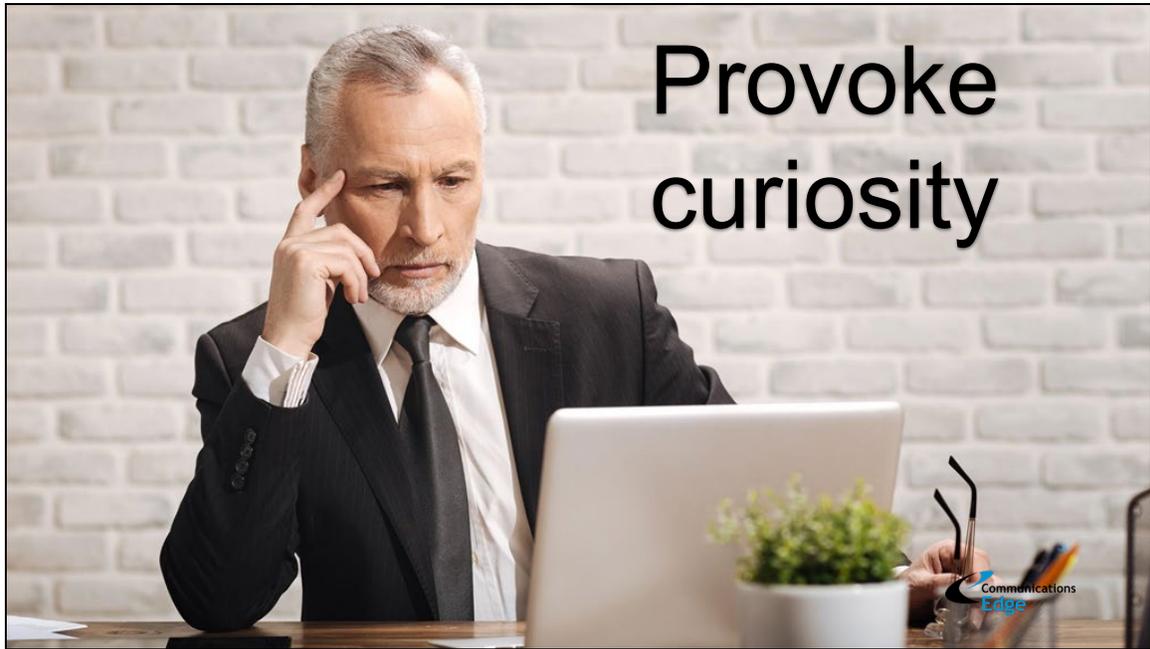


You may have seen advice like his. “Catchy, compelling email subject lines will vastly increase your email open rates and engage prospects.” No they won’t. Catchy fails terribly in sales prospecting messages. Attempts to compel also fail. See that word “vastly?” The author says “vastly increase” rather than just “increase” why? Because they’re: trying to persuade you; assuming you won’t believe them, hence the persuasion; and best case, they’re exaggerating—worst case, lying. This is why inserting adjectives and adverbs in anywhere inside your Subject Lines or messages to prospects doesn’t work. If you missed it we discussed this tip and many others in workshop #1. What software vendors and other self-appointed email experts don’t understand is customers are numb to catchy. They see right through it. They are also becoming excellent at spotting messages that try compelling them to open. Catchy & compelling don’t work in sales. Marketing? Maybe, if it’s original. But it rarely is and it rarely works in sales emails.

Effective email subject lines are direct, straight to the point and crystal clear.



Conventional thinking also says... “Effective email subject lines are direct, straight to the point and crystal clear.” Wrong again. Because cold email arrives without context. Prospects have not opted-in to receive it. The more specific your subject is about message contents (and your goal) the lower open and response rate. Think about it. From your target's perspective, they don't need to open when the subject indicates, "This is a cold email about a subject that 15 sellers per day email me about... to sell me." They delete, without hesitation. Clarity is the enemy. Instead, your subject line should provoke curiosity.



It should give customers less information and help them want to know more. If the subject line reveals even a little about your goal... to earn a meeting or discussion... it risks being put off for later. And later never comes. You've got to provoke them on the spot. On the mobile in most cases.



You've got to provoke curiosity on the spot. On the mobile in most cases. For example the subject line, would this help?

Would this help?



Using the word “this” -- in this specific way -- in a subject line begs the question -- “what is this?” As a recipient, you don’t know what “this” is... in order to hit reply and answer yes or no... which is another interesting aspect of this kind of subject line.

Open to this?



“Open to this?” is another effective subject line. Now, it may not work for you. Beware. In many sectors this specific line has burned out. But in others it still earns opens. Just the same, in some sectors “Open to this, first name”

Open to this, [first name]?



Tends to perform well. But in other industries it tends to ruin your chance of being opened. Again, because customers have grown numb to these kinds of provocations. Subject lines have a lifecycle. Just like anything else. Once they've been over-used, or abused, people become aware of subject lines (that used to perform) and respond less. Especially if they've been used by -- that's right -- low skilled sellers. One of these is "quick question?"

quick question, [first name]?



Quick question has run its course in most sectors. But not all. It's earned a bad reputation for most part because most low skilled sellers have used this line as a ploy to get opened -- only to present the reader with a pitch. No "quick question." In other words the subject line was a lie. Just the same using the fake "RE:" remains popular

RE: _____
FWD: _____



but I urge you to be careful with this. I recommend steering clear of any tactic attempting to trick your prospect into opening.

RE: the artwork



Some of our members do it anyway and are successful at using this method to engage. For example, one of our members in the tradeshow space uses this one ... to earn responses from marketing managers. The idea is to make the prospect believe there is an existing relationship between the sender (which there is not)... implying an ongoing discussing about artwork for a project. Which is a safe bet during trade show season... managers are juggling projects involving artwork, logos and such.



Ok. Again, the biggest reason to avoid any tips offered by businesses like these is because they are handing them out to all their customers -- which guarantees you're blending in with all the noise. When everyone uses the same bad templates, it doesn't serve anyone's goals. I've read all of the ebooks and downloads. Most advice is not qualified. It's almost always not current. And it's not because these bloggers or software companies want to do harm... or purposely give you bad advice. It's because effective communication techniques it's not part of their business model.



1)Bad advice

1)Lack of awareness

- Tactics: Better way
- Yourself: How you come across



Bad advice is one issue... another is lack of awareness. Awareness of the tactics (the better ways which I just demonstrated) and awareness of yourself. By that I mean how you come across to customers in emails. I mentioned this in lesson #1. Same thing. Sloppy subject lines make you come across as a hack. A slow-skilled salesperson who doesn't know the difference between pushing untargeted marketing messages and sending curiosity-sparking provocations. You look like a marketing slob rather than a skilled conversation-starter. This is why our Academy community is so valuable to members. We are all practitioners of up-to-date tactics... we're always experimenting and inventing new subject lines and message tactics.

Subject lines SHOULD:

- Use less than 4 words (“sweet spot” is 2)
- Experiment with lower-case first letter and ?
- Include trigger words to create “tension” ...
creating urge to open
- Provoke curiosity



Some quick tips for you to take away and use when practicing your new subject line technique.

Have you begun?
Are you starting?
Starting?
Upcoming deadline
Deadline
Let me know?

Compliance
Security breach
Not the person I hired
Worth considering?
Open to this?

Avoid:

- Words commonly found in your competitors' subject lines
- Playing to a "yes/no" answer
- Creating openers remorse (tricking)
- Communicating your intent
(“Larry, quick call next Tuesday?”)
- Asking for meetings
- Mimicking newsletter headlines



1)Bad advice

1)Lack of awareness

- Tactics: Better way
- Yourself: How you come across

1)Marketing mindset (tone)

 Communications Edge

Ok. Do you see, now, how your #3 marketing mindset may be causing subject lines to come across as part of the noise? The tone is off. And I say mindset because what you need, most likely, is to change how you think about communicating via email first.



Wrong mindset = wrong tactics



Wrong mindset means you'll be prone to use wrong tactics. Bottom line: Throw away your marketing mindset. The baby and bathwater must both go. Because if you don't.. or don't throw the baby out too ... I see the results every day with my personal coaching students: They aren't able to get in front of as many customers. Because of tone. I admit, it's difficult to reprogram yourself to write differently. To change your mindset -- the way you VIEW sales outreach. Some have an easier time with it. But others need coaching for a few weeks... to form the better habits that flow from the mindset. Remember: In life, mindset drives tactics.

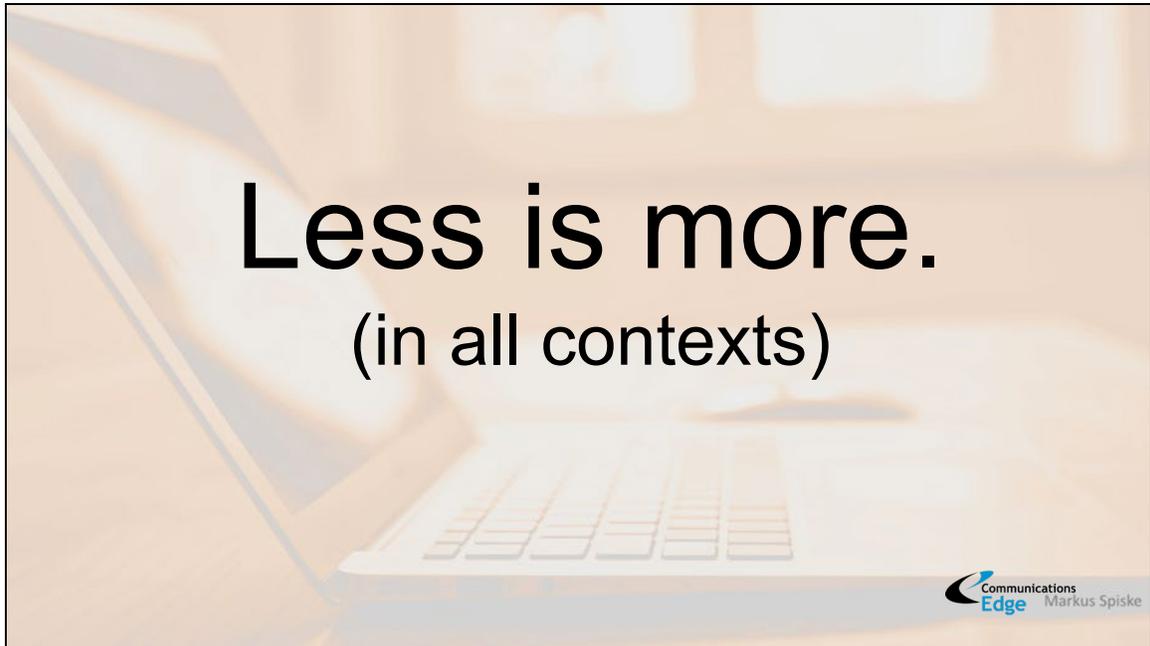


James Pinhorn

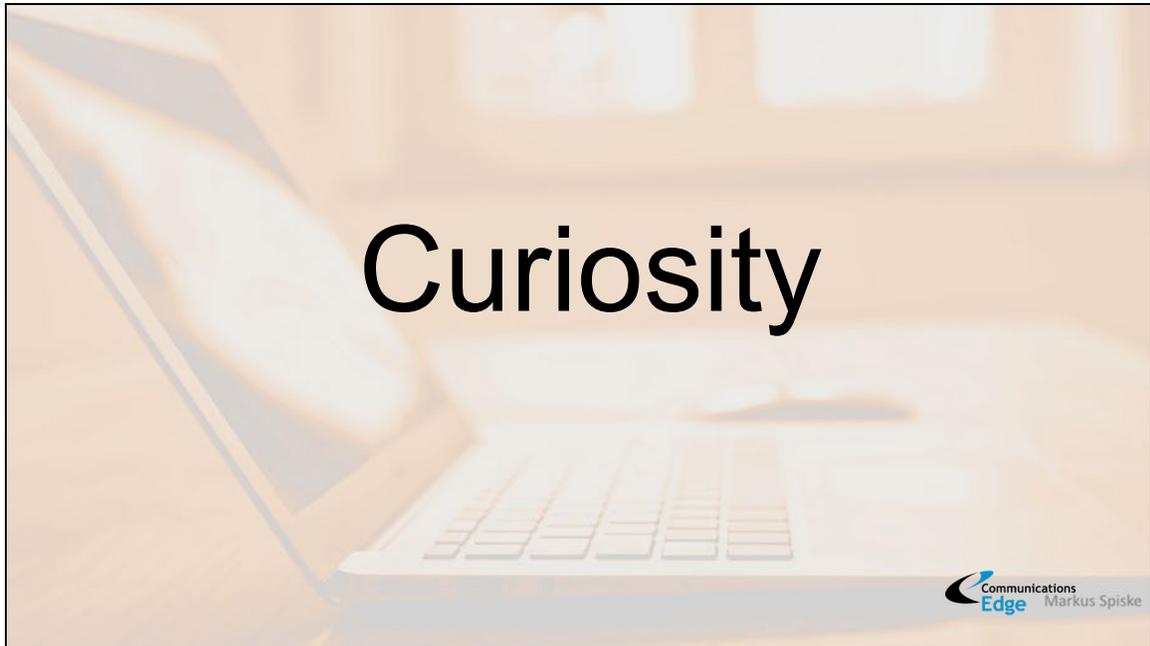
Talent Alpha, Krakow

“Within the first 2 days, (of shifting mindset) a company with revenues of \$15bn volunteered to have a meeting with me. I used techniques like acknowledging the prospect had a choice, no pushy tactics. This lead to them suggesting a meeting because they were keen to understand more. Their curiosity was piqued... **it was a shift in mindset** from trying to give information about my product to building curiosity and provoking a conversation.”

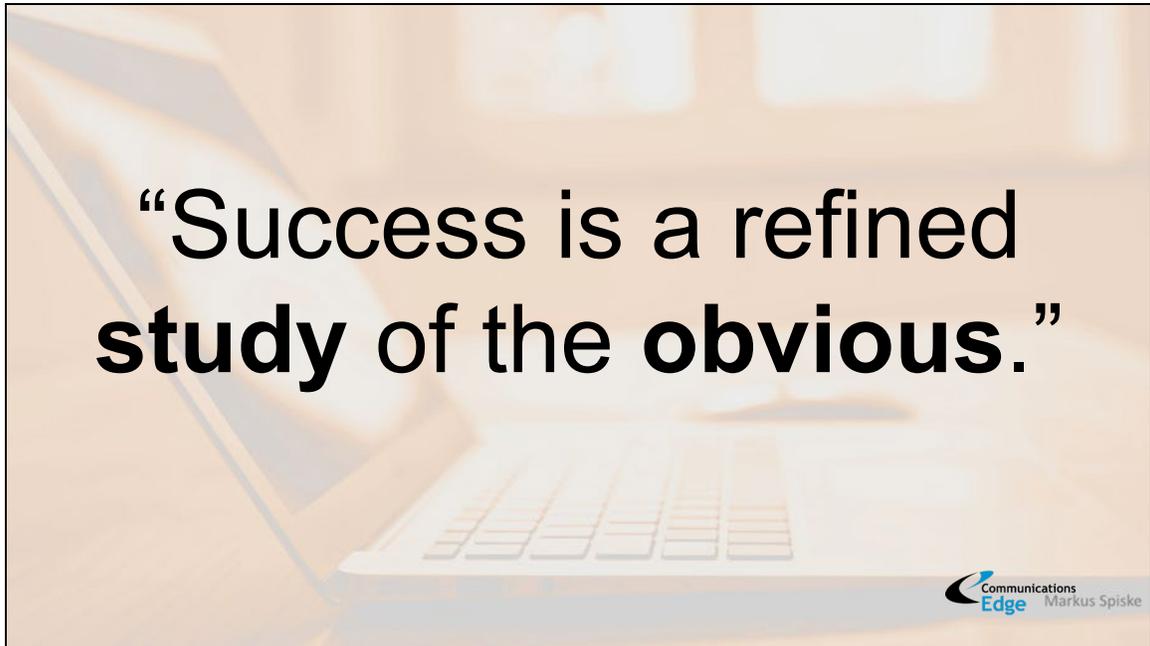
James is a testament to having better tactics driven by a better mindset.



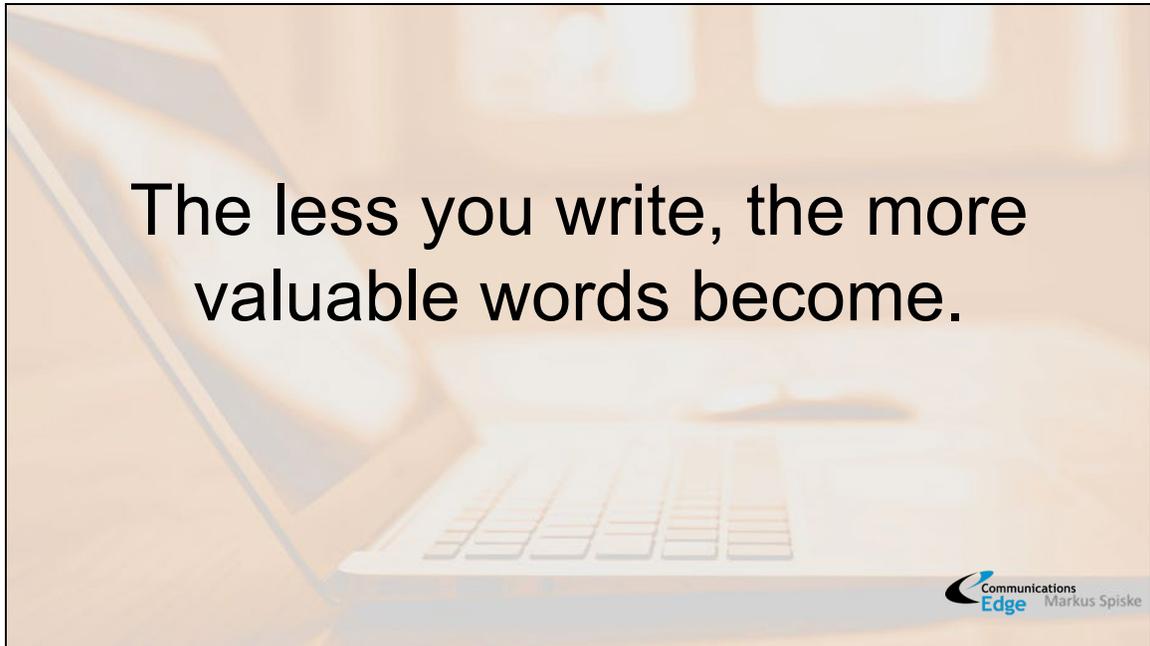
As a general rule, with subject lines and messages in the sales and marketing contexts... Less is more. It's also true in your follow, up... discovery meetings, voicemails. Ok. In closing, provoking curiosity is fundamentally different than sending meeting requests.. and persuasive messages.



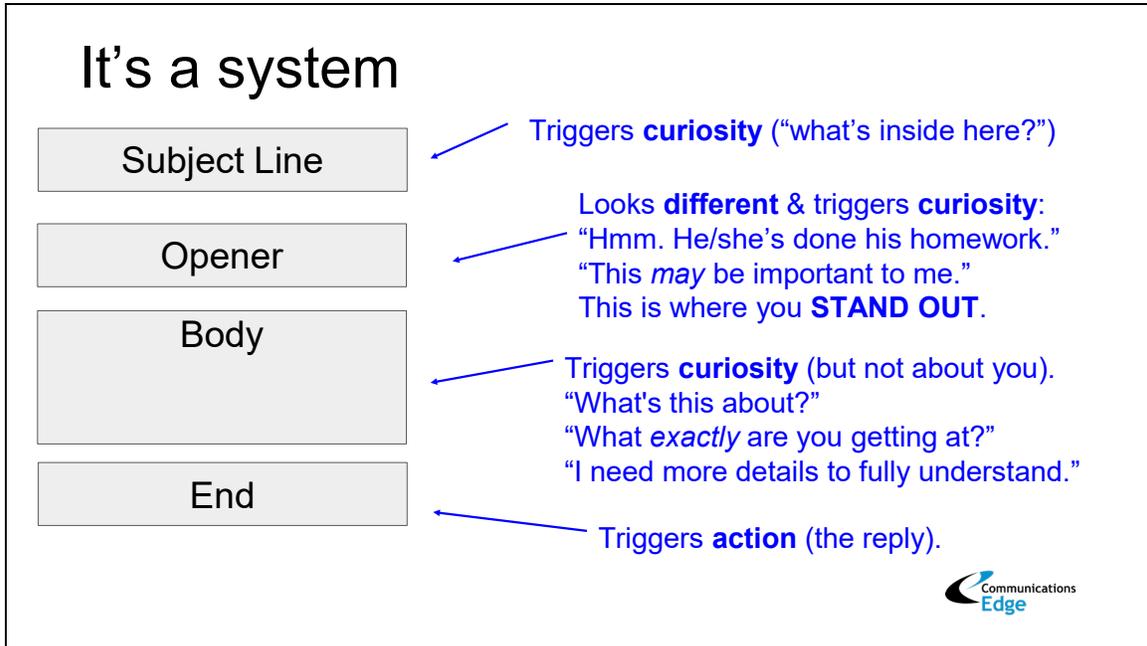
Sparking curiosity requires sending totally different subject lines and messages.... messages that stand out from 98% of what everyone else is sending. Thus, what you should expect to get back from customers is also different. And we discussed typical responses in Lesson 1. Ok... to wrap up, Jim Rohn's words come to mind right now. All of this seems obvious right? Well...



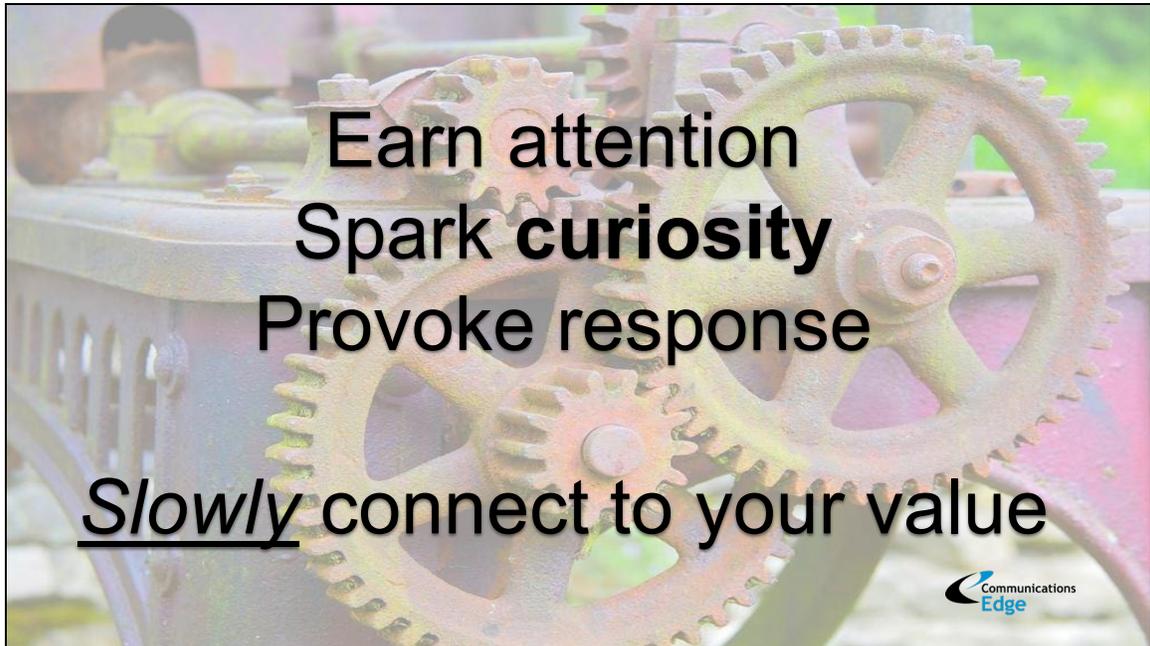
Success is a refined study of the obvious. So, this may be obvious but only if you get on the right path -- and stay on it. The path to using less words.



Because the less you write, the more valuable words become. And the more provocative they become. It's sales copywriting law. The less you write the stronger your words become. And the less you sound like a marketing hack.



And remember... the subject line is part of a system. One based on triggering curiosity. Using a behavioral science approach. And notice how it's a flow of curiosity. We trigger curiosity with the subject line... the opener stands out, looks different... and triggers more curiosity. And we have various ways of achieving this in our practice. This IS a practice, keep in mind. Then the body should (you guessed it) trigger more curiosity... as should the end of the provocation. And there are various tactical options to achieve this. But all involve a less is more, behavioral method of structuring your message to provoke response.



And remember... the way forward is simple: A 3 step process. A communication process. Where now you will have a better way to earn attention, spark curiosity and provoke response more often. Then you'll slowly connect that conversation to your value... IF, in fact, that conversation needs to happen. Ok. Now coming up next, we're going to dive into questions... a really, really important part of earning conversations with prospects.



See you in lesson #4

Using questions to provoke response

Jeff Molander
Founder



 Communications
Edge

Markus Spiske

What if your questions could be worded to provoke a conversation from cold? Or act as a "change GPS" to forward an active sales discussion. Or to revive a gone-dark conversation. They can. This next lesson will give you a clear understanding of what makes a question provoke response... examples of effective cold and follow-up questions, and a method to write provocative questions. Questions that don't try to hook customers. Again, that's a no-no. Marketing hooks don't work. They chase prospects away. I'll show you a way to write questions that foster... you guessed it... curiosity. Not about you or your product. Instead, about the prospects own situation. Counter-intuitive? It can be. See you in lesson three.