The 'Email From' Field - Small Tweaks Can Pay Off Big

What's in a name?
For your business, it could be everything.

Shakespeare posed this question on stage over 400 years ago, and it's just as relevant online today. Your customers are getting marketing emails from you, your competitors and brands from all across the world. How can you guarantee they'll click on yours? 43% of email recipients hit the spam button based on the sender's name or address, so tweaking this aspect of your outreach email can lead to big payoffs.

We've talked about how to write a good email, now let's delve into why the name component is so important, and what you can do to customise your open field.

It's all about getting an opening

Naming your company was a huge decision. Now it's time to make sure that that name is reflected across all your communication, especially in an overlooked area like emails. The 'sender name' or 'from field' is the first column in your contact's inbox and the first 20 characters your receiver will see. Make it count.

42% of people surveyed in this Litmus study said the first thing they look at when they receive an email is the 'sender' or 'from' name. This makes sense when we realise that most email users today check emails on phones; and our phones display the 'Email From' field first, followed by subject and preview. According to Mailchimp, the average email open rate is 21.33%. So where do you stand in this stat and what can you do to improve?

Avoid a person's name by itself or keep it consistent
Unless the person's name is as recognisable as Rihanna or Drake chances are your customer is not going to open an email from your marketing department's John Smith. Use a name that your customer can identify your brand with, or establish a connection. For example, if you initially sent a welcome email to your user and signed it 'Sara from XYZ', it is likely that the customer will remember and associate Sara from XYZ the second time around and every time after. By being consistent you are slowly building a bond and can gain the trust of your recipients, giving you an open.

Occasionally your company CEOs or presidents send out emails, and unless they are well-known, include your company name too. Hubspot tested two variations of sender names with interesting results. The 'personal name + company' version generated a 0.96% click-through rate (CTR) with a 7.10% open rate. Alternatively, using just the company name got a 0.73% CTR with 6.57% open rate. Below is an example of how the team at Contently does this effectively:

Joe at Contently	Inbox	[Webinar] How to get Budget, Buy-In, and Set Yourself Up for Success, with Joe …
Joe at Contently	Inbox	How to Map Content to Revenue, in 3 Steps - //contently .us18.list-manage.com…
Jess at Contently	Inbox	Thank you for requesting our Fast-Growth's Startup Guide to Content - e-book he…

Image source: author's own

When in doubt, stick to just your company name. It is what your customer signed up for and will know exactly who you are.

Message type

This is useful if you send out emails for different campaigns with unique focus points. Sometimes customers subscribe to specific topics and if you clearly characterise your 'from name', they will be able to distinguish the segment from the outset. Our average attention span is 8 seconds, so you have a very small window to make sure you stand out in a full inbox.

Take a look at the Refinery29 example below:

Today On R29	Inbox	Natural beauty is making a comeback during COVID-19 - VIEW IN BROWSER WE…
Refinery29 Money Di.	Inbox	I'm 24, live off $288,000 a year, & I spent over $1,000 this week - VIEW IN BROW…
Refinery29 This AM	Inbox	8 things you need to know this AM - VIEW IN BROWSER 8 NEWS STORIES YOU …
Refinery29 UK	Inbox	The back-to-school hair trend we didn't see coming - VIEW IN BROWSER WEDNE…
R29 The Mention	Inbox	The Real Housewives of New York just lost another cast member - VIEW IN BRO…
R29 Unbothered	Inbox	This Black trauma needs to stop - Image View in Browser Unbothered
Refinery29 Shopping	Inbox	$28 faux-leather leggings, satin masks, plus 14 more weekly scores - VIEW IN B…
Refinery29 Canada	Inbox	5 Fashion Trends That *Might* Get You Out Of Sweats This Fall - VIEW IN BROW…

Image source: author's own

Here you can clearly see the purpose of the email from the name itself. Define your intent and you will grab the audience you are targeting. Are you selling a new product, announcing an update or sending your customer their bill? Use a different naming convention for each purpose, alongside your company name, for a focused approach.

'Do not reply' is a big no-no

We've all received those 'no reply' emails. The ones that give you information but don't want to hear back from you. Remember how they make you feel? You do not want your customer to feel that. A 'do no reply' name is seen as being unapproachable before the receiver has even opened your email. Even if you are sending information that you do not want a reply to, keep the name open and welcoming. To save time, many people even auto-filter 'no reply' emails to be sent directly to spam. Replies are a valuable source of feedback, and you do not want to shut that door too soon.

To Wrap Up

We have established that your name is extremely important in introducing your brand to an audience, and directly affects email open rates. Use A/B testing to see what naming strategy works best for your business. People today are in a hurry and live fast-paced lives, so give them exactly what they are looking for. Test out what your 'email from' field looks like in different devices, browsers and email providers. And for more email guidelines, check out our ultimate cold email checklist!

What did you think of these 'email from' best practices?