THE COMPLETE
HANDBOOK
OF COLD MAILING

How to kick off your outbound sales

TESTIMONIALS

This guide to cold emails will reshape your outbound sales process. A must-read for any sales team.
Max Altschuler, CEO, Sales Hacker

Doing outbound email correctly is just as difficult to do as it is effective. This book will save you weeks of time and bundles of money that you would have spent learning these techniques the hard way. This is a must-read for every entrepreneur!

Ryan Buckley, Co-founder & Head of Sales, Scripted

I've made a career out of growing companies, and no matter the stage your company is in, you're always trying to find an advantage that provides sustainable growth now and into the future. With this ebook, outbound sales may become your main advantage.

Matt Ellsworth, Growth at Distribution Team, 500 Startups

INTRODUCTION

Last year, together with my co-founder Luke, we decided to change the way people generate leads through outbound channels. It was shortly after that we discovered a cold mailing technique and started generating results which amazed us. After a few campaigns I was thrilled, but also tired – *creating highly qualified lists and sending hundreds of emails is a real pain.* I started looking for an automated solution, and I simply couldn't believe that no one had automated the process. I mean, how hard could it be?

That's how Growbots was born – we decided to take up that challenge and create a system that would generate outbound leads automagically. Today, we can generate a list of prospects and send a new batch of cold emails in minutes . . . but for a year we're doing everything manually. We wanted to test every single email strategy we'd heard and thought about, and since May last year we've sent over a million cold emails. Not every campaign was a success – we've made mistakes – which makes you feel ashamed and like a rookie. But we kept digging, testing and improving the results. We've been through every single fuck-up and edge case possible. Finally, after more than a year, we can proudly say we've managed to generate more than $10 million in revenue for our customers.

Today, we can not only offer you software that allows you to run your cold mailing campaign in a few minutes a day, but we also want to share our experience. *Here, in this ebook, we share everything we have learnt by sending over a million cold emails*. I hope it will guide you through all the basics and nuances of outbound sales!

P.S.
I'm always happy to brainstorm on outbound sales, so find me on Twitter (@pietruszynski) or shoot me an email (greg@growbots.com).

Greg Pietruszynski

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SEARCHING FOR THE MAGIC FORMULA

– combining strategy, subject line, content and timing

Cold email. Love it or hate it, it's still the most effective way for outbound sales. Unfortunately, over time it has acquired a bad name, and a lot of companies ditch this strategy without even trying. But the motto is: *customer success starts with sales done right.* And in outbound sales, cold email is essential. When starting Growbots we knew that we were going on a journey to find the Magic Formula – our goal is to automate the whole sales process so sales reps could focus on closing more deals.

At the centre of the Magic Formula is email. Its subject line, its body and your skills are parts of outbound sales success. After months of testing, building predictable revenue with outbound sales and generating more than $10 million in of revenue for our customers, we can say that we've found the Magic Formula for outbound sales. **And now we are sharing it.**

customer success starts with sales done right

SUBJECT LINE

This is always the tricky part, mainly because it's hard to come up with a short, catchy line. But it's still the most important factor directly influencing your open rates. No matter how well adjusted for conversion your email body is, it won't bring results if the email isn't opened. Moreover, it's the part which requires a pinch of creativity and the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes.

Best practices

As mentioned before, a lot of depends on your target. So instead of creating bunch of shifty rules, we field tested many subject concepts and that's our best practices:

- **Write it last** so it matches the body of the email.
- **Keep it short** and avoid capital letters. It's common practice, but do you write to your colleagues with subjects in capital letters? I bet you don't.
- **Short subjects are great**, because they unlock the option of a long preview. According to CNN Money, more than **500 million** people use Gmail inbox. It means that the recipient sees the first sentence of your message before opening it. Don't waste that opportunity!
- **Maintain a conversational style** in your message – talk the way you walk. Try not to personalize . . . or do try. Confused? Disclosure: there isn't a correct solution here. If you think about it, you'll realise that a lot of cold emails include the <name> + <company> personalization scheme. It's a kind of red flag. Nevertheless, it's worth testing this: "Hey <name>". It may work!

- **Don't cheat** – that's why I'm suggesting coming up with the subject at the end. As soon as recipients discover that the subject was a mock-up and doesn't relate to the content of the email, they'll not only lose interest, but also be annoyed, and that's a short track to the "mark as spam" button. But there's one thing you should test: "Quick question/feedback". Such a subject very often has a high open rate and is vague enough to match your email's content.
- **Avoid cheesy sales jargon.** It is often overused, so using it has strictly negative connotations.
- **Change your subjects**, not only for A/B testing, but also once in a while in general. This approach will help you avoid Google spam filters and give you better understanding of your target.

Giveaways

- Keep it short and genuine. Use preview wisely.
- Remember that subject and preview have the biggest impact on open rates.
- Test personalization and vague lines.

CONTENT

Introduction to email structure

"Hey, I don't care that you are busy – please drop everything and think about buying a new project management tool. The best time to make that decision is now! Our software will help you to [insert sales pitch]. Ok, that's all. How about you postpone all your plans for tomorrow at 2.00 p.m. and get on the phone to me (so I can close that deal ASAP)?"

This is what I get from most of the "sales pitches" I receive in my inbox.

I know sales is all about selling, but, paradoxically, your cold email isn't. Just think about it – **you have probably up to 8 seconds of attention span before your recipient moves to the next email.**

Intro

You won't sell anything in 8 seconds, but you might win someone's curiosity to learn more about your solution in the future – and this is your goal. At Growbots we use this simple yet powerful email content creation formula to achieve that goal:

The first line of your email is your chance to make the content relevant to the person who gets your email – mess up, and nobody will finish reading. My advice is to get straight to the point and not waste the first line on introducing yourself. Knowing your name and company does not tell me my why your email is relevant to me. You can do that if you're Bill Gates – then your name makes whatever your write relevant, but let's assume you're not him ;)

However, if you say you loved my latest blog post or my friends company just became your customer, I would be thrilled to read more. At Growbots we relate to those situations connecting you with your prospects as *events*. There are many different events you can use to prove your email is relevant to the prospect:

- press release/blog post
- mentioning a mutual friend
- membership of a LinkedIn group
- attendance at the same conference
- participating in the same discussion in online communities

If you really can't come up with anything smart and compelling, then your last chance is to make up an imaginary event. You can recall a situation that happened while talking to a customer and try to make it relevant to the situation. One tip: do not lie. You don't want to end up like Savanna in her email below:
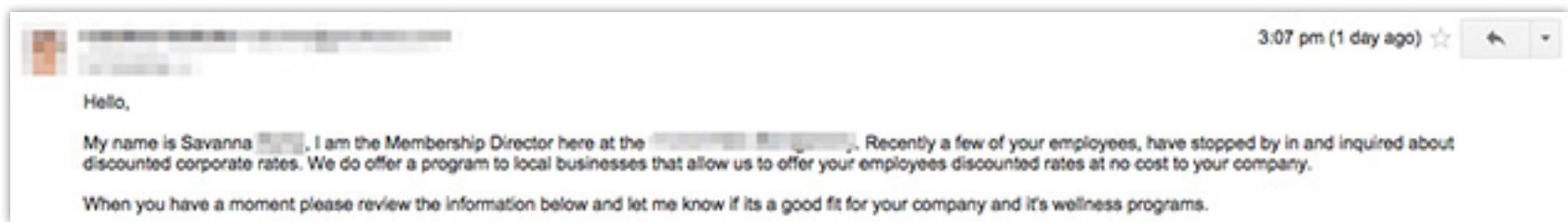
Not only did she start with a super-long introduction, but she also lied to me. The situation she mentioned in the email couldn't possible have happened, as I have only just arrived in the US and have no US-based employees . . .

Here's a much better example:
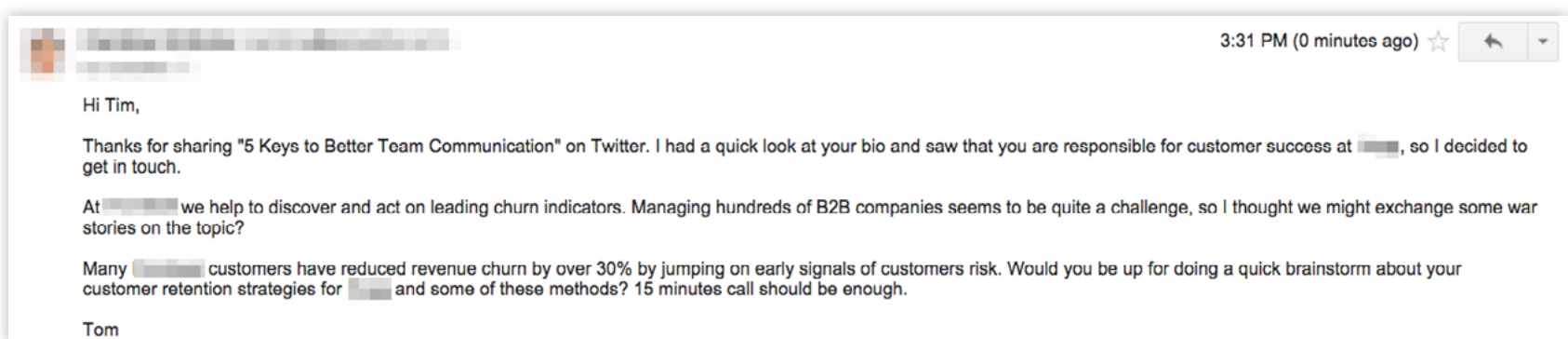
Tom made a great intro by starting from a real-life situation that happened today! This kind of events are a perfect fit for any email introduction. Another great example:
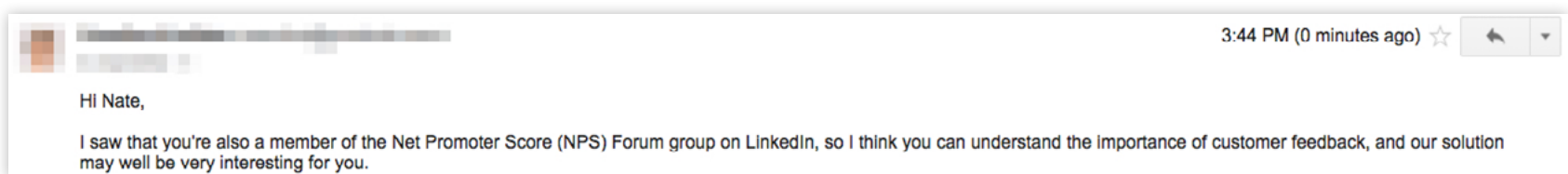
Still can't think of anything to start your email with? We've been there too, so we came up with a strategy that helps you create an event for almost every possible situation. Here's the trick: *send someone a tweet with an article and then mention it in your email.* Saying: *"Hey, I sent you a tweet yesterday with a link to the article <title>, as I saw you're into <this and that>"* makes it a hell of an event!

Benefit

The benefit sentence is the part where you explain why it is beneficial to read your email and maybe talk to you. Try to keep in mind the well-known acronym, WIIFM (What's In It For Me) – don't talk your product one-liners.
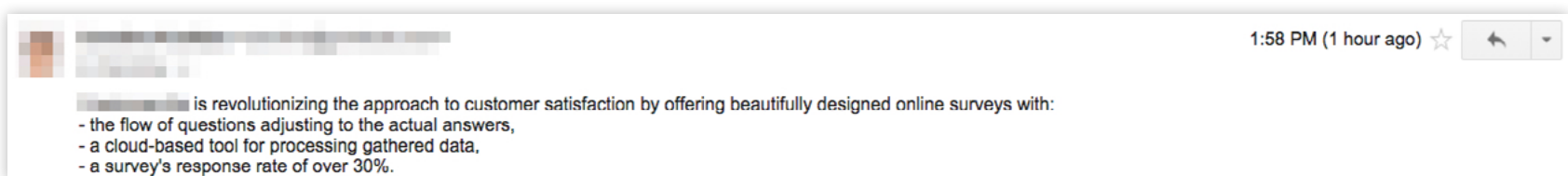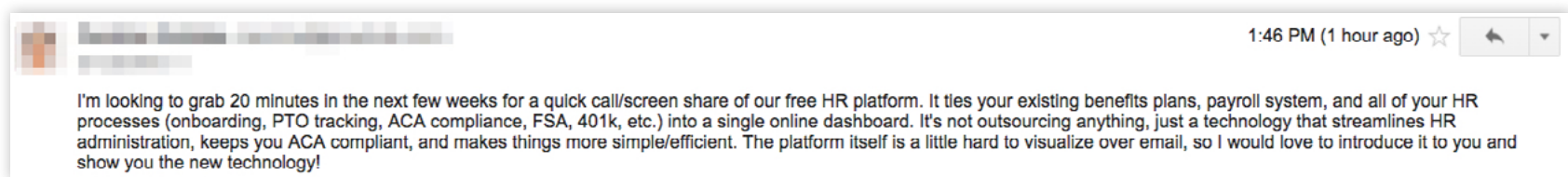
Best practices:

- Focus on the core benefit and keep something back that you can mention later in the follow-ups.
- Make it short – don't talk about product features.
- Adjust the benefit to the decision-maker and explain it from his or her perspective.

Good examples:

I'm looking to grab 20 minutes in the next few weeks for a quick call/screen share of our free HR platform. It ties your existing benefits plans, payroll system, and all of your HR processes (onboarding, PTO tracking, ACA compliance, FSA, 401k, etc.) into a single online dashboard. It's not outsourcing anything, just a technology that streamlines HR administration, keeps you ACA compliant, and makes things more simple/efficient. The platform itself is a little hard to visualize over email, so I would love to introduce it to you and show you the new technology!

is revolutionizing the approach to customer satisfaction by offering beautifully designed online surveys with:
- the flow of questions adjusting to the actual answers,
- a cloud-based tool for processing gathered data,
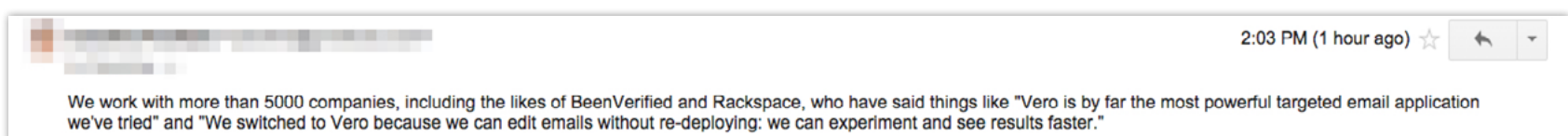- a survey's response rate of over 30%.

Social proof

Social proof becomes separate science lately, but in cold email case all you have to keep in mind is that nothing is better than presenting proof that you have helped people in a similar situation – if you do that, you win trust.

How to win trust in one sentence then? Our 5 unfailing best practices:

- Take testimonials from real people. Don't make it up.
- Quote the numbers – how many customers you have, how much money you helped them to save, etc.
- Share the best customers' names.
- Experiment with adding a one-sentence testimonial.
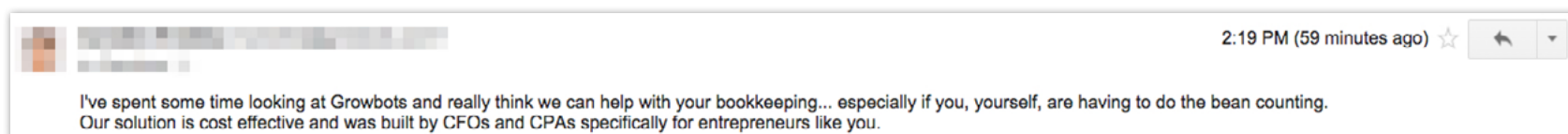- Keep it short – 1 or 2 sentences max.

Here's a great example of social proof:

We work with more than 5000 companies, including the likes of BeenVerified and Rackspace, who have said things like "Vero is by far the most powerful targeted email application we've tried" and "We switched to Vero because we can edit emails without re-deploying: we can experiment and see results faster."

Chris from Vero managed to pack an impressive number of customers, industry-leading names and customer testimonials into one sentence – this is the way to go!

The email below, on the other hand, does not tell me anything about why the service is relevant to my company or how it has helped others:

| | 2:19 PM (59 minutes ago) | |

I've spent some time looking at Growbots and really think we can help with your bookkeeping... especially if you, yourself, are having to do the bean counting. Our solution is cost effective and was built by CFOs and CPAs specifically for entrepreneurs like you.
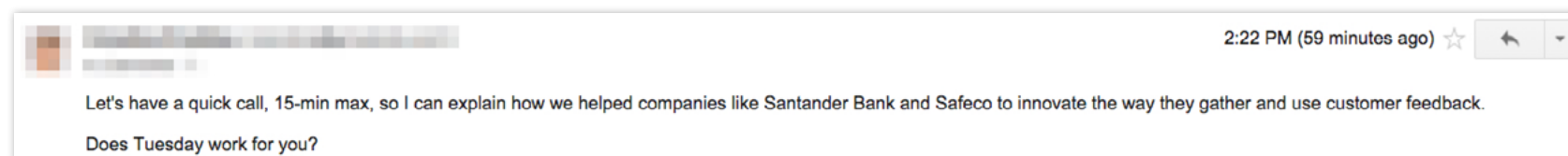
Call to action

Always aim for one CTA.
This gives a clear signal and leaves the recipient with an obvious task to do. Don't be afraid to propose a meeting on a specific date. Thanks to that, it becomes a yes-or-no question – don't leave space for doubt about what must be done next.

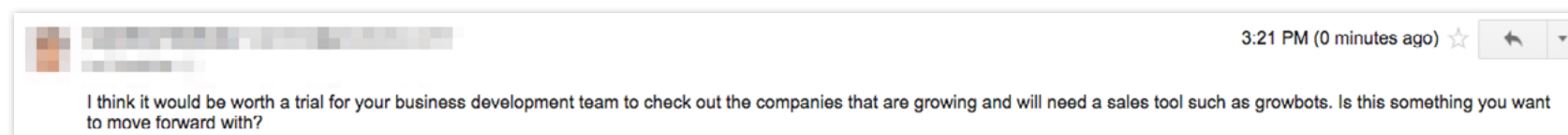**How to create the best performing CTA? Try these best practices:**

- Don't try to force someone to make a decision
  – you want to schedule a call or a demo to tell them more about the opportunity.
- Avoid too many links and distractions.
- You always have to test different strategies: keep it open ("do you have time for a call anytime soon?") vs. push on a date ("how about a call on Tuesday after 2 p.m.?")

 Good example :

| | 2:22 PM (59 minutes ago) | |

Let's have a quick call, 15-min max, so I can explain how we helped companies like Santander Bank and Safeco to innovate the way they gather and use customer feedback.

Does Tuesday work for you?

 Bad example :

| | 3:21 PM (0 minutes ago) | |

I think it would be worth a trial for your business development team to check out the companies that are growing and will need a sales tool such as growbots. Is this something you want to move forward with?

Email types

The Magic Formula strikes back! When building your cold email campaign, you should remember about the Ideal Customer Profile. *There are certain types of emails which align with certain segments of your prospects.* As we've discovered what elements should be included in every email, let's find out about general email types.

Referral email

Referral emails have one goal: to find the right contact. By right contact we mean decision-maker. Emailing the wrong person is common when contacting large corporations, where the person responsible for making decisions may be hidden and/or unclear. *Instead of blasting sales emails to multiple recipients, it's better to just ask.*
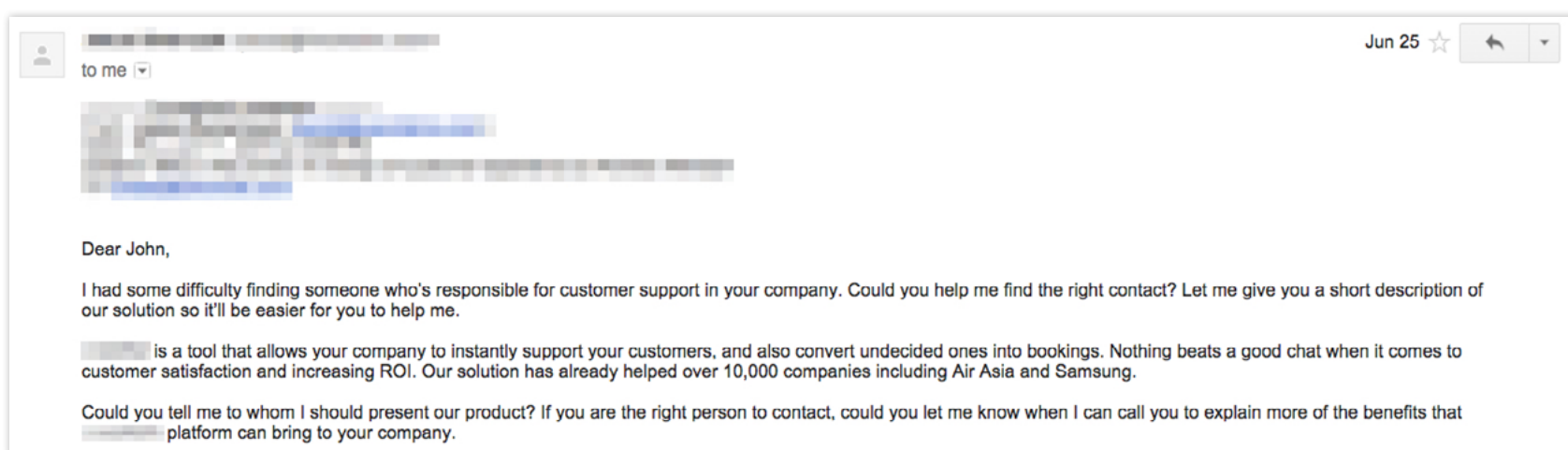
To make sure your request will be fulfilled, you should:

- **Make your intro straight to the point** – there's no need to establish a connection if you're looking for someone else.

- **Point to the benefit and provide social proof** – describe briefly why you are trying to contact the right person. It should be convincing so the recipient will think "it feels good – I helped them out by connecting them!".

- **Put in a clear CTA**: ask for the contact details of the decision-maker or person responsible for the area of your product/ service.

Direct pitch – short

A direct pitch is a perfect template if you are 100% certain that this is your guy and that your product/service will help him a lot … A LOT! Always remember that customer success starts with sales done right – no one will be satisfied in the end if you mismatch qualification at the beginning. So, *when you are sure there's a perfect product market fit – there's no point wasting time.* Use a short template if you have a verified decision-maker and he or she will be willing to jump on a call with you. This is one of our favourite templates:
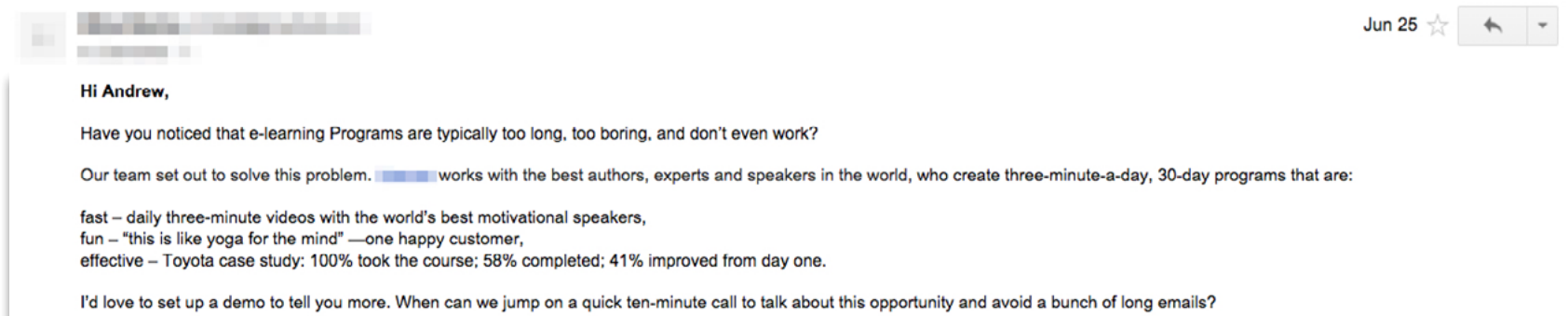
This email has a standard structure:

- intro to attract your lead
- benefit to introduce the solution
- social proof to make them trust you
- CTA to accomplish the goal

But what is great about it is its simplicity. Look closer – in the very first sentence you identify the potential customer problem and provide a solution. Including one sentence from a case study makes perfect social proof.

Direct pitch – long

This type of cold email isn't that much different from a short direct pitch – apart from the length, of course. In a long email, you really need to focus on storytelling – to allure the reader, to sell him the story, the feeling. Here, you have the opportunity to elaborate – the most important thing is to remember to keep the structure (intro, benefit, social proof and CTA) and to keep the tone conversational.

In a long email, you have space to be creative, so you can focus on personalization and the *pain/dream/solution* approach. In the *pain* section you should prove that you have identified the prospect's

problem. Later, you describe the *dream*, so it's simply "wouldn't it be great if ...", and that leads us to proposing the perfect solution – your product/service. In the *dream* section you should describe the benefits of your product, and in the *solution* section you should include elements such as UVP (Unique Value Proposition), USP (Unique Selling Point) and social proof. The whole message should be ended with a clear CTA.

Here's an example:
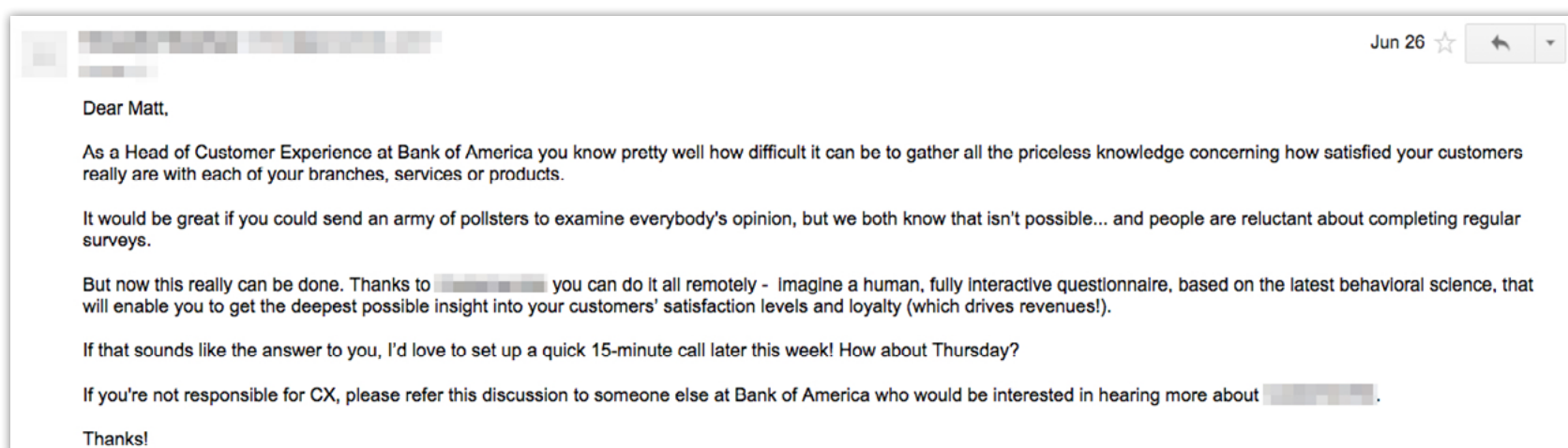
Smart personalization – how to use automatic segmentation to "personalize the emails"

The best emails are personalized emails, but in many cases you need to spend a lot of time gathering the information you want to use in your emails. However, there are many tactics that allow you to send personalized emails in no time, just by segmenting your data in the right way.

Here are three examples:

- **Personalization based on location.** Send emails only to people from San Francisco, L.A. or New York in one batch. You can refer to that location in your email, saying: *"I'm also based in San Francisco, so maybe we can grab a coffee next week"* or *"I'm coming to New York at the end of the month and would love to grab a coffee"*. I know a lot of sales people who send this kind of email and simply book the flight when they have their calendar filled in with meetings.

- **Personalization based on "Job position".** Refer to the job title in the email introduction. Thanks to that, you can say: *"As a CTO, you may struggle with managing distracted teams, so [...]"*. Always change the pitch so it is relevant to people in this position (to a CEO, talk about management and business; to a CMO, about inbound leads, etc.)

- **Personalization based on using software product.** You can create a list of companies using certain software products that you're integrating with or that are popular among your customers, and say: *"I saw you use Salesforce; we can integrate with your CRM."*
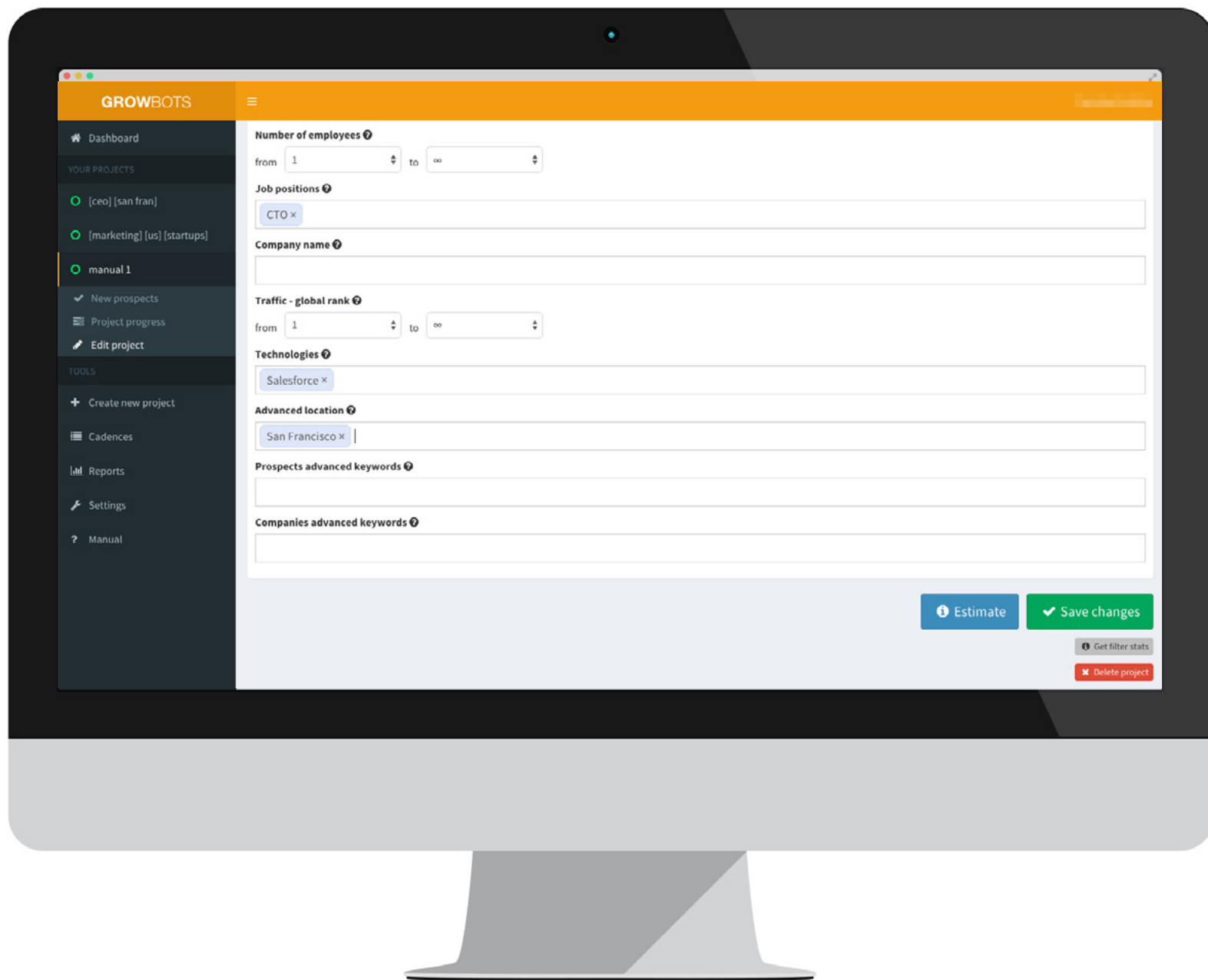
Giveaways

■ Keep your email structure right: Intro + Benefit + Social Proof + CTA

■ Choose the email type appropriate to your target
  – referral, short or long direct pitch

■ Try not to sell your product. Introduce how you can solve a problem.

■ Have a reason to contact them and work it into the email.

■ Segment your target using personalization
  – place, job title, technologies used.

TIMING

When to send emails

In marketing emails, you basically pick a few slots and test which performs the best. In sales emails, the trick is to observe behaviour and make assumptions for your targets. I don't want to create any rules, because it's really a very specific field, and the best thing you can do is to test it yourself. Generally speaking, what we've observed after sending a few million outbound emails is as follows:

Emails sent in the morning (7 a.m.–9 a.m., local time) perform very well (over 80% open rate).

Sending emails during lunch, as well as slightly before and after, is a waste of time (open rate below 40%).

People tend to tidy up loose ends before going home, so they check their inboxes before leaving work. If your email has a CTA which prospects could perform in less than five minutes, there's a chance they will do this on the spot. For that, you should try sending a message in the late afternoon: 6 p.m.–8 p.m.
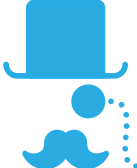
When approaching C-level, *it's a good idea to try something non-standard*, such as emailing them on Sunday! It may work in the case of higher positions, because they often unload their inboxes ready for Monday morning.

Take a closer look at your target. Make assumptions about their day and week plans. Test.

Campaign schedule

Cadence is a sequence of emails which will be sent automatically to prospects. Because we have to aim for the highest response rate, we should create cadences consisting of the first email and 7–8 follow-ups. Here at Growbots, we use three types of cadence:

type of cadence	no. of emails	duration	description
POLITE	3	3 weeks	consists of three emails, the whole campaign lasting three weeks: • first email in week 1 on Tuesday, • first follow-up in week 2 on Tuesday, • second follow-up in week 3 on Tuesday
BALANCED	3	2 weeks	consists of three emails sent over two weeks: • first email in week 1 on Tuesday, • first follow-up in week 1 on Thursday, • second follow-up in week 2 on Tuesday;
AGGRESSIVE	3	1 weeks	consists of three emails sent within a one-week period: • first email on Tuesday morning, • first follow-up the same evening, • second follow-up on Thursday

But in the end it's up to you what your cadence looks like. Just keep in mind your prospect's habits and behaviour.

Automation – how to improve workflow with drip campaigns

B2B sales are human-based and difficult to scale. One sales development representative is only able to handle a very limited number of conversations with potential customers. Moreover, *an average SDR wastes 50% of his time on manual lead prospecting.*

The whole sales process can be improved with automation.

1. **Sending hundreds of outbound emails manually is not possible**
   – that's why we have email drip campaigns.

2. Automatic doesn't mean not personal
   – you should put something personal in each email. It could be a company customer list, a personal note on somebody's background or any *event*, as we mentioned earlier.

3. Send emails according recipients' time zones so they won't get emails in the middle of the night.

4. Make sure you don't send automatic follow-ups over the weekend (unintentionally).

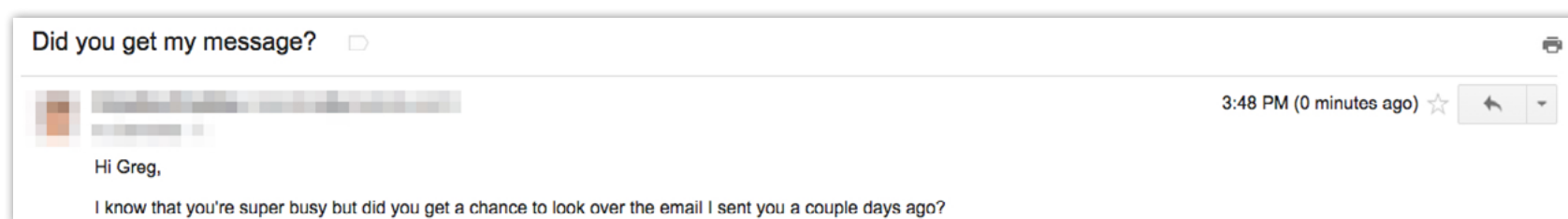**5. All follow-ups should be sent in the same thread, sending an email like this:**

Without linking it to the previous message is completely pointless. I don't have time to search for the previous message – I should see it in the thread.

Giveaways

- **Test different times for sending emails:**
  - 7 a.m.–8 a.m.
  - 4 p.m.–6 p.m.
  - weekends for C-level

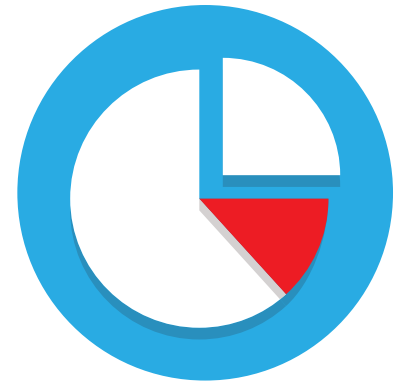- **Choose and try various types of cadence:**
  - polite
  - balanced
  - aggressive

- **Automate repetitive tasks (cadences):**
  - writing emails
  - sending follow-ups
  - personalization

ANALYSING RESULTS

No experiment makes sense if you don't measure and analyse the results.
The same applies to cold mailing.

Let's start with the statement that *response rate is the only metric that matters. Open rate is a vanity metric.* Why? Because cold email campaigns have a different set of rules to marketing email campaigns. In marketing email, you can't send a follow-up; a response isn't what is required. *Without sending 7–8 follow-ups, you simply don't see the full response potential.*

Open rate is definitely worth watching, as it allows scope for improvements in subjects and time of sending, but it's not the most important thing. Every time the Growbots team achieves a poor open rate (less than 40%), we wait two days, and then send a follow-up. Do you know why? Because follow-ups in sales emails receive between 20% and 30% higher open rates.

Response rate and conversion from demo to deal are the numbers you should outperform.
Focus on things you can keep under control (subject, content and timing) to optimise response rate.
Remember about perfect targeting, and start scaling when you find the sweet spot. Measure and improve!

Giveaways

- Open rate is a vanity metric.
- Response rate and conversion from a demo to deal are the only metrics you should care about.
- Don't give up after the first email – follow up 7–8 times.

TIPS AND TRICKS

Not a single ebook is good without a set of ideas to try. Many times during different meetups, conferences and meetings, I have been asked about the ultimate hack for cold emails in outbound sales. My answer has always been the same: there is none; there is a ton :) Here are some easily implemented ideas to boost your performance and creativity – all field tested!

- Use different pitches for multiple decision-makers to see which performs the best.

- Follow-up at least 7–8 (even to 10!) times.

- Unless you send 7–8 follow-ups, you simply will not get your full potential response rate.

- *Don't reference failed attempts in follow-ups. It's wasted space, and you're making your prospect feel guilt* – that's not the best conversation starter.

- Mention an event related to the company (I read your blog post last week . . .). Show that you care.

- Add "Sent from my iPhone" to your email. This add-on, for some reason, gets very appreciated – you sacrificed your time to type a message on your phone.

- Try to personalize with <place> in a subject line. It's an interesting idea which is related to smart personalization (described in more detail in previous paragraphs) – this works if you can schedule a meeting on the spot right away.

POST SCRIPTUM
ON OUTBOUND SALES:
automate and measure

Since automated emails will just keep on creating sales opportunities for you, it's tempting to set them and forget them. We are all busy, aren't we?

But it ain't so easy. We need to pay close attention to the results to see what's making sense (to scale it) and what's not (so you can say goodbye to it).

Every target is different, so test different. Email subject, personalization, timing - there's a lot of possibilities.

Be sure of your choices and listen to what your prospects are telling you through metrics.

Growbots

NOTES

THE COMPLETE HANDBOOK OF COLD MAILING