

# Adrian Savage - The SMART Framework To Reach The Inbox

**Jan Koch** 00:01

Hey friends, thanks for joining me on this session. I am here with Adrian Savage. First of all, what a fantastic name that is Adrian. Thank you so much for being on the List Building School.

**Adrian Savage** 00:13

It's a pleasure. Really grateful for being invited Jan. Thank you.

**Jan Koch** 00:15

Absolutely, I've seen your name first come up, when I came across your website, emailmart.com. You also run We Deliver Email. And the reason I am super excited to have you on because you are by far the most experienced person I know, personally to speak about deliverability and getting into the inbox and not getting into the promo folders and all that good stuff. So I'm really excited to dive into this. But first, tell us a little bit about yourself, please.

**Adrian Savage** 00:46

So I'm now 49 years old, which means that I've been a geek since I was age seven. So I've had about 42 years now working in IT, which is really scary. My dad brought an apple two computer home when I was a kid and I ended up teaching him how to use it. And I've been involved in technology one way or another ever since. I escaped from the corporate world a bit over 10 years ago, and I've never looked back. I very quickly discovered online marketing and marketing automation and I became an Infusionsoft partner. And within the first few years, I started getting customers with problems where their emails weren't getting through. And to start with, I wasn't doing a great job. And I lost a few clients because they blamed me, they blamed the platform, they blamed everything. So I made it my business to learn everything I could about how the emails get through, and how to maximize the chances of getting emails into the inbox avoiding the spam folder, because the thing that I've learned massively is that my customers, my clients, they expect me to help them be successful in their business. They expect me to help them make sales. And if people aren't seeing their emails, they're not going to sell anything. So it became a real passion thing for me to understand this as much as possible, because I realized that not many people did. And also with my background in software and things like that, I was able to start coming up with solutions where I could provide software to make it easy for people as well as just giving them hints and tips and training and things like that. So here I am 10 years on all that I work on this email and helping clients to be seen more through email, and I'm loving every minute of it.

**Adrian Savage** 01:03

I can imagine and it's not it's not going anywhere. I mean, everybody says email is that and then you have oh, there's email again. And I think oberlo had to study reasonably showing email has a 41x ROI.

**Adrian Savage** 02:28

Yes

**Jan Koch 02:29**

So for every dollar you spend on email, you make \$41 back, and there's almost no channel who can match that.

**Adrian Savage 02:36**

Absolutely. The thing I love about it as well is that there's very few other channels where we have as much control. If we are a social media platform, they can change the rules in a second and we get shut down. I mean, look at what happened to President Trump. He just lost his platform one day. And if someone that high up can just lose everything, then anyone else can as well. With email, you can still do dumb things. But on the whole, it's much easier to stay in control of your audience and what you're doing and all of that. So so I love it.

**Jan Koch 03:07**

Yeah, 100%. And you are specializing on such an important topic that I think everybody watching the summit know that it's important to get your emails into the inbox, but we all just have this theoretical knowledge that we should be getting there. But we have no idea how to do that. So what actually is email deliverability? Can you break down the term for us?

**Adrian Savage 03:29**

Well, and it's an interesting one, because until recently, I described myself as a deliverability expert or specialist or whatever. But I've started to change my attitude to the word because one of the big problems we face is, as you just said, not that many people necessarily understand what deliverability is or what it means. So a lot of people think that deliverability is a very scary technical complex subject. That means you're gonna do lots of different things and set this up over here and do this over there. And if you get something wrong, everything's going to, your email just won't get through. And people get frightened by that. Or even worse, people think that deliverability is just something that isn't anything to do with them. People see deliverability as someone else's problem. The number of times I've heard people say, Active Campaign has a deliverability problem. MailChimp has a deliverability problem. And in reality, all of these email platforms that we all know and love and use around the world, they are all awesome at getting emails delivered. Occasionally, they will glitch out but that's the same for any piece of technology. It's never 100.0%. But the majority of the time the platforms are very rarely the problem. It's us as the marketers and people sending emails, and the behavior that we choose to do is what makes the biggest difference. So I'm trying to get away from that deliverability word because technically it means being able to get emails delivered from the email platform to the provider and then from the provider into the inbox rather than the spam folder, and all the things associated with that. I'd much rather talk about just how people can get more emails seen. Because yes, deliverability comes into it. But because it's almost all about your own behavior as a marketer, I just focus on, here's what you can do to become what I call email smart. How you can get more email seen, so you make more sales. And the principles are so simple that it doesn't need to be complex. And I definitely don't want to blind anyone with science today. I want to share simple actionable hints and tips that anyone can follow. No matter what email platform they're using, no matter whether they've got the smallest email list in the world with a dozen people on it or the biggest list with millions of people. The principles are the same.

**Jan Koch 05:39**

This is fantastic to hear. Because I have a bit of a tech background myself. I am WordPress developer, and I started the studies in IT security for a master's program a while ago, and I understand the lingo a little bit. But as soon as it comes to deliverability, and then how, let's say the email server from Active Campaign has to talk to the provider and has to talk to the inbox and all that stuff. I'm out. So when you say you break it down into easy terms, please take it away.

**Adrian Savage 06:11**

Sure. I'll start by asking everyone who's listening a question. And I'll be honest, upfront and say this is a little bit of a tricky question. But the question that I now ask people is looking at your email list, do you see it as an asset? True or false? And what would your answer be Jan.

**Jan Koch 06:29**

For me, it's true.

**Adrian Savage 06:30**

Absolutely. And that's the answer that we want. We want our email lists to be an asset. But the challenges that we face is that if we're not managing our email lists appropriately, then our email list is more likely to be a liability than an asset. And obviously, we don't want to have liabilities around. And the reason for this is because on a typical email list, somewhere between 30% and 50% of the subscribers are actually silently killing the reputation of whoever is sending the emails out. They're making it less likely that those emails are going to go into the inbox. And that means that it's actually killing people's sales. So what I'm starting to focus on now a lot is understanding how you can make sure your email list really is an asset, by understanding what are the liabilities on your list, how you can find them, how you can eliminate them. And if you can do that, that's one of the biggest ways that you can improve the chances of emails that you send from being seen by your audience. There's other things as you start to dig deeper, but the fundamental message is just around being clear on what your assets are, what your liabilities are.

**Jan Koch 07:33**

This is interesting. So 50% of all the subscribers I have on my list could actually be harming me rather than growing my business.

**Adrian Savage 07:42**

Absolutely. Now, to understand this, we need to really have a little look at how the big mailbox providers operate. Let's look at Gmail, let's look at Microsoft with outlook.com, or Hotmail. Let's look at Yahoo. Between them they typically control between three quarters and 90% of a typical email list. Now, if you've got if you're localized, particularly if you're in any of the non English speaking countries, then there might be local email mailbox providers, but the majority of the world and even the localized ones, you'll find that Google still has a stranglehold and you'll find that Microsoft, you'll find that Yahoo, are all still very predominant. And the thing we have to remember is that nobody normally pays a penny to use a mailbox provider. So Gmail is free, outlook.com is free, yahoo is free. And the challenge we've got is if a product is free, then actually that means that us as the users become the product. And Google is

the best known example of this. Google make money out of Gmail, the same way they do with everything by selling advertising and displaying adverts to people. And the way that Gmail makes the money is when someone opens an email, they can display an advert. So that means they're going to love the people that are sending emails that get opened. They're not going to be quite so happy with the people that sending emails that have a very low open rate because those people aren't helping Google make money. Now, this isn't just about making money. They also obviously want to give their users a good experience. But myself as a Gmail user, I don't want to see lots of garbage right into my inbox that I don't want to read. I only want to see the things that I've asked for. I want Google to filter out all the emails from Nigerian prince's and things like that.

**Jan Koch** 09:20

But they have tons of money for you.

**Adrian Savage** 09:22

Oh they do. So much money that they can get into the inbox every single time. Except that unfortunately, Google has got wise to them. So there's a lot of this is just around how can we play by Google's gate? by Google's rules? How can we play by Microsoft's rules and Yahoo's. And if you do a bit of Googling, then you'll find this something called bulk sender guidelines and Google and Yahoo published those very clearly. For Microsoft you have to go really digging to find them. But I'll save you the bother because they all say something very similar somewhere hidden away. And what they say is remove inactive subscribers. And those inactive subscribers are what I tend to call the liabilities, because obviously, we want to get as high an open rate as possible because firstly, that means more people see our emails. Secondly, it means that we're staying on the right side of Google and everyone else. So statistically speaking, the people who are most likely to read our emails are the ones who've opened something recently, the longer it is, since someone has opened an email from us, the less likely. And the research that I've done over the past three or four years with a lot of data, I've analyzed literally hundreds of millions of emails. And somewhere between 45 and 90 days is what I call the point of no return. If a subscriber has gone more than 90 days without opening a single email from you, the chances are you've lost them forever. So why would you keep mailing them? This is where I often talk about Einstein's definition of insanity, which is doing the same thing and expecting different results. If someone hasn't opened the last 90 days worth of emails you've sent, what's going to change to make them suddenly open the next one. So we have to be pragmatic, and we have to let go of those people and focus only on the assets who are the people that open more recently. And it is possible to work out for each individual person where that point of no return is. Takes a lot of working out and analyzing your data. But typically, what I recommend is don't ever send an email to someone who's OBU, where it's more than 90 days, since they've engaged with you. If it goes beyond that, then at the end of the day, Google isn't going to like you, neither is Microsoft. And neither is Yahoo. Something else to bear in mind. And this is a frustration, I always feel Microsoft in particular is always the most difficult mailbox provider to deliver to. They hate marketers more than anyone. And one of the reasons is their threshold for considering someone to be disengaged is just two weeks and one day. 15 days. So if you're mailing your entire audience, and let's say only 10% of them have opened something in the last two weeks, every time the segment of emails you're sending to Microsoft gets received by Microsoft, they'll say why is this person sending emails when 90% of their audience don't care about them. And suddenly, Microsoft are going to look much more unfavorably on that sender. And if you're getting a 10% open

rates, then the chances are that Microsoft will say, well, I'm going to hide all these emails, because clearly nobody's interested. So it becomes like a vicious circle. The lower your open rates, the more you hurt your email reputation, the more you hurt your reputation, the more likely it is that email is going to spam. And when that happens, obviously fewer people see them. So the solution is to focus as much as possible on the assets. And the best assets, you've got other people that have opened something in the last 30 days. If you focus on sending as many emails as possible to those people, then you can't go far wrong. You can, there's more clever things you can do, where we can say, we'll send most of the emails to these really strong assets. And then occasionally, we'll just go back and try and wake up the people that have opened something between 30 and 90 days ago. If using a sophisticated automation platform, such as Active Campaign or keep or various other, where you can trigger specific automations, when criteria are met, you can actually say when it gets to 30 days of having not opened anything, let's send a little wake up email to this person and give them one or two chances to reengage. And then maybe if they still haven't been engaged, we wait till we get to day 60. And then we send them another bunch of emails, and they be the third email there is, hey, do you want to still want to stay on my list? And if they don't respond to that we unsubscribe them. Because at that point, they've lost all value to us, unfortunately. And we have to accept that.

#### **Jan Koch** 13:40

Wow, there's so much to unpack in this. So essentially what you're saying, at least every 90 days, we should do a list clean up and we should think about who didn't open over the past 90 days and just remove them from the list entirely. Now what if we have let's say we run an e commerce store? And the buying cycle is 180 days or something like that? Because it's just something you need every six months? Do we use reengagement campaigns to keep those addresses warm? Or how would you go about managing things like that?

#### **Adrian Savage** 14:16

So this is the fundamentally important thing about email is we can't just use it to sell we have to keep in touch with our audience as regularly as possible. The recommendation these days is that the minimum interval between mailing your audience should be no less frequently than once a week. So that way, then you're mailing them at least 50 times a year, and you're not selling something in that time. You're mainly educating, you're entertaining, you're informing your'e inspiring or sharing stories. The challenge that I gave in a very kind way but if I'm working with a business and they say I can't mail my audience once a week, I say have you really can you not think of 50 different things that you would want to speak to your audience about to help them with, because if you can't think of 50 things over the course of a year, then surely, you must be really struggling. Because there are so many things that you can share. Because obviously, the more frequently you send emails out, then maybe you can start to weave sales messages into them. But email is not just a sales tool, we have to look at engagement, first and foremost, because if people aren't engaging with us, we can't ever sell to them. So if it's 180 Day sales cycle, then that's fine. That gives us plenty of time just to keep them warm, keep our brand at the front of their minds, they don't forget about us. So then when it is time to purchase again, then they're used to hearing from us. And in general, if they are a good customer, if they're a good fit for us, they will be happy to hear from us. I do have lots of people whose biggest objection is but my audience won't want to hear from me, they're all going to unsubscribe. And yes, some of them will unsubscribe, but I'm willing to bet a lot of money that the people that unsubscribe, were the ones who would never have

bought anything anyway. And you have got to polarize yourself to some extent, I'd rather have a bunch of raving fans over here, and a bunch of people unsubscribed over there, than have a bigger list where everyone's just ignoring me because they're bored. It's much better just to actually get your message out there and be bold about what you're saying. And if they want to unsubscribe, then that's fine, because they're saving me the trouble of having to go through and weed out all those people that have just disengaged anyway.

**Jan Koch 16:20**

I love this perspective, because essentially, what you've just broken down is this myth that every email subscriber is free for us, because we have all those bike license plans that for every 10,000 people on the list, you get charged, and then the next step is from 10,000 to 15. And it doesn't make a difference if you have 14,500. Or if you have 11,000 in that licensing plan. But what you're saying is if from those 11,000, 3000 have opened in 90 days, that's a massive liability, and it's hurting the other 8000 or 7000 that we have on the list, because they don't see our emails.

**Adrian Savage 16:59**

Yeah, very much so. And that the scary statistics that I see is, supposing you just select the segment of your subscribers that haven't open anything for 90 days or longer. And then send an email to those people. If you're lucky, you'll get a 1% or 2% open rates. But the challenge you face is that if you continue to mail those people who are mainly ignoring you, then you're reducing the chances of the engaged people from opening maybe by as much as 10, or 20%. So by just continuing to mail these people that maybe once in a blue moon, someone might buy something, you're actually reducing the likelihood of selling to your best potential prospects. So it really is important to pay attention to this because I can understand there's a big fear of loss here. I've worked with clients that have built email lists of hundreds of 1000s of people, and they've spent possibly millions of dollars on Facebook ads, and Google ads and various different lead generation strategies. And then I go in, and I tell them that they've got to remove maybe 40% of their subscribers, and they look at me as if I'm telling them to go and sacrifice their firstborn or something like that. And it's a very personal thing, because there's a lot of time and money invested in building lists. But we have to recognize that sooner or later, all email subscribers are not created equal, the ones that are still engaging with you have a high value. The ones that aren't engaging, they're the liabilities, and you do have to let them go. But when you start talking about numbers, like deleting 10s of 1000s of email subscribers, then it's a very scary step to make. But if you maybe don't delete them, and just start splitting your list into the people that have engaged the most, and then the next locks, and then the 90 day plus, and you can look at the open rates, and you can see what the difference is. And even though open rates aren't as accurate as they used to be, they're still good enough that we can get an understanding of what the relative performance is of each segment. I think we haven't got time necessarily to talk lots about how Apple have made our lives more difficult as email marketers. But the thing I will say is that even though Apple has made it more difficult to accurately see who is opening an email, it still tells us what the trends are. We can still know that if we send the emails to our most engaged people and get an open rate of x. And then we send to the less engaged people. And we get an open rate of Y that is still that is still a valid comparison. It doesn't necessarily tell us that the numbers are exactly right. But we can see what's working better and what's working worse. We can see where the people are engaging and where they're not. And all you have to do is just keep an eye on those statistics. And normally, the numbers will speak for themselves. They

will give you enough reason to do what I'm saying that you can kind of overcome the fear of letting go of all these hard one subscribers that you've got.

**Jan Koch** 19:40

It's very interesting that I would love to dive into metrics and a little bit but I have one selfish question before and in terms of scheduling and frequency of newsletters and things like that. So wind back for two years ago, I had an open rate of about 5% on an email list. That was quite stale when I took it over. Switched different providers because I found that the one I was with was blacklisted. And just that brought my open rate to 15%. And then what I started doing is five out of four days in a week, I would email to the engaged people. And then on the fifth day, I would email the entire list. Is that a sequence that you would recommend? Or is that something that I shouldn't be doing?

**Adrian Savage** 20:29

It's very close. But what I would typically do is on that fifth day, I would still draw the line at 90 days. So for the four days out of five, I would send emails to the people that have engaged within the last 30 days. And then the fifth day, include the people up to day 90. And then as long as you've got this other automation, or maybe you might do this manually every week, or every month or something like that, as long as you're then weeding out the people that have gone beyond 90 days, and giving them one last chance to engage before you unsubscribe them, then you've pretty much got everything covered at that point.

**Jan Koch** 20:59

Nice. So that gives everybody watching this also a starting point, have at least a weekly newsletter, tell them something and then watch the session with Jason Resnik. If you want to have two daily newsletters and see how Jason is doing, then that gives you everything you need covered. Now talking about open rates and metrics and things like that. Can you shine some light for us onto those numbers? Because open rates? Can you trust them? Can you not trust them? You've spoken about that already? That they're a good trend indicators? What other metrics should we be looking at as email marketers?

**Adrian Savage** 21:31

So the main thing, so I look at open rates. And I look at click rates, because obviously that's telling how specific campaigns are performing. The reason that we have to look at open rates, even though they're not that reliable, is because unfortunately, even in a 30 day period, only about 20% of the people that open your emails are going to click something. So if you start removing all the people from your list that haven't clicked, we're going to be throwing away so many people that are potentially still able to engage with you in the future. So we can't just look at clicks. And at least the way that Apple works with most platforms, they're pre loading the tracking that the email platforms put in place. So in most cases, you'll see a higher open rate than you would. The only problem you've got is some platforms like Active Campaign are choosing to not report those Apple false opens. So with Active Campaign, it looks like it's a lower open rate than it really is.

**Adrian Savage** 22:30

You've got to be very careful and make sure that if you are going to remove someone from your list, ask them to click on a link first to confirm they're still there, just in case the open isn't being reported. But

open rates are important. Don't compare them with someone else's, because you can't compare it because a their audience is different. And B the way they manage their engagement will be different. I've always joked that I can double someone's open rates in seconds. And the way I do it is I just remove half of the email list the half that haven't engaged. So open rates when you look at it that way are complete nonsense. But at the same time, I can say fairly confidently that if you're managing your engagement really well, you should aim for an open rate of between 40 and 50%. Even with today's Apple privacy and all this kind of thing. Now if your mailing every single day, and by the way, I will be your big proxy Jason and people like that who teach daily or twice daily emails, because the more frequently you mail your assets, the better results, you're going to get. Almost without exception. So assuming you're mailing really frequently, then yes, your open rates will drop. Because not everybody opens every email. I mailed my list every single day for 30 days. And in that time I reached 85% of my audience. Now, if I'd have done that by mailing once a month, then in 12 months, if I was lucky, I'd have reached maybe 30 to 40% of my audience. So the more frequently you email, the more likely you are to get through. So opens and clicks matter. But the statistic that I really look at that really matters is who has engaged with me in the last 30 days, how many people have engaged. And if we look at that so this is not a per campaign or a per contact statistic. We're just looking at our entire email database. Let's say we have 1000 people that we've mailed in the last month, what proportion of those have engaged at least once in that time, and the higher you can get that number, the better. And what you have to remember is that you're in control of that number because you can choose to exclude people that haven't opened for a long time. So it's possible to get almost 100% engagement as long as you are very, very strictly removing the liabilities from your list. And the closer you can get that percentage engagement in the last 30 days figure to 100% the better your reputation is going to be. And I talked about the vicious circle earlier. Now I'm going to talk about the virtuous circle, which is where the good thing happens. You get your open rate as high as possible. Then your reputation improves. And suddenly you're more likely to get emails landing in the inbox rather than the spam folder. And that's what makes the difference between success in the long term and failure. Because if you've got a strong reputation, if you're getting as close to 100% as possible of your existing list reaching the inbox, then it means that when you are spending a lot of time and energy on generating new leads, that means that you will transform the performance of your lead generation and your follow up. Because one of the things that I see and this is another statistic that you need to measure really carefully, is take the number of new contacts that you've added to your list in the last 30 days. Now, if you're doing paid for ads, work out what the cost was of acquiring those as well, \$70, per lead, or whatever. Because then we need to look at what percentage of those new contacts have opened something in that 30 day period. And if it's a typical business that I've worked with, I've seen as many as 55%, of new contacts, not opening something at all. Which means that if you're spending 1000s of dollars a month on Facebook ads, you're potentially setting half of your marketing budget on fire. So you really need to look at this figure. Because if we go back to the virtuous circle, if you've managed your engagement, so you'll never get into 100% of your existing list, engaging with you, it means that you're massively increasing the likelihood of new contacts from engaging with you. And it's possible to get you can't get 100%. But you can get 85 to 90% of all your new leads opening something, as long as you're managing everything else well. Obviously, there's other rules that that will make more of a difference, where we can go into a bit more detail. But just changing this, one way that you manage your engagement is enough to make a massive difference alone. And that way, then I have saved people literally hundreds and hundreds of 1000s and millions of dollars on their Facebook ads, because they suddenly started

getting much better results just because they manage their engagement. And I'm afraid there's no magic button, there's nothing you can do to overnight suddenly get twice as many people seeing your emails. We can change the percentage overnight, but the real number won't change. But if you go three months, six months into the future, that's when you see the real difference. Because within a month or two months of making the change to managing your engagement, you will see that all these engagement rates start to go up and they stay up. And that's what drives the number of real people seeing your emails and that number going up. So I've worked with customers where one person had a list of nearly 180,000 people, he dropped it back down to 130,000, which was painful. Five months later the list have grown to 200,000 because he was very active with his lead generation. But the beauty was that the engagement rate on his list went up from 60% to 80%. So that was nearly I think about 27% increase, which meant the value of each contact on his list have gone up by that amount. Yeah. So you know, so you just you look at the return on investment there. It doesn't matter how much you're spending, you can just get better returns just by managing your engagement.

**Jan Koch 27:55**

And it's quite easy to do, because we're not selling as you said in those emails, it's just a matter of telling stories, making ourselves accessible as persons and being interesting to our audience. I love it. Talk about storytelling, how do we format our email so I can report images and GIFs and videos and stuff like that in those emails? Or will they make it more likely that we go into the promotion folder,

**Adrian Savage 28:22**

So it can make a huge difference. So there's actually there's five steps to what I call being email smart. There's the starting smartness, shifting your thinking, which we've mentioned. And there's manage your engagement, which is the M in smart, there's the A, which is authenticate your emails as our wishes about reputation is everything. And the final one in Smart is T for transform your content. Now, this really matters. Because again, the world has changed. 10 years ago, we could build the biggest email list we wanted. And then we just mail the hell out of them, we could almost spam them with stuff until they either buy, they die or they unsubscribe. If we do that these days, then we get we get put into Google jail quickly cause they spam trap. So we have to manage our engagement and content has gone the same way. If we go back 10 years ago, then kind of plain ugly, almost no dang candy, start emails with lots of kind of an email that looked like a sales page is probably the best way to describe it, they could get through. And as long as you didn't have the word free in there, as long as you didn't have the word Viagra and a few other things, then you could just write what you wanted. But again, Google in particular, has spent millions, probably 10s of millions or hundreds of millions of dollars on artificial intelligence and natural language interpretation and things like that. To really understand what every single email that gets sent really means. They're trying to work out. What's the purpose of this email? Is it a spam email? Is it a phishing email? Is it a letter from me to my auntie or something like that? So they can work out whether it is a legitimate email based on the content of it. And there's some specific things that matter. And I use the acronym WILF to remind me what they are. There's W, which is words, there's I, which is images, there's L, which is links, and F, which is the formatting. And the words, you can't write emails that sound like ad copy anymore, you've got to be your authentic conversational self. Sure, you can put calls to action in there. But again, if you put something like click here, or buy this now, or something like that, the more imperative it sounds, the more instructional it sounds, the more it will be treated as either a promotion, or even junk. Microsoft in particular, if you put

click here in an email, Microsoft are three times more likely to put it into the junk folder than if you use a different softer call to action. Now, that's that one alone can make a huge difference. So just make it conversational, and make it sound like you're just writing to a friend. And then you can weave whatever you want into this. By the way, if you want to find out about this, then you can use this link or something like that. There's lots of different ways of doing it. So the words matter massively. Images, if you have more than about three images, then it will be treated as a promotion. Now, if you're running an E commerce site, where you need to send lots of product images, don't panic, because this is like saying Pirates of the Caribbean. And these are guidelines, not rules. As long as you're following as much of them as possible, you're going to be okay. So, there's always exceptions. But on the whole, try and minimize the number of images, make sure that the amount of storage space the image takes is small. So you want it in kilobytes, not megabytes. And make sure they're relevant and limited to two or three images. If you can help it. If you have a great big beautiful masthead at the top of your image, a big banner, then that's likely to look more like a promotion. Because let's face it, if you're sending an email from your phone, or from Gmail, or from Outlook to a friend, you don't start with the images and things like that.

**Jan Koch** 31:45

And the logo. Yeah.

**Adrian Savage** 31:47

Yeah, absolutely. The emails you send wants to look as much as possible, like it's a personal email. So you know, nice and plain. So say, hey Jan, and maybe put an image in the middle somewhere, maybe have an image at the bottom and your signature with a picture of you or something. But don't put lots of images in for the sake of it. And the same is true for links, every single link, even if it's linked to the same thing, you have to remember that email marketing platforms use a different link ID for every time you put a link into the email. And if you've got more than about three links, again, it's more likely to be treated as a promotion. So minimize the number of links, minimize the number of images, make them relevant. And please, for the love of all things sacred, don't have your little email signature, with links to Facebook and Twitter, and YouTube and Instagram and all of that. If you do that, then you've got maybe five images and five links that are likely to send you straight to promotions. So an email should have a focus, which is getting people to follow one call to action. Why would you distract them putting links to social media at the bottom and things like that. If you want to promote your Facebook page of cats, then send an email out saying, hey, check out my facebook page with cats on it. Don't put it at the bottom of every single email. So that's the images in the links. And then the formatting I've mentioned is we all remember the old Dan Kennedy sales letters, we like to read text here, underlined here bold here. If you do that in an email, it's going to go into promotions. Because again, that's not what a conversational personal email looks like. So again, keep it as low key as possible. If you want to do all those things that I've just said, or a bad idea, link people through to a website where you can still do whatever you want, as long as the links that you're sending people through to are not on block lists, because if that happens, then Google will still send you an email to spam because they know what websites are bad. And as long as you're not on a blacklist, then you can send people wherever you want on the web. And you can follow whatever rules you want on a webpage. So I often have a very short, sweet, simple email. And as you said, you can find out more here, send them to the website. And then you can be as beautiful as you want. You can be as salesy as you want, because it doesn't matter.

But yeah, the content can make a huge difference. And the other thing to bear in mind is that even though things like free and Viagra and Nigerian prints don't quite trigger the spam filters, the way they used to. Google will still look at the content. And if you've got too much spammy content with lots of trigger words and things like that, then it's more likely to be filtered than if not. So I can't remember the exact link. But if you do a Google search for blow GIS tools, spam checker, and there's a really cool online tool where you can paste the copy your email in and it will highlight all what they consider to be spammy words in yellow. And then you can go and change the words for something that's slightly less controversial. So just pay attention to some of those things. And that's enough to transform your performance anyway.

**Jan Koch** 34:35

That is almost a little masterclass in itself. Thank you so much for all the detail. Now, does it matter where we placed the links in the email body? Let's say we have a text of about 300 words or something like that, because we don't want to make it too long. We keep paragraphs short. We keep sentences shorter, it's easy to skim through. Doesn't matter if the links are in the beginning or at the end of the body copy should we spread them out?

**Adrian Savage** 34:59

No, not particularly. As long as they all make sense. As long as it's in the right place for the email that you're sending, then that matters more than the positioning. I personally haven't done any testing on whether the call to action near the start or the middle of the end makes a difference in box placement. Probably there's someone who's even geeky than me has, but my gut feel is that it shouldn't make that much difference, because at the end of the day, then it's still the same link. So I'd say just work out where it's best. Some people might only put it in the PS, some people might put it, where they sign up. But there's no real hard and fast rule that I'm aware of that makes that much of a difference.

**Jan Koch** 35:34

Do you have any thoughts on having the same block of content in every email? Like some speakers on this event, for example, they recommend that you have a sales block in every single email, because at anybody on your list at some point is ready to buy, and you want to capture them. But you don't want to do that in the storytelling. That's what they said. So they have at the end of the block, here's how you work with my cause my book, blah, blah, blah.

**Adrian Savage** 36:00

Absolutely. There's something that they call super signatures, where you've got lots of different areas that you can have this or this or this or whatever. So again, it's an interesting one, because the one thing that Google Microsoft and Yahoo hate more than anything else, is repetitive content. So as an example, I know that the email compliance team at keep, every now and then they will send an email to someone who's not quite following the rules. And they have to change the content of those emails slightly every three months, because if the same email goes out time and time again, Google gets tired of it, and they start filtering out. So content like that is okay, as long as you're mixing it up sufficiently. If you literally sent the same super signature with every single email you send for a six month period, it's not necessarily enough to get you into the spam folder on its own. But it's enough to contribute to other factors that could cause you to be less likely to go into the inbox. So my preference is always to mix

things up. And I think super signatures are great, definitely have them in there because they work. But maybe if you're sending five emails a week out on the Monday, you might have a PSN check this, check out this particular product, Tuesday might be the super signature, Wednesday might be some other kind of PS, Thursday might be something else. So as long as there's enough variety, and as long as you're changing what the super signature says occasionally, then it's absolutely great. But I would be a little bit wary of having exactly the same boilerplate text in every single email you send for months and months and months. So as with anything, it's a balancing act, but it's definitely not a bad thing. It's just that too much of anything can be a bad thing.

**Jan Koch** 37:36

Yeah, just as too much oxygen or too much water is a bad thing as well. Yeah. I love it. What other best practices should we know about that I didn't ask you.

**Adrian Savage** 37:47

So I think the important thing if we go through the smart model, again, we've talked about shifting your thinking, we've talked about managing your engagement. So the A is the really important part, which is authenticate your emails. Now, this is something that's a one off job, you should do when you first set up your email platform. And then once you've set up authentication is done and you can forget about it. But this is a techie bit, I will apologize This is the only place where I can't avoid being technical for a second. But there's something called DKIM, which stands for DomainKeys Identified Mail. And it's normally known as email authentication, if you're looking at something like Active Campaign or MailChimp, or something like that. And when you set this up, then you're publishing a record on your domain saying, here's my public key. And then every time an email is sent from your email platform, it's signed with a private key. And that's how the people receiving your emails, Google and so on, this is all happens behind the scenes, they will use these public and private keys and the signature in the email to make sure that these emails came from you, and not a spammer. So you must set up authentication as a one off before. If you haven't got authentication set up right now. As soon as you finish, listen to this, go and google it and setting authentication for Active Campaign or DKIM for MailChimp or whatever. Active Campaign are a little bit naughty, because the default option is active campaign will manage authentication for you. Actually, that's a lie. They manage their own authentication, they don't do anything for you. So you need to make sure you select the second option in Active Campaign, which is I will manage my own. But then they ask you what domain you're using. And then they will give you a long string of hieroglyphics that you have to go and publish in your domain. Now, if you're not sure, please go and get professional help. It's a one off thing. So you don't need to learn how to be an expert in this. Just find someone who can set up your email authentication. And once that's done, you're good to go. DKIM is the most important. And the second one is called SPF, which stands for Sender Policy Framework. And that's another record that you publish that just says here are all the different email platforms I trust to send emails on my behalf. Get those two bits done, and that will definitely transform your performance because then everything that happens is based on your own personal reputation. And not just the default reputation from the email platform you just happen to be sending from.

**Jan Koch** 39:59

So essentially, if I understand that correctly, anybody could say I am [jan@virtualsummitmastery.com](mailto:jan@virtualsummitmastery.com). I'm sending email as that address, as long as they have the technical background and only having those records in place tells, let's say, Google, hey, this is a ballad [jan@virtualsummitmastery.com](mailto:jan@virtualsummitmastery.com) email.

**Adrian Savage** 40:21

Yeah, absolutely. Because this is it, it's possible to spoof anything, but DKIM makes that impossible for people to successfully spoof.

**Jan Koch** 40:29

Brilliant, that was a lot to digest. Adrian, where do people get in touch with you to find out more about this stuff?

**Adrian Savage** 40:37

So there's two things first off, we talked about the most important metric, which is around what proportion of the emails you send have been to engage people. And I've created an email smart score tool. It's completely free, you can go to [emailsmartscore.com](https://emailsmartscore.com). And register connect your email platform up, and it will give you a very simple score that tells you the proportion of assets versus liabilities. So that's one way to connect. Also, you can find me on Facebook, [facebook.com/adrian.savage](https://facebook.com/adrian.savage). And any questions you're welcome to either. If you take the SmartScore then you'll be added to my list and then you can reply to those emails and contact me that way. Or you can contact me via Facebook. And if it's something that I can help with, I'll always be happy to help and answer questions. If not, I can always point people in the right direction. Brilliant.

**Jan Koch** 41:23

Both resources and links are linked below this video. Thank you so much for taking the time to be with us.

**Adrian Savage** 41:28

It's a pleasure. Thanks Jan. Thanks for the invitation. Hope this has been some useful stuff.