OFFLINE SHARKS

EPB PLAYBOOK

HACKING YOUR EMAIL SIGNATURE
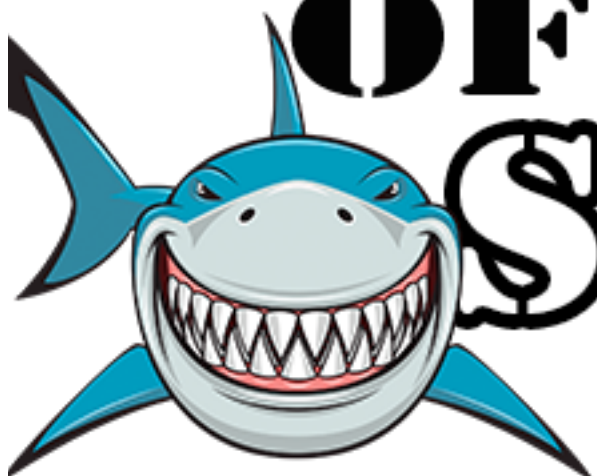
Hacking Your Email Signature

If your subject line is lame, your email doesn't get read. The average person receives more than 50 emails a day and a quarter of us receive more than 100, according to a study by the software company Varonis Systems.

So let's assume you've made the cut and your email has been opened, there's an often-overlooked element you may want to rethink—your signature at the bottom on the email. It can be your opportunity to leave a lasting impression.

"It's easy to forget that once the reader gets through the subject line and body of your email, there's one more chance to stand out," says personal brand expert Melissa Cassera of Cassera Communications. "I look at the email signature as an extra chance to sparkle and delight."

Ron Cates, director of new market development for email marketing provider Constant Contact, agrees that the signature line is important: "It's a great marketing opportunity, but it's a concise one," he says. "If it's misused, it can backfire."

5 Common Signature Mistakes

Cassera and Cates say the best way to optimize your email signature is to avoid one of its five common mistakes:

1. INCLUDING EVERY POSSIBLE WAY TO CONTACT YOU.
With multiple phone numbers, email addresses, websites, and social media networks, it can be tempting to cover the bases and include all forms of contact. Cassera says this is a mistake.

"It's overwhelming," she says. Instead, give one or two of the best ways to reach you. You can even add a sentence letting the reader know the quickest way to reach you. For example, Cassera ends her emails with "Twitter is the quickest way to my heart," and she includes her ID.

Cates says that too much contact information comes across as desperate. It can also be confusing. "Unless you have a retail store or office, it doesn't make sense to put physical address in your signature," he says. "Include one or two social icons but not all of them. The more choices you offer, the less likely any of them will be clicked."

2. USING AN IMAGE AS YOUR SIGNATURE.
Some email providers or devices have default settings that block images in emails. If your signature is an image that includes your name, title, and logo, you run the chance that the recipient won't see anything.

Cates says if you want to include an image, always use alt text behind it so the recipient doesn't see a blank box. "There's nothing worse than an email with an unreadable signature," he says.

3. NOT DESIGNING FOR THE SMALL SCREEN.
At least half of recipients read emails on their mobile device, says Cates. This means your signature is being shown on a smaller screen.

"Make sure everything is 'thumbable,'" he says. "The thumb is the new mouse. If the recipient can't easily put their thumb on your link, your email will get deleted."

He also says to pay attention to the font. "On a mobile device, reading speed is slower," he says. "Use san serif font with a point size of 11 to 14. Usability always takes precedence over design."

4. INCLUDING IRRELEVANT INFORMATION.

If you have a blog or a business, you probably want to grow your readership. It can be a good idea to include a link to your site in your email signature, but make sure your content is relevant to the person receiving the email.

"If I'm going to link to blog post, for example, it should be current," says Cates. "Sending someone to a page that hasn't been updated in months could backfire. It sends the message that you're not serious."

5. HAVING A STALE SIGN OFF.

Cassera says traditional closings, such as "Sincerely," "Best" and "Take care," are fine and follow general rules of business etiquette, but they won't get you noticed. Instead, she suggests injecting your personality. Are you bubbly and fun? Snarky? Silly? Use these traits to your advantage and end your emails in a surprising way.

"We tend to water down our personalities in order to fit a mold of what's professional, but what's professional is an arbitrary idea," she says. "If someone is offended in your signoff, you probably wouldn't want to work with or for them."

Cassera ends her emails with, "To your sizzle, spark, and stardom." She says when she allowed her personality to shine through her correspondence, her business took off.

"You always want to leave the person excited to respond to you," she says. "Most of the people who respond to me remark on my unique closing."

Increasing Web Traffic via Your Email Signature

Making sure your website has a steady amount of activity is one of the most important aspects to maintaining a successful website. Increasing website activity is one of the easiest ways you can make your site more popular as well as help your business if it is ran over your site.

By using specific tools, such as email signatures, you can passively increase your website's activity with no extra effort required. Even if you have been using email for years, you may not be aware that you can add signatures to your emails. Email signatures consist of a few lines of text that are automatically added to the bottom of each email you send.

You can usually create these signatures using a "preferences" tab on the email program you most often use. After you create an email signature, each time you send an email, your email program will automatically add whatever you saved as your signature to the bottom of the email, without you needing to do anything.

Before you can enjoy the increase in website activity through email signatures, you will need to create an appropriate signature.

To do this, you should consider two things. First, consider how much space your email program allows you for your signature. This will be important, as you may need to condense your content to fit the program you use. Secondly, and most importantly, you need to think about what you want to say with your signature.

If you are running a business it is probably best to use your name, the business name, address, phone number, and website address. This is a very professional and passive way to promote your website. If you have a more casual website, you may want to include your name, the website link, and a nice quote or two that you find inspiring, entertaining, or relevant to your website. Think about the overall feel of your website and try to keep your signature in the same tone of writing.

There are a few "rules" in creating an email signature to help website activity. The first rule is to keep your signature limited to four lines or less. If you create long signatures, it is likely the reader will completely tune out and not remember anything in your signature. There is also that possibility that they will not even read it because it "looks too long". This can occur frequently.

Keep in mind that most people use email because it is easy to use as well as fast. Therefore, they will not be prompted to read areas of email that are long because they will feel they take up too much time. Another rule is to make sure your email signature is appropriate for all ages, genders, and ethnicity. The last thing you want to do is offend someone with your signature because this will not attract website activity, but deter it.

After you successfully create your signature, be sure to save it in your email program so that it is added each time you email someone. You may have to "check" a specific box in your "preferences" to get to this point. You can check to make sure it is working correctly by sending yourself an email. Your signature should show up exactly how others will view it on the email.

After everything is working properly, all you need to do is send emails like normal. The more emails you send, the more often your website link will be viewed. When you send emails that are forwarded by the recipient, your signature will be viewed even more than expected. The chain of email is a complicated one with many viewers, so you will likely get viewers that you don't expect, which is great for your website. The more the link is viewed, the more traffic you will have on your website.

Increasing website traffic through email signatures is one of the most effortless and passive ways of advertising. You will probably even forget that you are advertising because you don't need to do anything to do so after the initial setup phase.

Clever Ways Your Signature Can Support Your Marketing

You know that you're a true email marketer if every single one of your emails includes a call-to-action. And I'm not talking about email marketing blasts here. What I have in mind are the individual, personal email messages you send on an everyday basis. Yes, your personal email signature can provide a serious marketing opportunity.

You are most likely already using your own email signature to provide information about who you are and where you work. But you can take this practice to the next level by updating your signature to reflect the marketing campaigns you are running today. Company employees, particularly those in sales and marketing, might be missing out on another opportunity to spread brand awareness or nurture prospective customers with their personal messages. Encourage them to turn their email signatures into a marketing mechanism, and they will most likely leap at the chance to sound smarter and help you in your promotional efforts. You, in turn, will get more traffic to certain pages and boost conversions.

Wondering what exactly you can promote through your email signature? Here are ten awesome suggestions:

1. Your Website (Homepage)
The least you should promote in your email signature is your company's website. In order for this tactic to be efficient, you have to make sure your homepage acts like a landing page. In other words, it directs the visitor's attention to the activity you want them to take. For instance, HubSpot's homepage suggests that you start a free, 30-day trial or receive a free product demo. Including your website's homepage in an email signature also helps to expand awareness of your brand.

2. Your Blog
Your blog is one of the smartest things you can include in your email signature because it provides value to the community and gets updated on a regular basis. The fresh content on your blog is more engaging than a static homepage and will most likely retain the attention of the

visitor for longer. Also, don't forget to include calls-to-action throughout your posts, because once a reader has landed on your blog, you want to encourage them to take the next step and become a lead. Using our email signature tool, you can create a dynamic email signature that includes an RSS feed, which shows the title of your most recent blog article and automatically updates as new articles get published.

3. Social Media

When it comes to the usage of social media in email signatures, you have two options. You can either include a link to your personal accounts on sites such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Google+, etc., or you can include links to your company's accounts. Both are good options.

If you are building a personal brand, you will want to spread the word about who you are outside the company. That will help people to get to know you better and get more familiar with your interests on a personal level. Including links to your corporate social media profiles, on the other hand, will help you grow the reach of your organization and gain more followers. Our free email signature generator offers some great social media add-ons for your signature, including that link to your profiles, allow you to drive traffic to your latest tweet, Facebook post, or LinkedIn update.

4. Book

Have you written a book? Has your manager or CEO written one? Don't be shy about it! Share a link to the book in your email signature. That will help you build authority and credibility among the people you communicate with. For instance, some employees at HubSpot include a link to the Inbound Marketing book in their signatures. Authored by HubSpot's co-founders, the book does a great job at conveying our mission and vision.

5. Conferences & Events

Is there a company trade show coming up soon? Or maybe you are speaking at a conference? Change your email signature to reflect that. While your email signature might not necessarily help you generate more registrants, it will surely spread the word about the event and gain some awareness among your target audience.

6. New Marketing Offer

If you are an inbound marketer, you must have a few offers lying around. They could be a number of different things, such as whitepapers, ebooks, webinars, or kits. Which ones are the best at converting traffic into leads? (You can tell by looking at their corresponding landing pages' visitor-to-submission rates in your marketing analytics). Identify your best performing offers, and then expose them to more traffic! Use your email signature to share a link to a popular ebook or a webinar. Or if you're currently featuring a new campaign that highlights a particular offer, use that in your signature instead.

7. Case Studies

Salespeople love this one! If you're talking to potential customers, what's better than sharing stories of successful ones? Use these examples profusely, and make sure you highlight some data points. For instance, you can mention how the ROI of a customer has increased since they started using your services or product. You can even quote a customer in your email signature!

8. Industry Research

Speaking of data, don't underestimate the impact that facts and figures can have in a marketing context. People on the web are overwhelmed with vague information, which encourages them to look for specifics. If you publish an industry report based on proprietary research, consider including a link to it in your email signature.

9. Free Tool

If your company happens to have a free tool, such as an online calculator, educational game, or even a free trial, give it some marketing love. Free online tools have the power to engage readers and get them further interested in your product or service.

10. Demonstration of Your Product / Free Consultation

When you are having a tough sales month, consider using an email signature that promotes a free consultation with your team or even a demonstration of your product. In that way, you'll increase traffic to these middle-of-the-funnel marketing offers and show your sales organization that you're taking advantage of every possible opportunity to help them out.

Conclusion

Email signatures are a great tool that cost nothing and can deliver results. Those who don't use them are often those that have no idea how to use them. By learning to set up your own email signature you can immediately begin seeing an increase in traffic to your website.

You can incorporate links to offers, more information, PS lines, or any other kind of call-to-action or attention grabbing section that you want in your email signature. This is truly an aspect of email marketing that you SHOULD NOT pass up or shrug off.

Don't let one more day go by without taking a moment to create an effective email signature. It can take less than two minutes to set up, and is perhaps the most cost-effective online marketing you can do. After all, it's free.