



How to increase your email marketing reach by 288%

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Ask any Internet marketing expert what makes an **email marketing campaign** more likely to be successful, and you're liable to hear a common refrain: valuable content. Content is king. Send relevant email to people who asked for it.

While all these answers are true, they're incomplete. They don't provide you with a more comprehensive view of **email marketing** from the perspective of getting your subscribers to do what you want them to do.

In 1999, Dr. Robert Cialdini postulated the 6 weapons of influence and persuasion that can be leveraged to make influence and persuasion techniques more effective. Let's take a look at these and how they might be able to improve the shareability and influence of your **email marketing**. The 6 weapons are:

1. **Reciprocity.** People tend to return a favor.
2. **Commitment.** People will tend to honor a commitment.
3. **Social proof.** People tend to follow the herd.
4. **Authority.** People tend to obey authority figures.
5. **Likeness.** People tend to be influenced by those they are like and those they like.
6. **Scarcity.** People tend to act faster under the perception of scarcity.

How would each of these principles be used in email marketing?

Reciprocity. Offer your subscribers something of value. This may be content, or it may be a material good or service. Whatever it is, Cialdini's version of reciprocity does not necessarily enforce a quid pro quo. Give, and then ask after you've gained influence.

Commitment. Getting someone to read an email is one thing. Getting someone to subscribe to a newsletter is slightly more difficult. However, once subscribed, people tend to remain subscribed unless they're deriving negative benefit from subscription. Back when I was writing a financial aid newsletter, people stayed subscribed long after they had graduated from school because it was simply easier to receive the newsletter, and we made an effort to include some generic money saving tips to keep at least a little value in there. However, the bulk of the content was of no relevance to those graduates most of the year, and by all rights they should have opted out. Once someone makes the commitment, they're yours for as long as you can keep them.

Social proof. Tools like Forward to a Friend and Share With Your Network, combined with other social media outlets, can radically change your email marketing. Email is mentally considered a private communication between two parties (even when it's clearly a newsletter), but having other people sharing it and talking about it provides very public social proof that your email marketing has value. Encourage and incentivize your subscribers to share.

Authority. Presumably people subscribe to your email newsletters because you have some degree of knowledge and authority, enough credibility for people to want to read what you have to say. Provide people with the tools they need to become authorities in their own social circles and your email marketing will be unstoppable. For example, Peter Shankman's Help a Reporter allowed PR and marketing professionals to have free access to journalism inquiries that they otherwise wouldn't have gotten. Not only was Shankman an authority on PR, but he empowered each of his subscribers to become authorities in their respective companies, creating press and earned media opportunities seemingly out of thin air.

Likeness. How well do you know your audience? For good or ill, we are easily persuaded by people who are like us, or are people we like. Again, tools like Share With Your Network allow [email marketers](#) to reach prospects who are social friends – like people – of subscribers. More broadly, think about the imagery in your email marketing and whether it’s aligned to your audience. If your marketing data indicates that your audience is largely Hispanic, having content and imagery focused on Swedish personas will simply not resonate.

Scarcity. Whatever you have to offer, there’s a way to make it scarce. It could be a time limited special offer, or a limited quantity. It could be your time and knowledge in a consulting capacity about a subject matter you have expertise in. Find a way to bring some scarcity to what you have to offer.

Let’s look at a case study and some results of using these principles. Blue Sky Factory client [Marketing Over Coffee](#) recently published a [newsletter](#) in which a contest for free passes to a marketing conference was the prize. The contest terms were simple: share the newsletter with your colleagues, and the five people who brought the most number of new eyeballs will win the contest.

How many principles are at work?

1. **Reciprocity:** yes. In addition to the contest, the newsletter publishes a large collection of free resources.
2. **Commitment:** not necessarily.
3. **Social proof:** unquestionably. The very nature of the contest demands social proof in abundance.
4. **Authority:** maybe, though again the free reading list of marketing resources does give subscribers some additional tools to enhance their own expertise.
5. **Likeness:** yes. Again, the contest is all about friends “selling” to friends.
6. **Scarcity:** the contest brings scarcity to an otherwise abundant resource (marketing newsletter).

Now let’s check the results.

The previous edition of the newsletter, issue 4, had a clickthrough rate of 4.7% and a **reach increase of 13.84%** via sharing with your network. (reach increase is defined as the number of eyeballs outside of your subscriber base who read your newsletter)

The contest edition of the newsletter, issue 5, had a clickthrough rate of 4.8% as well, but a **reach increase of 53.74%** via sharing with your network, **a 288% increase in reach from the previous edition.**

Is Cialdini’s checklist the definitive answer to making your email marketing more powerful? No. Is it part of the answer? Absolutely. Try it out with your own email marketing, integrate his principles into what you’re doing, and see if you can create some similar results.

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