SUBJECT LINE CHEAT SHEET FOR STARTUPS

SUBJECT LINE:

_____

NOT BEING TESTED
CONTROL / RECIPE A
TEST / RECIPE

GENERAL RULES
Use these as guidelines, but be strategic about veering far from them.

☐ Is shorter than 50 characters, including spaces
☐ Includes the brand name
☐ Leads with an action word, is phrased as a question or suggests newsworthiness or learning value (e.g., "how to")
☐ Uses exclamation points and other punctuation sparingly
☐ Avoids spam-trigger words, unless the pay-off is greater than the potential loss
☐ Is not overly cute or clever, unless that's true to the brand or audience
☐ Offers a visual break between lengthy clauses (e.g., a dash, a comma)
☐ Is mirrored by the headline in the email itself

Push for more opens by trying the following subject line options with segments of your list.

☐ Is personalized, using a first name but avoiding crossing the line into creepy
☐ Uses info specific to what is known about the segment
☐ Works well with the pre-header / preview text in the email itself
☐ Is formatted using sentence case, not Title Case, just like a friend would write
☐ Piques curiosity, wows, turns X on its head or otherwise attracts quick interest
☐ If a very good incentive is offered and there is no reason not to mention it:
  o States the incentive in a way that shows maximum value
  o Includes an end-date for the incentive

BRAND LAUNCH EMAILS
Keep in mind how much time has passed for people who signed up to learn about the launch of your product, service or company. Consider segmenting older subscribers from newer ones.

☐ Reminds recipients of approx. when they signed up
☐ Presents a strong reason to start using the product/service/company
☐ Uses the brand name
☐ Uses a word such as "launch" or "available now"

LIFECYCLE EMAILS

Lifecycle and event-triggered emails are among the most opened emails – which makes them a great opportunity for you to build relationships and boost revenue.

New Subscriber Emails (Newsletter) / New User Emails (App / Tool)
- ☐ Clearly references where this email falls in a series (e.g., "Welcome to", "[1/5]")
- ☐ Explicitly offers value or highlights a high-value benefit of opening and reading
- ☐ Goes beyond summarizing the content of the email
- ☐ Speaks to a 'bonus' or surprise X inside, if one exists

Shopping Cart Abandonment & Win-Back Emails
- ☐ Explicitly reminds recipients of the page / spot where the site or app lost them
- ☐ States the amount of time items will remain in the cart
- ☐ Does not appear aggressive, creepy or demanding in any way

Receipts & Service Notices
- ☐ States the product purchased
- ☐ States the company name
- ☐ States what to do with the receipt or notice (e.g., "File this receipt", "Get your download link inside")
- ☐ Does not attempt to sell, even if an offer is within

Triggered Upgrades / Unlocks
- ☐ States the name of the new item, element, feature or version to buy or unlock
- ☐ Offers a reason to upgrade or unlock, whether an incentive or a benefit
- ☐ Highlights any extra motivator, such as social proof (e.g., "Over 30K others have unlocked Invoice Generator – your turn!")

Free Trial Ending Soon
- ☐ Gives the exact number of days before a free trial ends
- ☐ Number of days is written as a numeral for scanning
- ☐ Encourages action by using loss aversion (e.g., "Don't lose your data") or by stating exactly what undesirable event will happen at end of free trial

OFFER / INCENTIVE SALES EMAILS

Emails that look like they're trying to sell rarely actually complete the task. A good rule of thumb is, if the incentive isn't 50% off or greater, don't lead with a salesy subject line.

- ☐ Reflects a key benefit of the offering or a motivation of the recipient
- ☐ Gets quickly to the point, or intrigues the lizard brain
- ☐ If a partner product is offered, includes the partner name / product and offer