

Newsletter Health Check: 10 Critical Areas to Optimize

[Future Forest](#) helps brands turn their newsletter into a secret weapon. An exceptional, consistent newsletter can transform an email list into a high ROI asset.

Their newsletter is how they grow their reputation, build trust with their audience, and convert subscribers into paying customers. On average, for every \$1 spent on email marketing, companies generate \$42.

But many marketing and communications teams face a problem. They are spread too thin managing multiple channels, and it's hard to find the time to consistently produce an exceptional newsletter.

To make it easy for you, we've created a 10-step Newsletter Health Check. Complete the full health check and implement these practices, and you'll be better than 95% of newsletters.

Addressing the first five steps should take less than 30 minutes, while the second five will take much longer to dial in. Together, these 10 steps will help you level up your next newsletter and transform your email list into a high-ROI asset.

The Basics: 5 Steps You Can Complete In 30 Minutes

Step 1: Keep It Short

Most newsletters are too long. Make sure your readers can finish your newsletter every time. We recommend fewer than 1,000 words (~5 minute read time).

Step 2: Make It Easy to Digest

People don't carefully read in the inbox. They skim.

Consider making slight formatting and layout changes to make your newsletter more readable and less dense. Simple changes, like adding section breaks, clear font hierarchies, signposting big ideas, and short (1-2 sentence) paragraphs, can be the difference between a newsletter that's engaging and one that's overwhelming.

Step 3: Include A Clear Call-To-Action (CTA)

Ensure that 90% of your newsletter is about helping your audience achieve their goals (see Step #6). But in that last 10%, add a call to action for people who want to take the next step.

My favorite is Kyle Westaway's "[Should We Work Together?](#)" CTA section at the bottom of his newsletter. It's subtle and understated, but it gets results. Kyle's newsletters are one of his primary sources of new business for his law firm.

Pro Tip: In your email service provider (ESP), you can often find the email addresses of the people who have clicked on this link but have not completed your CTA. Reach out to them!

Step 4: Write an Irresistible Subject Line

Write better subject lines by following these latest best practices:

1. *Keep them short:* Research has found that the optimal email subject line length is between 20 and 40 characters.
2. *Make them clear and intriguing:* Don't try to be clever or funny in your subject line. If you need inspiration, use AI tools to generate compelling subject lines based on your content. Just upload your newsletter and ask for 10 subject line variations. In our experience, Claude does the best job with this.

And bonus points if you can tap into your reader's pain or tease a benefit.

Step 5: Don't Forget The "Preview Text"

The preview text is the short blurb that's viewable in the inbox before someone opens your email. This is prime real estate!

Consider ways to build intrigue that are complementary to your subject line. Once you've settled on a subject line, ask AI to generate a list of 10 preview text options that complement the subject line and build intrigue for readers to open your email. For more on preview texts, check out [this guide](#).

Stand Out In The Inbox: 5 Steps To Level-Up Your Newsletter

Step 6: Put The Reader First

The most common mistake people make with their newsletter is making their organization the hero. It's all about their business, their products, their successes. Instead, your newsletter needs to solve a problem for your reader—the person on the other end of the inbox.

Who are they? Why do they care?

Jot down your ideal reader's top 2–3 traits (e.g., small business owners, marketing leads). Keep that profile visible while you work, and make sure every content decision aligns with what your ideal reader is interested in.

Step 7: Make It Worth a Damn To Read

Is your newsletter something you would open and read?

If you don't find it interesting or insightful, your audience won't either. Hold yourself to a high standard, and ask yourself three questions:

1. Will our audience find this interesting?
2. Will it help them achieve their goals?
3. Are we producing something of real value here?

AI has raised the bar. Anyone can produce basic content in seconds. The newsletters that stand out are the ones that provide real value.

Step 8: Make It Human

Humans trust humans, and [recent research](#) has shown that people dislike content they think is written by AI. To build trust and deepen loyalty, make it human.

Consider personalizing the newsletter's main idea or feature section by having it come from a person on your team. Use first-person pronouns. Tell personal stories. Avoid corporate-speak.

Step 9: Clean Up and Segment Your Lists

You can improve deliverability by maintaining good email list hygiene and optimization. This is a rabbit hole, and you can spend hours refining and optimizing your lists. The low-hanging fruit is to do some simple list segmentation.

To start, consider creating a rule in your ESP that excludes addresses that haven't opened any emails from your domain in the last x number of editions (you can customize the exact rules in your ESP).

Step 10: Leverage Past Performance to Iterate

Most teams don't have the time to study newsletter performance in detail. But a treasure trove of insights is hiding in your historical newsletter data.

Short on time? Doing even one of these three steps will improve the ROI of your newsletter.

1. Test various CTA variations
2. A/B test newsletter subject lines based on historical patterns
3. Optimize send times based on historical open rate data

Next Step: Transform Your Newsletter into a Strategic Asset

This Newsletter Health Check can help you avoid common traps and drive better performance, but it requires time, expertise, and dedication.

Many teams are spread too thin to invest the time necessary to stand out in the inbox with a newsletter that unlocks the latent value in their email list.

At Future Forest, we help busy teams consistently produce newsletters that build trust and drive revenue. We can do the same for you—with just 30 minutes of your time each month.

Set up a call with us to learn how we can transform your email list into your highest-ROI asset with an exceptional newsletter. Schedule a call [here](#).