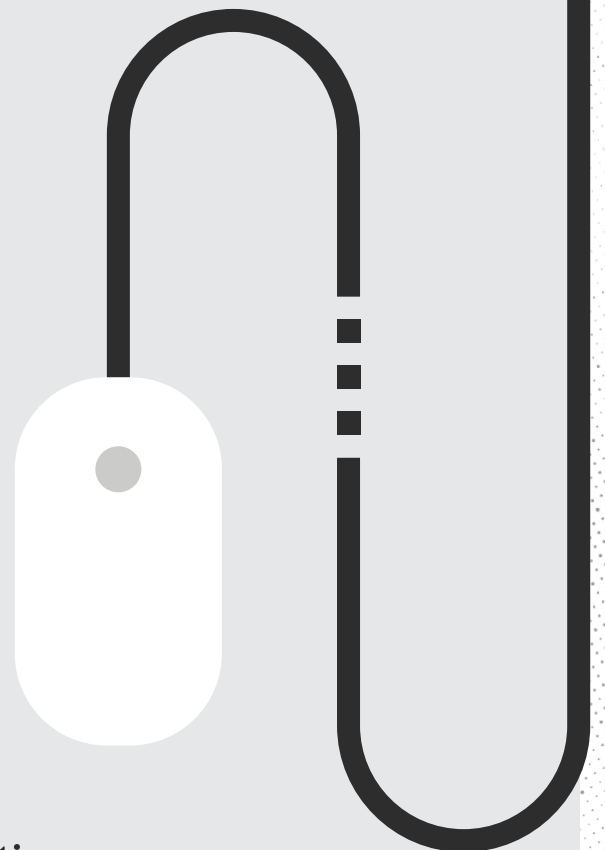


HOW TO GET JOURNALISTS TO OPEN,  
CLICK, AND LOVE YOUR EMAIL PITCH  
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# HOW TO GET JOURNALISTS TO OPEN, CLICK, AND LOVE YOUR EMAIL PITCH

**SECOND EDITION**

ORIGINAL RESEARCH  
FROM AGILITY PR SOLUTIONS



Agility | PR Solutions

YOU HAVE SOME COMPETITION WHEN IT COMES TO CATCHING THE ATTENTION OF A JOURNALIST.

New message



To PR PROFESSIONALS

Subject How to get journalists to open, click, and love your email pitch: 2nd Edition

As a PR professional you send a lot of emails to journalists and influencers to **earn media for your brand**.

Fractl (a content marketing and digital PR agency based in Florida) surveyed 500+ journalists in 2019 and found that **42% of them receive between 11 and 100 pitches per day**. That's a lot of pitches to read on a regular basis.

It also means you have some competition when it comes to catching the attention of a journalist.

When we published the first edition of this report back in 2019, we wanted to help you better the odds of getting your pitch noticed. A lot has changed since then, so we thought it was time for an update.

Just like last time, we took a good look at the numbers, found the distributions that had performed exceptionally, and approached the companies and agencies that earned the highest open rates and clickthrough rates to find out how they did it.

By the time you're done reading this report, you should have the knowledge you need to stand out from the crowd and get your emails opened and engaged with by journalists.

EMAILS WITH TOP OPEN RATES  
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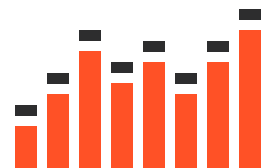
## SECTION 1: EMAILS WITH TOP OPEN RATES

HubSpot says the average email open rate is 20.94%. We rounded up and said that any email that had an open rate of 21% or higher fell into the “top open” category. Emails with an open rate of 40% or more we placed into the “high performers” category for special analysis.

After identifying the top open email distributions, we dug into the why, looking for both general email best practices as well as any patterns specific to PR emails. What makes an email stand out from all the others in a journalist’s inbox?

### THIS IS WHAT WE ANALYZED:

- Length and nature of the subject line
- Whether the *from* address was a personal or a general one (i.e. jane.doe@prcompany.com vs. info@abcpr.com)
- The day and time at which it was sent
- The number of recipients



AFTER PORING OVER THE EMAILS, HERE ARE OUR CONCLUSIONS.

# THE EYE-CATCHING EMAIL

## SUBJECT LINE

Subject lines ranged from 11 characters at the low end to 244 characters at the high end. The average length of subject lines among the top open emails was 79 characters. Average length was just a little shorter among high performers at 63 characters.

In the first edition of this report, nearly 60% of subject lines in the top open category contained something along the lines of “Follow Up”, “Re” or “Additional Info”, whereas we found this time around that a mere 1.8% of top open emails contained these types of indicators.

### TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY

Aim for a subject line of 60-80 characters that gets right to the point, and only include indicator words like “Re” or “Follow Up” if you have sent a previous email.

For additional tips on how to write a winning subject line, watch the free webinar, [PR Subject Lines that Get a Yes](#) from Nikki Woods.

## DELIVERY ADDRESS

In 74% of the top open emails, the *from* address was personal.

### TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY

As much as possible, provide a person behind the pitch.

## TIME AND DATE

The days of delivery varied—as would be expected—with Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday being the most common.

Tuesday edged out the competition by a slight margin, accounting for over 25% of high performer emails. As for time of day, it’s all about the afternoon—over 67% of emails were sent after 12 pm.

## TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY

If good open rates are what you're after, you're best advised to send your distribution after 12 pm on Tuesday.

### NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS

There is no clear answer when it comes to optimal number of recipients as the lists ranged from 100 to 11,791 contacts. But these stats might give you some food for thought.

#### Out of top open emails:

- 35.8% of emails had more than 500 recipients
- Only 12.6% of these emails achieved an open rate of 30% or better

#### Out of high performer emails (remember, that's a 40% or higher open rate):

- Only 15.9% of emails had more than 500 recipients

## TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY

The majority of emails with top open rates were sent to less than 500 recipients. If you're sending your email to more than 500 people, it may be time to consider creating smaller, hyper-targeted lists of contacts.

N, THERE ARE THREE GOLDEN RULES TO MAXIMISE OPEN RATES.



# PRO TIP



**Belinda Boyd**  
MCIPR,  
Founder, [20-20 PR](#)

*Belinda's email received  
one of the top open rates*

Once your press release is ready for distribution, there are three golden rules to maximise open rates. Firstly, and essentially, create a concise preview at the top of each. Secondly, invest time in editing—no journalist worth their salt will take a badly-spelled, illiterate piece, and finally, make sure your private press lists are up to date.

The subject heading contains the first words the journalist sees, and I'd suggest a max of 12. It should be crafted to succinctly summarise the story so that it not only stands out in the time-poor journalist's burgeoning inbox, but also resonates with them AND the day's news-flow. When we are targeting regional journalists, we edit the subject heading to ensure they know the story relates to their region.

Our top open email, 'Pub group chairman demands Hancock explains flawed figures', struck three chords: it related to the current news agenda; it implied sector-specific antipathy to HMG's misleading interpretation of data during the pandemic; and it carried an implication of a moral argument that might develop against the protagonist. The story has not ended because the whole subject is now the subject of a judicial challenge in The High Court.

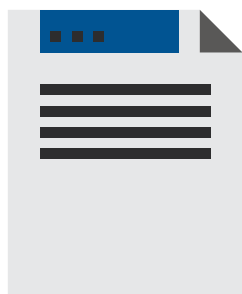
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ME IN EDITING—NO JOURN



## SECTION 2: EMAILS WITH TOP CLICKTHROUGH RATES\*

Open rates are one thing—the crucial first step in gaining earned media coverage—but when your clickthrough rates start climbing, that’s when you know you’re doing something right.

After identifying those email distributions with the highest clickthrough rates, we dove into their specifics, namely:



- ✓ The day and time at which each was sent
- ✓ Was the email personalized or a straight-to-the-point copy-and-paste of the press release?
- ✓ How many links were included and what kind?
- ✓ The length of the email

**WHAT WE FOUND DURING OUR ANALYSIS IS THAT SOME OF OUR CLIENTS ARE REALLY GOOD AT ENTICING JOURNALISTS TO CLICK. HERE’S HOW YOU CAN BE LIKE THEM:**

\*See methodology on Page 12

# THE CLICK-WORTHY CONTENT

## TIME AND DATE

Thursday edged out the competition in this round, accounting for 34.5% of emails. In second place was Monday with 18.5%.

Overall, it didn't seem to matter at what time the email was sent, as there was a near even split between morning and afternoon distributions.

## TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY

Send your email on a Thursday for the best shot at getting clicks.

## PERSONALIZED OR COPY-AND-PASTE

Less than 15% of the top CTR emails were personalized!

## TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY

You don't need to have a snazzy opening, you can just send your release and let it speak for itself—but don't send it to just anyone. Make sure you're targeting the right journalists and influencers. A good media database will give you a starting point but you should still do your own research to make sure your story is relevant for the selected contacts.

## LINKS

Over 75% of emails had between one and nine links and ranged from Dropbox to YouTube to specific pages on websites (like bios) to photos and b-roll to an online version of the press release.

## TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY

Have more info or relevant multimedia to support your story? Don't be shy—include links!

## LENGTH

The average length of the emails was 620 words. The longest email was over 9,000 words and the shortest email was 67 words. However, almost 80% of the emails were under 1,000 words.



Some emails didn't include copy at all! They shared the information in an embedded, clickable image that took the journalist to a PDF with the full scoop.

**TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY - TAKEAWAY**

Don't be afraid to go long if you have the information and an intriguing story, but we do recommend keeping your email under 1,000 words.

E. IT ALL STARTS WITH A CO  
TH A COMPELLING SUBJECT  
IG SUBJECT LINE—BE SPECI



# PRO TIP



**Kim Logan**  
Media & Comms Manager,  
Banff & Lake Louise Tourism

*Kim's email received one of  
the top clickthrough rates*

The secret to crafting and sending an email that gets opened and clicked on by journalists is a good hook and a relevant audience. It all starts with a compelling subject line—be specific and concise.

Everyone's inbox is overflowing, and you've really only got a second or two to capture the recipient's attention before they hit 'delete'. I personally don't include 'press release' in the subject line because that's taking up characters, and I check to make sure I haven't included terms that are going to trigger spam filters. I always include an image in the body and will provide links where relevant.

There are so many other considerations to be mindful of, but by drilling down into what is newsworthy and keeping to the point, you're on your way to achieving success.

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## SECTION 3: TOP-PERFORMING EMAILS

We've been over what you need to do to get opens, and we've examined how to secure clicks, now it's time to look at a particular distribution that achieved both.

Behold, the email pitch that gets opened AND clicked.



DESTINATION  
BRITISH COLUMBIA®

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### NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
September 30, 2020

Destination British Columbia

#### Destination BC Brews Up Partnership with the BC Ale Trail Team and Six BC Breweries to Launch the *Explore BC IPA*

Vancouver— Starting next week, a new limited-edition craft beer is set to hit shelves and restaurants around BC to inspire British Columbians to explore their own province along BC's ale trails this fall. The new [Explore BC IPA](#) is an exciting collaboration between the [BC Ale Trail Team](#) and six craft breweries across the province, representing BC's [six ultimate experience collections](#):

- West Coast Culture: [Vancouver Island Brewing](#)
- Northern Wild: [Wheelhouse Brewing Company](#)
- Vineyards, Valleys & Lakes: [Field House Brewing Co.](#)
- Ranches, Rivers & Ranges: [Red Collar Brewing Co.](#)
- Vancouver & Sea-to-Sky: [Bomber Brewing](#)
- Mountain Peaks & Towns: [Fernie Brewing Co.](#)

Launching the week of October 5 during [BC Craft Beer Month](#), the *Explore BC IPA* invites residents to taste the flavours of British Columbia and support BC's tourism and hospitality industries this fall by touring BC's ale trails: itineraries in every region of the province that take beer enthusiasts from brewery to brewery.

**ON SEPTEMBER 30, DESTINATION BRITISH COLUMBIA SENT THIS EMAIL TO 110 JOURNALISTS. IT WAS OPENED BY 48 OF THEM (A WHOPPING 43.6% OPEN RATE) AND ITS LINKS EARNED 35 UNIQUE CLICKS.**

Let's see how its performance compares to our findings:

More than 85% of our emails with top clickthrough rates were not personalized and Destination BC's email falls neatly into this category, getting right to the point with a copy-and-paste press release with a backgrounder below. The copy comes loaded with useful links directing journalists to specific web pages and digital assets.

The subject line, "Destination BC Brews Up Partnership with the BC Ale Trail Team and Six BC Breweries to Launch the Explore BC IPA," is longer than our recommended 60-80 characters, clocking in at 112 characters, but those triple digits were effective. Journalists knew exactly what they would find inside and why their audience should care.

The press release and backgrounder (together running over 1,000 words) combined with the external links, provided journalists all the information they could possibly want or need to produce an interesting and engaging piece.

The collaboration is the latest in a series of partnerships that have been created to broaden the reach of Destination BC's province-wide *Explore BC* [marketing campaign](#). The campaign is designed to compel BC residents to book their trips now and visit destinations around the province in every season.

To help residents enjoy the best-of-BC brew while they rediscover BC and tour the various ale trails this fall, a number of ['sip & stay' packages](#) will be available at participating hotels around the province throughout the month of October. The *Explore BC IPA* presents a great opportunity for British Columbians to support the small businesses that are at the helm of tourism, extending travel into the fall season, while enjoying the flavours and scenery that make *Super, Natural British Columbia*® so spectacular.

The recipe – developed by all six brewers and produced by Vancouver Island Brewing – celebrates the best of BC bounty, showcasing local ingredients from BC farmers such as haskap berries, blackberries, hops and malted grains. Residents can purchase the product in select BC Liquor Stores, numerous private liquor retailers, craft breweries and restaurants around the province. For more information on retail locations, please visit <https://bcaletrail.ca/explore-bc-ipa>.

#ExploreBC  
#BCAleTrail  
#ExploreBCIPA

**Links and Resources:**

- [Explore BC experience collections](#)
- [Explore BC IPA digital assets](#)
- [BC Ale Trail travel photos](#)
- [BC Ale Trail itineraries](#)
- [Explore BC IPA retailers](#)

E. REPORTERS HAVE HUNDREDS OF PITCHES IN THEIR INBOXES, SO F



# PRO TIP



Kristen Learned  
Specialist,  
Corporate Comms,  
Destination British Columbia

*Kristen's email received  
one of the top clickthrough  
and open rates*

*Write the headline for them.* Just like getting your resume viewed can be the biggest challenge in a job hunt, getting a reporter to open your email can be the main hurdle to clear in securing media coverage.

Reporters have hundreds of pitches sitting in their inboxes, so from just the few visible words in a subject line and email preview, how can you convince them that yours is the one they must read? Do the work for them! Think about the type of headline you can envision being written about your story, and use that as the subject line—if the title is already in ready-to-publish format, there's a greater chance that the content is too, making it that much more enticing!

As communicators, language is one of the most fundamental tools in our box. Can you leverage a consistent buzzword that's being used in other industry media coverage? How about a playful pun for an uplifting community story?

*Keep it short, snappy, and impossible for them to ignore.*

P: WRITE THE HEADLINE FOR THEM. JUST LIKE GET

## QUICK RECAP

For the best chance of opens, send your email on a Tuesday afternoon, from a personal email account, with a subject line between 60 and 80 characters.

For clicks, worry less about word count and more about providing the essential information needed to write a story. Attach your press release, at least one external link to more information or digital assets and send it on a Thursday.

All of this is great to know but let's go back to the beginning. *How do you know who should hear your story? How are you going to reach them?*

You'll want a [top-rated media database](#) to help you with your story amplification needs.

Search by keyword, beat, media type, location, or even track social conversations that matter to your brand to find the people most likely to spread your message. Agility's media database will also help you prioritize follow up and make tweaks to your outreach strategy thanks to insights from the reporting function.

We'd love to give you [a personalized tour of our global database](#) and introduce you to the great features that will help make your media relations activities easier.

## METHODOLOGY

We analyzed 5,162 distributions (spanning from September 1, 2020 to November 30, 2020) and broke them down a couple of ways: by open rate and by clickthrough rate.

The reason for the first is straightforward. If a journalist doesn't open your email, that's it, you're done. To calculate open rate, we divided the number of unique opens by the number of recipients.

To calculate clickthrough rate, we divided the number of unique clicks by the number of unique opens—what is commonly known as “relative clickthrough rate.” The reason we wanted to look at clickthrough rate is twofold: 1) it indicates a level of engagement on the part of the recipient, and 2) it gives us a chance to plug the fact that when you use our tool, you can track exactly who clicked where in your email, making follow-up a piece of cake.

[Click here](#) for the 2019 edition of this report.