

ÉTIENNE GARBUGLI

THE SAAS EMAIL MARKETING PLAYBOOK



CONVERT LEADS, INCREASE CUSTOMER RETENTION,
AND CLOSE MORE RECURRING REVENUE WITH EMAIL

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The SaaS Email Marketing Playbook

*Convert Leads, Increase Customer Retention, and Close
More Recurring Revenue With Email*

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To my mother, gone too soon.

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Early Reviews

“40–60% of your first-time users will check out your product and never come back. A good email marketing strategy is often the main difference between users coming back and never touching foot again in your product. This book shows you how to build a SaaS email marketing strategy that actually works.” Wes Bush, Author, Product-Led Growth

“Etienne’s book helped us set up all of our initial emails for our SaaS business—Pipeline. This book is very valuable to new SaaS businesses because it will show you how to get more subscribers from free trials, retain users, and even get back subscribers who cancel their subscriptions. I think anyone with a SaaS business will find something that can increase conversions from this book. Highly recommended!” Greg Davis, Founder & CEO, Pipeline

“I feel like I got an upgraded version of myself after going through the book. Etienne has in-depth knowledge of email marketing. The deep dives, cheatsheets, and case studies provided with this book were invaluable, and saved me tons of work. This book is a real must for SaaS founders and marketers.” Saroj Ativitavas, Co-Founder & CEO, Visible

“A well-written book for those who want to learn about SaaS email marketing from A to Z: how to create, segment and send successful campaigns, what templates to use, and how to optimize key elements. Etienne Garbugli has put together dozens of lessons, which are divided into logical and easily-digestible chapters. It’s all very easy to read and extremely useful. I definitely recommend this book!” Jacek Krywult, CEO, PWSK

“The world would be a better place if B2B marketers stopped spamming and sent more well-targeted and well-crafted emails—and everyone would also sell more! Etienne Garbugli has put together a great no-BS resource where you are guaranteed to pick up useful tips and approaches, whether you’re an email pro or just starting out.” Andrus Purde, Founder & CEO, Outfunnel

I

Introduction

1

Why This Book?

Unless you're working for a large organization, your job title probably isn't 'email marketing specialist'.

Chances are that you have either volunteered, or you were selected as the most qualified person to handle email marketing.

Either way, you are accountable to make it work, and that can really be overwhelming. You may be thinking:

- *"How do you get started?"*
- *"How do you design effective emails when the design team is busy designing the product?"*
- *"How do you write effective copy when you're not a copywriter yourself (or don't have one on your team)?"*
- *"How do you get the right data and segments to make sure your emails reach the right users at the right time?"*
- *"How do you measure the return on investment of your campaigns?"*
- *"How do you avoid burning through your whole list?"*

And, most importantly: *"Wasn't email supposed to be dead?!"*

That's what I probably assumed when I got started at LANDR, a freemium SaaS platform in the music industry.

I turned to email a bit as a last resort. Too late...

Because it took months to get started, we probably lost a lot of users and revenue.

It turns out that it's really hard to reactivate and reengage users when you haven't been messaging them at all.

But that's also the beauty of SaaS email marketing. Improvements in conversions impact both current AND future users.

By making a single change today, you could significantly grow conversions.

In fact, if you do email marketing well, you can:

- increase product onboarding completion and engagement across the customer lifetime;
- increase trial-to-paid conversions and upgrade to paid plans;
- increase feature discovery and product engagement;
- reduce churn; and
- increase average revenue per user (ARPU), monthly recurring revenue (MRR), and the customer lifetime value (CLV).

You can get the benefits of those increases predictably, and repeatedly. You just need the right processes and knowledge.

Email marketing is one of the highest-leverage activities in a SaaS business.

I wrote this book to help product teams and SaaS marketers leverage email as a way to grow their business predictably.

WHY THIS BOOK?

In this book, you'll learn how to:

- create new emails to influence user behaviors and purchase decisions;
- create processes and structure to systematically grow the performance of your email marketing program;
- double, triple, or quadruple the performance of every single email you send; and
- avoid the countless mistakes I've made learning SaaS email marketing.

After reading this book, you'll be able to increase product onboarding completion, trial-to-paid conversion, and overall revenue with email.

When I joined LANDR, we were only sending three automated emails (and only one of them was working). By focusing on sending the right email to the right user at the right time performance jumped up with, among other things, an upsell program generating up to 42% of weekly subscription sales.

That's conversions we probably wouldn't have got without email.

This book will teach you everything I know about SaaS email marketing.

Once optimized, your lifecycle emails will deliver predictable growth and performance, literally printing money for your organization.

Let's take your business to the next level and add email marketing to your skillset.

Let's get this going.

Why Email Marketing Still Matters Today

Every year, email is declared dead.

Surely, social media, chat, voice, bots, or even augmented reality have killed it, *right?*

Yet each year email marketing keeps delivering a return on investment (ROI) as high as \$42 for every dollar spent¹, much better than search and social media².

Why?

- Email is direct, it's personal.
- It's already part of everyone's habits.
- 99% of users check their emails daily³.
- It's push, not pull.

In other words, if you have permission (which you should), your emails will usually *at least* get considered by your users.

This makes it one of the most effective channels at engaging, re-engaging, upselling, and retaining SaaS users.

WHY EMAIL MARKETING STILL MATTERS TODAY

No matter how great your product is, it's very likely that 40–60% of your free trial users won't see your product a second time⁴.

This means that you stand to lose 60+% of your hard-earned signups. *Do you just let them go?*

Maybe you have access to their mobile numbers, or have their Facebook profiles. Perhaps you can send text messages or do retargeting, but these channels are more expensive and often less proven than email.

Email, to this day, remains the best channel to build relationships and bring users back into your product.

Done well, it has the potential to change minds and influence behaviors.

Email allows you to own the relationship. It can make your promos successful, amplify feature discovery, systematically grow conversions, and build habits.

In other words, it can help you maximize customer success while freeing you up to work on other high-leverage activities, like building a product.

You don't need to be a master copywriter (or have one on your team) to send effective emails.

In the next chapter, I'll show how to use emails to grow your business.

3

The Right Way to Think about Email and Marketing Automation

I got my start in email marketing in 2005. At the time, I was working for a retail chain in Canada called Bikini Village. We had created a Flash game that had gone viral. Thanks to the campaign, we had acquired over 300,000 email addresses.

And by that, I mean *only* email addresses.

While sometimes we had managed to capture the subscriber's first and last names, some preferences for brands, and (occasionally) the store of origin, usually the email address was *all* we had.

Soon thereafter, we began sending newsletters with the aim of nurturing and monetizing our 'database'.

But we were sending the same thing to all recipients regardless of:

- the context—where they signed up from;
- the timing—newer and older signups were handled the same way;
- past purchase behaviors and purchase intent—it didn't matter what

products subscribers were interested in;

- their preferences; or
- their behaviors.

All we were doing was a basic language split. We had one list for English speakers, and one for French.

This led to results that were *OK* for the time, but not amazing.

And that made complete sense to me.

Benefits were bland and generic, visuals weren't tailored to any specific segment, and messaging wasn't personal, or even relevant to most recipients.

But this was in 2005.

Sadly, these are the same mistakes that many marketers still make today.

A key reason for this is that marketers view an email or user list as a mere *list*. And this line of thinking leads to the idea that everyone is the same.

As a result, marketers end up sending the same messages to everyone—not thinking through each recipient's context—and using newsletters for engagement.

It's the only thing everyone will find relevant, *right?*

This leads to underperforming email campaigns, contacts that get burnt, and an overall under-appreciation of the value of email.

Mastering SaaS email marketing requires a change of mindset.

To be successful, you have to go from *list-thinking* to *database-thinking*—understanding

that contacts have different experiences and attributes.

They may differ in terms of their signup dates, their levels of engagement, languages, preferences, spend, subscription plans, goals, worldviews, etc.

Don't get me wrong! Every single person on your lists will still be worth contacting—they just won't be worth contacting for the same reasons.

Email marketing automation enables “personalized” communications at scale, so that you can:

- send the right message at the right time to the right people;
- go from list-thinking to a database and relationship marketing mindset;
- move away from one-off campaigns to workflows; and
- transition from “one-size-fits-all” to tailored and personal communications.

This change of mindset will help you grow performance across the customer journey and increase lifetime value. Most importantly for your users, it will improve their experience, and reduce the number of contacts and leads you burn.

SaaS is relational and data-driven by default—your email marketing should be as well!

The days of the “email blast” are long gone.

It's time to change your mindset and start thinking of each and every contact for what they are: people, like you and me.

This book will help you figure out how to serve them better.

How to Use This Book

At LANDR, we were sending 300 different emails, and were adding new language versions almost every month.

For Lean B2B, I have about 40 different emails sending.

For Highlights, the SaaS business I co-founded, I had about 30 emails and In-App messages sending at any given moment.

Chances are that, at this point, you're nowhere near as convinced as I am of the value of email marketing.

But if you have bought this book, it's probably because you have a hunch that email can be big for your business. And that's completely reasonable.

My response is: **let email prove its value to you, first.**

The content of this book was designed in layers:

- First, it has everything you need to create a basic email program. However, if you want to go further, there's enough content to take things very very far.

- In the Strategy section, we look at key SaaS milestones, core email sequences, and data segmentation strategies.
- The Execution section covers pacing, copywriting, and email analysis post-send.
- And sprinkled throughout the book are advanced tips for reporting, data management, optimization, team structure, and more.

This book *should* make you money. Lots of it!

It should allow you to predictably grow engagement, sales, and retention across your user base.

You can read it at your own pace—you don't need to optimize if you don't have the bandwidth to do proper email optimization.

Start with the basics, see how it feels, and let email prove its value to you. Advanced tactics will be there waiting when you're ready for them.

This book is meant to drive action and help you grow your business. If you don't intend to take things further, I will gladly refund the money you paid for it.

But if you do believe email can help, you'll see exactly where to get started in the next section.

Onwards!

That's It for the Sample, but There's a TON More to Check Out

The SaaS Email Marketing Playbook contains everything you need to plan, build, and optimize your email marketing program.

In it, you'll learn:

- how and when to create new emails or In-App messages to influence your users' behaviors and purchase decisions;
- how to double, triple, or quadruple the performance of every single email you send;
- how to stand out in an increasingly more crowded inbox;
- how to create processes and structure to systematically grow the performance of an email marketing program; and
- much much more.

Keep Reading and Level Up:



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