

2025

The 8 ½ things you should never
ever, ever never do in email.

The authoritative version.

GURU  2025

— THE CONFERENCE —

Agenda

- Who am I?
- The 8 ¾ things
 - WinBack Emails
 - Birthday Triggers
 - Loyalty Programs
 - Transactional Emails
 - Browse Remarketing
 - Image-Only Emails
 - Unsubscribe Confirmations
 - Mobile Mistakes
 - Buying Lists
 - **BONUS**



We are marketing evolutionists.

Empowering amazing customer experiences.

For over 25 years, our teams have pioneered the highest levels of email strategy and worked at the ground level needed to implement effective programs for thousands of companies.

We're the only vendor agnostic, end-to-end email agency in the space serving Mid-Market and Enterprise companies with class and precision.

Our values remain the same to be an **indispensable partner** to marketers that rely on email for success and help them replace the simple with the sophisticated with people that **care** about their aspirations.

Some of our great stories



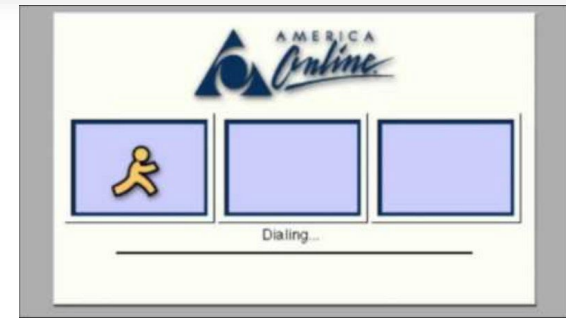
Who's that guy on the screen

Ryan P Phelan CEO, RPE Origin

Since 1999, Ryan has created and led innovative marketing strategies for high-growth SaaS and Fortune 250 companies, including Canadian Tire, Capital One, Hewlett-Packard (Global), Skype, CenturyLink, Sprint, FedEx, BeachBody-P90X, and U.S. Bank.

His experience and history in digital marketing has shaped his approach on creating innovative orchestrations of data, technology and customer activation for clients of Adestra, Acxiom, Responsys, Sears & Kmart, BlueHornet and infoUSA.

A resident of Dallas, Texas, Ryan's background, experience and unique perspective have made him a popular keynote speaker and thought leader on digital and email marketing issues. He was named the 2023 ANA-EEC Thought Leader of the year and has built a library of thought leadership through blogs, white papers and presentations.





<rant>

I've been wrong before (ask my wife). The opinions in this presentation are mine alone based on 27 years of experience working on 100's of brands. It could be, that one of these makes the company a massive amount of money and that the email marketer is a company hero that probably won employee of the year. But I am also a consumer. So, some of these things are head scratchers. Really, they are. I mean some of these emails make me wonder if they were done at a pub. That being said, I love all the companies listed herein. I have purchased something from almost all of these companies in the last year.

Please don't hate me.

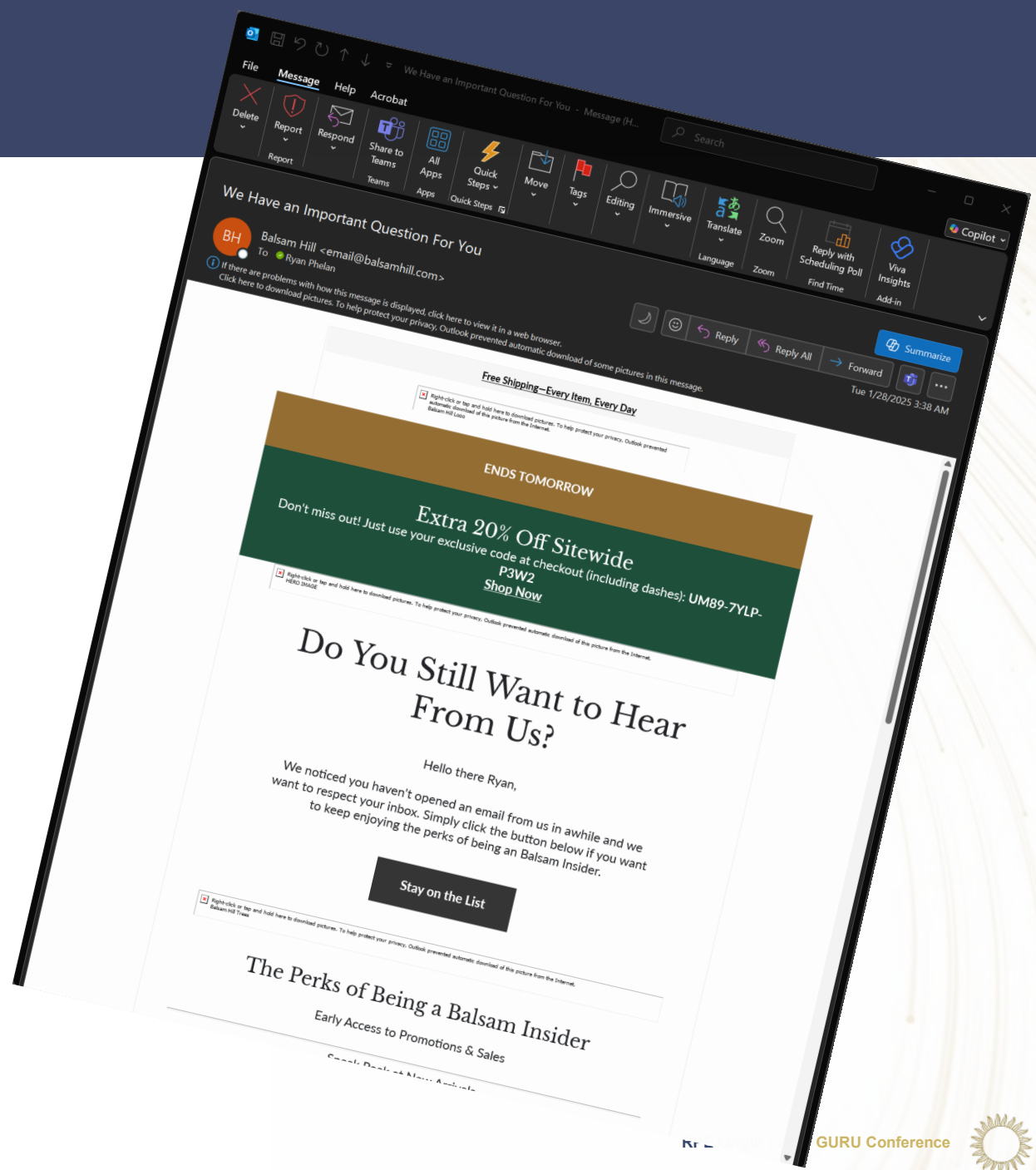


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WinBack

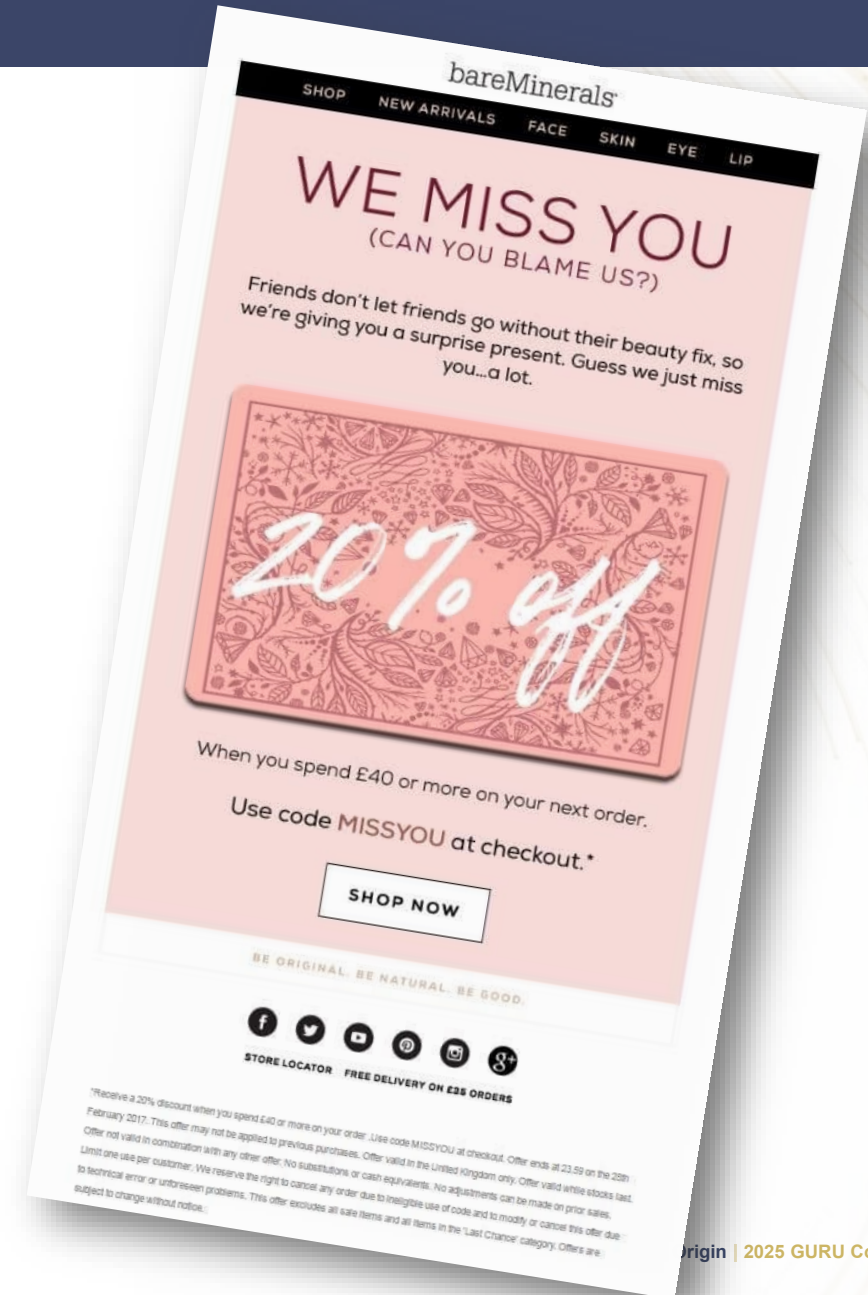
Come on, it's January

I bought a very expensive tree 2 years previous. What else do you want from me?



Don't miss us

The whole “we miss you” line should be **stricken** from our minds.





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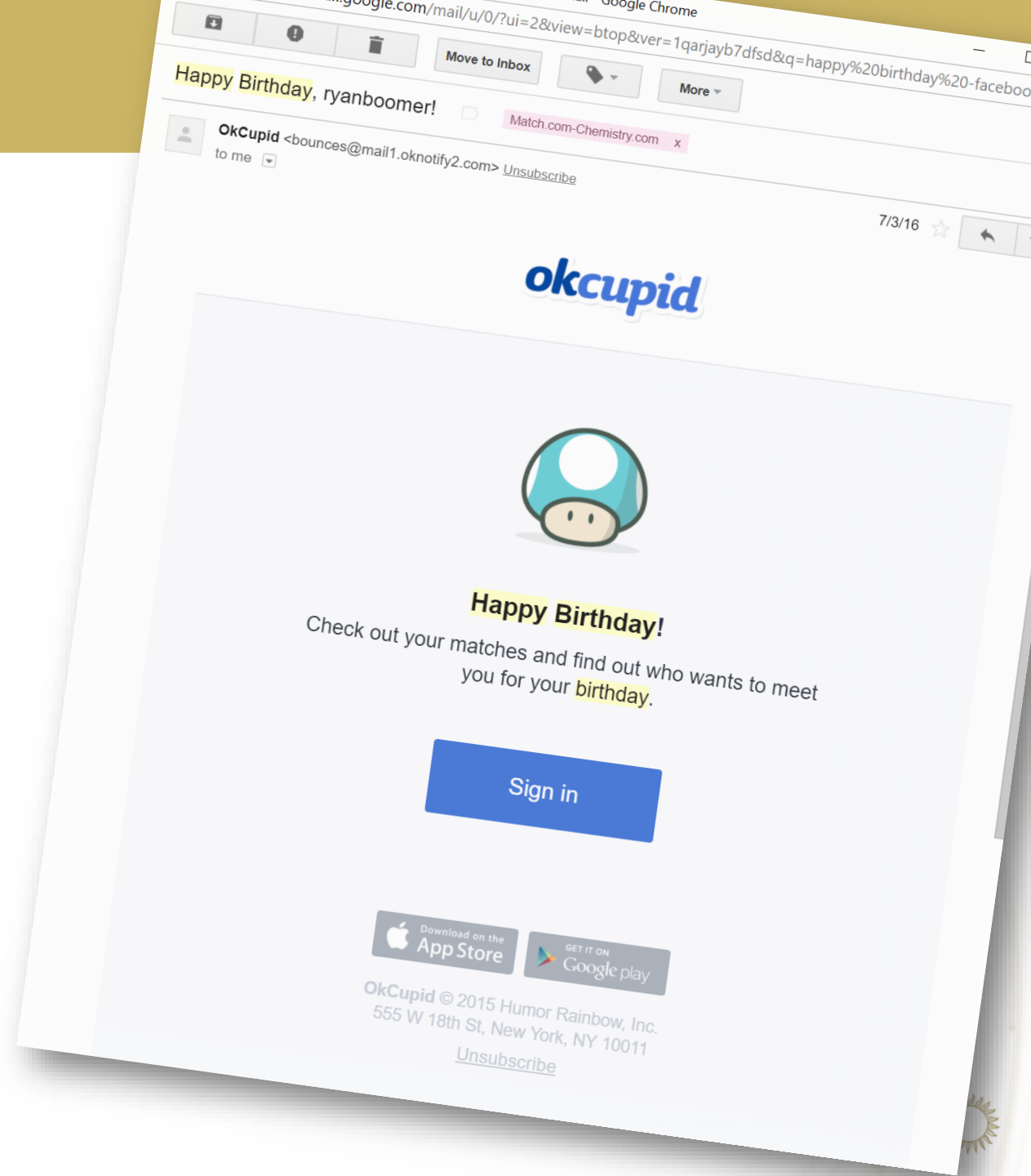
Birthday

Really?

OH
MY
GOD

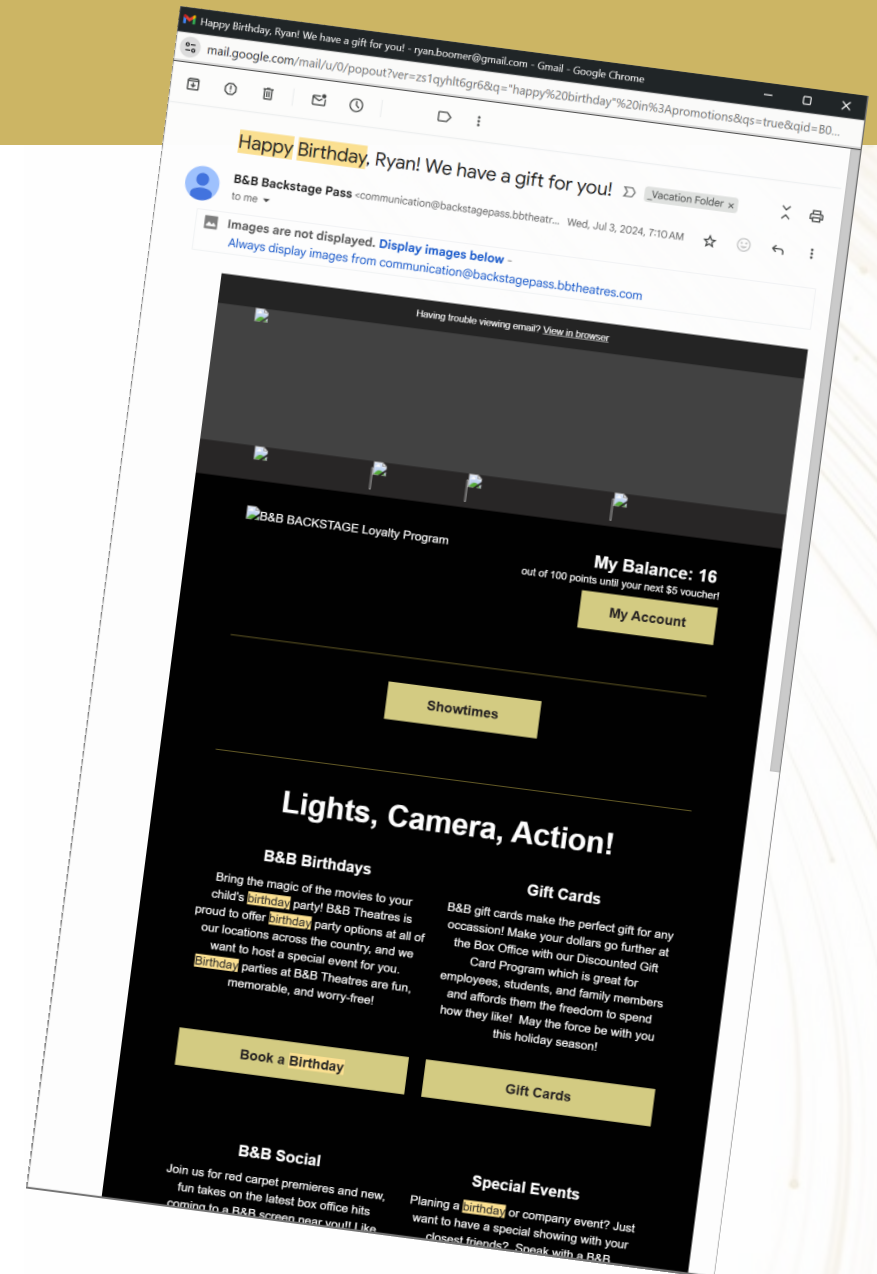
Triggers not only need includes –
they need excludes

I have not logged into okcupid, or
had any activity in 7 years – no really



We could learn from SMB

When SMB does it **better** than Enterprise, we're hanging our head in **shame**.





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Loyalty

Gold Standard: American Airlines?

- This entire email was packed full of accurate (and shockingly sad) stats!
- It was a powerful and depressing email every year

Travel Stats

Distance Traveled
1312054 mi

 Total Days 1723

 Total Trips 433

 Countries/Regions Visited 20

 Cities Visited 212



But where did they go?

- 2020 was the last year that I got this email!
- I have been Executive Platinum for the last 10 years
- When you have a good thing, don't stop it. Overcome the challenges.





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Transactional

60%

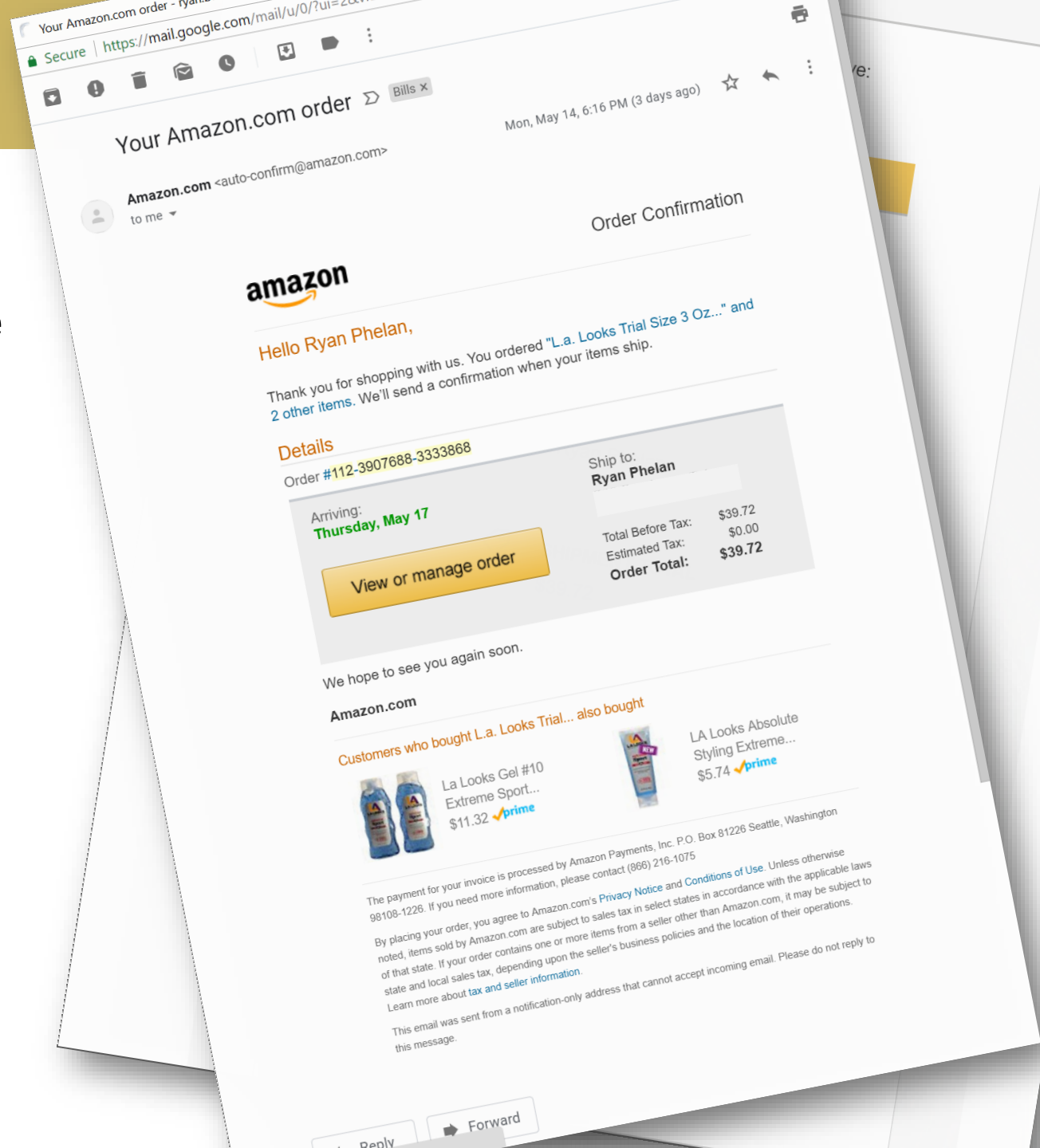
40%



The “kinda” gold standard

Amazon, in its retail domination, is the main email in many inboxes.

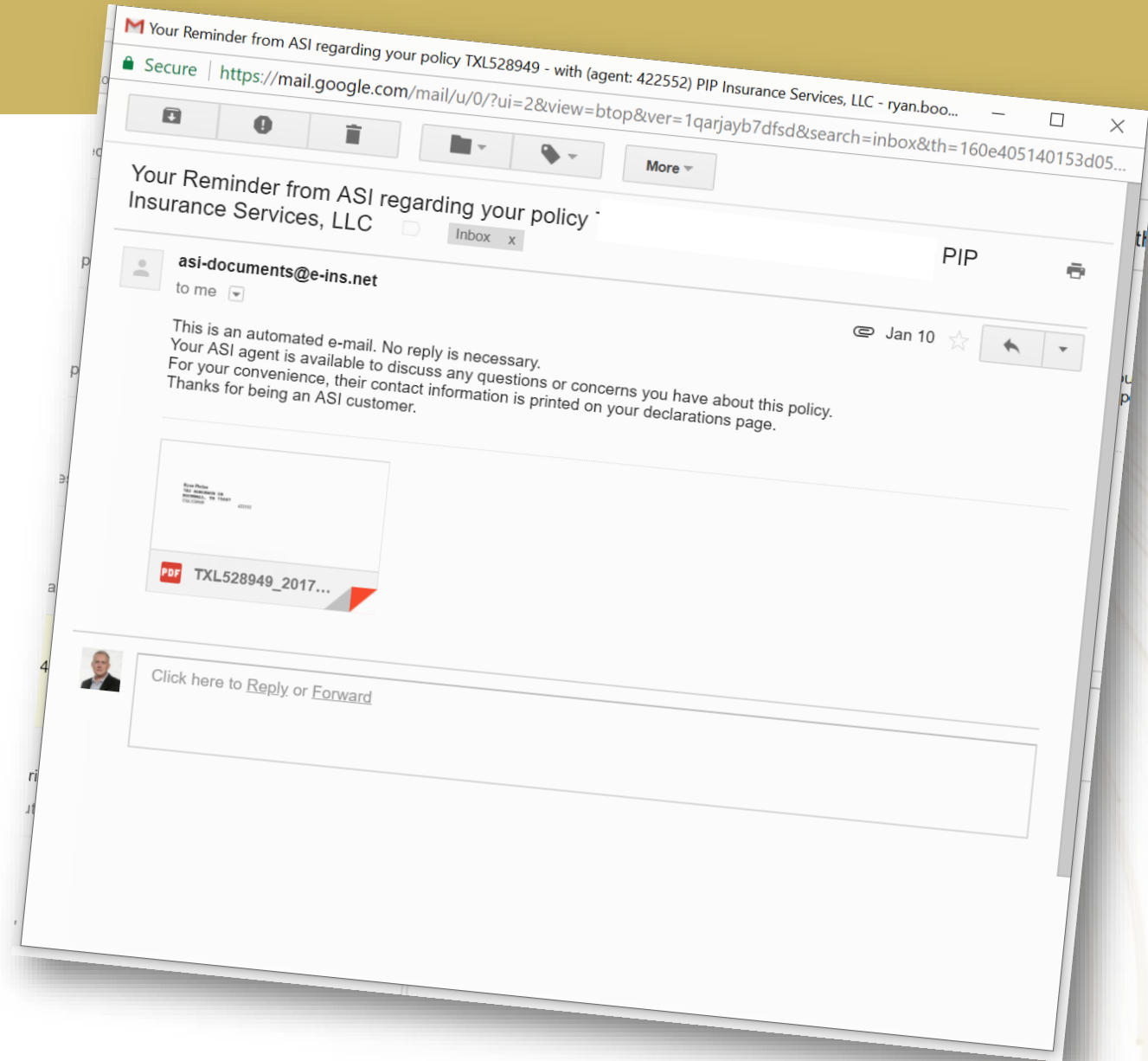
- Clear and concise
- Informative with options for more detail
- Cross sell at the bottom
- Consistent



Insurance

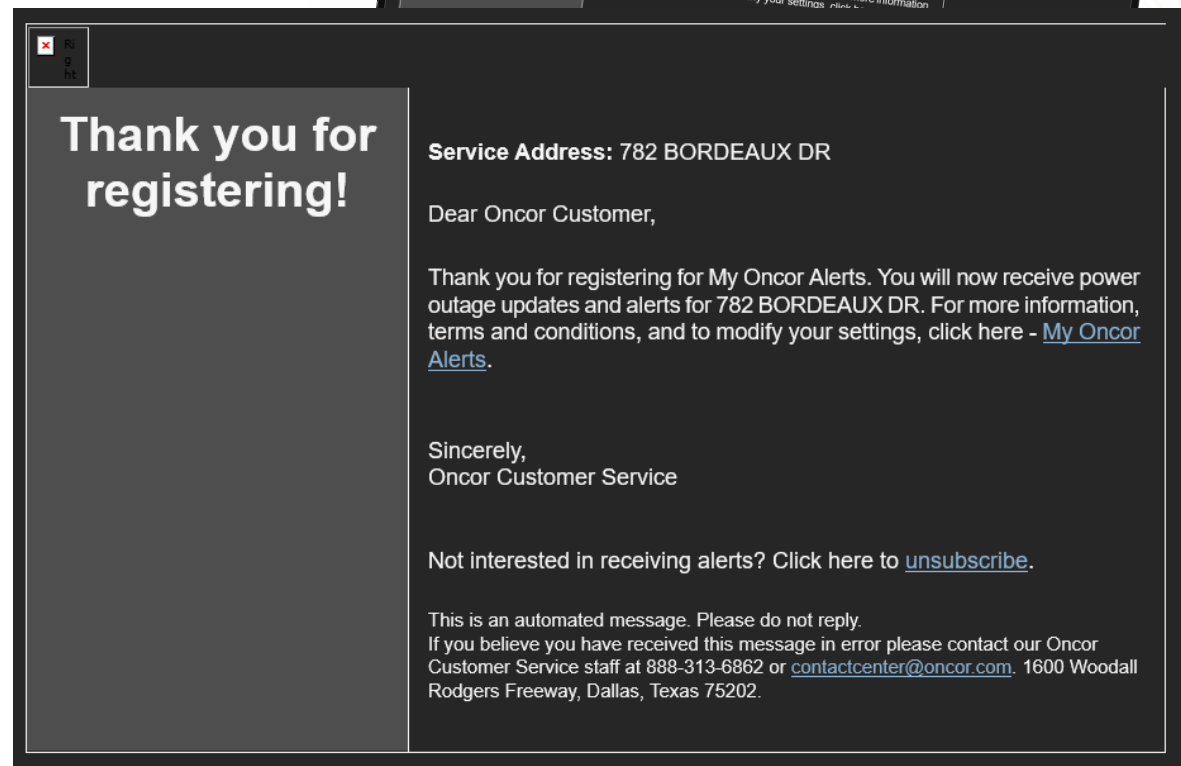
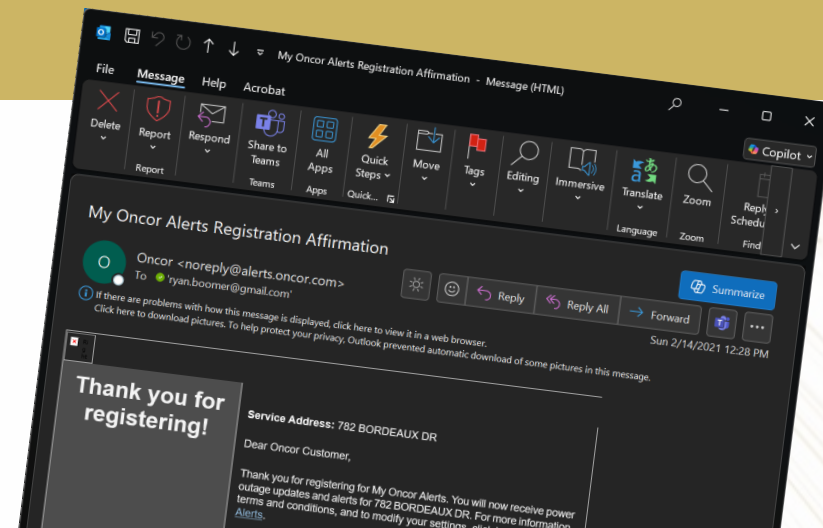
These emails actually contain a PDF of my bill

- Challenges include
- Virus/Security problems with various demographics
- All comms look like this – how do I differentiate?
- Subject Line: Reminder of what?



Missed Opportunity

- There's so much more that you could have done with this email.
- This could have been a text, but also, why not talk about service, quality, dedication.





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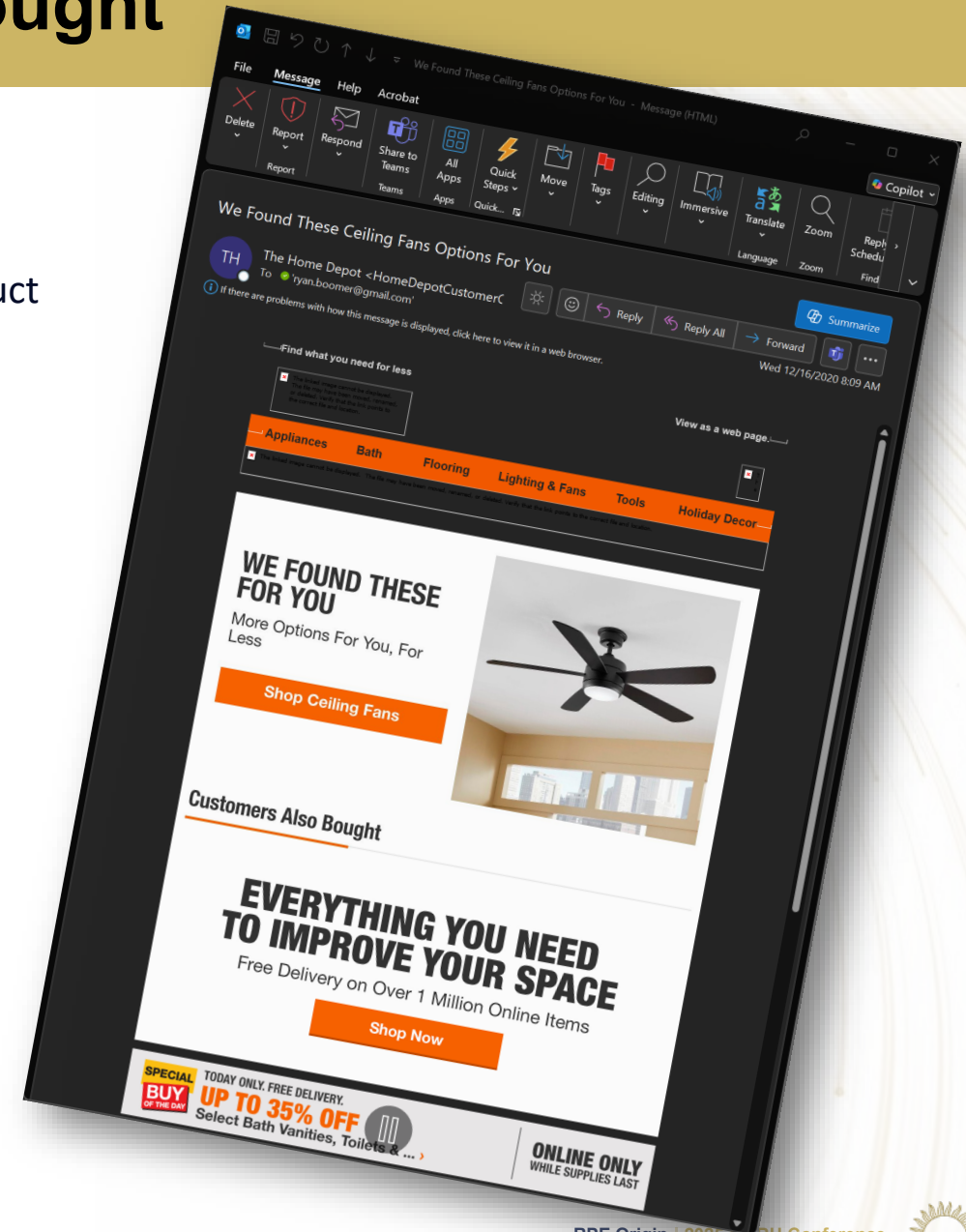
Browse Remarketing

I just wanted to look at what my sister bought

in·tent Sounds like uhn·tent 

Repeatable actions which indicates that a consumer is actually interested in the product and not just looking at something cool that a friend got.

- The time for simple Browse Remarketing is over. Twenty years ago, it was a great and effective idea.
- Now? Please!



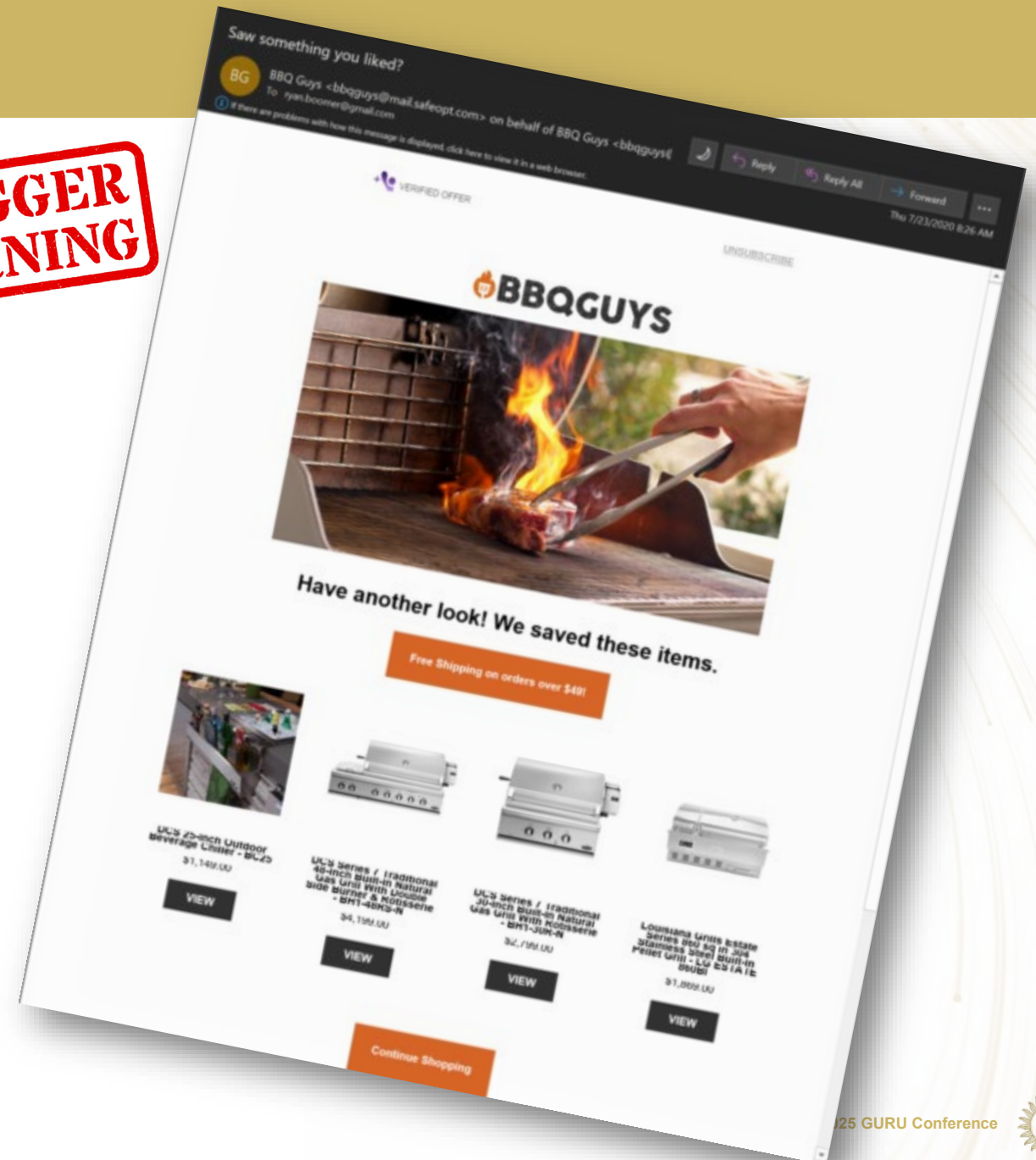
No, no, no, no, um....NO

<sub-rant>

This is wrong. Completely wrong and against what we believe as email marketers and email being a permission-based channel. It's creepy and gives away margin. It's spam. Full Stop.

</sub-rant>

TRIGGER WARNING



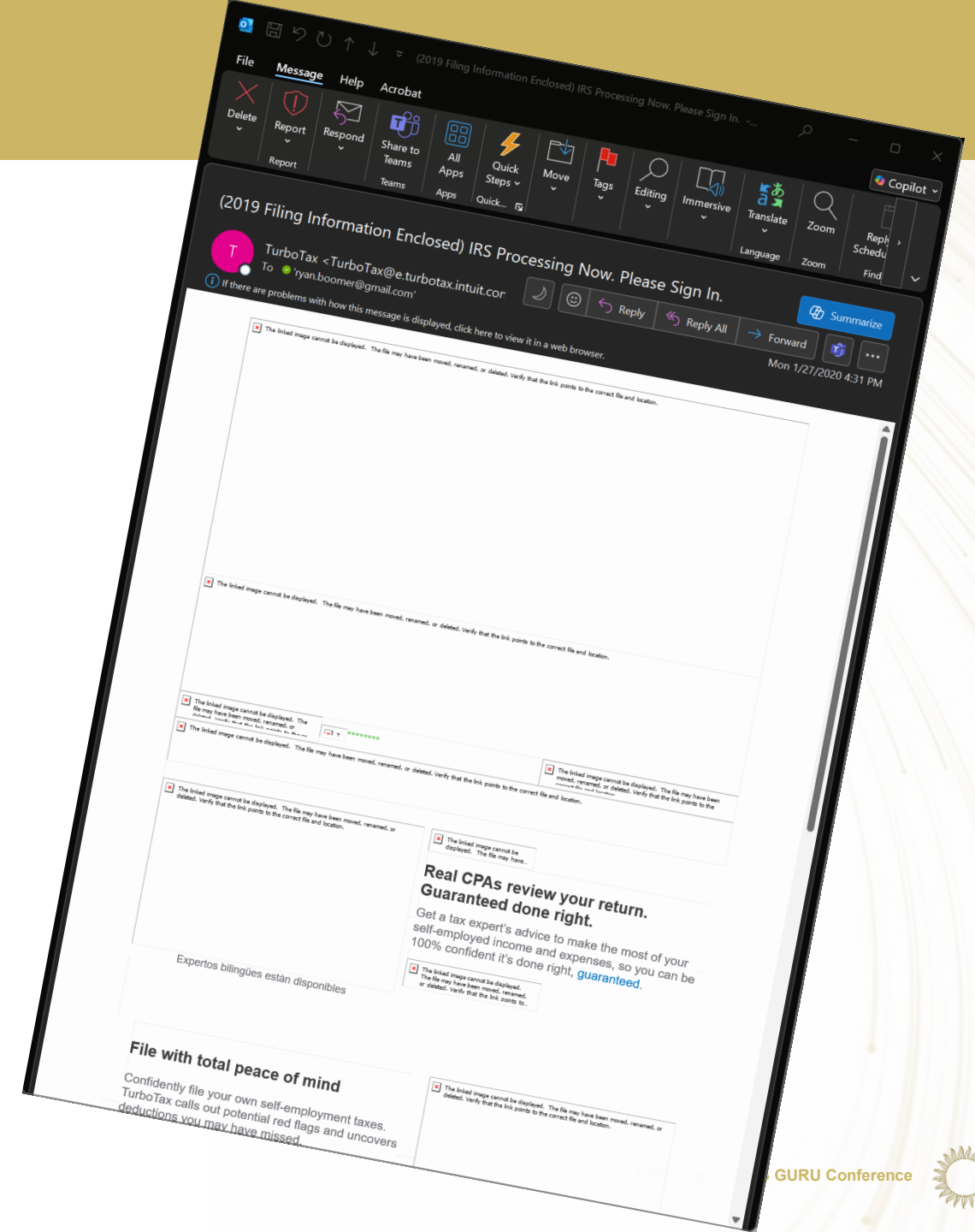


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**Image only
emails**

I can't see

- Great email if I knew what was being sent.
- Picture this as a Welcome email!
 - Pssst, it happens
- Image only emails are the lazy way to email.



Do better

This is ridiculous

FW: Don't miss your special offer, John! - Message (H...)

File Message Help Acrobat

Delete Archive Report Respond Share to Teams All Apps Quick Steps Move Tags Editing Immersive Translate Zoom Scheduled Find

FW: Don't miss your special offer, John!

John A Caldwell
To: Ryan Phelan
Cc: Evan Diaz

Start your reply all with: Yes, indeed! Yes, they are. Exactly! Feedback

sam's club

sam's cash

Turn your monthly bills into Sam's Cash.

Activate today!

Earn \$5 in Sam's Cash for each qualifying service provider when you set up a new recurring bill payment with your Sam's Club Mastercard.*

Activate Offer

Activate now and make your first bill payment between Sept. 1 – Oct. 31, 2025 and your second bill payment the next month.*
A maximum of \$50 in Sam's Cash can be earned with this offer.

It's easy to earn extra Sam's Cash.*

- 1 Activate this offer.
- 2 Contact service providers in any of the qualifying categories below to set up automatic bill payment. Mastercard® may not be accepted by all service providers.

- Internet
- Gym membership

Nothing Short of Perfect: NEW San Lucio

Tommy Bahama <tommybahama@em.tommybahama.com> to me Vacation Folder x

Images are not displayed. [Display images below](#) - Always display images from tommybahama@em.tommybahama.com

Tommy Bahama Mens

Big & Tall Womens Women's Swim Beach & Home Beach & Home

This Shirt Gets It New season, same stretch and ease. Your favorite shirt is primed for fall.

Live in the San Lucio.

Shop All Shirts

The Best Pant. Made Better. Comfort is calling! For a limited time only, buy one, get one 50% off the new Boracay Island Chino.

Shop the Boracay Island Chino

Let's Loop Back

Shop Belts

The Tommy Bahama Store at NorthPark Center

8687 North Central Expressway, Suite 175, Dallas, TX 75225 | [469-232-2290](tel:469-232-2290)

Free Shipping on All Orders

Men Women's Swim Big & Tall Free Returns

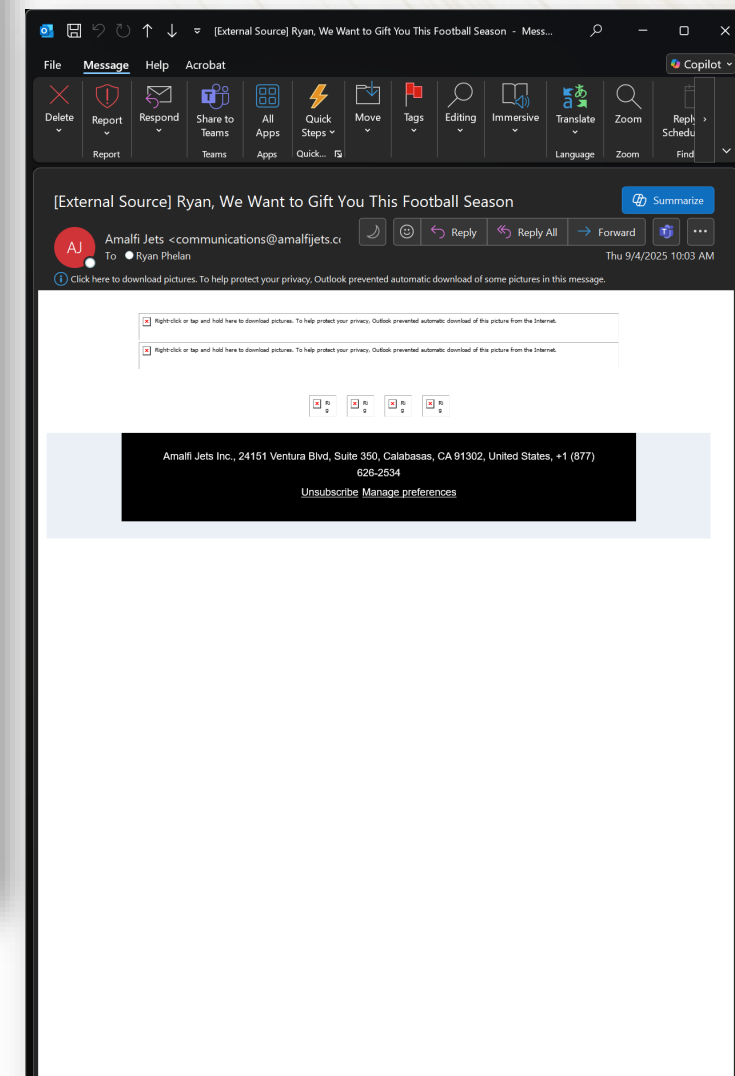
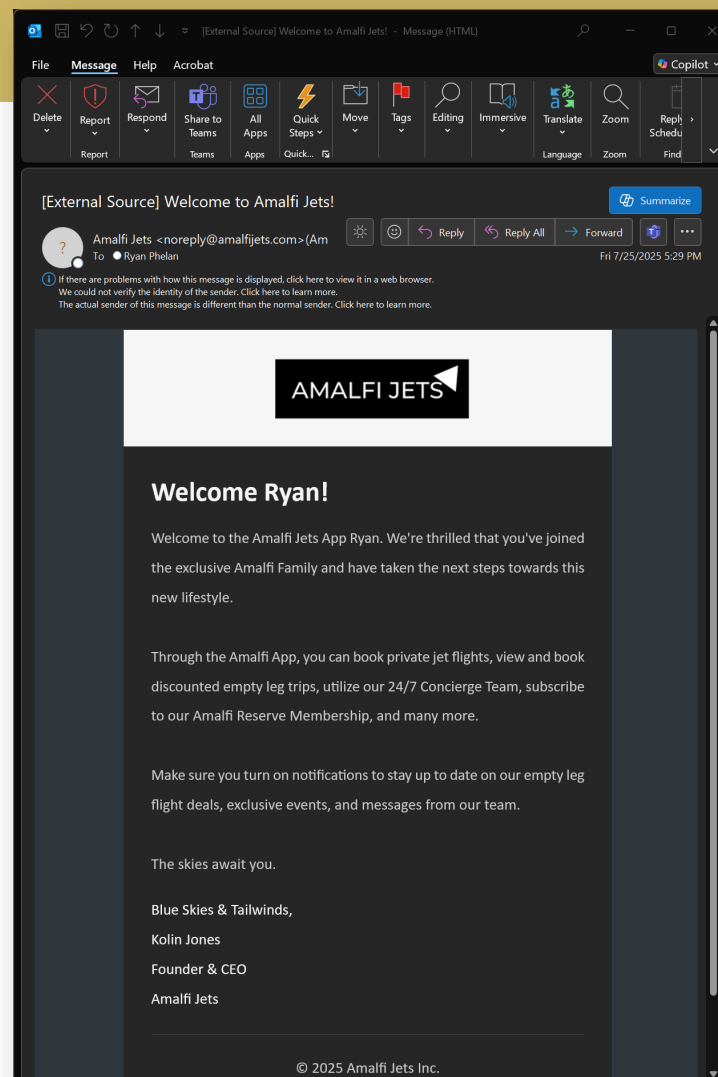
Restaurants & Marlin Bars Women's Swim Beach Gear Women Home

[Message clipped] [View entire message](#)



They started so good...

- Welcome email....perfect.
- Follow on emails, are not effective.
- Their audience is affluent businesspeople probably working on Outlook.





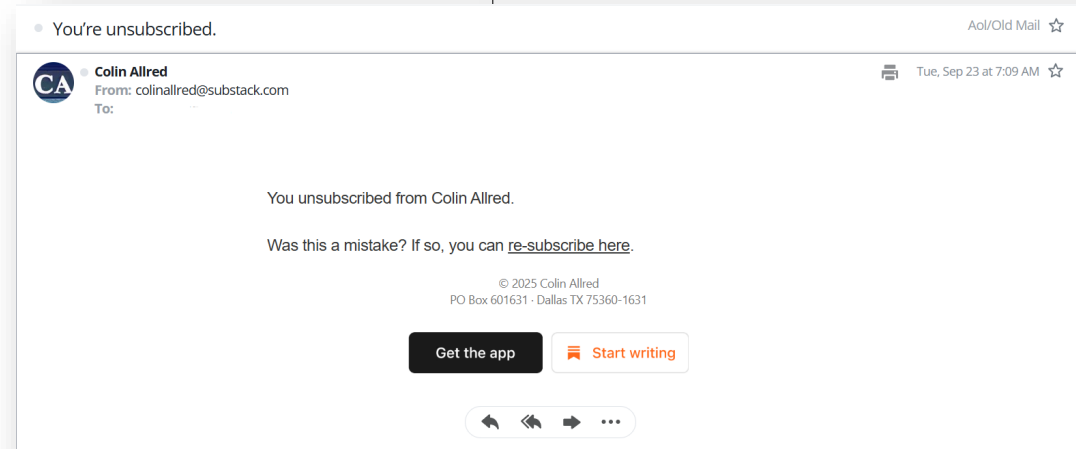
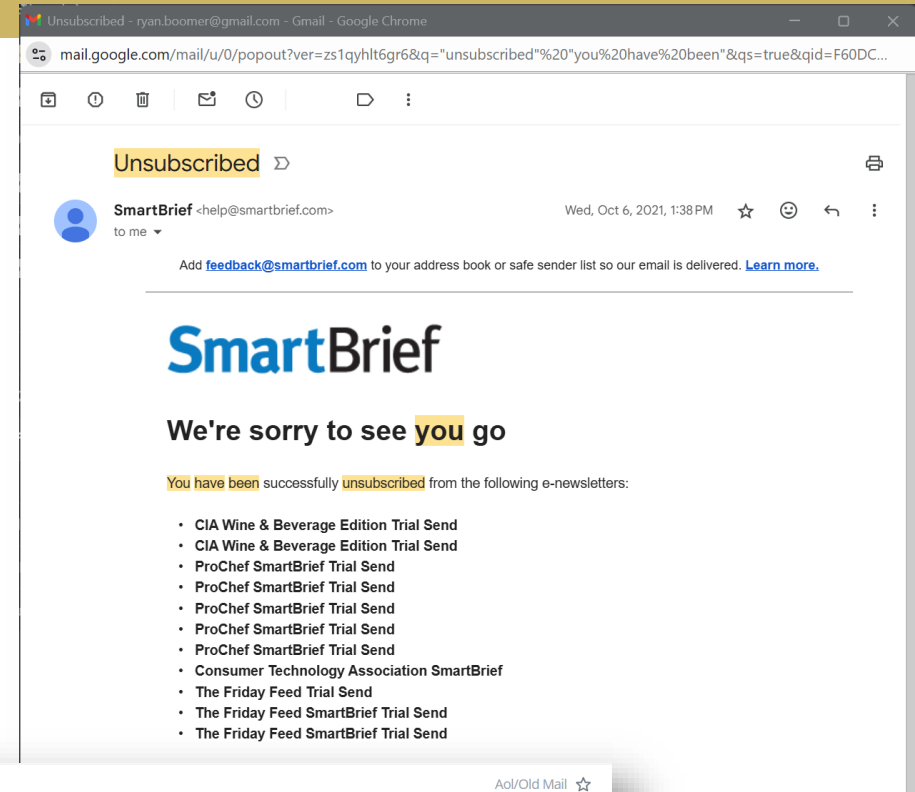
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Unsub Confirmation

Just stop....please

It's just so desperate
and unneeded

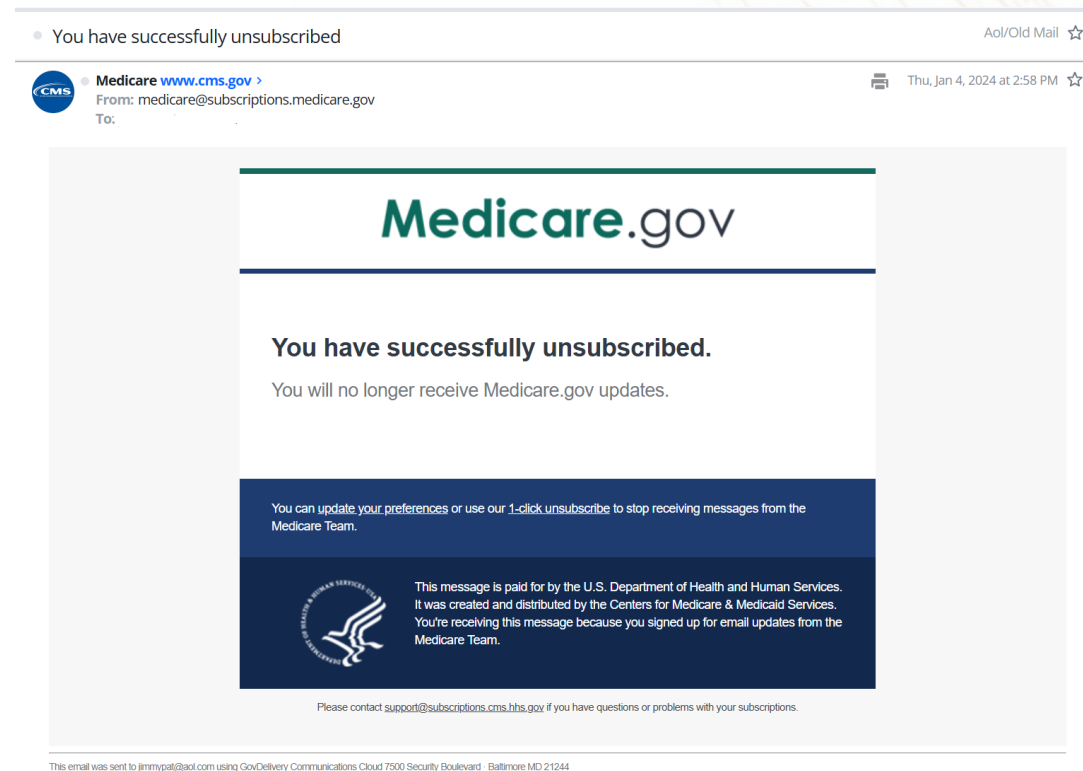
It's akin to chasing an
old relationship.



Ok, just maybe one more

BUT!

There are times where it's appropriate. Financial Services, Insurance and memberships (paid) are important because of the financial condition. However, it's a better email if you explain what you will continue to get.



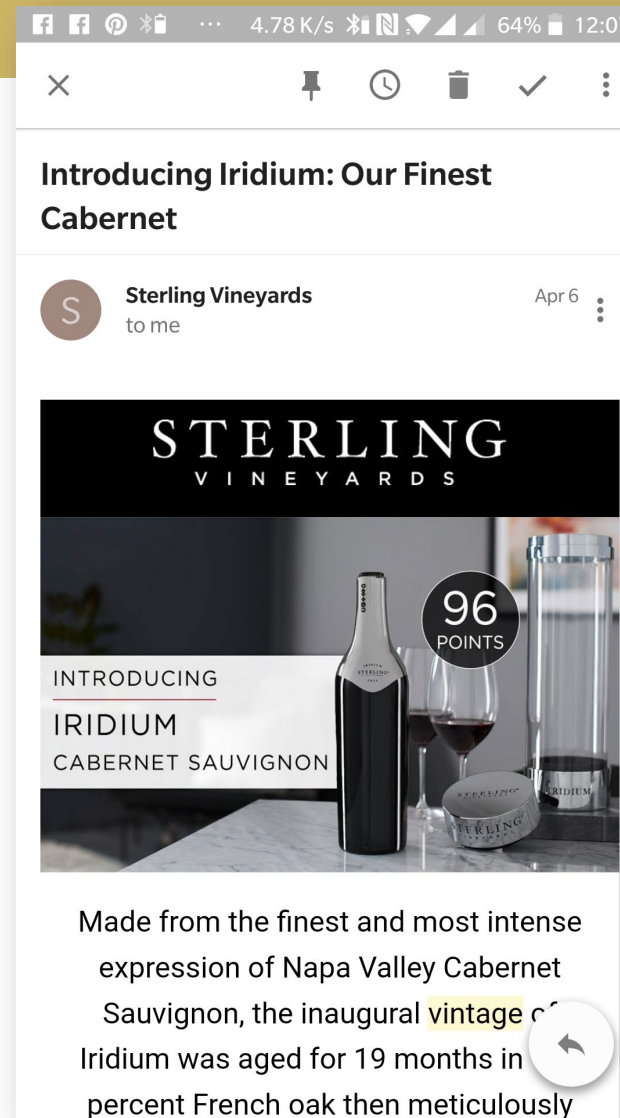


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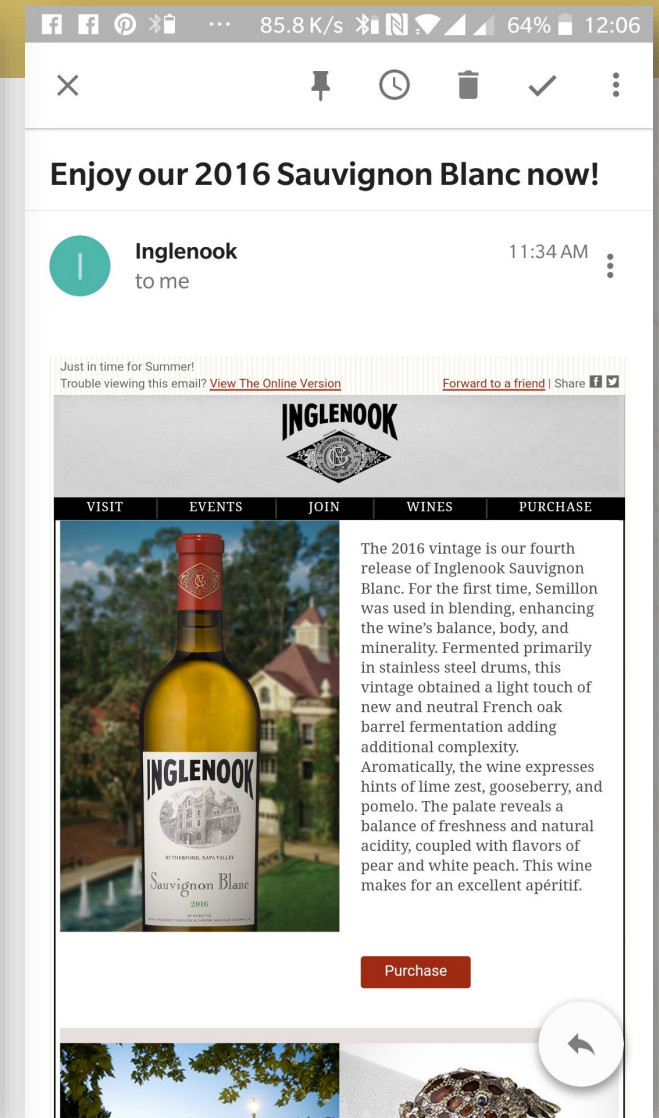
Mobile

Mobile musts

- If you have to pinch the email creative, you're doing it wrong.
- Ensure that you're developing and designing for mobile.
- Don't make me squint



Good

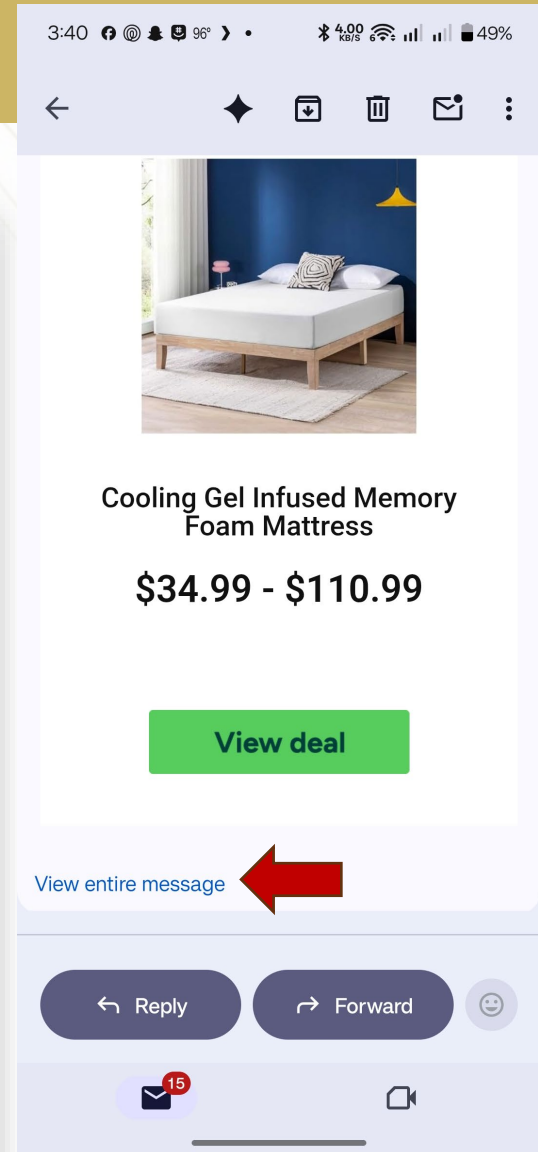
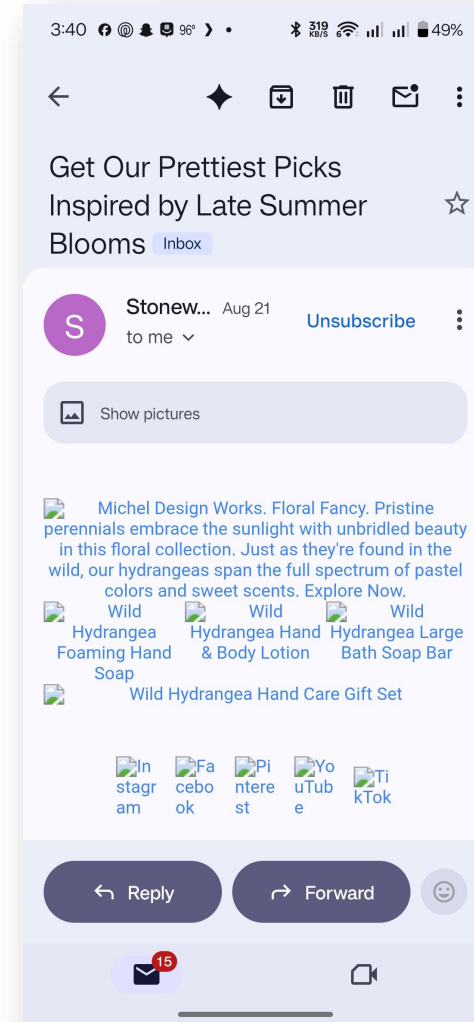


Bad



Why...just why

- You have even less time on a mobile device and people get annoyed more at the brand.
- ADA compliance is real
- If your message says it's "clipped" you're coding it wrong.



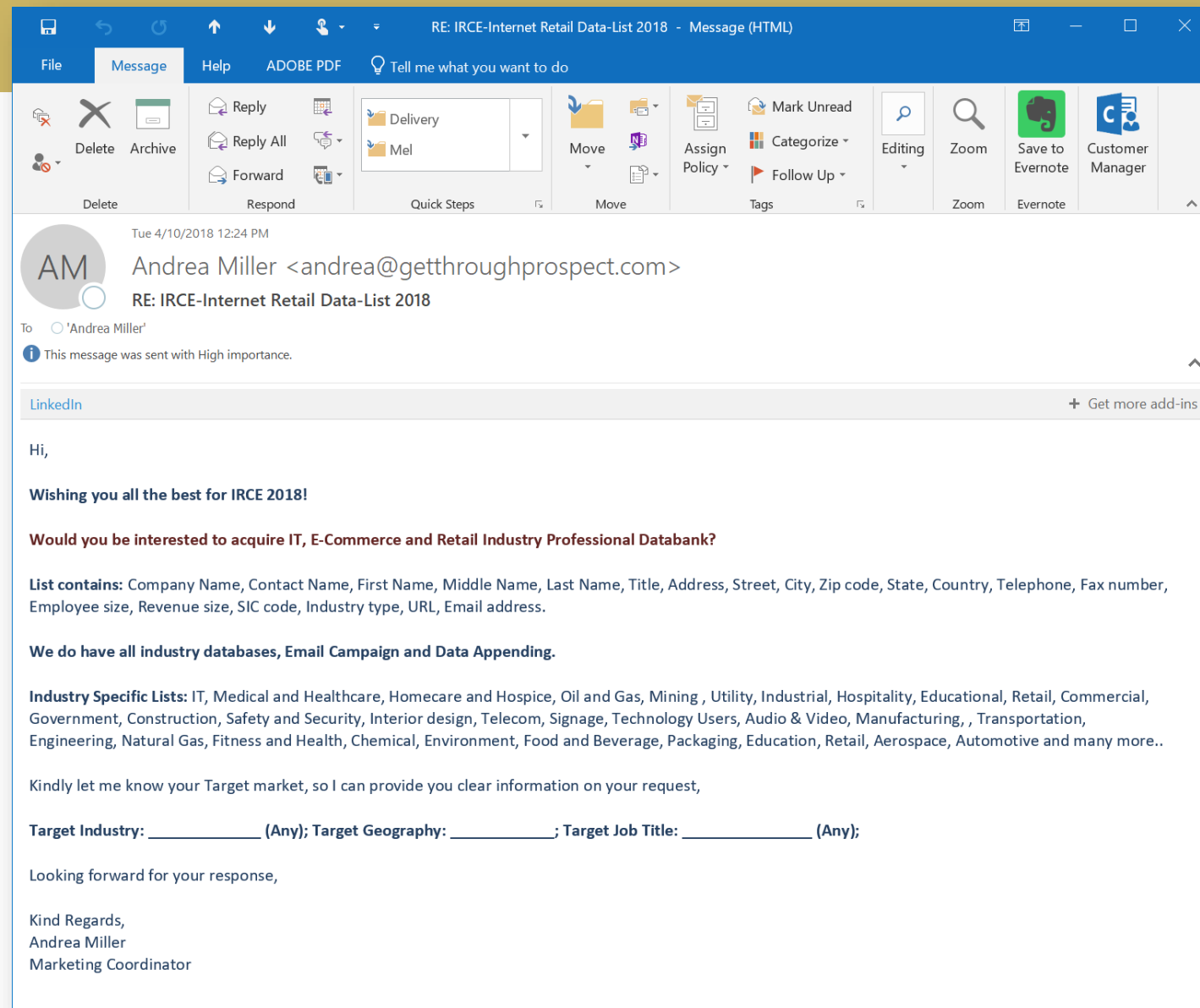


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And the last ½

BONUS:DON'T BUY A LIST!

- Never
 - Never
 - Don't do it
 - No really, don't
 - Not kidding
 - Seriously
 - It's bad, like really bad
-
- If you choose to do it, please send me your email, so I can send you crap you don't want.



Junk Email

[498]





Thank you for your time

Ryan Phelan
CEO

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402-630-5836

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BONUS

Folks, name the city correctly.

It's **ROCKWALL**

BTW – the comments were
hilarious

