

# Email For Advocacy and Community Organizing: Basics, Essentials, and Best Practices

## Email Graphic Design Best Practices

These training materials have been prepared by Aspiration in partnership with Radical Designs and ScoutSeven

Funded by the Community Technology Foundation of California

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# Learning Goals

- ▶ Understand differences and trade-offs between HTML and text email messages
- ▶ Appreciate HTML design best practices
- ▶ Survey HTML template elements
  - Headers, footers, columns, side bars
- ▶ Learn best practices for text-only messages

# Message Design Best Practices

- ▶ Consider Delivery Format – HTML vs. Text
  - Audience: how do they get their email?
    - Client-based or web? Older or newer machines?
  - Issue of forwarding HTML email
    - Formatting often “breaks”
  - Without HTML you lose:
    - Open tracking, clickthrough tracking
  - Best practice: send both, test both

# HTML Design Principles and Tips

## ▶ Simplicity is Golden

- Limit the numbers of colors and fonts
  - Maximum 3-4 colors: too many colors distract
  - Use 1 or 2 fonts
- Refrain from caps and excessive use of bold
  - CAPS ARE HARDER TO READ
- Use font size and colors to break up sections

# HTML Design Principles and Tips

## ▶ Graphics and Images

- Make sure all images have
  - Width and height specified
  - Meaningful ALT tag provided
- If recipient checks email with an email client and reads their email offline, images will not appear

# HTML Design Principles and Tips

## ▶ Graphics and Images

- Avoid using images to create design and spacing
  - May be removed or rewritten by ISPs or email clients
  - If an image is critical to the email attach it when you send (do this rarely due to spam filters)
- Make sure that you use full URLs for the links to the images

# HTML Email Template Elements

## ▶ Header

- Include organizational logo and tag line in the header
  - Have it link to your website.
- Don't make the header too tall or it will push down "the fold"
  - Don't make it harder to view important content

# HTML Email Template Elements

## ► Optional Header Items

- Date the email is sent
- URL of your site
- Donate link
- Organizational contact information
- Info or graphics about the specific campaign/list
- Tag line for the goal of the email

Link to Campaigns



**The Ella Baker Center**  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

BOOKS NOT BARS • RECLAIM THE FUTURE • BAY AREA POLICEWATCH

PLEASE FORWARD \*\* PLEASE FORWARD WIDELY \*\* PLEASE FORWARD

Dear Friend,

Please Forward

Link to Archive

Note: the full text of this e-mail message is online at <http://www.sfpeople.org/dispatch>



**The SFPO Disp@tch** INFO & ACTION ALERTS TWICE A MONTH

[www.sfpeople.org](http://www.sfpeople.org)

Web Address




**united for peace & justice**

ACTION ALERT \* UNITED FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE  
[www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org) | 212-868-5545 | [Click to subscribe](#)

List Type Contact #

Subscribe Link

# Example: Email Headers

Too Big  
Pushes  
Content  
Below  
Fold



**Rainforest Action Network**  
Tough Love for Corporate America

5 Million Acres Protected



PHOTO BY: BRUCE HILL

Dear David,

# HTML Email Template Elements

## ▶ Columns and Sidebars

- Best used to pull out “the ask” and main message to a flashy and easy to read area
- Include an image and button for folks to click on that are related to the ask
- Sum up the goal of the ask or message of the email in one sentence below the image

## ExxonMobil Announces Record Profit

### The environment and consumers are paying for it

Dear TrueMajority member,

In his State of the Union speech Tuesday night, President Bush said that we are a "nation addicted to oil." He's right. Unfortunately, it appears the President is fueling that addiction, by threatening to veto a bill that would tax the record profits being reaped by oil companies – profits that come at the expense of consumers and the environment.

The day before the President's speech, the world's largest oil company, ExxonMobil, announced that it made **\$36.13 billion** in 2005. That is the largest profit ever recorded in the history of American capitalism.

Since President Bush is working to keep those profits from going to step up and hold ExxonMobil accountable for the damage to the environment and your wallet. Towards this end, the campaign has created a short, funny video in

**Click the link below to check it out, and then ask ExxonMobil to clean up their act:**

<http://www.truemajority.org/ExxonToastsThePlanet.html>

We're sure the movie will make you chuckle. **Please share the laughs by forwarding it on to all your friends and family.**

The movie is humorous, but ExxonMobil's policies are not. Sadly, ExxonMobil's profits have come at a huge cost -- both to consumers like you and me and to our environment. ExxonMobil uses its billions to sabotage efforts to slow global warming and to lobby Congress in support of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and off of America's majestic coasts. Instead, ExxonMobil should invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy, such as wind and solar power.

The good news is that we have a chance to change for the better the way ExxonMobil does business in 2006. ExxonMobil CEO Lee Raymond retired in December after a long and extremely costly run. This month, Rex Tillerson took over as ExxonMobil's new CEO.

You can help ExxonMobil change direction by asking Rex Tillerson to make the company a responsible corporate citizen that respects consumers and the environment.

[Watch the movie](#)



Image

Different  
Color  
Background

citizens  
going to

Watch a [funny movie](#) from ExxposeExxon.com, then take action to demand that the company change its poor environmental policies.

Summary  
And Ask

# HTML Email Template Elements

- ▶ Secondary information on a sidebar could be used for links to
  - Background information
  - Human interest stories
    - Linked to a profile on your site
  - Updates on your campaign
  - News or other information

Dear MoveOn member,

Earlier this week 84% of us agreed we should challenge some right-wing incumbent Democrats in primary elections. Now, we're announcing our first MoveOn-member endorsement in a primary.

Ciro Rodriguez is running for Congress in the primary. He opposed the war in Iraq and has championed veterans' benefits. In the words of Marta from San Antonio, "Ciro would stand up to the Bush administration in Washington."

But Rodriguez is up against an incumbent—Henry Cuellar—who consistently voted against Democrats on important issues and literally campaigned for Bush in 2000. With a sprint to the March 7th finish we can put him down. Can you contribute whatever you can afford?

<https://political.moveon.org/give/springraces.html?ffF981vCSWogP4PdIbeEsw&t=4>

The really good news about this primary is that there is no Republican in the race. If Rodriguez wins in three weeks it will be a big progressive win.

Electing Rodriguez is one part of our two-part candidate strategy—taking back the House and supporting the more progressive Democrat in primaries.

We also have another candidate you can support today—Francine Busby (D) who is the MoveOn-member endorsed candidate in California's 50th district. She is running in a special election to replace Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham (R) who left Congress after pleading guilty to accepting bribes.

And like Rodriguez, the special election is coming right up—on April 11th. Every minute is urgent for these candidates. Together we can put them over the top. Can you contribute whatever you can afford?

<https://political.moveon.org/give/springraces.html?ffF981vCSWogP4PdIbeEsw&t=5>

Thanks for all you do.

—Tom, Jennifer, Matt, Justin and the MoveOn.org Political Action Team  
Thursday, February 16th, 2006

Summary

veteran  
democrat

Ask

th our

Narrative  
Image and  
Story

### A Sprint to March 7th

In less than three weeks a progressive Democrat, **Ciro Rodriguez**, will try to unseat a right-wing Democrat in the pocket of the Bush administration. **With a sprint to the finish, help is urgently needed. Can you contribute whatever you can afford?**

Click Here

[Help A Progressive Win](#)

### Beat Bush's Democrat



Ciro Rodriguez' opponent, Rep. Henry Cuellar, is a symbol of the sort of Democrat we need to replace. He supports the war and the Bush Medicare drug debacle. He votes one out of three times with the Republicans. It isn't a surprise that Bush and Cuellar

# HTML Email Template Elements

## ► Footer

- Place all information about how to subscribe, unsubscribe, or manage your profile in the footer
- Other information related to the sending and receiving of the email are best placed here
- Place organizational contact information or links that do not show up in the header or sidebar

# Example: Footers

---

Books Not Bars and the Ella Baker Center can't survive without the support of our donors. Please take a moment to support us today: [click here](#) to donate.

Donate Link

---

Not on our list-serve yet? (Maybe this message was forwarded to you.) Sign up to get e-mail updates directly by going to <http://www.booksnotbars.org/subscribe>.

To UNSUBSCRIBE from this list, go to <http://www.booksnotbars.org/unsubscribe>

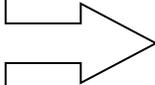
Update your preferences or contact information here: <http://www.booksnotbars.org/profile>

(Note: The first time you go to update your preferences, you must first create a login and password.)

Subscription

# Example: Footers

Address &  
Phone

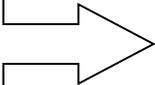


**GREENPEACE**  
702 H Street, NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
(800) 326-0959

You received this mailing because you are subscribed to our mailing list. If you need to update your information or prefer not to receive these mailings in the future [click here](#) to update your account.

We value your privacy. If you have any questions about how we use your information please read our [privacy policy](#).

Privacy  
Policy



**Thank You for your Support!**

# Text-Only Best Practices

- ▶ Text messages make it harder to draw the reader's attention to parts of your email.
- ▶ The layout of text emails means that you have less content "above the fold"
- ▶ Place your "ask" at the top of text emails
  - List a table of contents below the "ask" so readers will know if there are things they want to read below.

# Text-Only Best Practices

- ▶ Be mindful of your use of CAPS.
  - Caps can be hard to read but can also bring attention to a section.
  - Consider using caps like you would use bold for section headers.
- ▶ Use lines and stars to break up content
- ▶ For text emails you still want to include relevant subscription and organizational links.

# Text-Only Best Practices

- ▶ Link and Email Information in text email
  - You should include most of these links at the bottom of text emails
    - Place a few selected links such as organizational website and donate link at the top of the email.
  - For links to other websites use short URLs
  - Long URLs may break onto 2 lines and be more difficult to paste into a browser

Dear friends,

It's a new year and the CYA is on the hot seat again.

You may remember that a young man named Joseph Maldonado tragically committed suicide at the Chad youth prison on August 31, 2005. The Inspector General just released a report confirming what youth and families have known all along: Joseph Maldonado didn't have to die -- Chad's prison guards failed to save his life.

\* TAKE ACTION! EMAIL THE GOVERNOR RIGHT NOW! \*

Caps and \*\* for  
Section Headers

This is not just one more report -- it is a loud call to action. In the new year, we need friends and allies to re-commit to helping us close Chad!

E-mail Governor Schwarzenegger and demand that he:

1. Issue an official apology to Joseph's family.
2. Fire the guards that contributed to Joseph's death.
3. Close Chad immediately!

CLICK to E-mail Arnold:

<http://www.booksnotbars.org/emailarnold>

White Space for  
Ask

\* THE OFFICIAL REPORT MAKES 3 KEY FINDINGS: \*

- 1) Joseph was locked in solitary confinement for 8 weeks, even though he hadn't been accused of any wrongdoing.
- 2) Joseph requested mental health services four times, but Chad failed to provide that help.
- 3) For 40 minutes after clear warning signs appeared, Chad's prison guards failed to check on Joseph, ignoring CYA policy. Joseph died during those 40 minutes.

The CYA continues to warehouse youth in abusive prisons, even though five youth have died there in the last two years.

As Books Not Bars Field Director Jakada Imani said in the Stockton Record, "They're as responsible as if they tied the sheet around his neck, as if they whispered into his ear every night to go ahead and do it." (Read the news article here: <http://www.booksnotbars.org/page.php?pageid=5&contentid=118> )

You can read the full Inspector General report here: [http://www.oig.ca.gov/reports/pdf/death\\_of\\_a\\_ward.pdf](http://www.oig.ca.gov/reports/pdf/death_of_a_ward.pdf)

\* MAJOR CALIFORNIA PAPER AGAIN SAYS: CLOSE CHAD NOW! \*

In response to the report, the Sacramento Bee has called on the Governor to close Chad! Last year in July, they declared "It's time to close Chad."



www.booksnotbars.org

Fighting for a California that lifts young people up instead of locking them down.

PLEASE FORWARD \*\* PLEASE FORWARD WIDELY \*\* PLEASE FORWARD

Dear friends,

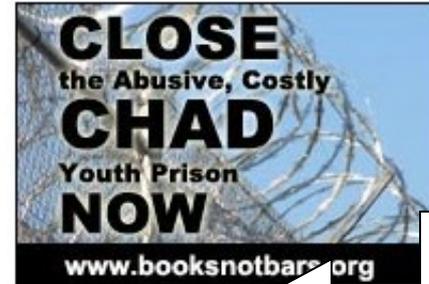
It's a new year and the CYA is on the hot seat again.

You may remember that a young man named Joseph Maldonado tragically committed suicide at the Chad youth prison on August 31, 2005. The Inspector General just released a report confirming what youth and families have known all along: **Joseph Maldonado didn't have to die -- Chad's prison guards failed to save his life.**

**The official report makes 3 key findings:**

1. **Eight weeks of solitary confinement:** Joseph was isolated in "lockdown" for 8 weeks, even though he hadn't been accused of any wrongdoing.
2. **Four requests for help:** Joseph requested mental health services four times, but Chad failed to provide that help.
3. **Neglect at the vital moment:** For nearly 40 minutes after clear warning signs appeared, Chad's prison guards failed to check on Joseph, ignoring CYA policy. Joseph died during those 40 minutes.

The CYA continues to warehouse youth in abusive prisons, even though five youth have died there in the last two years.



HTML Version

**Take Action!**

This is not just one more report -- it is a loud call to action. In the new year, re-commit to helping us close Chad!

**E-mail Governor Schwarzenegger and demand that he:**

1. Issue an official apology to Joseph's family.
2. Fire the guards that contributed to Joseph's death.
3. Close Chad immediately!



# Summary

- ▶ There are key differences and trade-offs between HTML and text email messages
- ▶ In HTML design “right size and simple” summarize the best practices
- ▶ Consider HTML template elements
  - Headers, footers, columns and side bars
- ▶ Text-only messages have a very different set of best practices

# End Of Section

- ▶ Questions?
- ▶ Comments?

## Thank You!

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