



YOUR BRAIN ON EMAIL:

11 DESIGNS PEOPLE CAN'T RESIST



emma

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ABSTRACT

You don't have to be a neuroscientist to do genius email marketing...but it certainly helps. In this report, you'll see how top brands are using the secrets of the human mind to design and write email our brains simply can't resist. They'll spark ideas to help you get better results in the inbox, and you won't need 4 years of grad school to do it.

(Special shout-out to our friends at [Coglode.com](https://coglode.com). If brain science + marketing is your thing, check 'em out.)

METHODS

A background image showing a person's hands holding a white coffee cup and pointing at a document with a pen. The image is faded and serves as a backdrop for the text.

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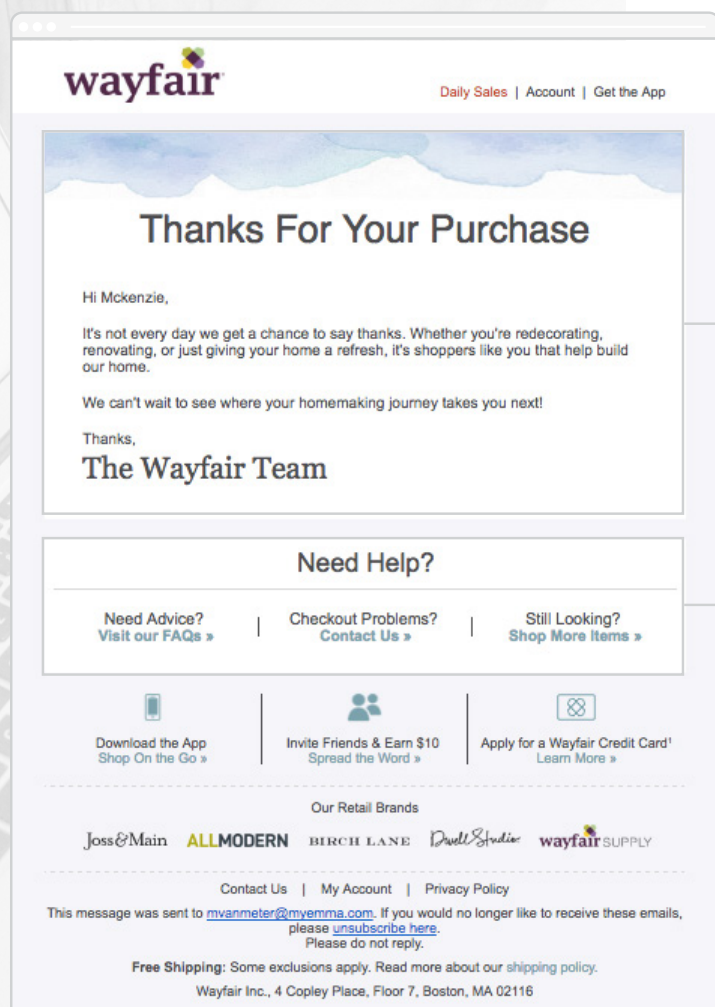
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TRIVIALIZATION EFFECT

[trih-vee-ul-eye-zay-shon ih-fekt]

The **Trivialization Effect** says that rewarding purchases with financial gifts (like an extra discount or cash back) makes the relationship feel more... well, trivial. Instead, try a good, old-fashioned, heartfelt “thank you” like this one from Wayfair. Your customers will feel much more appreciated.



Straightforward, no-strings-attached copy feels more authentic. ■

Nothing inspires customer loyalty like being genuinely helpful. ■

**THANK YOU EMAILS AVERAGE
TWICE AS MANY OPENS AND
CLICKS AS OTHER MAILINGS.**

(HUBSPOT)



CHOICE PARADOX

[choys pair-uh-dahks]

Choice Paradox tells us that when faced with too many decisions, we won't make a decision at all. So rather than cramming a ton of content into a single email, break it up into several emails, each with its own super clear call to action (like this one from Grammarly).



Clarity is king, and this tells you exactly what you're going to get. ■

A single CTA button surrounded by plenty of white space really pops. ■

EMAILS WITH A SINGLE CALL TO ACTION INCREASE SALES A WHOPPING 1617%!

(WORDSTREAM)

RECIPROCITY

[reh-cih-prah-cih-tee]

This one's a no-brainer: If someone does something nice for you, you'll naturally want to do something nice for them. It's no different for marketers, and smart brands like Anthropologie have been using this principle to inspire customer loyalty for years.



Tell us what you love to give "and" get. View in a browser.

ANTHROPOLOGIE

your thoughts
our treat

Love picking out presents? Us, too!
A thoughtful gift, whether given or received, makes special occasions that much happier. To that end, we'd love to know more about how you shop for family and friends—for birthdays, holidays and more.

This survey will take less than 5 minutes to complete, and as a token of thanks, we'll knock

20% off any full-price purchase through Tuesday, September 6.

[LET'S GET STARTED](#)

Set the “give and get” expectation to grab attention from the outset. ■

And make sure the payoff is super clear (and worth their while). ■

72% OF MILLENNIALS WOULD PAY EXTRA FOR PRODUCTS FROM COMPANIES DEDICATED TO SOCIAL CHANGE (AKA, COMPANIES THAT DO NICE THINGS). (NIELSEN)

MOTIVATING- UNCERTAINTY EFFECT

[moh-tih-vay-ting un-sur-ten-tee]

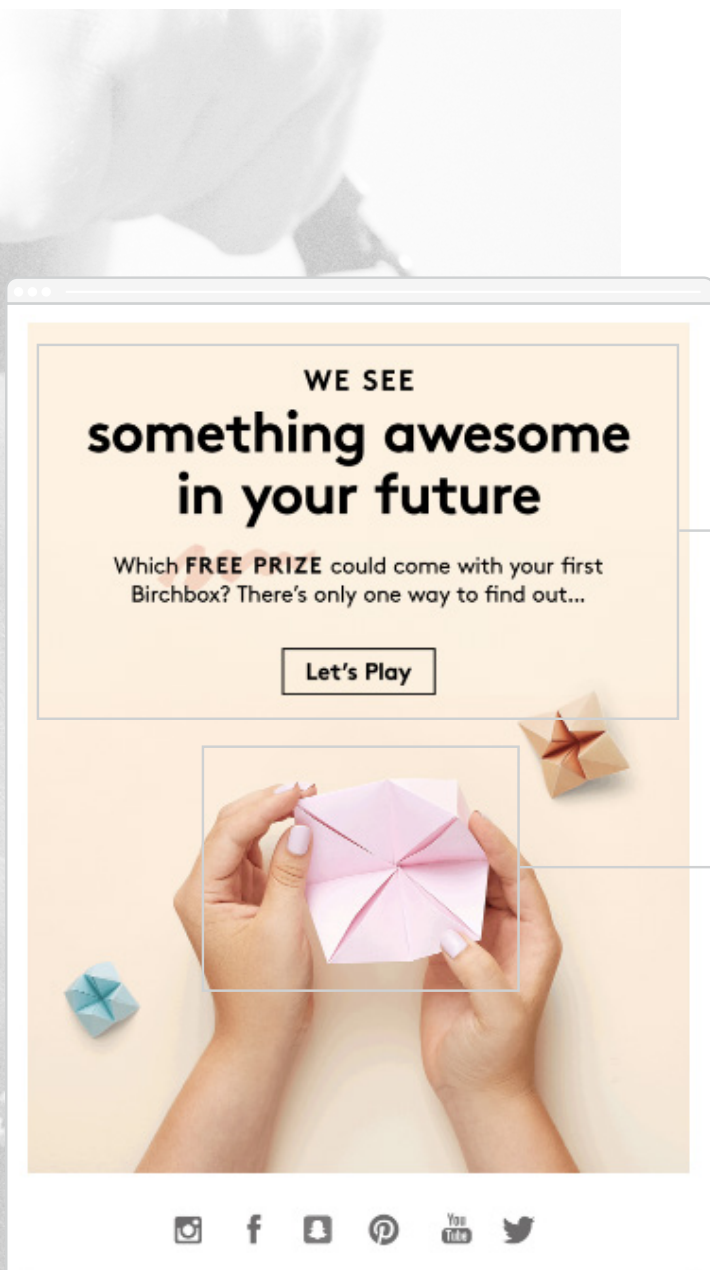
Think back to game shows where people select the mystery briefcase rather than the \$100 cash in hand: We're more motivated by the possibility of a reward than by a certain payoff. Birchbox beautifully adds some mystery and uncertainty to this email, making it almost impossible not to click.

This copy is the Motivating-Uncertainty Effect in a nutshell. ■

Adding the fortune teller is a nice touch. You're dying to lift the flap and see what you won. ■

THE SUBJECT LINE IS THE PERFECT PLACE TO TRY THIS: 33% OPEN EMAIL BASED ON SUBJECT LINE ALONE.

(CONVINCE & CONVERT)



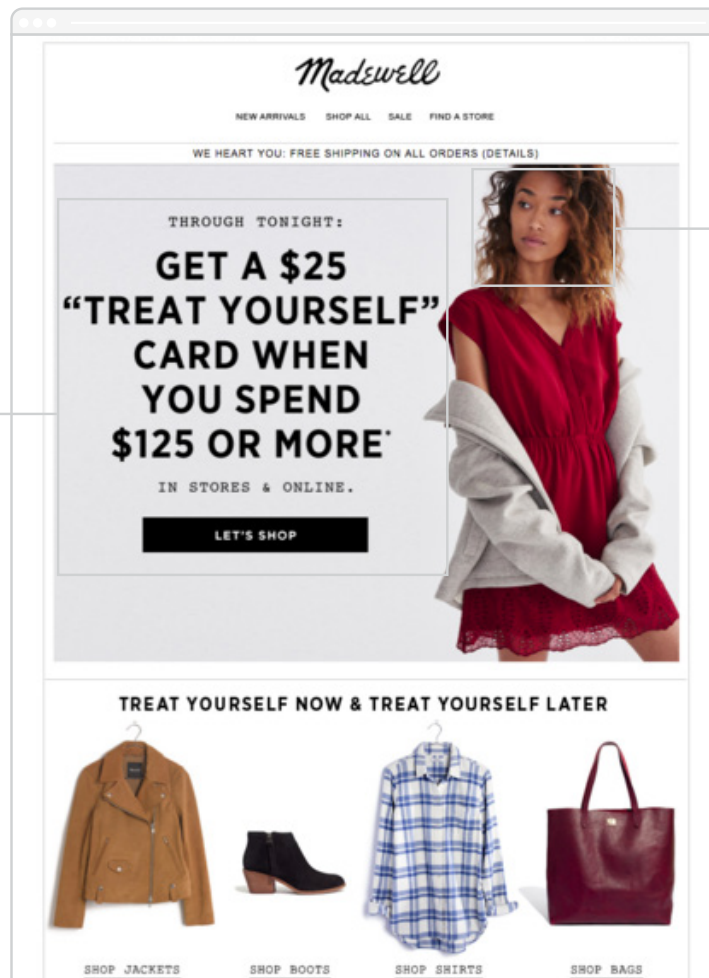


TEMPTATION COUPLING

[temp-tay-shon kup-ling]

Humans are much more likely to do something difficult when it's paired with something tempting. For example, you might be willing to run an extra mile if you know there's a delicious cheeseburger waiting for dinner. So take a cue from Madewell and tightly bundle your offers with a special bonus gift to add some extra incentive.

It's the same thing as \$25 off, but it feels more valuable. ■



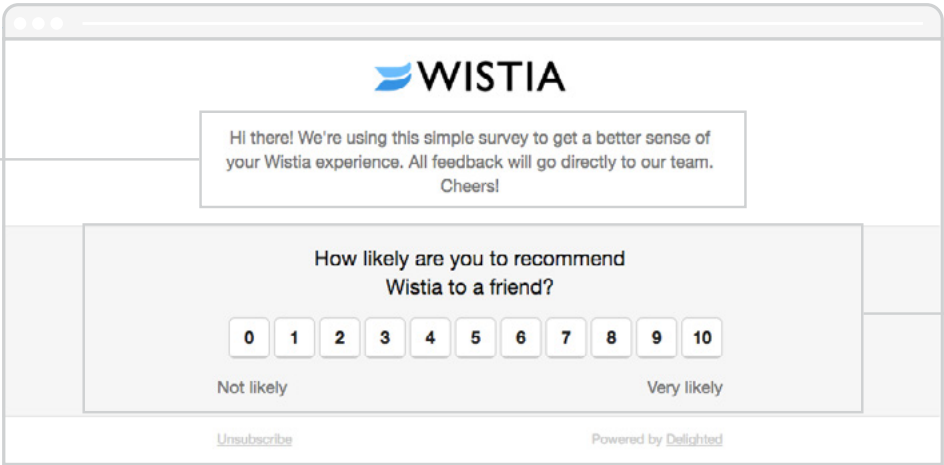
Eye-tracking studies show we'll look where another person is looking... right at the offer. ■

69% OF CONSUMERS SAY THAT THEY'RE MORE LIKELY TO TRY A BRAND IF IT GIVES "FREE" REWARDS. (SOCIAL ANNEX)

BEN FRANKLIN EFFECT

[behn frank-lihn ih-fekt]

According to the **Ben Franklin Effect**, humans believe that we do favors because we like the person (or brand) – it's part of our inherent need to justify our actions. So don't be afraid to ask for favors from your email audience, like in this email from Wistia. If they're willing to help out, their opinion of you will likely go up.



WISTIA

Hi there! We're using this simple survey to get a better sense of your Wistia experience. All feedback will go directly to our team. Cheers!

How likely are you to recommend Wistia to a friend?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not likely Very likely

[Unsubscribe](#) Powered by [Delighted](#)

Keep the request super simple and it's more likely they'll take you up on it. ■

We love to push buttons, so this is a brilliant setup for their survey. ■

**THE AVERAGE RESPONSE RATE FOR EMAIL SURVEYS IS 24.8%
– ALMOST A QUARTER OF YOUR AUDIENCE!**

(FLUIDSURVEYS)

BAADER-MEINHOFF PHENOMENON

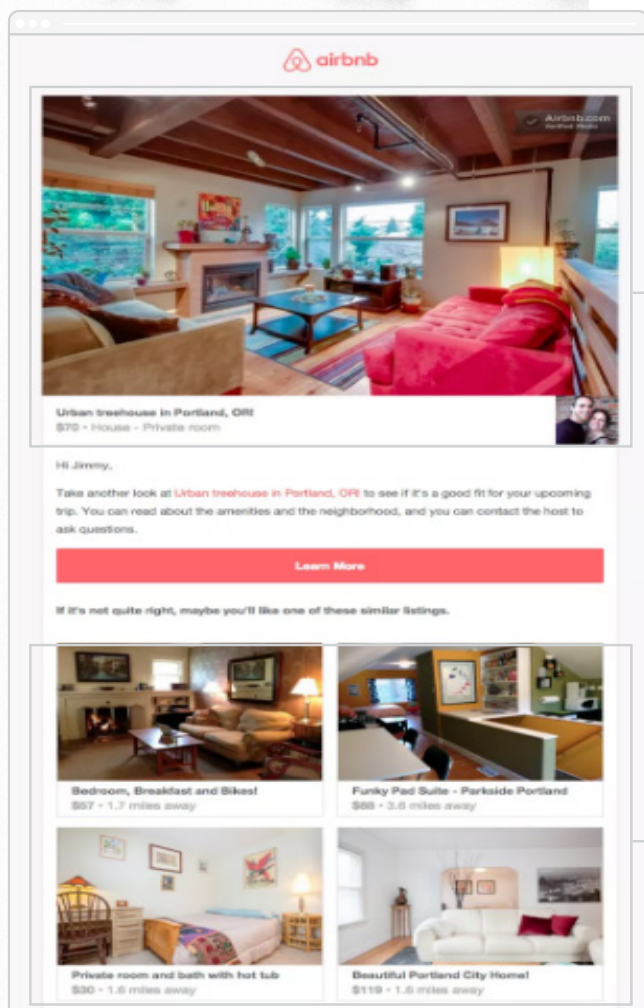
■ [bay-dur myne-hoff]

You know that feeling you get when you see something once, then you start seeing it everywhere? There's a name for it: The **Baader-Meinhoff Phenomenon**. It's why ad retargeting works – and it's why automated emails based on website browsing, like this one from Airbnb, are so effective at making casual shoppers complete a purchase.

Here, Airbnb leads with an image someone previously viewed on their website. ■

Provide choices: If the first place doesn't do the trick, the recipient has instant access to similar options. ■

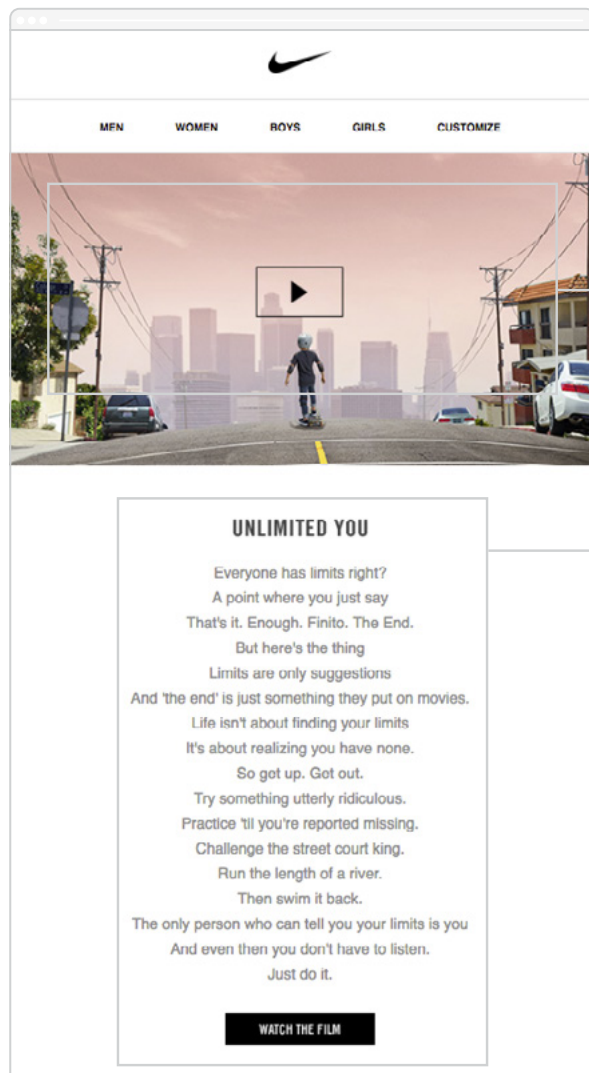
42% OF CONSUMERS PREFER EMAILS THAT CONTAIN PRODUCTS BASED ON BROWSING BEHAVIOR. (EMAIL MONKS)



FRAMING EFFECT

[fray-ming ih-fekt]

Marketers like to subtly invoke fear, anxiety, and stress to stimulate a sense of urgency. But science suggests we should frame our copy around positive outcomes for the best results. It's all about framing, so pay special mind to the words you use and keep them positive (powerfully done here by Nike).



Our brains are drawn to images of landscapes and open spaces. ■

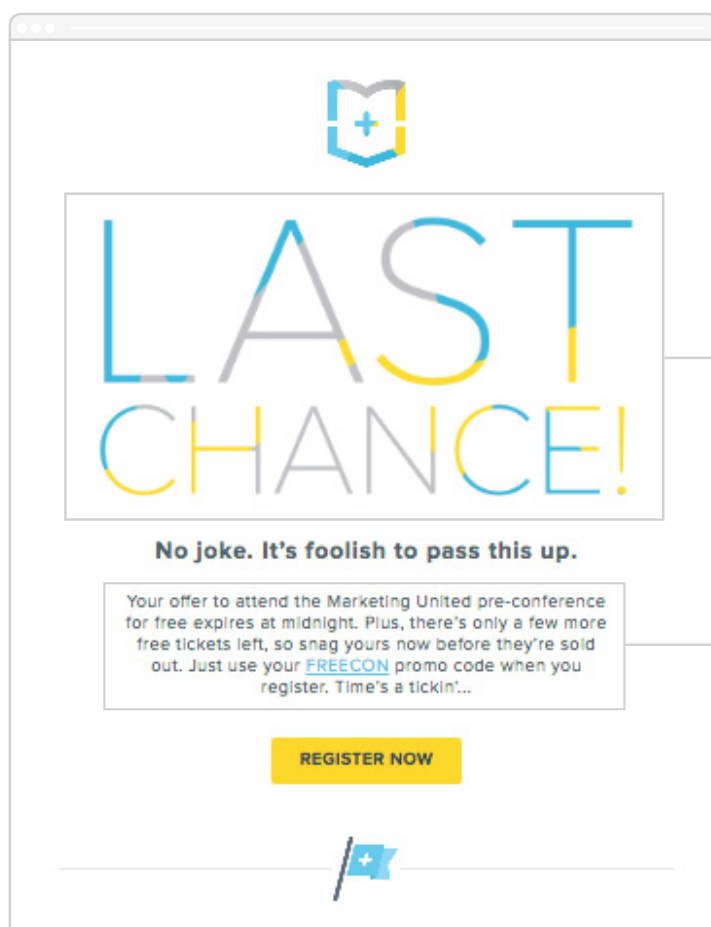
Rather than shaming you off the couch, Nike appeals to your best self. ■

POSITIVE FRAMING IS THREE TIMES MORE PERSUASIVE THAN NEGATIVE FRAMING.
(NEUROSCIENCE MARKETING)

SCARCITY

[skair-cih-tee]

Better known today as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), humans instinctively put more value on things they feel are scarce. But using it too often can make your brand seem disingenuous, so save it for when you really need a boost – and when what you're saying is actually true.



This email about Marketing United screams urgency right off the bat. ■

And the copy supports it: Ticking clock + limited supply = ACT NOW. ■

SUBJECT LINES THAT CREATE A SENSE OF URGENCY HAVE A 22% HIGHER OPEN RATE. (EMAIL INSTITUTE)

LOSS AVERSION

[lahss uh-vur-juhn]



People would rather avoid a loss than gain something; in fact, it's been suggested that losses are twice as psychologically powerful. So figure out what your audience is worried about losing – like time, security, or money – and solve that pain point in your email.

Identify and address the challenges and reservations of your subscribers. ■

From the copy down to the CTA, everything about this JackThreads welcome email is reassuring. ■

**THE AVERAGE SALES CYCLE HAS BECOME 22% LONGER
DUE TO INCREASINGLY RISK-AVERSE CONSUMERS.**

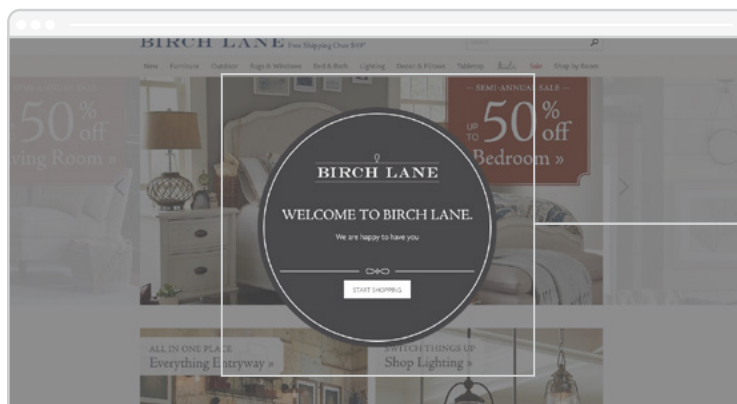
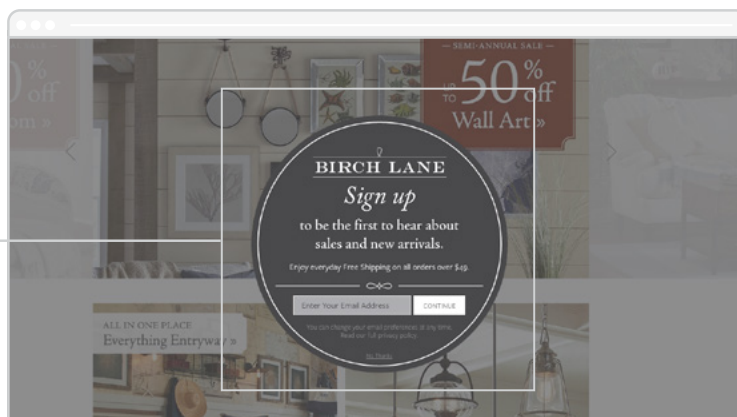
(B2B INBOUND MARKETER)

UNCONSCIOUS PROCESSING

[un-cahn-chus prah-sess-ing]

With **Unconscious Processing**, if you can get people to commit to a small action (like signing up for your email list), then it's much more likely that they'll later commit to a larger action (like buying something). Lightbox forms like this one from Birch Lane are a great way to get people to take that first step.

Always give people an incentive to join your list. ■



And don't be shy about asking them to make that larger commitment. ■

LIGHTBOXES INCREASED OUR EMAIL SIGNUPS BY 371%.
(EMMA – THAT'S US.)



CONCLUSION



YOU'VE GOT THE SCIENCE. NOW PUT IT TO WORK.



Emma Plus gives you the next-level capabilities and hands-on help you need to do your best email marketing faster.



SEE IT IN ACTION



emma