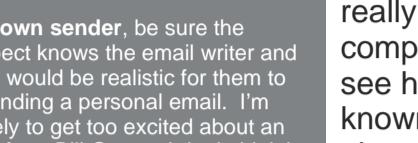




# UNDER THE SHELL

A Free informational publication for direct marketers



## An Email Trade Secret!

The secret of the VIP email – don't use it a lot – but use it!

### A Few Tips for VIP Emails

- Known sender, be sure the prospect knows the email writer and that it would be realistic for them to be sending a personal email. I'm unlikely to get too excited about an email from Bill Gates. I don't think he knows me...yet.

- Don't over-personalize, just because you can. A first name salutation may be a nice touch. Including that name throughout the text, or other personalization elements are likely to look gimmicky – the message should look personal, not personalized.

- Keep the tone personal. Use "I" and "you" throughout. This is a personal note from you, not your corporation. I like to write these with one person in mind, and write that one person a note, not the whole world.

- Keep unsubscribe link. Yes, they may figure out that it's not a personal email with an unsubscribe link at the bottom. That's OK – you're not trying to trick anyone, just get their attention.

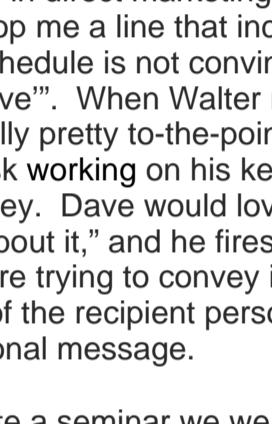
- Use VIP emails sparingly; It's nice to spice up a campaign that includes more traditional email marketing mixed in with direct mail and other channels. Used too often they lose credibility, and can even hurt the credibility of the "celebrity" sender.

- Make a great offer. No matter how effective your VIP emails (or any marketing channel) may be, you still need a strong value proposition and offer to get a response. My mom can invite me to a lousy seminar, and I won't go (and Mom is a definite thought leader in my world.)

I got an email from my friend Walter this morning. OK, he's not really a friend, but I know Walter, and I like him. He also runs a company that we do work for, so I was all the more pleased to see his name pop up in my email inbox. Walter is pretty well known in this area so I'm guessing I wasn't the only person pleased to see his name in their inbox.

I didn't open Walter's email. I don't know or care what he had to say in it.

Here's why: **I could tell from a glance that Walter wasn't really writing to me** – it was just someone trying to sell me something using his name. The subject line said something about "last chance to register" – Walter wouldn't tell me about a "last chance" in a real email he was sending me. In the preview pane of the email I could see it was headed by a logo from the conference. Walter would never lead with a logo in a real email to me. **This was just some ad** from a trade association that Walter and I each belong.



So they wasted Walter's name. They used Walter's name in vain – and that is a sin.

Using an industry thought leader as a sponsor or endorser of a conference is a time honored tradition in direct marketing, but trying to convey that he decided to drop me a line that included a border, logos, bullet points and a schedule is not convincing, even if it starts with the salutation "Dave". When Walter really does email me, it's just text, and usually pretty to-the-point. I like to think of Walter sitting at his desk working on his keynote speech when it pops into his head, "Hey. Dave would love this. I should make sure he knows about it," and he fires off a quick email. That's the message we're trying to convey in a VIP email. The sender was thinking of the recipient personally, and sent them their own special personal message.

Here's a VIP email we used to promote a seminar we were having. We sent this out as the first effort in the campaign:

**From:** Dave Lewis ([dlewis@prolist.com](mailto:dlewis@prolist.com))

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 21, 2012 2:00 PM

**To:** [Karen](#)

**Subject:** May 17 - Postal Seminar

Karen,

I wanted to let you know that ProList is planning a spring Postal Seminar for Thursday May 17. We didn't do one last year, but there's just too much going on at USPS right now - we'll be pretty much all postal this year, stuff I think you need to know.

Anyway, we'll start our official "marketing" in the next couple weeks - I just wanted to let you know so you could get it marked on your calendar. You will start receiving emails and direct mail soon enough with all the details.

Even though our landing page was not up yet I had people responding, and thanking me for letting them know. A couple of weeks later we followed up with:

**From:** Dave Lewis

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 17, 2012 1:50 PM

**To:** Karen

**Subject:** Seminar heads-up

Karen,

We've got a registration page up for the May 17 seminar I mentioned to you a couple of weeks ago.

You can reach it at [seminar512.prolist.com](http://seminar512.prolist.com). I wanted to give you one last shot before we start the real marketing efforts.

Given what's going on with the Postal Service and postal regs in the next few months I thought it was important that you go if you can. Hope to see you there.

This was one of our most effective efforts in marketing the seminar. It was easy to execute, and effective. The recipient could reasonably presume that I was writing to them personally, and that is the kind of email people are willing to read.

There's nothing wrong with a nice branded email promotion that shows off your branding, schedules, special offers, and big bright "click here" buttons. Just don't try to pretend it's personal.

I would also not suggest a steady diet of VIP text-only emails. Occasional and credible are the watchwords. I like Walter, but he doesn't email me all that much.

So on your next multi-channel campaign, consider a VIP email – they're easy to do and can be very effective when done correctly and sparingly. That's my personal advice to just you, dear KAREN BARTRAM.

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8341 BEECHCRAFT AVENUE  
GAIERSBURG, MARYLAND 20879

855-MYSNAIL (697-6245)

[WWW.MYSNAILWORKS.COM](http://WWW.MYSNAILWORKS.COM)

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(855) 697.6245