The Evolution of EMAIL:

MARKETING IN A DATA-DRIVEN WORLD

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DMN

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Email isn't going anywhere. The tried and true medium remains a core component of any brand strategy, even as emerging concepts like machine learning, predictive analytics, and programmatic start to settle down as regulars in the stack. There's plenty of room for all – and with the right savvy, plenty of ways for old and new technologies to play nicely together.

Many forward-thinking brands are already taking part in the email evolution. They're testing creative, segmenting audiences, and experimenting with responsive design. Data lies at the heart of their decisions, while personalization remains top-of-mind.

In this eBook, we look at some ways brands work with tech to improve their email marketing strategy. There's automation, A/B testing, embedded video, and even a few transactional tips. But above all else, we see how brands connect with customers to tell a story in a way that's true, personal, and authentic.

And isn't that what marketing's always been about?
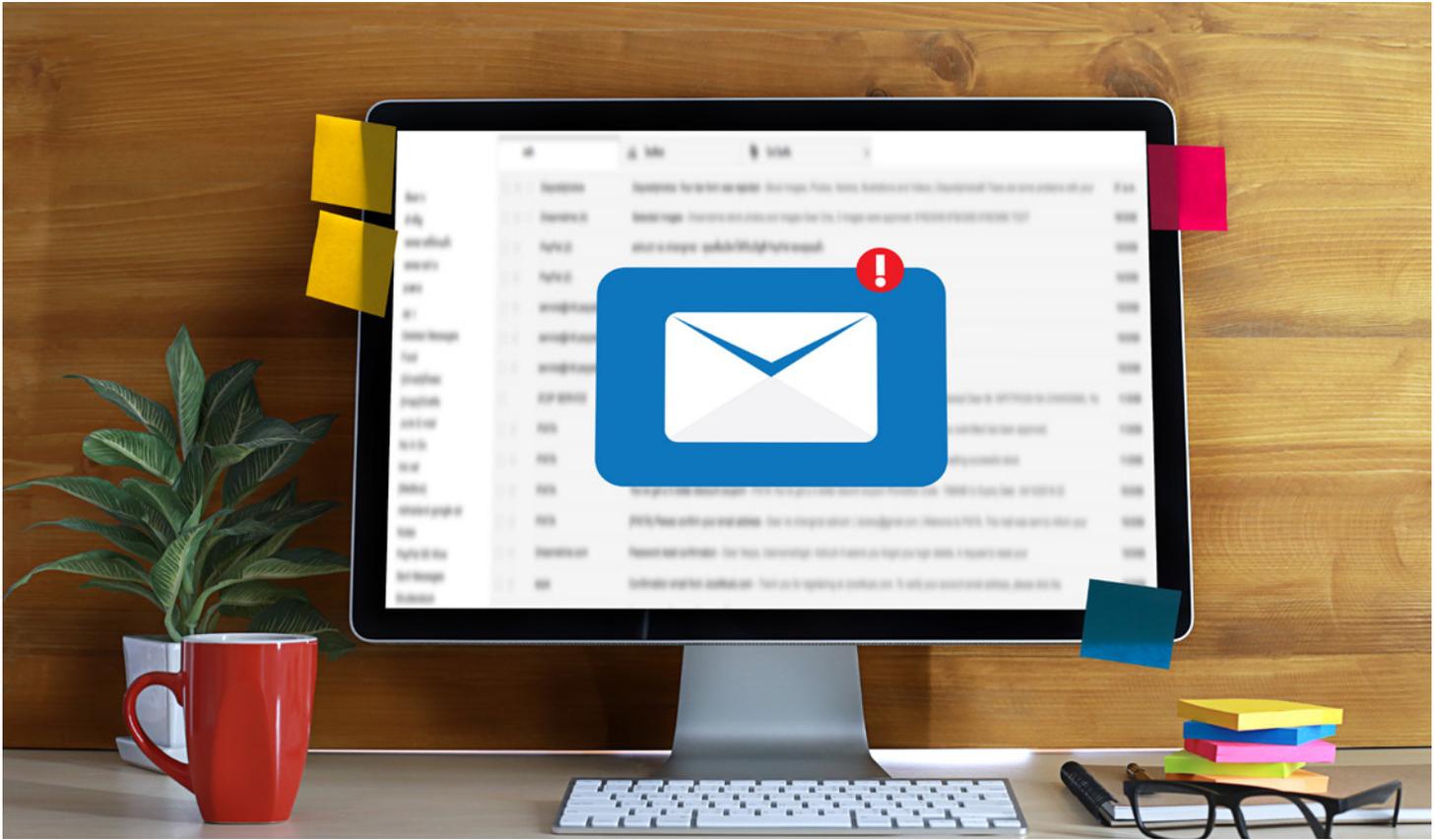
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5 Email Marketing Tips To Stand Out In The Inbox

Email marketing is an important part of any cross-channel strategy

By **Amy Onorato**

Marketers are lucky enough to have access to a wealth of data that allows brands to understand their consumers better than ever before. Segmentation can help marketers refine their messaging to speak to very specific target audiences, and how marketers choose to segment their audiences depends on their brand's overall mission or specific campaign goals.

Regardless of how

you choose to define your audience, it's important to craft your message in a way that's accessible, engaging, and valuable.

Data gives the power of insight to build the framework for your email marketing campaigns, and identify the right personas for your messaging. The next step is taking those insights and using them to connect in a way that's empathetic and meaningful. It's injecting the "human" into your data – and bringing your brand to life.

Here are some tips to bring some 'oomph' to your audience's inbox:

① Set the tone

The tone of your emails should be written in a way that speaks to your target audience, while also being reflective of your overall brand voice and mission. Your brand "voice" should remain consistent across all channels, but the way you speak to your audience through email may be slightly different than how you connect through your blog, or on social media.

For Carney, a full-service marketing

agency, tone was top-of-mind when they decided to launch their "Daily Carnage" newsletter, a core component of their "Carnage" brand identity. Carney embraced a more casual tone and offbeat subject lines to connect with their predominately Millennial audience.

"It was important to us to have a casual tone that really speaks to Millennials," CMO Nick Comanici said.

② Stand-out subject lines

Think about how many emails come into your inbox every day. Which ones made you the most excited to open first?

Your email subject line is your brand's first impression on consumers – and an important way to stand out from the crowd. According to Campaign Monitor, average subject line lengths range anywhere from 50 to 100 characters, with anywhere from 50-70 characters as the "sweet spot" for readability.

When writing subject lines, consider your tone, your offering, and your audience. Simply put: How can you quickly convey the value of your email in a way that resonates with your readers?

There is no right answer. In fact, it

SUBJECT LINES LENGTH:

(average 50-100 characters)

SWEET SPOT:
50-70
CHARACTERS

Campaign Monitor

> "Testing of messaging is so important because you can do research, but at the end of the day, you don't know what works until you try something and you measure it"
>
> Matt Harris,
> CEO and co-founder of Sendwithus

may take some trial and error to find a way that works. A/B testing allows marketers to try out different subject lines and track success through metrics like open rate or click-through-rate.

"Testing of messaging is so important because you can do research, but at the end of the day, you don't know what works until you try something and you measure it," Matt Harris, CEO and co-founder of Sendwithus, said.

③ Dominate design

It's not just about what you say – it's how you say it. And when it comes to email, format and design can really impact how a user engages with your content.

Research shows that more than two-thirds of consumers access email through their smartphones. When formatting your email template, consider a responsive design that will translate across all desktop, tablet, or mobile devices. This ensures all content in your email will render in a way that's most accessible to readers, wherever they are.

④ Reward your customer

According to Harris, transactional emails are one of the best opportunities for fostering brand loyalty – but it's also the one that's most often overlooked.

"During a transactional email… that's the time when a customer is most engaged with a brand, because

2/3

Consumers access **email** through **smartphones**

they just bought something," Harris said. "Coming from a brick-and-mortar world, a lot of the time it's {email} treated like something that just came out of a register."

Harris notes that while there may be some legal guidelines on what needs to be included in a receipt email, "from a customer experience standpoint, you're not limited to plain text."

"I think that's the biggest disconnect, and the biggest missed opportunity," Harris said.

Whether it's a newsletter, an offer email, or a receipt, there are several ways you can leverage additional content to create lasting community and cross-channel engagement:

- ❯ Offer customer discounts or coupons towards their next purchase
- ❯ Invite customers to participate in a referral or loyalty program
- ❯ Provide interesting content or items that match customers preferences
- ❯ Ask customers to subscribe to your newsletter or join your social community
- ❯ Provide social sharing buttons and website links

⑤ Keep your lists clean

What's the point of an amazing email if no one reads it? Make sure your brand stays out of the dreaded spam folder by regularly cleaning your lists to ensure duplicates, outdated email addresses and other inconsistencies aren't slowing you down.

Because after all, with all the effort your team is putting in to create a great campaign, the last thing it should be considered is "junk." ■

If You're Not Automating Your Email Campaigns, Who Are You?

Email isn't just a marketing tool — It's still big business

By **Hillary Adler**

For a company like Scott's Cheap Flights, email isn't just a marketing tool. Email is their business. And when that business started scaling at a faster rate than founder Scott Keyes could have ever predicted, Keyes and his team of 25 had to look to automation to meet increasing demands. Word-of-mouth referrals fueled much of Scott's Cheap Flights' early success, but as the business grew, Keyes needed a way to keep up with his customers.
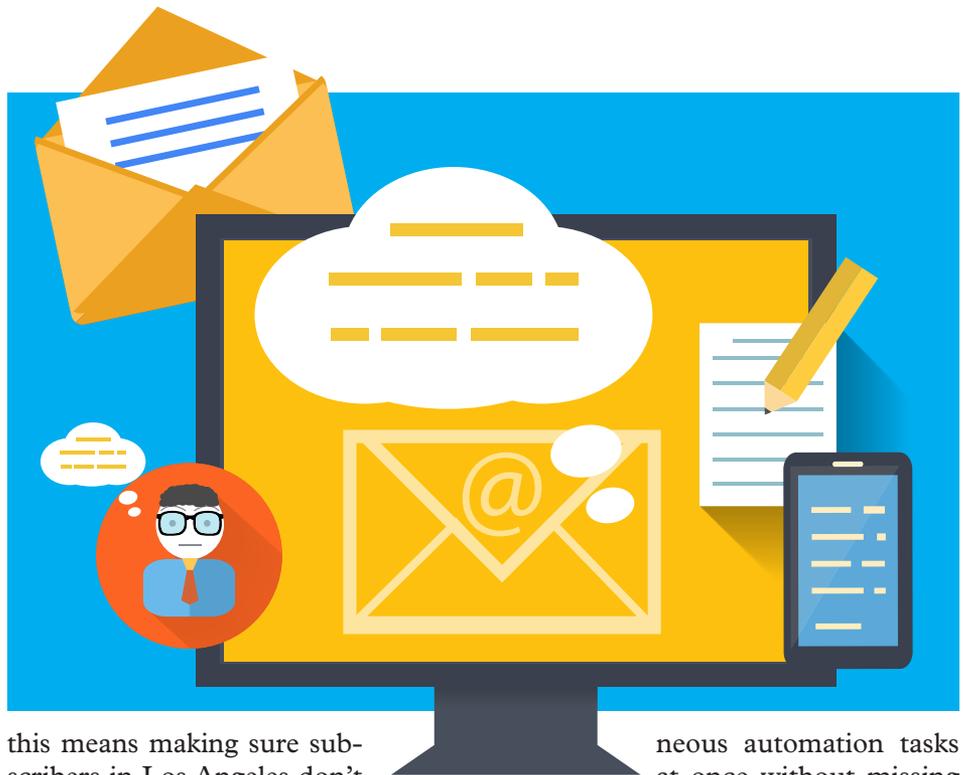
Enter: ActiveCampaign — the cloud-based platform tasked with automating the entire marketing and sales cycle, and sending out thousands of customized email offers and deals a day to Scott's Cheap Flights subscribers.

As of October 2017, Scott's Cheap Flights subscriber lists sits at 1 million, making a service like ActiveCampaign crucial to running the business.

"With over a million subscribers, we just wouldn't be able to do this without automation," said Keyes. "We get a couple thousand new subscribers every single day, and if we were to try to do that ourselves, it wouldn't work. It wouldn't be sustainable, or even feasible, and certainly not in a scaleable way."

Scale aside, email marketing automation through ActiveCampaign also eliminates human error in a business where the smallest deviation from user behavior can result in the loss of a customer. For Scott's Cheap Flights, this means making sure subscribers in Los Angeles don't receive emails for discounted flights leaving New York City. When you're sending 3-4 individualized emails per subscriber a day, it's important that each email is relevant to the user.

By automating the recipient list, ActiveCampaign segments and tags subscriber settings so that the right customers get the right emails — all in one go. Premium subscribers get ad-free emails, free subscribers receive the same email, but with ads.

"I don't have to do anything different with the formats," said Keyes. "It really makes the process 100 times simpler to send these emails than it used to be."

Performing multiple and simultaneous automation tasks at once without missing a beat, and ensuring appropriate and timely delivery is what ActiveCampaign offers users — all of which keep Scott's Cheap Flights operating at a high octane level.

"With ActiveCampaign, I know the emails are going to go out exactly when they say they are, and to the exact recipients they should be sending to," Keyes said. "With a quarter million emails going out every day, this has been crucial for the growth of my company."

And what about that growth? Well, according to Keyes, click-through rate sits at a boastful 40%. And since adopting ActiveCampaign in 2016, Scott's Cheap Flights has grown its subscriber base by 1000%. ■
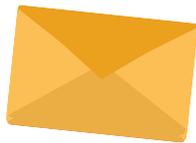
How DonorsChoose.org
Turns Transactions Into Email Celebrations

Donorschoose.org uses email marketing to help connect teachers with donors for school projects

By **Amy Onorato**

One million – and counting. That's the number of projects DonorsChoose.org has helped secure funding for since founder Charles Best started the nonprofit back in 2000. The crowdfunding organization, which helps connect teachers to donors for school projects, hit the milestone in late January 2018. The achievement represents hundreds of millions of dollars donated to millions of classrooms across the United States.

It's also a testament to the strength of Donorchoose.org's email marketing program, which serves as the backbone of their outreach strategy.

"Email is the primary form of communication between our donors and our teachers," Morgan Kazan, director of email marketing at DonorsChoose.org, said. "On the teacher's side, we use email to get teachers to come to our site and post classroom projects for things they need. And we use email to give teachers tools needed to share their projects with their friends and their family."

Donors receive email updates on projects they've contributed to, encouraging them to follow along every step of the way. It's something Kazan prides as building community between donors and teachers, while providing transparency. Donors are also alerted to new projects and promotions they may be interested in giving to based on prior activity.

"We know that the donor has some sort of relationship with the teacher at that point, and we also try to strength-

> " That donation email isn't just a receipt - it's a celebration. It can be a really exciting moment, and emphasizing those can be really effective "
>
> Abby Feuer, VP of marketing and community at DonorsChoose.org

en it through email," Kazan said. "We kind of close the loop with our donors to get them to come back to our site."

REALIZING A NEED

DonorsChoose.org has always turned to testing to make sure their email campaigns were optimized and running smoothly.

"Before every big campaign we like to be rigorous and make sure we're sending the best possible message to our donors," Kazan said. "At the very least, we're always subject line testing when there's a big campaign. We'll also test content within the email, calls to action, and who it's coming from."

But as their campaigns became more sophisticated, the DonorsChoose.org team realized they weren't testing one of their most productive touchpoints – their automated transactional emails. These emails are sent to donors and teachers after a contribution is made, or are triggered by different stages in the donor journey.

"For many years we weren't testing these automated emails," Kazan said. "We were doing a lot of work on our campaign sets, but we weren't treating our trigger notifications the same way. It was almost ironic because we were driving a lot of revenue through these notifications, and we were just kind of letting them be without doing any testing on it."

> " Testing of messaging is so important. You can do research, but at the end of the day you don't know what works until you measure it "
>
> Matt Harris, co-founder and CEO of Sendwithus

The problem, at the time, was accessibility. Automated emails were managed by the engineering team, which made it more difficult for the marketing team to go in and make changes to content.

"It was a homegrown system used to send out these emails, so it was very difficult for us to get in there and test," Kazan said.

DonorsChoose.org decided to partner with Sendwithus, a transactional email SaaS provider, to help make customization and personalization easier through a platform that's more accessible to marketers.

"Testing of messaging is so important. You can do research, but at the end of the day you don't know what works until you measure it," Matt Harris, co-founder and CEO of Sendwithus, said. "One of the beautiful things about transactional emails is that they're sent in real-time and go out on a one-to-one basis. So it's a really good opportunity there where you have a lot of data and you can be testing over time."

"It's a place for collaboration, where the engineering team can use email when they need to, but marketers can also A/B test," Harris said of the email platform. "You can update logos or images without having to contact an engineer, which could add weeks onto the project. You're disconnecting the business from the technical logic."

"It [Sendwithus] allowed us to go in there and do what we do best – try subject lines and do content changes in a way that doesn't tax our engineering team," Kazan said.

The Donorschoose.org also worked to tie data points together to create more tailored experiences for repeat donors.

"One of the things that we've found was that every time we add a layer of personalization – so if we layer geography on top of subject, on top of other factors — that will perform better than anything else," Abby Feuer, VP of marketing and community at DonorsChoose.org, said.

THE RESULTS

DonorsChoose.org has put personalization to the test for several promotions since partnering with Sendwithus. The nonprofit's annual "Best School Day" campaign is one of the biggest events of the year. The event is widely promoted on their website,

77%

of all the public schools in America have at least one teacher who has posted a project on DonorsChoose.org

through social media with the hashtag #BestSchoolDay, and, of course, through email.

The year-over-year results were paramount. The nonprofit saw a 157% increase in donor participation in the campaign from 2016 to 2017. This led to a 132% increase in projects funded, and a 95% increase in project inventory.

"I think it's really easy for marketers to focus really heavily on the campaign aspect of it," Feuer said. "But we also have seen the majority of engagement that happens is through these automated [transactional] emails."

"That donation email isn't just a receipt – it's a celebration," Feuer added. "It can be a really exciting moment, and emphasizing those can be really effective." ■

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A 'Customer Obsessed' Approach To Email Marketing

Put customers at the core of every business decision

By **Amy Onorato**

More brands are recognizing the critical role email marketing plays in customer experience. It's the center of every digital relationship, and can help foster personal connections while driving sales.

"Two-thirds of companies know that customer expectations are higher and think that their businesses are doing something to accommodate those changes," Shar VanBoskirk, VP, Principal Analyst at Forrester said during a recent DMN webinar on the topic.

However, Forrester research suggests only 13% of companies have taken proactive steps towards

improving the customer journey. For VanBoskirk, this signals a big disconnect in perception vs. reality of how brands view their email marketing programs.

BE CUSTOMER OBSESSED

VanBoskirk says there are several things great companies do to drive their marketing strategy. But above all, brands need to be "customer obsessed" at their core to start.

"A customer-obsessed business puts the customer at the center of every single business decision," VanBoskirk said.

In a customer-obsessed mindset, email is a way to connect and build relationships with consumers.

There are several ways to use email to do this:

AS MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER MEDIUM

Email is more than "just a way to deliver coupons," VanBoskirk explains. Use segmentation to determine which audiences would be most interested in certain promotions to make sure your

> ❝ Look for a partner who can hack your email program. You don't want a partner who will continue 'business as usual' ❞
>
> Shar VanBoskirk, VP, Principal Analyst at Forrester

messages are getting to customers who will appreciate it most.

EMAIL AS A CROSS-PLATFORM CONNECTOR

Email can be a portal to your company website, social media, or as a starting point for your referral or loyalty programs. Make sure you make it as easy as possible for consumers to share, click, and move across channels as you introduce them to new ways to engage with your brand.

AS A CUSTOMER PROFILE BUILDER

Measuring user behavior can help gauge how audiences are responding to different messaging. It will also help determine what types of content resonate best as you build ideal customer profiles.

"This is the idea of understanding through email behavior how a profile is evolving," VanBoskirk said.

This will allow your team to curate better offers based on how a customer has interacted with prior email campaigns.

AS A LAB EXPERIMENT

Email can be a great medium to test out new techniques. VanBoskirk encourages marketers to try out different product placements or pairing different items together in offers. Engagement insights from these email campaigns can help marketers apply similar changes to their website, or across social channels.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT EMAIL MARKETING TECH PARTNER

When adding an email marketing platform to your tech stack, VanBoskirk says you should be looking for a vendor that offers a wealth of expertise and innovative ideas.

"Look for a partner who can hack your email program," VanBoskirk said. "You don't want a partner who will continue 'business as usual.'"

VanBoskirk suggests evaluating vendors based on these core principles:

- ❯ How they think: Understanding how a vendor looks at the future of marketing
- ❯ How well they can solve a real business problem
- ❯ How well they will improve the email medium (the creative elements)
- ❯ How they will measure email's value beyond opens and clicks. This means they must have the ability to measure success that looks at true revenue and not just vanity metrics. ■

Charity: water

charity: water Taps Exclusive Content For New Revenue Stream

How the nonprofit uses email to create a donor community

By **Amy Onorato**

For many nonprofits, creating a steady flow of donations can be a challenge. Donations are typically plentiful during "giving season," which lines up alongside the winter shopping holidays. But once the New Year arrives, many charities are back to square one.

"As a nonprofit, you start every year at zero," Tyler Riewer, brand content lead at charity:water, said.

charity: water works to provide funding for water projects in 24 countries around the globe. The nonprofit sends 100% of their public donations to their partners, and has helped bring clean water to more than 7.3 million people since 2006.

"Fundraising is our biggest job, and we do that by telling powerful sto-

11,700
Number of suscribers

ries," Riewer said.

The team at charity: water needed to find a way to tap into revenue streams that didn't dry up at the end of the year. To do that, they knew they needed to offer something valuable, while also creating a community. They also knew they needed an innovative email strategy to succeed.

"The primary things for us were that the emails needed to be easy to

> " Automation is a really powerful way to be relevant, to be personal, and to provide that customer experience "
>
> Colby Cavanaugh, SVP of marketing, Emma

build, and we needed help specifically with segmenting and engaging with our audience by behavior and attributes," Riewer said. "The other priority for us was finding something [an email template] that was reliably responsive – that had been something that was tricky for us in the past."

In August 2016, charity: water teamed up with Emma, their email marketing partner, to launch "The Spring," an email-driven monthly giving program that offers a suite of content exclusively for subscribers.

"People have this suite of products that they subscribe to throughout their life," Riewer said, giving a nod to platforms like Netflix and Spotify. "We wanted to create a product that's like a type of subscription service for someone to help."

Each month, members receive a personalized message with updates on how their contributions are making a difference in areas of need. The trigger-based emails are automatically sent when their credit card is charged for their donation. The content varies each month to tell a complete story, with narratives from local partners

Charity: water

724

Number of water projects funded since 2010 to bring clean water to Rulindo.

and benefactors.

"When you think about it from a nonprofit perspective, engagement is so important, and being able to make them [donors] a part of the story is important," Colby Cavanaugh, SVP of marketing, Emma, said. "Automation is a really powerful way to be relevant, to be personal, and to provide that customer experience."

EXPLORING NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE

When it came to creative, charity: water wanted to make their audience feel as close to their contributions as they could. They decided to turn to video to capture their work with communities around the world, and deliver it straight to their donors' inboxes.

Shortly after launching "The Spring," charity: water started "The Journey," an exclusive video series that gives their monthly donors an in-depth look at how their contributions are making a difference in areas of need.

The videos, hosted by Riewer him-

Charity: water

self, are emailed directly to subscribers, who can watch the clips without having to leave their email browser. The videos are hosted on a password-protected microsite to ensure only subscribers have access to the content.

"The idea is that we take you to a new country and introduce you to the need, our local partner, and what the solution looks like," Riewer said. "We want to give you an experience that brings you closer to that impact."

The mix of automation, creative content, and a sense of exclusivity has certainly paid off for the nonprofit. The program currently has more than 11,700 subscribers, and Donorschoose.org was able to grow the program more than 95% in their first year.

"That moment of inspiration can happen right in the email because it looks as beautiful as we intended," Riewer said. ◼
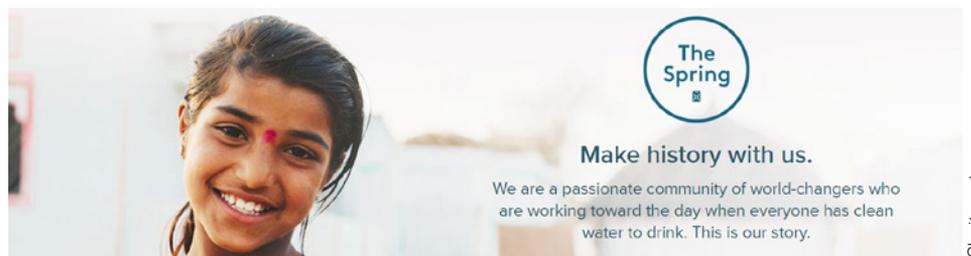
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