

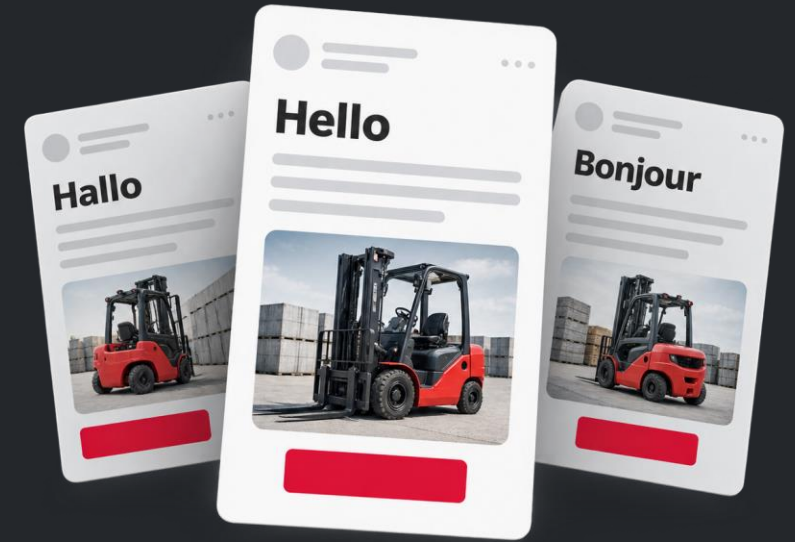


EMAIL STRATEGY IN B2B

**27,040 contacts.
Zero emails.**

How we built a segmented, multilingual email programme from a database nobody had ever mailed

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Chris Lam

Marketing Manager at Forkliftcenter Group since April 2026, responsible for marketing across the entire group, globally. Before that, more than ten years in B2B marketing, including Dyson and LG. Ten years of learning the same lesson repeatedly: in B2B, the content is the campaign.

● Ten years in B2B

Long cycles, small audiences, technical buyers. Nothing about that is solved by a bigger media budget.

● Behind two strong brands

At Dyson and LG the name opens the door. You are never starting a conversation from zero.

● Now behind none

Forkliftcenter is respected by the people who work in the market and invisible to everyone else. The content has a big role to play.

PREVIOUSLY

dyson



Global brands where recognition does half the selling. Forkliftcenter has no such luxury.





Forkliftcenter

We sell and service heavy material handling equipment. Ports are our home ground, but the same machines move earth in mines, containers in logistics hubs and pipe on major infrastructure projects. We operate from offices in several countries and ship worldwide.



Reach stackers

Konecranes, Kalmar



Empty container handlers

up to 45 t



Terminal tractors

Terberg



Heavy forklifts

16 t to 45 t

Ports & terminals

Container handling, ro-ro, bulk

Mining

Site logistics and material movement

Logistics & industry

Distribution centres, breweries, steel

Infrastructure

Pipeline and large civil projects





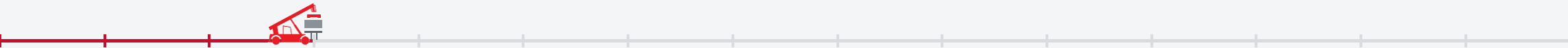
B2B is not B2C with longer words

The mechanics look identical. A list, a template, a send button. What changes completely is what the content has to do, because the buyer, the decision and the timeline are nothing alike.

	B2C	B2B
The buyer	One person, deciding for themselves	Three to six people, each with a veto
The trigger	Desire. Content creates the want.	A problem that already exists. Content proves you can solve it.
The cycle	Minutes to days	Weeks to months, with long silences
What content does	Persuades	De-risks
What wins	Emotion, aesthetics, brand	Evidence, specification, proof of delivery
Cost of being wrong	A returned product	Operational standstill, financial consequences

The consequence

In B2C a beautiful email about an average product can still win. In B2B a beautiful email about an unproven claim gets you nothing. The content is not the wrapper around the offer. It is the only thing that carries risk out of the decision.





And what that changes about the email itself

Same principle, one channel down. Almost everything written about email marketing is written for B2C, and most of it quietly stops being true the moment the buyer is a committee with a three year replacement cycle.

	B2C email	B2B email
The list	Built for the campaign. Grown fast, often for a discount.	Years of quotes, orders, parts requests and trade fair badgescans. The permission is already there.
Rhythm	Several a week is normal	Two a month is already at the edge
What gets it opened	The offer in the subject line	The sender name, and whether the subject line names their market or their machine
What is inside	One message, one call to action	Projects, news in the market or other information that need to catch the attention to keep reading
Success looks like	Revenue attributed to the send	Being remembered when the machine finally fails
The real failure	Unsubscribes	Silence. They stay on the list and stop seeing you.

The consequence

A B2C programme is judged on the send. A B2B programme is judged on the year. Which means the unsubscribe rate settles almost nothing, and the only real question is whether your name is still worth opening eighteen months from now.



So what does that mean for how you market?

If the buyer is a committee, the cycle is measured in years and the job of content is to remove risk rather than create desire, then three things follow. None of them are about design.

Presence

Be there for years, not for a campaign

You cannot time a campaign to a purchase you cannot see coming. The only workable answer is to be in the inbox every month, with something worth opening, until the moment the need appears.

A campaign has a start and an end. A programme does not.

Relevance

The price of entry, not a finishing touch

A technical buyer forgives a plain email. He does not forgive an irrelevant one. That is why segmentation comes before creative: it decides whether the email had any right to arrive.

Segment first, design second.

Content

The whole proposition, not a support act

Without a brand that opens doors, content is all we have. Every email either adds evidence or subtracts credibility. There is no neutral send.

In B2B the content is not the campaign. It is the product.





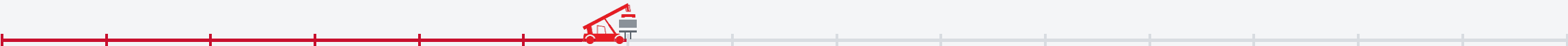
See, Think, Do, Care

Google's Avinash Kaushik framework asks one question before any creative decision: what is this person's intent right now? A machine buyer three years from a purchase and a buyer with an open budget need entirely different emails.

SEE	THINK	DO	CARE
Largest addressable audience Anyone who moves heavy things. No intent yet. What we send: industry insight, reference cases, our newsletter.	Some intent Considering a replacement, comparing new against used. What we send: comparisons, total cost of ownership, why refurbished.	Clear intent Budget, specification, timeline. What we send: the machine list. Availability, hours, price, lead time.	Existing customers Already bought, may buy again. What we send: parts, service, trade-in, fleet expansion.

Our reality

Everything we had ever sent lived in DO. Machines, prices, availability. We had no content at all for the 90% of the database that was not buying this quarter.



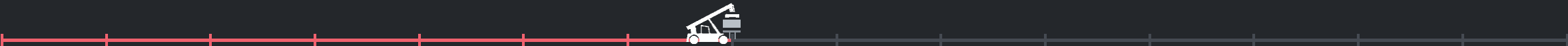
Where the two models meet

Intent tells you what to say. Value tells you how much effort it is worth. Cross them and you get a content plan instead of a sending calendar.

	SEE	THINK	DO	CARE
Top customers	Newsletter	Fleet review	Machine list	Parts & service
Active relationships	Newsletter	Case studies	Machine list	Trade-in offer
Leads	Newsletter	Why refurbished	Machine list	-
The unknown	Newsletter	-	Machine list	-

Read the columns, not the rows

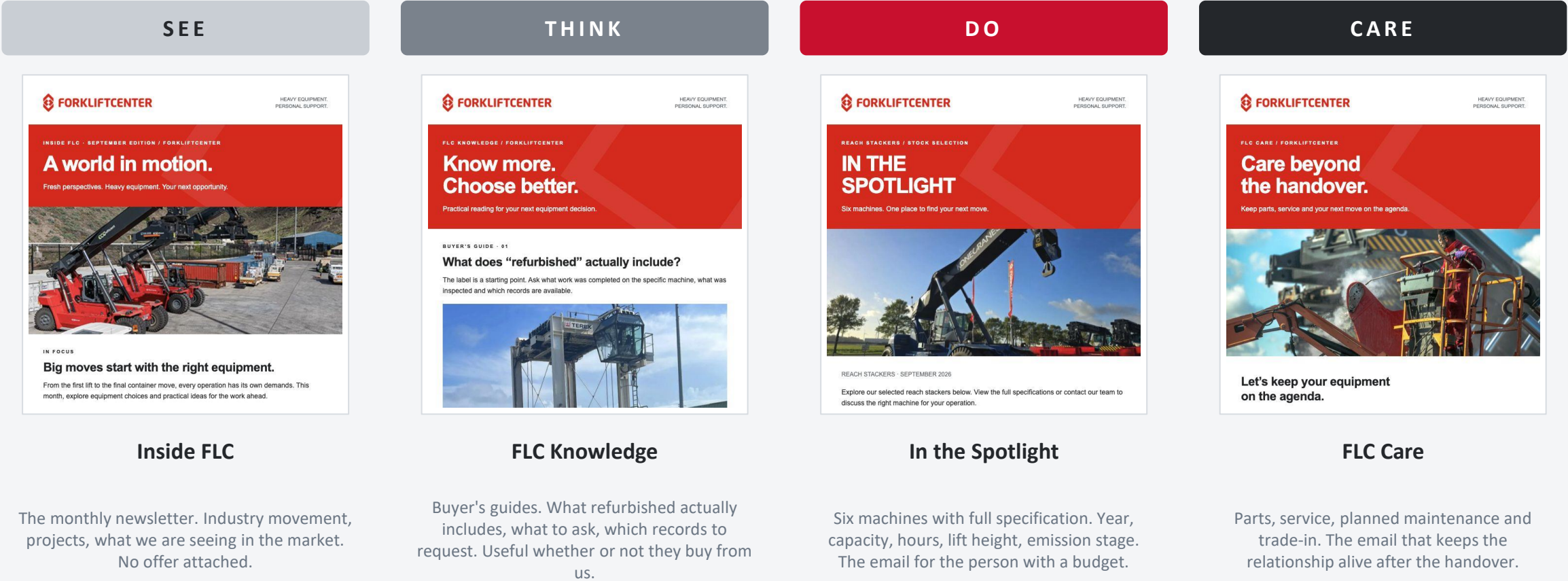
Two content streams cover the whole grid. A monthly newsletter carries SEE and THINK for everyone. A machine mailing carries DO for everyone. That is the entire programme, and it is small enough to actually run.





What that looks like as actual emails

Four templates, one for each stage of intent. Same brand, same structure, entirely different job. This is the model translated into something a sales team can recognise.



We had an audience. We were not talking to it.

27,040

contacts in the CRM

120+

countries represented

0

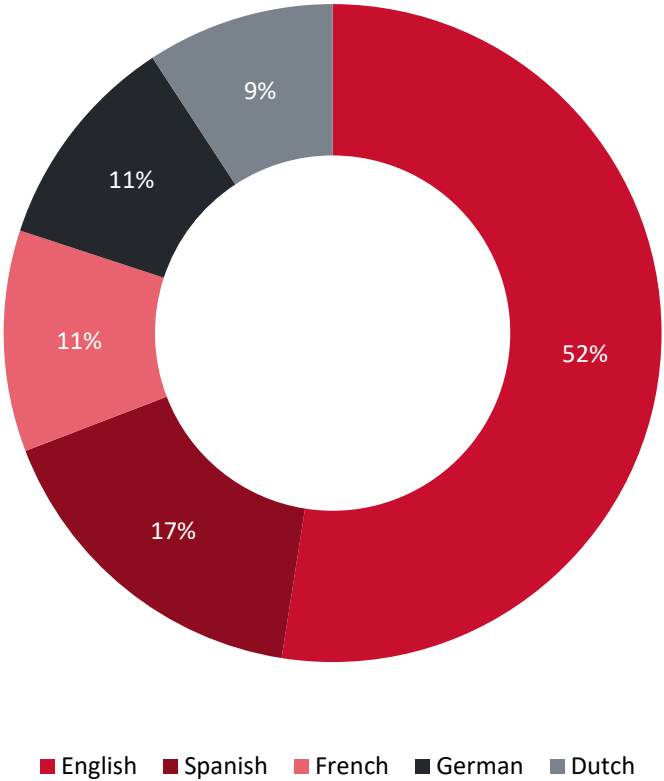
marketing emails sent

Every one of those contacts had reached us for a reason. They asked for a quote, bought a machine, requested a part, met us at a trade fair. And then nothing. No newsletter, no offer, no reason to remember the name.





Language is a segment boundary, not a translation task



Five languages, ten taken off the table

The database contains more than ten language groups. Sending in all of them is not a strategy, it is a cost. We picked five and made the choice explicit.

- English is the base**
Twelve segments. In this industry, ports and dealers work in English every day. The other four languages are derived from it, never the other way round.
- Local language where it earns its cost**
France, DACH, Iberia, Latin America and the Netherlands. In those markets the local language is the business language, not a courtesy.
- Bilingual where the market is split**
Turkey, North and West Africa goes out in English and French. Belgium follows the contact's own preference.
- Everything else stays English**
Polish, Russian, Italian, Portuguese, Turkish. We revisit this when open rates tell us the choice is costing us.





Content for people who distrust marketing

This is where the B2B difference becomes concrete. Our reader is a fleet manager, a technical buyer, a workshop supervisor. Twenty years of being sold to, and a very good filter. Adjectives bounce off him. Evidence does not.

■ Reference cases as evidence

Where the machine went, what it does there, how long it took. A delivery is a fact a prospect can verify. A capability statement is not.

■ Proof of delivery

We promised a lead time. Did we make it? Publishing that is uncomfortable and it is exactly why it works. Nobody in this market expects a supplier to put a date in writing twice.

■ The customer speaking

Two sentences from the person who actually operates the machine beats two paragraphs from us. Their language is also our best source of subject lines.

■ Industry and company news

New suppliers, trade fairs, what is moving in the market. Not about us. About the market they work in.

The rule we work to

Every piece of content has to be checkable. A specification, a date, a place, a named customer. This is what pulls a buyer across the line in B2B: not persuasion, but the removal of doubt. The moment we write something a competitor could also write, we have lost this reader.





Content as evidence: two deliveries that do the selling

A claim is something we write. A delivery is something that happened, with a date, a place and a customer who will confirm it. These two stories work harder than any campaign we could design.

REACH

St Helena

One of the most remote inhabited islands on earth. Supplies arrive by sea roughly once a month, so the port is the island's lifeline. We delivered a Kalmar reach stacker, a MAFI terminal tractor, trailers and accessories to Rupert's Bay, assembled and commissioned on the island by our Southern Africa partner.

150th

FCDO

On island

country supplied

UK government funded

assembly and training

PROXIMITY

Artis, Amsterdam

Artis opened its new aquarium and needed lifting work in the middle of the city. We gave a sharp discount, because an Amsterdam company helps an Amsterdam institution.

Not the machine or the year, but the reason we were there. A name everybody knows, in a place nobody links to port equipment.

Artis

Opening

Amsterdam

Amsterdam institution

of the new aquarium

on our doorstep

These already live on LinkedIn. The email programme is where they finally reach the 24,542 people who are not following us.



Forkliftcenter · Segmentation & email strategy





What we measure, and what would prove us wrong

We have no results yet. What we do have is a decision about which numbers count, made before the first send rather than after it.

 Open rate per segment <i>Benchmark, not a KPI</i>	Compared across segments, never against an industry average. If Poland underperforms Germany by twenty points, that is a language decision showing up in the data.
 Click behaviour per machine <i>The qualification engine</i>	Every click tells us a machine type, a capacity class and a buying window. This is how 15,347 unknown contacts stop being unknown.
 Leads back to sales in 48 hours <i>The only number that matters internally</i>	A click is worthless if nobody calls. This is the hand-off we commit to in the internal newsletter.
 Unsubscribes per segment <i>The honest counter-metric</i>	A segment that unsubscribes is a segment we misjudged. We would rather lose them than keep mailing the wrong thing.
The behavioural layer	After three cycles, opens and clicks become segmentation layer D. That is the moment we can finally do what every article told us to do on day one.





People sign in the language they think in

Five languages was a cost decision. It is also what decides whether an email is read once, or forwarded to the people who sign.

Trust

Local language says we are in your market

A French dealer reading French sees a supplier with people nearby, not an exporter mailing in from somewhere else. That judgement is made before anyone reads a specification.

Accuracy

Technical detail survives the second language

Capacities, safety rules and finance terms are where a foreign-language email loses precision. The buyer needs wording he can quote internally without translating it himself.

Reach

It travels past the person who opened it

The reader is rarely the signer. In his own language he forwards the mail to maintenance, finance and the board. In English he summarises it, and the detail disappears.

Same content, five languages. Translation is the cost; being read by the people who decide is the return.



Be personal or be ignored

