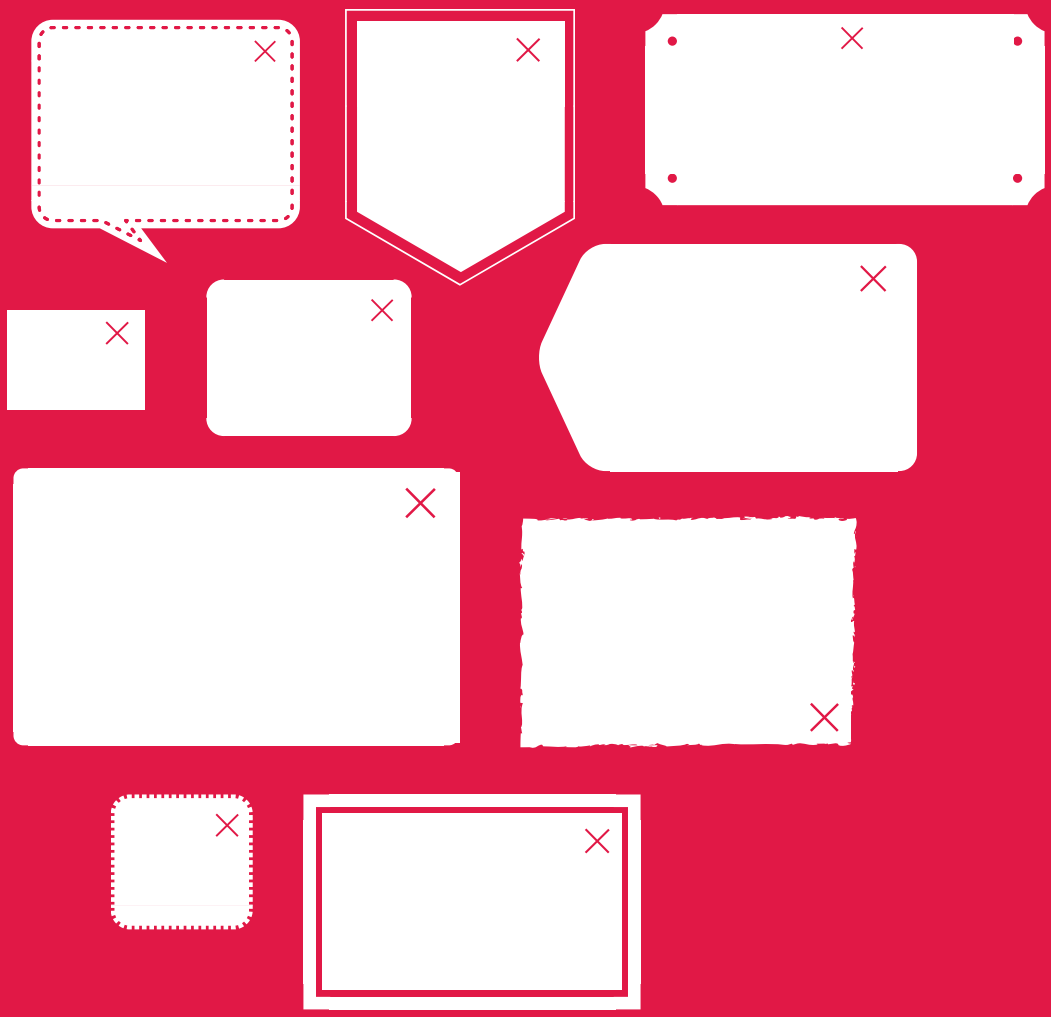

10 POP-UP ADS THAT WORK

Marketing Daily Advisor

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Introduction

Any informal poll will tell you that people hate pop-up ads. They hate when they can't find that tiny "X" to close them. They hate it when ads block out their full screen on mobile devices. They hate it when the ad appears repeatedly again and again and again. Even the inventor of the pop-ups, Ethan Zuckerman, issued a lengthy apology for their creation.

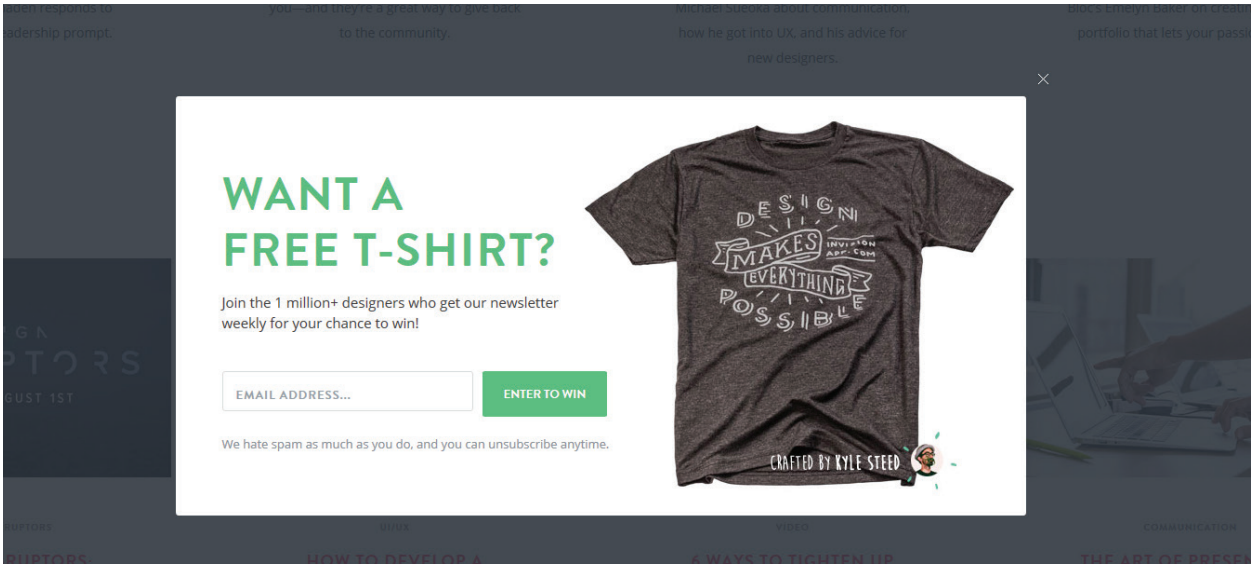
However, pop-ups aren't all bad. They've come a long way since their inception, when marching red ants and flashing yellow buttons were ubiquitous. Now, these ad units (also called floater ads, out-of-page ads, or interstitials) can be user-friendly. When done correctly, they provide a demonstrated value to website visitors. And for marketers, the statistics are hard to ignore.

In the business-to-business (B2B) space, the conversion rates on pop-ups consistently overperform any other type of ad unit. A successful in-house ad can provide a 20 percent to 50 percent lift in website conversions. For some niche blogs and publishers (like us), the increase can be even more pronounced. We've seen numerous case studies of e-mail acquisition rates testing at 100 percent or better. Unbounce points to an example of a niche website that saw a 1,375 percent increase in subscribers in their split test of a pop-up unit.

For the business-to-consumer (B2C) space, the results can be equally encouraging, providing as much as a 60-percent reduction in bounce rate and 50 percent more time on site. Like in the B2B space, they are used on the consumer side to engage passive users, request feedback, and build e-mail lists. Coupon codes perform well on e-commerce sites, providing an immediate benefit to new or existing shoppers.

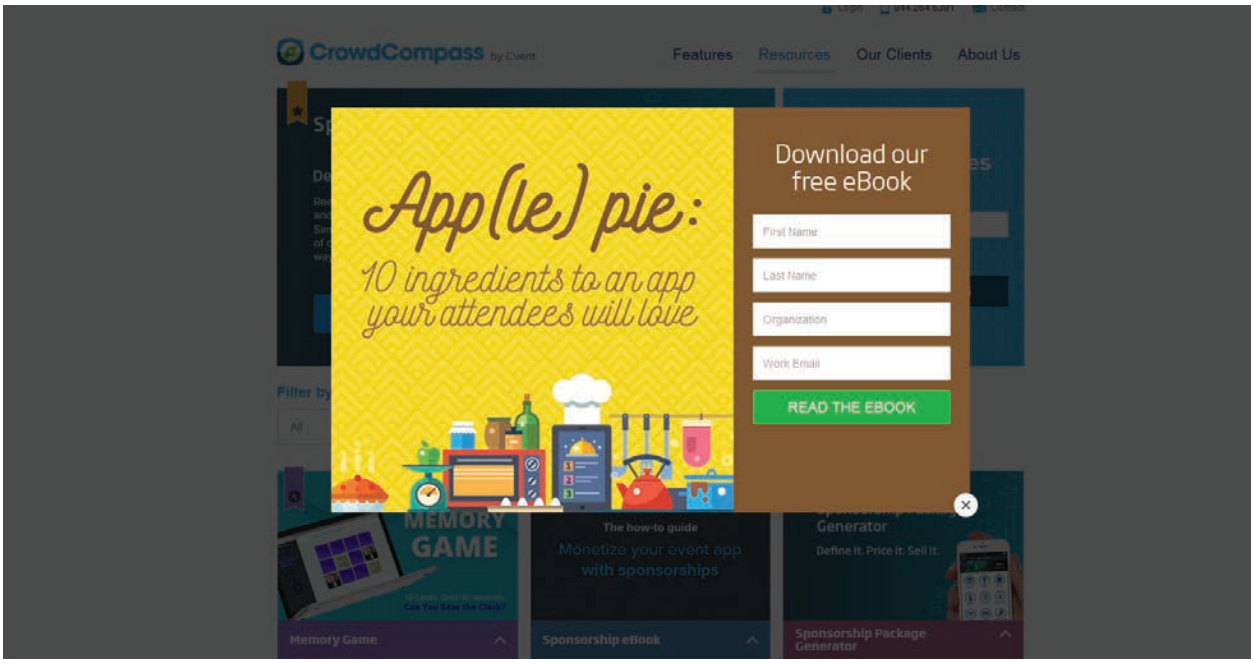
No matter the market, the ads that work are the ones that focus on users' wants and needs. Here are 10 examples of pop-ups that are getting it right.

1. InVision



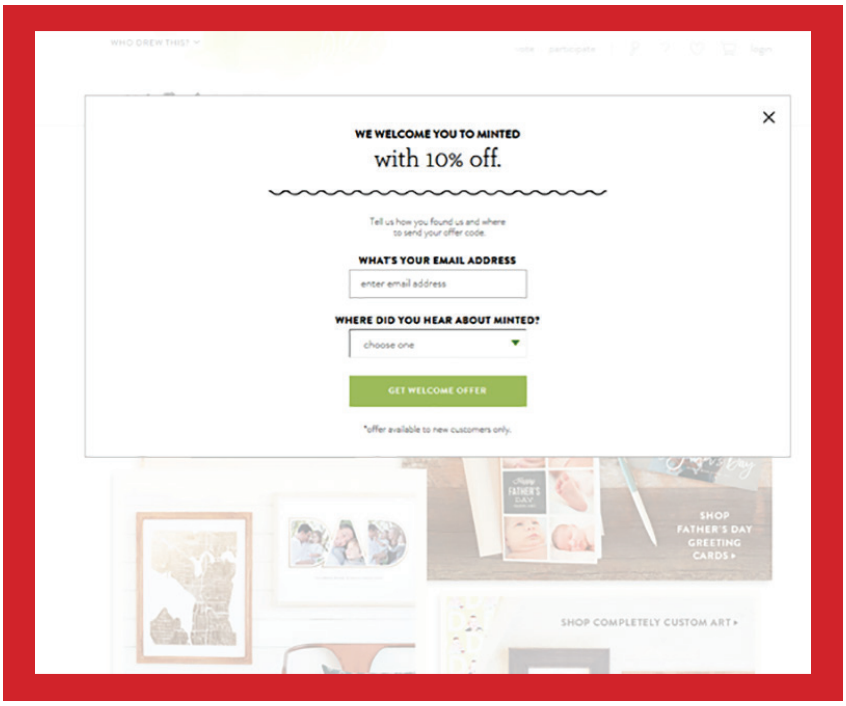
InVision is a collaboration platform for designers. Given its audience, it's no surprise that InVision's ad is designed well. It is clear about the benefit (winning a free t-shirt) but also transparent with the user that they will be signing up for the weekly e-mail newsletter. The request for e-mail address (*and only e-mail address*) provides fewer hoops for the user to jump through and also frees up space on the ad for a large headline.

2. CrowdCompass



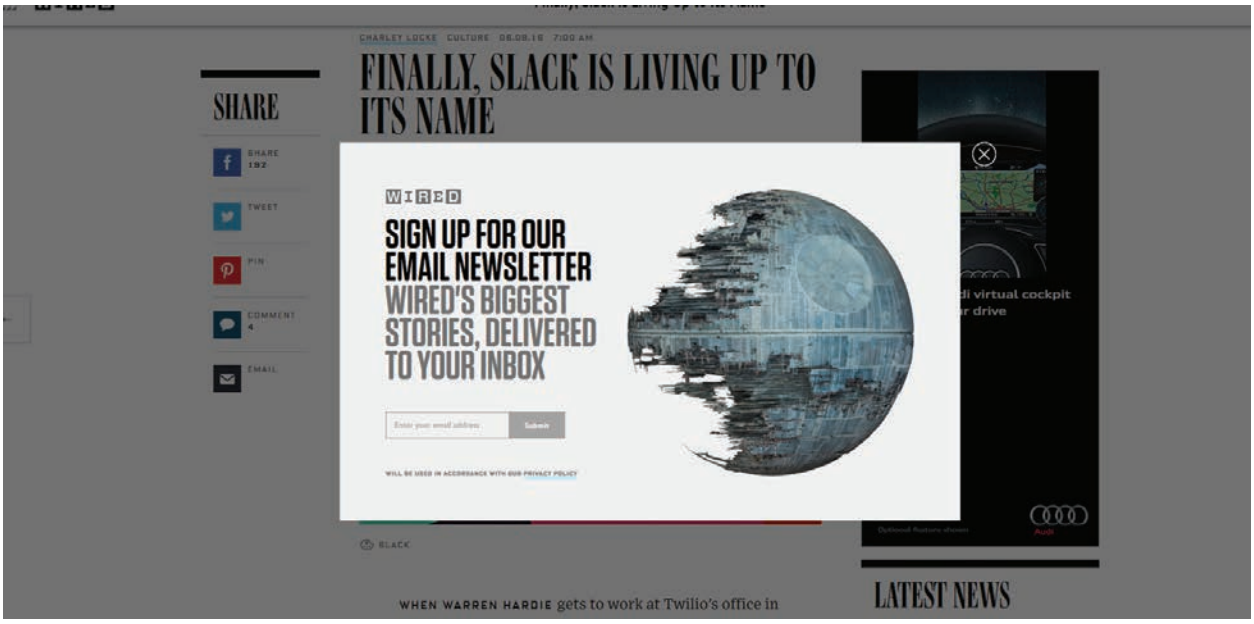
The first thing to note here in CrowdCompass's ad is that there are four fields instead of one or two. From a user perspective, it's more work, and from a marketing perspective, the conversion rate takes a hit. However, these fields aren't the types that usually hit conversion rates hard like drop-down select boxes or requests for more sensitive information like company revenue or phone number. It also helps that the CrowdCompass offer is appealing to its event-planning audience. It's a fun, colorful, and well-themed piece of content. The only drawback here is the x at the bottom right instead of top right; it's not a traditional placement and causes a few seconds of extra hunting for the user.

3. Minted



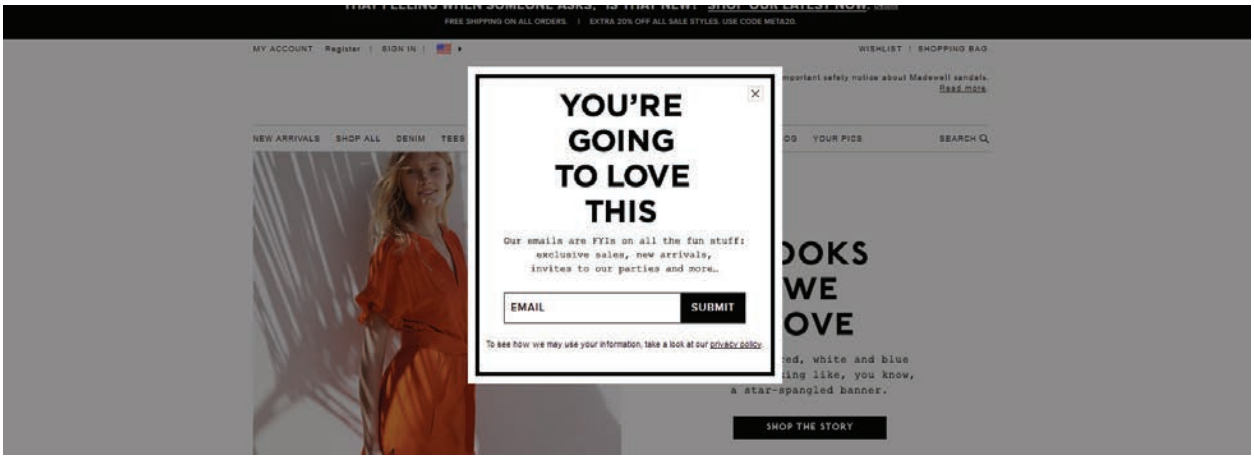
Visiting Minted for the first time? This minimal ad welcomes you to its design marketplace with a 10 percent discount code. It provides an immediate benefit for users intending to make a purchase, while also incentivizing a casual visitor to turn into a buyer. The ad asks for two pieces of information: e-mail address and referral source. For the Minted team, referral source is likely doubly important due to its branded stationary. "Saw Minted's name on the back of a card or envelope" is listed in the "Where did you hear about Minted?" drop down list.

4. WIRED



A lot of magazines are doing pop-ups well, but Wired Magazine's ad definitely has a cool factor. The marketing copy is nothing fancy. It tells the user exactly what they should expect in their inbox: Wired's biggest stories. There is no incentive here—no discount, no contest, and no coupon. However, where Wired succeeds is in using the Death Star image. With *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* still fresh in movie-goers' minds and with buzz for *Star Wars: Rogue One* already building, this ad makes the user pause and consider what they might be missing out on if he or she doesn't sign up.

5. Madewell

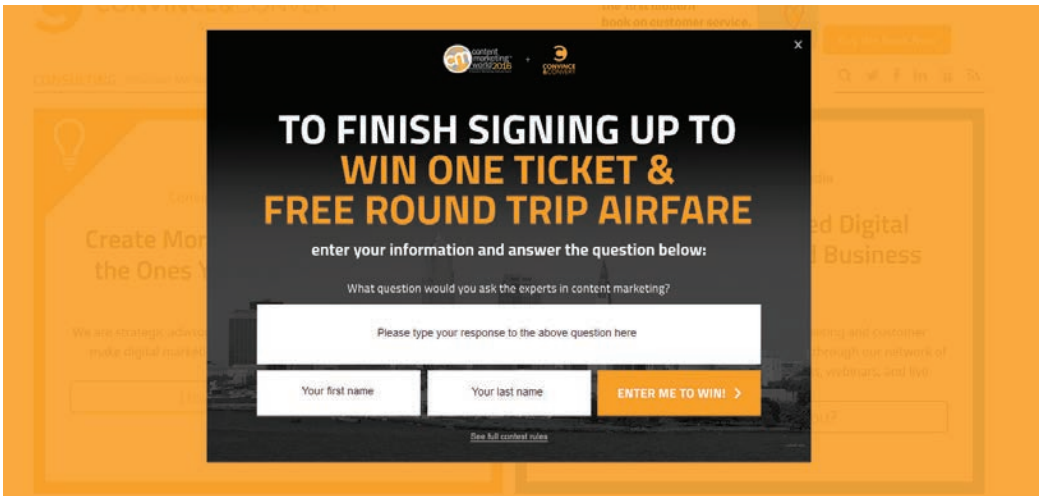


Clothing company Madewell uses a simple black and white design for its ad. Here, the copy is the star. Madewell claims in bold, capitalized text, "You're going to love this." Taking the tone of a best friend who will keep the user in the loop on "all the fun stuff," the ad promises the benefit of exclusive sales and invites to parties. Where the ad falls a little short is in the standard "Submit" button, one of the worst performing for form completions. Although Madewell isn't the only ad on this list to use it, it could have easily stayed true to the character of its ad with something like "Let's get started" or "Join in."

If you're interested in more call-to-action (CTA) ideas, read Hubspot's great post here. There are also has additional examples in its guide.

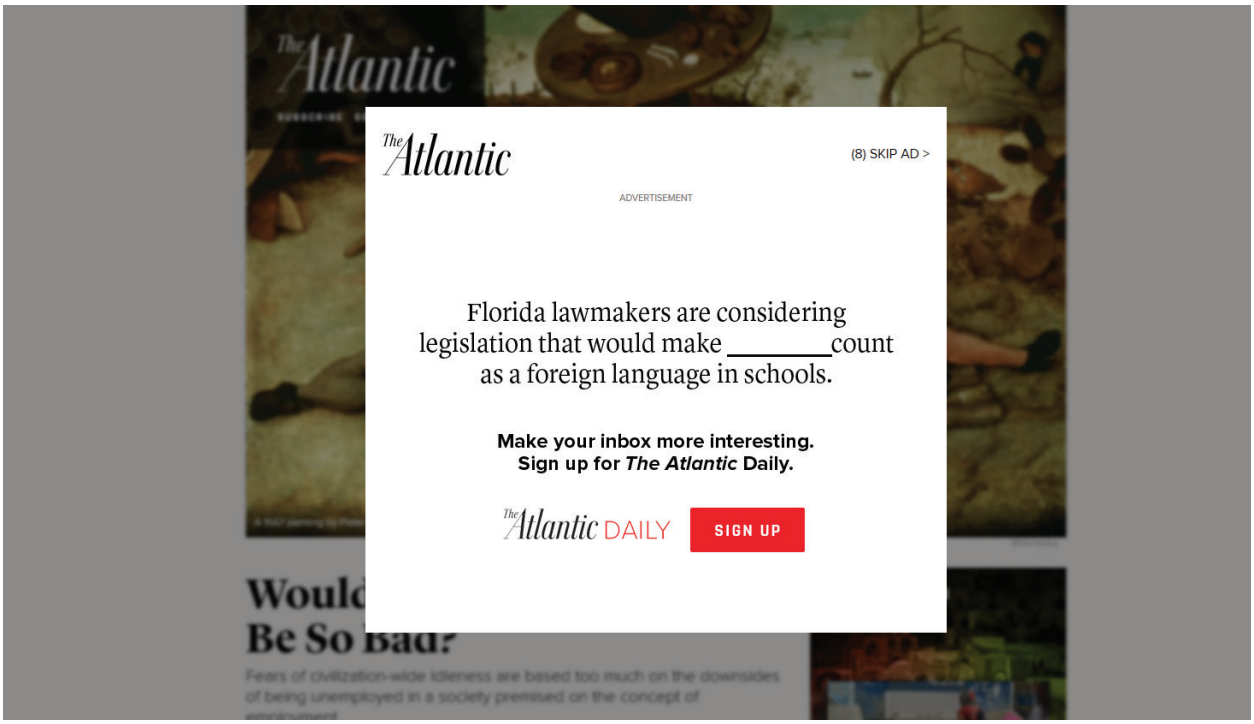
6. Content Marketing World

If you're not familiar with Content Marketing World, it's a yearly event catering to … You guessed it, content marketing professionals. It does a nice job design-wise, and its bold orange background is a refreshing departure from the typical dark fade. We've seen this form structure before—all we have to do is enter an e-mail address to win … But wait! This pop-up ad has a second screen.



Taking a cue from multistep landing pages, this ad makes the user enter the most important information first, and then follows up by asking users to enter another three fields. It's a great concept, since multistep landing pages can convert at 200 percent to 300 percent better.

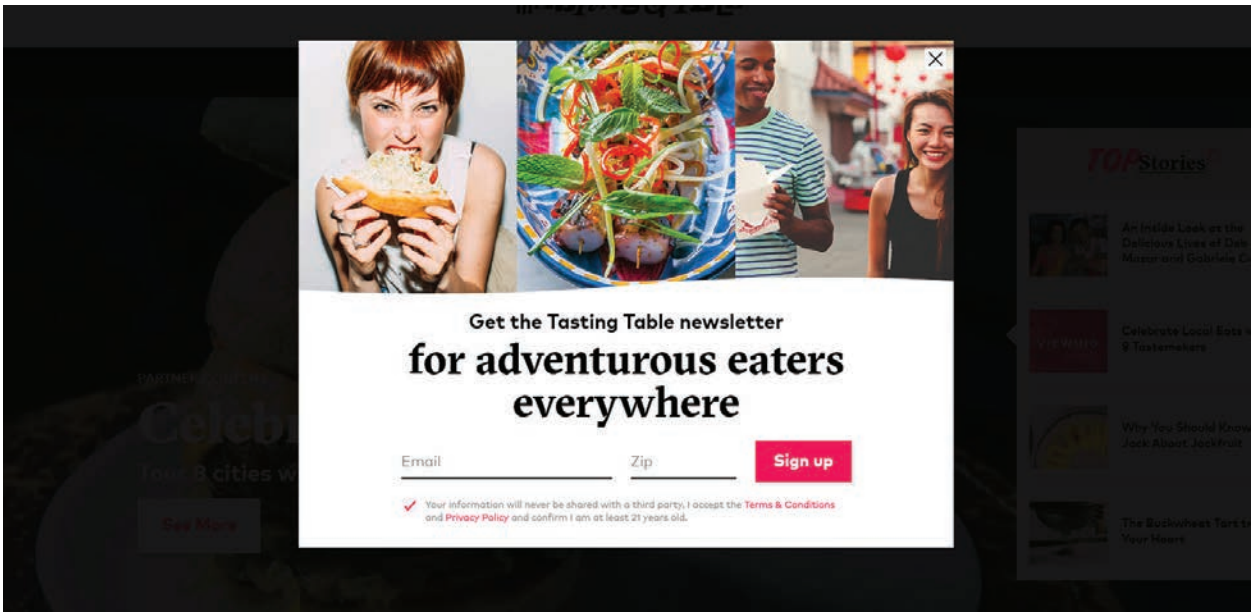
7. The Atlantic



People love a good "fill in the blank." Lately, this tactic has seen a resurgence across web forms, polls, contests, and a variety of social engagement efforts. (As of July 2016, SHIFT B2B events has a great fill-in-the-blank web form above the footer of their site.) The advantage to this strategy is that it's novel enough to catch a user's interest, and also creates a small challenge for the user, gamifying the interaction.

In the ad above, The Atlantic uses an unanswered trivia-like question. The benefit to signing up is clear: If you subscribe, you're going to get interesting news and articles, and you'd be able to answer this question. (Ironically, if you do sign up, the Atlantic never tells you the answer. It would be nice if the trigger e-mail that follows the user request provided this, plus a few unique facts from other Atlantic articles.)

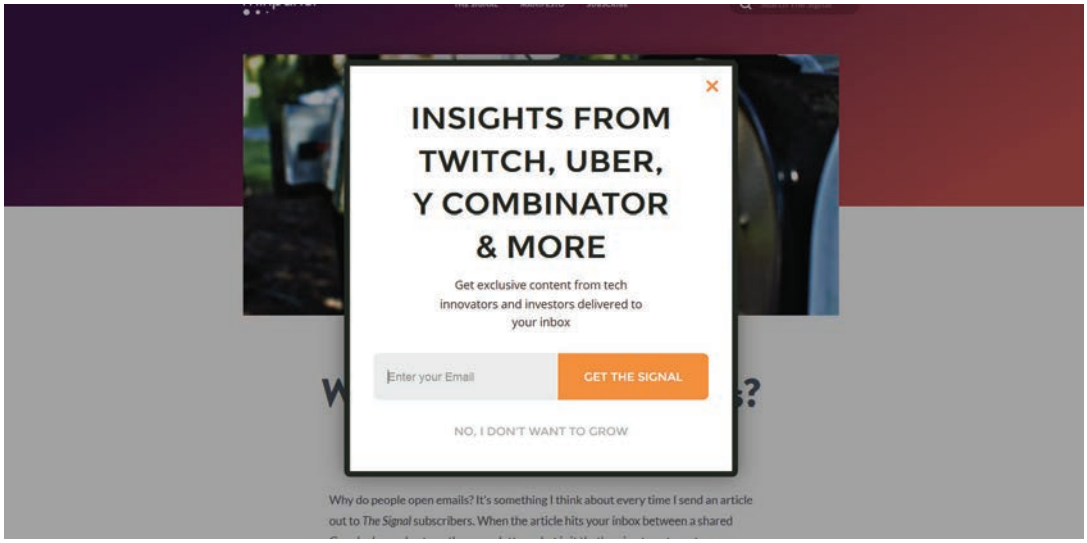
8. Tasting Table



Tasting Table won a Webby award for its e-mail newsletters, but its website is just as beautiful. It's almost a shame to have that experience interrupted. However, where this ad succeeds is in the power of its images. Tasting Table's bread and butter, quite literally, is in large photos of delicious-looking food and food experiences. When users look at the three images above, they are getting an experience in miniature of what they should expect from the Tasting Table newsletter on a daily basis.

It also helps that Tasting Table requests a zip code upon sign up. In this case, it promises an unspoken benefit for the reader (local restaurants, food events, and happenings) as opposed to simply another request for personal information for marketing purposes.

9. Mixpanel

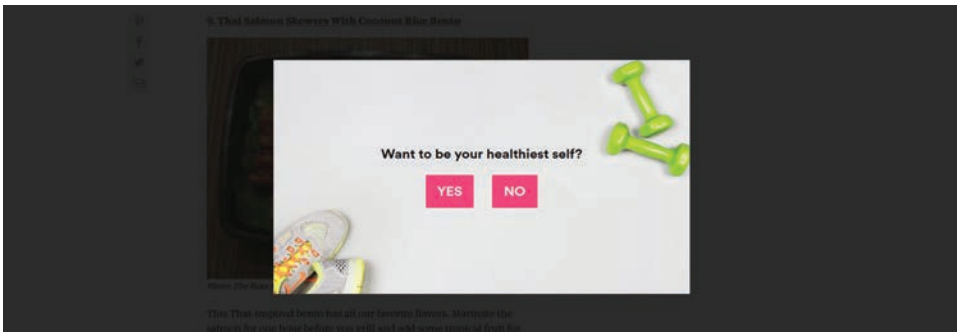


There are a few interesting things going on in this ad from Mixpanel, a mobile and web analytics company. The first is that it's using the names of other companies as the main driver to sign up for its e-newsletter. It's a bit risky, because you can almost forget who it is you're going to receive an e-mail from once you do sign up. However, for a small company or start-up, it can make sense to go this route.

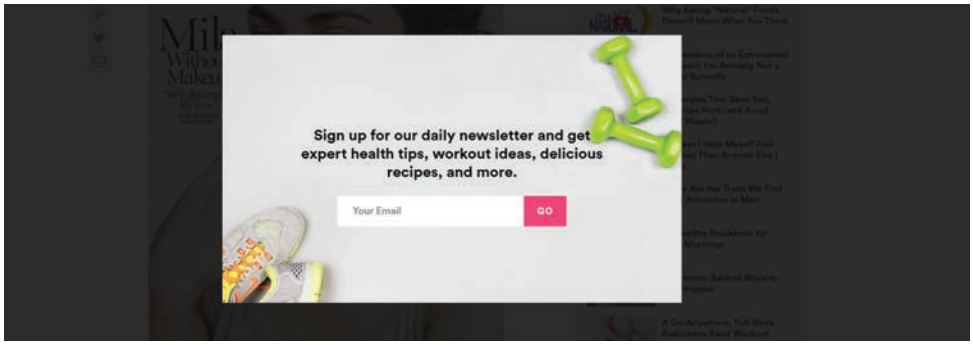
The CTA button is also inventive. "Get the Signal" sounds a lot more interesting than "Subscribe." Although there have been countless studies about which color button converts best, the button contrast of orange and white really stands out here. (ConversionXL maintains there is no one best choice for color conversions.)

Finally, the standard "No thanks" here is the very snarky, "No, I don't want to grow." One Buzzfeed, Inc., writer is calling these types of elements "guilt trip user interface design." While these elements can cause annoyance, it is important to consider the target audience. In the B2B space, job role and industry may affect whether users see it as an injection of personality or a flippant attempt to shame them into an action they don't want to take.

10. Greatist



Greatist is a fitness, health, and happiness internet media startup. You can't get much simpler than the button approach here. If users click the "YES" button, they are taken to a second screen, just like with Content Marketing World. However, this screen is very simple as well, with a single form for e-mail address.



The ad is easy to close with the "Thanks, but no thanks!" appearing at the bottom left with both screens, and provides a bit of safety for users who have been burned in the past by accidentally clicking on an ad when trying to close it. The CTA button "GO" also ties into the fitness theme well.

The only real drawback to this ad is that if a user elects to click "NO" on the first screen, the same version of the second screen still shows up. Ideally, the ad would either disappear or provide altered copy to the user on the basis of that action to try to swing them back around.

Conclusion

So, there you have it! Pop-up ads can be a useful tool for growing subscriber lists, engaging your audience, and providing users with demonstrated value. Much more than the intrusive and irrelevant ads of old, today's pop-ups feature forward-thinking design, clever copy, and a seamless user experience between ad, offer, brand, and site.