

**BBC Studios x ActionRocket**

# **Walking with Dinosaurs**



**BBC STUDIOS**



**Ben Hammond**  
**CRM Director**  
**BBC Studios**

Who  
we are



**Conor Wilson**  
**Senior Developer**  
**ActionRocket**





# What do we do?

## BBC STUDIOS

- Commercial arm of the BBC Group
- We make and distribute world renowned content internationally
- Nurture and grow iconic brands like Bluey, Doctor Who and BBC Earth

## ACTIONROCKET

- 10+ year partnership with BBC CRM team(s)
- Experts in email design, code and strategy
- Pushing what's possible within email as a channel



BBC STUDIOS

# Walking With Dinosaurs

- Part of our BBC Earth brand
- In 1999 it revolutionised documentary storytelling
- Series re-launched in 2025
- Pushing the boundaries of interactive email design - delivering an immersive experience



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# In this session we will look at:

**1.**

Understanding your audience to know whether interactive email code is the right solution for you.

**2.**

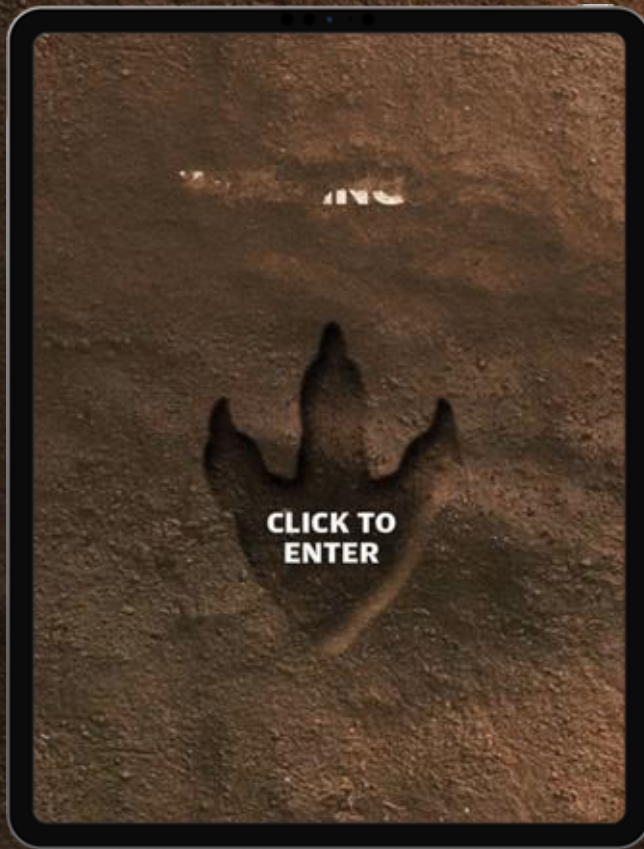
Uncovering a good reason to use interactive email code so that it amplifies the message being sent.

**3.**

Using interactive code. We will take you behind the scenes of how we created a fully immersive interactive email.



**But first,  
let's take  
a look at  
the email...**



Tap-to-reveal  
animated entrance  
sequence



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BBC  
**WALKING WITH  
DINOSAURS**

## LEGENDS UNEARTHED

Six dig sites. Six stories. Six prehistoric heroes. Discover incredible dinosaurs brought to life from real-world excavations.

▶ WATCH THE TRAILER



Custom cursor



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'Dig site' based on  
interactive hotspots



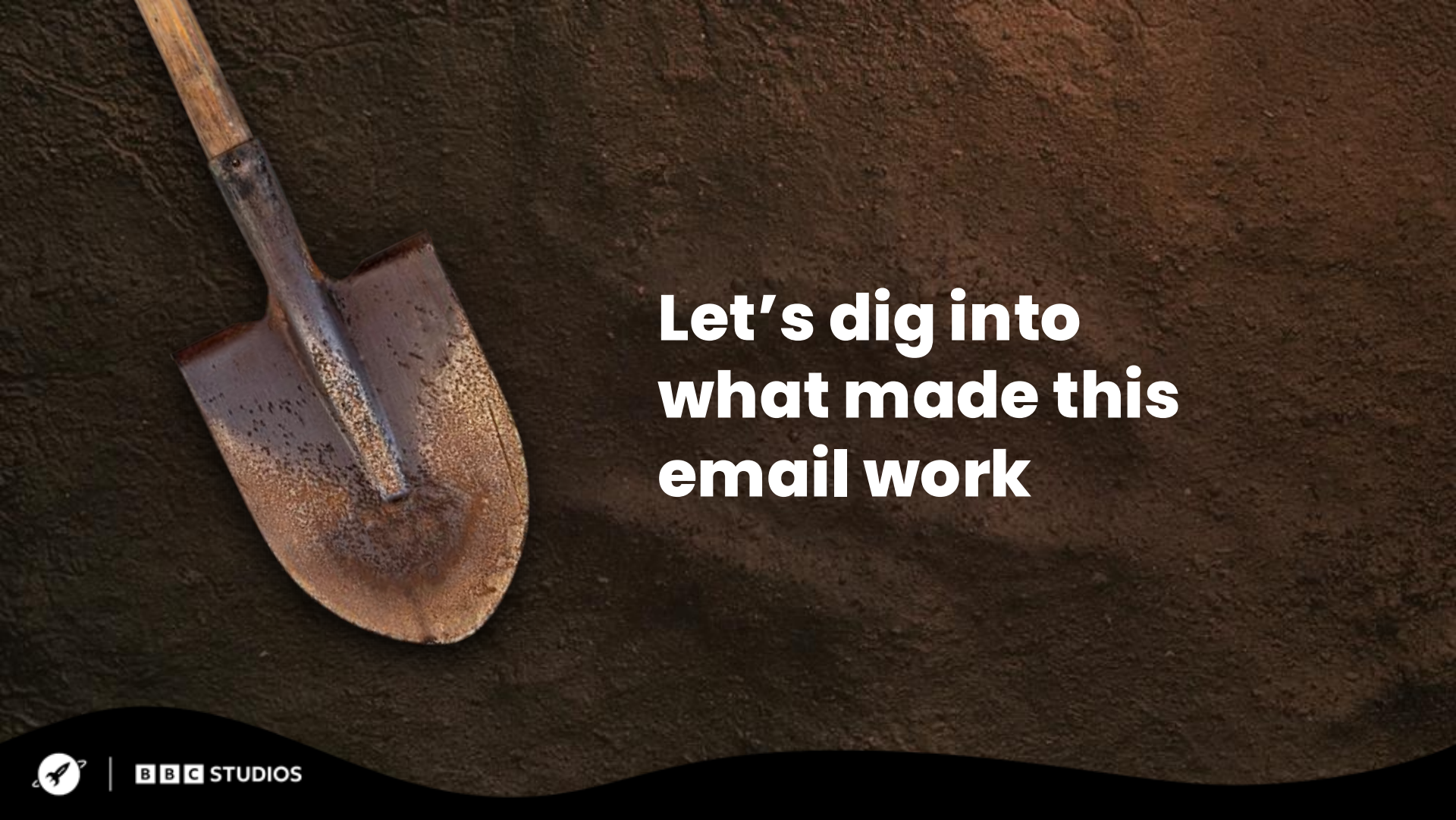
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Push to watch  
the trailer at the  
end of the game



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A close-up, top-down view of a rusty, weathered shovel stuck into dark, rich brown soil. The shovel's head is partially buried, and its wooden handle extends towards the top left corner. The soil has a fine, granular texture.

**Let's dig into  
what made this  
email work**



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**1**

**The right  
audience**



**2**

**A good  
reason**



**3**

**The interactive  
code**



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1

# The right audience



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# Current support for interactive emails

|                                        | <br>Apple Mail<br>Mac + iOS | <br>Gmail | <br>Outlook.com<br>+ Outlook<br>for Mac | <br>Windows 10<br>Mail + Outlook<br>for Windows | <br>Yahoo + AOL |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CSS Animations/<br/>Transitions</b> | ✓                                                                                                            | ✗                                                                                          | ✗                                                                                                                          | ✗                                                                                                                                  | ✗                                                                                                  |
| <b>CSS Hover Effects</b>               | ✓                                                                                                            | ✓ <sup>*</sup>                                                                             | ✓ <sup>*</sup>                                                                                                             | ✗                                                                                                                                  | ✗                                                                                                  |
| <b>CSS Interactive<br/>Checkboxes</b>  | ✓                                                                                                            | ✗                                                                                          | ✗                                                                                                                          | ✗                                                                                                                                  | ✗                                                                                                  |

<sup>\*</sup> Hover effects don't affect mobile

Source: [caniemail.com](https://caniemail.com)



# BBC device breakdown



|             |                      |       |
|-------------|----------------------|-------|
| <div></div> | Apple Mail           | 66%   |
| <div></div> | Gmail                | 17%   |
| <div></div> | Other Desktop Client | 10.6% |
| <div></div> | Other Mobile Client  | 6.4%  |

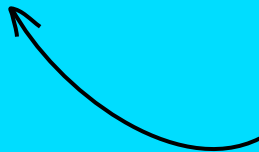


2

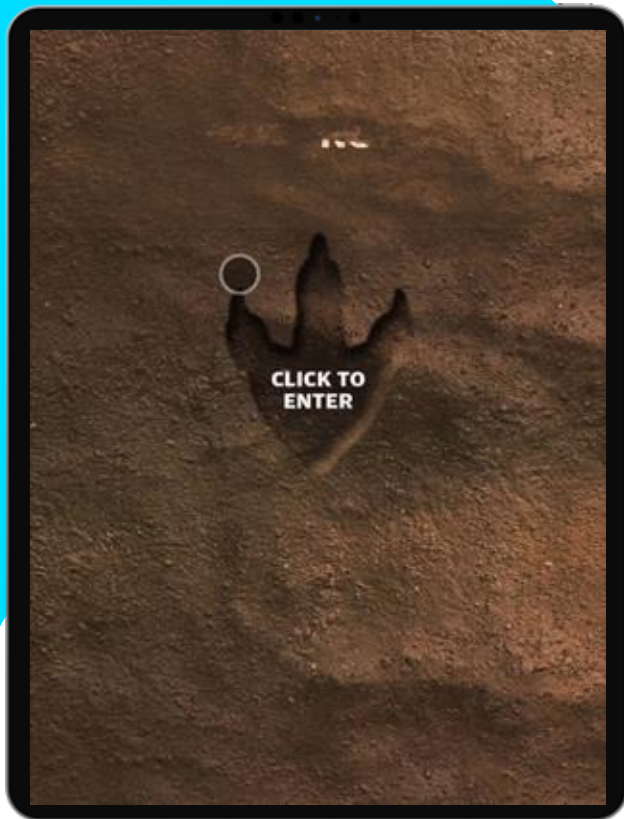
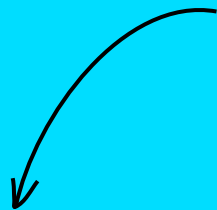
**A good reason**



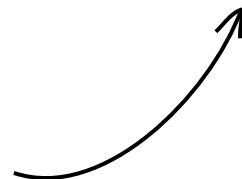
Pushing  
engagement



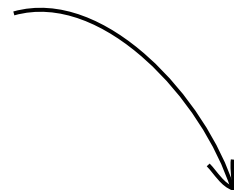
Storytelling



Getting lots of  
information across



Gamification





3

# The interactive code



# Code repo

## Interactive email code

A repository to share different interactive email techniques.

The aim of this repo is to share examples of ways to code interactive elements in email, therefore only using HTML and CSS.

### 1. Techniques to show/hide an interactive section

CSS and HTML to include in your emails to show the interactive element where it is supported and show a different experience for email clients that don't support those techniques.

For example:

CSS

```
@media screen {  
  /* This CSS will not be shown in  
  Windows Desktop Outlook clients */  
}
```

HTML

```
<!--[if !msn]><!-->  
<p>This will be hidden on Windows Desktop Outlook</p>  
<!--[endif]-->
```

All of these techniques put the 'fallback' or code that is not interactive before the interactive section. This is deliberate, as some interactive elements can add a lot of code and as email developers we need to consider [Gmail's 100kb\(ish\) limit](#). Another Gmail limitation is the size of the `<style>` tag in the head, which needs to be kept to 16kb.



<https://github.com/JayOram/interactive-email-code>



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```
<style>
#reveal:checked ~ .outer .revealed-content {
  display: block !important;
}

#reveal:checked ~ .outer .tap-content {
  display: none !important;
}
</style>

<input type="checkbox" name="reveal" id="reveal" style="display:
none; class="outer">
<label class="tap-content" for="reveal" style="display: block;">
  <p>Tap me</p>
</label>
<div class="revealed-content" style="display: none;">
  <p>This content is revealed when the checkbox is checked.</p>
</div>
</div>
```

Tap me

## Tap to reveal

This is the simplest interactive email effect.

Add a hidden checkbox, with a linked label element. Then you can use CSS to change the email when that checkbox is checked.

Most advanced interactive emails use a series of these tap-to-reveals strung together.





**Bone 1**



**Answer 1**



**Answer 2**



**Answer 3**



# Current support for interactive emails

|                                |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Apple Mail<br>Mac + iOS                                                           | Gmail                                                                             | Outlook.com<br>+ Outlook<br>for Mac                                                 | Windows 10<br>Mail + Outlook<br>for Windows                                         | Yahoo + AOL                                                                         |
| CSS Animations/<br>Transitions | ✓                                                                                 | ✗                                                                                 | ✗                                                                                   | ✗                                                                                   | ✗                                                                                   |
| CSS Hover Effects              | ✓                                                                                 | ✓*                                                                                | ✓*                                                                                  | ✗                                                                                   | ✗                                                                                   |
| CSS Interactive<br>Checkboxes  | ✓                                                                                 | ✗                                                                                 | ✗                                                                                   | ✗                                                                                   | ✗                                                                                   |

\* Hover effects don't affect mobile





# Cursor swap

Using a tap to reveal and the cursor CSS property, we were able to change the users cursor to a shovel.

This enhanced the storytelling element of the digsite and added to the immersive feeling.

Cursor effects are supported in Apple Mail on Mac and Desktop browsers.

```
<style>
#shovel:checked~.wrapper-dig {
  cursor: url(images/shovel.png) 5 5, auto;
}
</style>
```



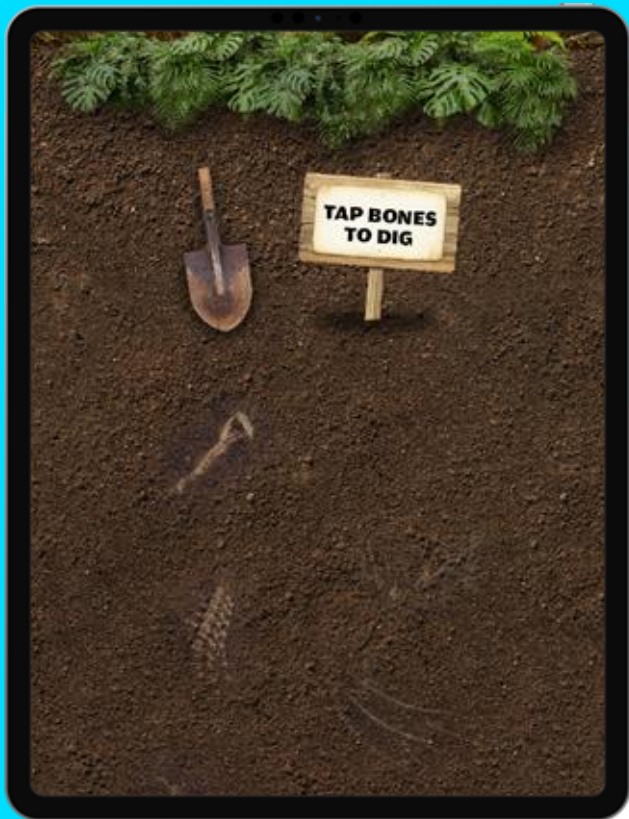
# Considerations when using Interactive code

## Fallback

- Use progressive enhancement to turn on features for supported email clients (<https://howtotarget.email/>)
- For heavy interactive campaigns, push the user to the web version of the email so they can still see the interactive content in their browser

## Accessibility

- Use tabindex and aria attributes for interactive elements.
- Ensure all images have appropriate alt text when used in an interactive context.



# Campaign results

↑ +40%

ENGAGED AUDIENCE  
CLICK-THROUGH  
RATE

4.9%

↑ +50%

UNIQUE OPEN RATE

67.3%

DELIVERY RATE

99%

RE-ENGAGED  
SUBSCRIBERS

7,250





# Key takeaways



## Creative Storytelling

Creative storytelling works best when it's immersive and interactive, turning audiences from passive viewers into active participants in the brand experience.



## Perfecting the Narrative

Strong narrative structure and emotional engagement are key to making campaigns more memorable and driving deeper audience connection.



## Design Excellence

Combining rich visuals, motion, and personalised content can elevate digital communications into experiences that boost engagement and brand excitement.



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**Thanks**



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