

The 9-Hour Marketing Makeover:

A guide to improving your
marketing success in one day



The 9-Hour Marketing Makeover

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Want to learn more?

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The 9-Hour Marketing Makeover

Introduction

This is a different type of guide—based on practical advice that you can implement today, rather than theoretical tips that may not be applicable to your small business. We know that small businesses are busy and need some reasonable and practical tips that they can quickly put to work!

The 40-hour work week flies by so fast (and for most of you it's even more hours than that) that sometimes you feel you can't spare the time to improve your marketing. That's why we've written this paper in 9 one-hour chapters so that you can improve your marketing and increase your sales quickly and easily.

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A Marketing Reality Check — Hour 1

Good morning—It's a brand new day and believe it or not you can do a lot in one day—and even in one hour—to improve your marketing! Where to start... well first of all, make sure you have your coffee, tea, or water on hand (very important). Now, I know you'll probably want to scan your emails and respond to the urgent or fun ones. Once you've done that, it's time to focus. Let's see what we can really do in one hour to get a good grasp of your overall marketing

So I am sure many of you are thinking, just what is a reality check for your marketing? Will it really only take an hour? Well in one hour you have enough time to put together a simple Marketing Performance sheet. This simple sheet will help you determine what's working and what's not, so you are headed in the right marketing direction for the future. Let's get started.

Step 1 — Create a Monthly Marketing Performance Sheet :

You can use a Word document and insert a table or use an Excel or Google spreadsheet. Create a grid with at least 4-5 columns (you can always add more depending on your business/marketing needs) with the following headers: Source, Spend, Results, Number of Sign-ups, or even Revenue, Cost per Result (the spend divided by the results). You should measure results by tracking what types of results you are expecting (e.g., number of purchases). The number of rows will be dependent on the number of marketing sources you have (i.e. Email Marketing, Direct Mail, Social Media, Online Advertising, Print Advertising, Telemarketing, Search Engine Marketing, Event Marketing).

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Below is an example of what your performance grid could look like. Of course yours would vary depending on what marketing you were doing—as well as the metrics you track that are most important to you from a marketing/business perspective.

EXAMPLE — Month To Date Marketing Performance Sheet				
Source	Spend	Results (Purchase)	Cost Per - (Spend/Purchases)	Revenue
Email Marketing	\$400	500	\$0.80	\$12,500
Online Advertising	\$1,000	90	\$11.10	\$2,250
Direct Mail	\$800	28	\$28.57	\$700
Print Advertising	\$700	5	\$140	\$125
Search Marketing	\$500	75	\$6.60	\$1,875
Add source here				

Step 2 — Start Filling in the Grid:

This may take a while time to find all your data. Give it a shot though; it will help you realize how well you are tracking your marketing, including what you are spending and its relative performance.

Step 3 — Schedule/Block Time to Review Sheet:

Congratulations! You now have a performance sheet set-up! You can then block some time later to do some analysis— Ask yourself these questions when you schedule time to review your Marketing Performance Sheet.

- What is working well?
- What did not perform well?

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- What didn't you track?
- Why?
- What is taking the most time?
- Is the performance worth the effort?
- If not what can you do to streamline the specific process?

One hour of the day is gone already! Can you believe it? You can be proud of what you accomplished — you put your marketing in check. This is important to do, so that you are being responsible for monitoring your marketing efforts and success.

Additional Resources:

Email Reporting: http://help.verticalresponse.com/site/index/examine_reports/

Direct Mail: 10 Steps to Postcard Marketing Success (Step #8: Include Tracking)
<http://www.verticalresponse.com/sites/www.verticalresponse.com/files/10steps-postcard-success.pdf>

Free Business Forms in the Lounge: If you are looking for free business forms and templates to keep you on track in your business, you can get them free by becoming a member of the VerticalResponse Marketing Lounge.

- ✓ Sign-up free to be a member here: <http://lounge.verticalresponse.com/>
- ✓ Check out all the free types of forms here: <http://lounge.verticalresponse.com/page/page/show?id=2026477%3APage%3A19266>

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An Email for All Browsers — Hour 2

One hour down—job well done. You've given your marketing a reality check. Now onto our 2nd hour.

If the world were a simpler place, every single email browser would display your messages beautifully and exactly as you designed them. But the world is not so simple—there are dozens of different browsers in which a recipient might view your message and each one has its own special way of displaying your email.

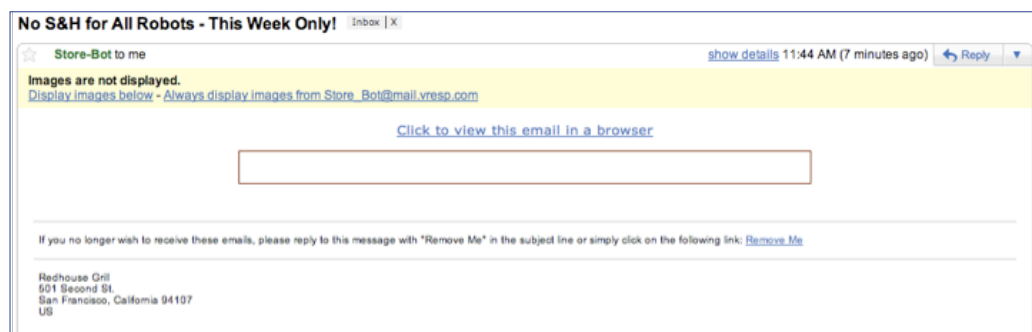
Then there are all those people who check their emails on their mobile phones or Internet connected toasters or Wi-Fi steak dinners, all of which also have their own special way of displaying your email. So how can you design an email that looks great no matter how it's being viewed?

Here's the Secret:

Keep it simple. The simpler your design and content, the more likely that design will look the same across multiple browsers and devices. There is no need to start from scratch to make any of this happen. All you have to do is take the content/ design you already have and pare it down a bit using these tips.

Use Fewer, Smaller Images:

Many email browsers have images turned off by default. As you can see in the example below, this can be a problem if your email design relies heavily on images or if you use very large images in your message.



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This is an extreme example, but it shows you exactly where the problem lies. If a browser turns images off by default, then the images don't show up unless the recipient clicks a link to turn them on. And if your email is too image-heavy, people may not see enough content that would inspire them to turn the images on.

Select Only the Images You Need:

Determine which pictures you need to help make your email pop. Remember, you're going to be sending simpler emails now, so it should be fairly easy to only choose three or four different ones. Pick images that stand out visually and relate the most to your message.

Edit Your Images:

Shrink your pictures so they better fit this new "simpler is better" philosophy you're adopting. Don't have an image editor of your own? No problem! You can edit your pictures from right within VerticalResponse.

If you scroll over the thumbnail for any image stored in your library, you should see a pencil icon  appear in the lower right of the thumbnail. Click that pencil to open the image editor. The editor allows you to resize, crop, flip and rotate an image.

Turn Larger Articles Into Teaser Content:

Instead of putting an entire article or offer in your email, use teaser content that points to more information on your website or blog. This has the added bonus of providing readers with more of a reason to click a link and make their way over to your site.

Start Blogging/Edit Your Site:

One of the biggest problems with not putting all the content of your message in your email is that you need somewhere else to put it. And, depending on you or your company's level of technical expertise, this may seem somewhat difficult. But if you have so much content that you're writing 700 word email essays every time

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you send a newsletter, then you can certainly take some of that content and use it for blog posts. You can then link people to the full article on your blog. And if you're announcing products or having sales, you should certainly have that info on your site as well. That reinforces the message from your email and gives extra space to provide more info.

Get Linked:

Since all of your content isn't in your email, you need to make it as easy as possible for a reader to click a link and reach your main content. Have some variation of a "Read More" or "Take Action" link following each section, turn your headers and titles into links and turn your images into links.

Break Your Content Up:

Since you have no way of knowing the size of your recipient's computer monitor and how your text is going to be displayed, it's important that your content be very easy to read.

How can you do that?

- ✓ Use bullet points.
- ✓ Break larger paragraphs up into two or three sentence mini-paragraphs.
- ✓ Highlight important points within those paragraphs.
- ✓ Use at least a 10pt font — 12pt is even better.

Shrink Your Layout to One or Two Columns:

There are some mobile devices—older BlackBerries are the biggest example — that have a terrible time with HTML email. Even the most basic design may either not display properly or break in some way.

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This becomes particularly noticeable if you have lots of separate columns and sections in your message. While such a layout may look lovely in Gmail, it might appear to be a big, jumbled, nearly nonsensical pile of text on someone's phone. And you definitely don't want that.

A single column with up to several rows works well if you are pointing readers to one or two offers/articles (think of a sale or product announcement email). Two columns work well if you have a few main offers / articles, plus some extra info you want to throw in for good measure (think newsletters). Good examples of both—taken from the collection of several hundred layouts we make available with our Canvas editor—can be seen below:

Back to School Sale!

Hello (FIRST_NAME).
(You can add personalization to your email by using the --insert-- pull-down in the tool bar).

First Article

Reserve this area for the your lead article, the one you feel will be most exciting to your readers. The first article will be seen in the preview pane of most email applications so it needs to be enticing enough to draw your reader in to read further. It's also worth noting that some people will only see information to the left of the screen, depending on how they have the preview pane of their email application set up.

Finally, don't forget to entice subscribers to your visit your website with a link, like [Continue reading this article on my website.](#)

Highlight: Short Headlines Get Attention!

Readers tend to scan your emails for the topics that interest them most. Here are some tips on how to make it more reader friendly.

- Use bulleted lists, they help the reader's eye find relevant information
- Include a table of contents for easy access to topics
- Using **Bold** and **Highlighted** text can really drive home your message

Finally, don't forget the **CALL TO ACTION**. Driving traffic to your website is one of the main reasons you're sending this email in the first place.

Your Product Here

Select this image and click the icon in the toolbar
width: 200px height: 100px

Second Story

Keep it Short & Concise. By 'chunkifying' your text, publishing short easy-to-read paragraphs, and adding a splash of imagery you entice readers to visit your website. We've found that customers are comfortable reading shorter sentences. If they don't have time to read every word, they can easily scan the content. It's a good idea to link from [more than one](#) point too.

Again, don't forget to entice subscribers to your visit your website with a link, like [Continue reading this article on my website.](#)

Third Story

The 80/20 rule of images. Images in an email can be a powerful thing. But too many images can render your email ineffective. All of today's email programs have an "Images Off" option so if your email contains too many images, it may look like a blank email to a reader who has their images turned off. So rule of thumb is - 80% text, 20% images. Use images to support the text of your email, not replace it.

Again, don't forget to entice subscribers to your visit your website with a link, like [Continue reading this article on my website.](#)

[Forward this email to a friend](#)

Back to School Sale!

In this issue

- [First Article](#)
- [Second Story](#)
- [Third Story](#)

Upcoming Events

Learn more about upcoming events and dates. We'll be sure to keep you up to date on all the latest happenings. [View all events](#)

Customer Spotlight

See what our customers have to say about our products and services. [View all testimonials](#)

Your Product Here

Select this image and click the icon in the toolbar
width: 200px height: 100px

[Forward this email to a friend](#)

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Additional Resources:

Learn how to build a great looking email using our Canvas editor:

http://help.verticalresponse.com/site/index/build_your_email/

Take a look at the many email marketing related articles on our CEO's blog to get some great ideas:

http://blog.verticalresponse.com/verticalresponse_blog/email_marketing/

3 Successful Ways to Use Direct Mail — Hour 3

You're probably wondering... can you really do a direct mail piece in an hour? It's possible with VerticalResponse. Before we get there, we'll cover the top 3 reasons why direct mail really works for small businesses. And the best part is you can capitalize on all 3 reasons to send direct mail postcards in just 1 hour.

Reason 1 — You don't have email addresses for all of your current customers:

If you're like most businesses, chances are you have a bunch of customers or prospects that you don't have email addresses for. It's easy to send them a postcard directing them to your site to sign up for your offers..

- Identify all of your customers who you do not have an email address for. Then create and upload this list into your VerticalResponse account.
- Start thinking about what kind of offer you can send to this audience.
- Get them to sign up for your email list. List what type of offers they could receive if they signed up. Tell them that these are "Email Only" offers — meaning, they'll only get these great deals if they sign up for your email list today!

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Reason 2 — You want to find new customers:

With direct mail you can easily rent or purchase a list of new contacts and send them a postcard.

- Make a quick list of who your ideal customer would be. Note all key demographics that would help you build a perfect list of new leads
- Check out [Dun & Bradstreet](#) for business-to-business lists.
- Check out [USA Data](#) or [InfoUSA](#) for business-to-consumer lists.
- Or do a simple web search for postal address rental lists and find another company.
 - Give the company you have chosen a call and talk about what your options are. Make sure to think about whether you want to do follow up mailings to the list you are interested in purchasing. It might be worth it to spend a little bit more money to use the lists multiple times so you can re-mail them at a later date. The more they see your offer and brand the more likely they are to remember you.
- After you know what your list looks like you can take 5 minutes to think about what type of an offer you can send to this audience.

Reason 3 — You want to improve email response rates:

The average open rate of an email is 20%. That means 80% of your audience doesn't open your email or just misses it on a regular basis.

- Create a mailing list of everyone who hasn't opened your last five email newsletters.
 - Click on the last newsletter you created in your VerticalResponse account. Click on the Create Mailing List link within the report dashboard. Check the box that says all non-responders. Make sure to include postal addresses from this list or else you will not be able to send them a postcard. This can be list number one.

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- ✓ Repeat with four more newsletters so you have five lists total.
- Send them a direct mail postcard with a new offer or ask them to call you and update their contact information in case their email address has changed and they forgot to let you know.

When you are designing your postcards in the future, no matter what your offer is, make sure to include the following:

A Clear Call-To-Action – Clearly display what you want your recipient to do whether it's visit your website, visit you at an event or come to your location. Make sure to follow your call-to-action with a phone number, website address, store hours, and physical location. If you have a specific page you want them to visit on your site, include the web address.

An Offer – Boldly display what your recipients will be getting in return for following your call-to-action. Discounts or free gifts have been offers we've seen work well in the past.

An Expiration Date – It's a good idea to promote this clearly on your direct mail piece to get your recipients to move quickly. Be sure you make your expiration date within a month and stick to it.

A Benefit for Your Audience – List why they need whatever you are promoting. It is important for them to know how you'll save them time, money or make their lives easier.

Your Logo – You want people to start identifying with who you are by your brand, especially if you plan on sending a follow up mailing.

All in all, postcards are the least expensive form of direct mail and can be a great way to get the attention of your recipients, especially when they're not looking in your direction. Once you get them to your site and get their email address, your cost of marketing to them will decrease with the emails you can send now. Give it a shot!

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Additional Resources:

Secrets to Postcard Marketing Success

http://help.verticalresponse.com/site/index/secrets_to_postcard_marketing_success/

10 Steps to Postcard Marketing Success

<http://www.verticalresponse.com/go/10steps-postcard-success>

6 Questions You Should Ask Your Customers Right Now – Hour 4

You know who really likes you? Your customers! That's why they buy things from you instead of from your competitors. But why do they like you and what is it exactly that they like? What don't they like? Who are your customers exactly, so that you can find more people like them? Do you know the answers to all these questions? There might be a good chance you don't. But you need to know the answers, because knowing what your customers think and who they are can help you focus on the right areas that can help your business grow. If you don't know these answers, don't worry, 'cause there's an easy way to get them. Just ask!

Step 1 – Write Your Questions (30 Minutes):

1. *How old are you?*

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16-20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 43-50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21-27 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 28-35 | <input type="checkbox"/> 60-70 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 36-42 | <input type="checkbox"/> 80+ |

This is a fairly obvious question, but knowing the answer gives you an excellent view into how you should approach your business and marketing. Do you want to make changes and try to reach a more balanced age range? Do you want to focus on a specific age group that appears to already be more interested in your business?

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2. *When was the last time you made a purchase from our store?*

- In the Last Month
- 3-6 months
- 6+ months

Knowing who your recent customers are versus your not-recent customers and non-customers is very useful. Non-customers would probably be more likely to respond to different messaging than recent customers, so you could use this info to split your list into separate groups and try different kinds of emails/offers with each.

3. *On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being best and 1 being worst, how do you rate our:*

- Prices
- Location / Convenience
- Customer Service
- Products

Improve on your weak points and continue to focus on your strong ones.

4. *What kind of special offers most interest you?*

- Buy One Get One Free
- Sales
- Free Shipping
- Loyalty Programs
- Refer-a-Friend/Family Member Discount
- Other: _____

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You should have your own special offers to list out here (maybe even with specific services or products). Knowing what most interests your customers tells you where to focus your efforts. You could even split people up into lists based on their answers and send them the kind of offers they prefer.

5. How often do you prefer to receive our emails?

- Twice a Week
- Once a Week
- Twice a Month
- Once a Month
- Less than Once a Month

This could both help you determine how often you should send email in the future and see if people currently find your email messages valuable. If the majority of your recipients want to hear from you less than once a month, then you probably need to make some changes.

6. Have you made a purchase from any of these companies this year?

- Burt's Homemade Ice Cream and Hardware
- John the Robot's Lock and Key Emporium
- Ace Hardware
- Home Depot
- Locks 'n' Things

Though you'll probably not be interested in asking specifically about any of the companies listed above, you should ask about your competitors. This can help you figure out who you're competing against so you can more easily differentiate yourself and even learn from what they're doing (you should always know your competitors and keep up with them). You could even ask why they purchased from the competition to get a little more insight

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Bonus Question!

If you could change one thing about our business, what would it be?

Provide a free response question so respondents can tell you exactly what they think without being restricted to the answers you've provided. It's a great way to get ideas and hear exactly what your customers are thinking.

Step 2—Build a Survey:

Now that you know which questions to ask, how do you get those questions in front of your customers? With a survey!

The VerticalResponse survey application makes it very easy to put a survey together. You can build the survey from scratch or by using one of our customer satisfaction / product survey templates as a starting point.

Check out the resources below to quickly learn how to build your own survey using the VerticalResponse tools.

Additional Resources:

Take a look at our short video and text tutorials that detail how to build your own survey: <http://help.verticalresponse.com/surveys/>

Look at our other white papers and webinars on the topic of Survey best practices: http://help.verticalresponse.com/site/index/survey_best_practices/

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Update Your Email For a World with Social Media — Hour 5

This past year, social media has made leaps and bounds as a marketing tool. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn have grown exponentially. And lots of folks have started to figure out they can tap into these groups effectively and inexpensively.

The goal of this hour is not to sign you up for social media (if you aren't set-up on social media yet — then get on it!) but to help you update your emails after you have signed up for social media.

Step 1 — Create an email signature and add it to your email marketing template:

You need to link to your social media profiles or groups in every message you send out. This helps remind your audience that you have a presence in each space so they will continue to visit and follow you there.

- Identify all the social media profiles you would want highlighted in your business emails and collect all the links you would send customers and leads to.
- Find the social media images/icons you would like to use. There are thousands of free icons on the web. If you do a simple search in Google for social media icons you will easily find ones you can use. If you don't want to use images, just use links.
- Here is a link to a Google Search for Social Media Icons:
<http://www.google.com/search?q=social+media+icons&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a>
- Edit your email marketing template and add in your social media icons. You can include these images anywhere in your email but try and keep it consistently in the same place so people know where to find them.

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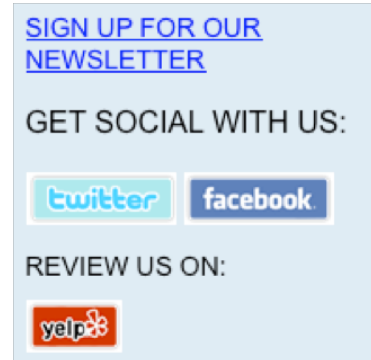
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Step 2 — Add a link to an opt-in form to your email communication:

Not everyone who follows you on Twitter or who is a fan of your Facebook Fan page will have signed up for your email newsletters. One goal should be to get everyone who is a fan, friend or follower onto your email list and vice versa. This guarantees that your audience will be saturated with your messages and keep you top of mind.

- ❑ **Set up an opt-in form.** Because VerticalResponse offers you an unlimited number of opt-in forms for free, we recommend labeling this one as a “social media” opt-in form. That way you can report on how many people sign up for your email communication from your social media platforms.



- ✓ If you have never set up an opt-in form here is our help link about opt-in forms: http://help.verticalresponse.com/site/index/opt-in_forms/
- ❑ **Add a link to your email newsletter or email template that links to your opt-in form.** ‘Subscribe Here’ or ‘Sign Up for X Company Emails’ are great links to get people to sign up to receive your newsletter.

Step 3 — Share your emails with your social media audience:

- ❑ Post your sent emails on Twitter or Facebook directly from your VerticalResponse account using our new Social Sharing feature. Mention your opt-in form when you ‘share’ your emails to keep growing your email marketing list.

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- ✓ **New to Social Sharing?** It's our new free feature that helps you reach a larger audience with your emails and build your email list.

Step 4 — Schedule an email message announcing that you are on social media:

You can't just expect people to find you, you have to let them know where you are. By signing up for different social media platforms it also gives you an additional reason to contact your audience and help keep your business top of mind.

Additional Resources:

Integrating Social Media & Email Checklist:

<http://www.verticalresponse.com/go/socialmedia-checklist>

Add an email opt-in form to your Facebook Fan page:

http://help.verticalresponse.com/site/index/add_a_form_to_your_facebook_page_video/

Social Media for Your Business Group:

<http://lounge.verticalresponse.com/group/socialmedia>

VerticalResponse's Social Media Series:

<http://www.verticalresponse.com/socialwebinarseries/>

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Look Beyond the Open – 3 ‘Easy to Use’ Metrics of Success — Hour 6

The open rate is a very good measure of email success. If people open your email, then it's likely they're interested in what you have to say.

But opens are hardly the be-all, end-all of email metrics. In fact, there are other metrics that are equal to—or even superior to—an open rate when it comes to determining the success of your messages. Which metrics are those and how can you put them to use? We knew you were going to ask that, which is why we devoted a whole section of this paper to the topic.

Step 1 — Pay More Attention to Clicks:

Click-through is the other major email statistic along with opens. In fact, “What is a good open and click rate?” is probably the most common question we see. Why do we rate the click-through rate ahead of the open rate? It's easier to track. Regardless of whether images are turned on or off in your recipient's email browser, you can see if someone clicked a link. It shows who was most engaged with the message. It's nice to have people read your email message. It's even nicer when they're so interested in what they read that they want to take action on the email and visit your website.

You can access your click data either in the *Reports* section of your VerticalResponse homepage or under *Email > Sent Email* in your account. The email reporting dashboard displays the click %, the total # of clicks, the clicks received by each individual link and which lists got the most clicks. You can also see exactly who clicked a link and which link they clicked by using the *Download Lists* option found on the left-hand side of the reporting dashboard.

Step 2 — Start Tracking Conversions:

Conversion tracking takes your reporting one step further. This enables you to look past the clicks from your email campaigns onto your website, allowing you to

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see which of your recipients actually took action with the offer in your message.

If someone clicks a link in your email and later reaches a page that includes the tracking code we provide, they'll be tracked in your account as a conversion and you'll get to see who is "buying" from your emails.

Activating conversion tracking is a two-step process. You have to turn it on from within your account and then add the snippet of code to whatever pages on your site you want to use for tracking conversions.

How to Turn it On:

1. Go to the *Account* section of your VerticalResponse account.
2. Select the *Analytics Settings* sub-menu.
3. Choose the *Click-to-Conversion* tab.
4. Use the provided drop-down menu to select *Click-to-Conversion*.
5. Click the *Submit* button.
6. Add the provided snippet of HTML code to the pages of your choice on your website.



Enable:

To begin tracking conversions, first add the following code snippet to the appropriate page(s) on your website.

```

```

Add Tracking to Your Site (15 Minutes):

If you don't manage or design your site, ask your designer to add the tracking code for you.

1. Copy the tracking snippet from your VerticalResponse account.
2. Open the HTML for each individual webpage you want to use for conversion tracking.

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3. Paste the tracking snippet within each page. The easiest place to add it is directly above the closing body tag - `</body>` - at the bottom of the page's HTML code.
4. Upload the edited HTML to your website.

Access Conversion Stats in Your Account:

Once conversion tracking is turned on, it becomes a trackable statistic (just like opens and clicks) in your email reporting. You can view and download this data from the email reporting dashboard accessible from *Email > Sent Email* or the *Reports* section of your Home page.

Step 3 — Google Analytics Integration:

If you're using Google Analytics to track traffic on your website, then our integration will allow you to see exactly how email is impacting that traffic.

Specifically:

- ✓ How does traffic from your emails compare to traffic you receive via search, ads and other options?
- ✓ Are people who click a link in your email actually spending time on your site and visiting other pages?
- ✓ This can help you determine the actual value of your email marketing and see which links are leading people to spend more time on your site / take action.

How to Turn It On:

1. Go to the Account section of your VerticalResponse account.
2. Select the *Analytics Settings* sub-menu.
3. Stay on the *Google Analytics* tab.

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4. Enter the domain (or domains) you're tracking with Google Analytics. If there's more than one, use the *Add Domains* link. Note that you do not need to enter every page you're tracking with Google Analytics, just the actual domain of your site.
5. Click *Save Domains*.

Access Your Data in Google Analytics:

Compare VerticalResponse to Other Traffic Sources

1. Open Google Analytics
2. Go to *Traffic Sources > All Traffic Sources*
3. "VerticalResponse / Email" will be listed there alongside your other sources of web traffic.

See Who Visited Your Site Via an Email

1. Open Google Analytics
2. Go to *Traffic Sources > Ad Versions*
3. Here you will find a list of everyone who visited your site, how long they were there, and how many pages they visited.

Additional Resources:

Watch this video to get help activating Google Analytics and Click-to-Conversion tracking:

http://help.verticalresponse.com/site/index/detailed_reports_video/

Get a free Google Analytics account to track traffic on your website:

<http://www.google.com/analytics/>

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The 9-Hour Marketing Makeover

4 Steps to Successful Marketing Planning — Hour 7

You're nearing the homestretch of our 9-hour marketing makeover. There's just one more hour to go, so let's get to it!

We all know there's a limited amount of time in the day. Who really feels like they can afford to schedule time to make a plan? It might seem like a waste of time, but the truth is that you will save time in the future by creating a plan today.

If you haven't already guessed, this hour is devoted to planning and scheduling. You might be wondering, "What types of plans and schedules are we discussing?" Well, let's talk monthly marketing plans. There are just four simple steps.

Step 1 — Define Your Goal:

Any plan or schedule is worthless without having something to achieve. A goal is a great place to start. Imagine a month. Within this month, consider what marketing goals you are trying to accomplish. How do they relate to the bigger picture, like your quarterly goals? Yearly goals? Breaking these long-term goals into smaller pieces—such as months—makes them less intimidating, and then it's easier to figure out which tactics to use to meet your goals.

Just in case you aren't sure where to begin, some common marketing goals might include:

- ✓ **Social Media:** Get a certain amount of members or followers each month
- ✓ **Email:** Increase conversion rate or email performance with an email test plan
- ✓ **Direct Mail:** Use direct mail to acquire X amount of new customers a month
- ✓ **Surveys:** Increase revenue by leveraging customer feedback from surveys
- ✓ **PR:** Write one press release a month to get media coverage and build buzz around your business

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Step 2 — Choose a Calendar:

There are many free and easy ways to create a plan. Most email services have calendars (i.e. Google Calendar), and the VerticalResponse email tool also has a free calendar for customers to use. You can even get organized by creating a plan in Microsoft Word or Excel. For those of you who are old fashioned, a pen and paper will do (Warning: The hand-written method tends to take longer). List all marketing ideas you want to try. Now cross off the ones that are too ambitious, expensive or aren't effective enough. Prioritize the remaining items and add them to your marketing plan.

Step 3— Schedule Your Day:

We know—this blank canvas thing can be intimidating. But don't worry; we're here to help you get started. All you really need to do now is make a list of activities and responsibilities that will help you reach your marketing goals. A regular schedule helps keep marketing initiatives a priority.

Here are some ideas to help you achieve your marketing goals:

- ✓ **Social Media:** Create your accounts (if you haven't already), and then allot times for blogging/posting/tweeting.
- ✓ **Email:** Create an email test plan with content due dates and launch dates.
- ✓ **Direct Mail:** Pick the method of direct mail you prefer (postcard, flyer, letter, etc.). Then decide on the due dates and launch dates.
- ✓ **Surveys:** Make time to discuss your survey ideas, schedule time to write the questions, and pick survey send dates.
- ✓ **PR:** Have a PR check-in. Allow time to explore good media sources for your company, delegate time to write your press releases, allot dates to send out the releases.
- ✓ Be sure to allow time to stay on top of your reporting.
- ✓ Hold industry news, trends and best practices discussions.

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Now think about frequency. Decide which of these need to be conducted daily, weekly or monthly. Then enter the activities on your monthly calendar. Cut, paste, and repeat all the activities that occur more than once. Before you know it, your month will be organized and your days will be full and productive!

Example of a Marketing Calendar:

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
	2		3		4		5		6
Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post		PR Check-In		Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post		Discuss Monthly Direct Mail Plans		Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post	
Discuss Monthly Email Plans		Send Weekly Email		Discuss Monthly Survey and create schedule		Read/Catch-Up on Industry News, Trends and Best Practices		Go Over Reporting	
Weekly Email Copy Due									
	9		10		11		12		13
Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post		PR Check-In		Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post		Create Email Test Plan		Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post	
Weekly Email Copy Due		Send Weekly Email		Monthly Survey Questions Due		Send monthly survey		Go Over Reporting	
	16		17		18		19		20
Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post		PR Check-In		Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post		Read/Catch-Up on Industry News, Trends and Best Practices		Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post	
Weekly Email Copy Due		Send Weekly Email		Direct Mail copy due				Go Over Reporting	
	23		24		25		26		27
Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post		PR Check-In		Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post		Launch Monthly Direct Mail Piece		Check Social Media Sites Blog/Twitter Post	
Weekly Email Copy Due		Send Weekly Email						Go Over Reporting	
		First Email Test - Subject Line Test							

Bonus Step 4 – Execute

It's all laid out now. And really, the easiest thing to do is just stick to your schedule. Your daily, weekly, and monthly breakdown is essentially a to-do list designed to keep your marketing plans on track. So, get to work!

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The 9-Hour Marketing Makeover

Communicating to Your Customers To Improve Sales — Hour 8

Now that you have successfully made over your marketing, you should give yourself a huge pat on the back! So you've taken a look at your marketing performance, email layout, direct mail, essential survey questions, social media, reporting, planning and you're thinking, "how and when do I reach out to customers to increase sales and keep in touch with them?"

Well that's a great question! We know that marketers need to focus on two key areas with their customers: sales and keeping customers coming back. So in this chapter you'll find our top sales or "special offer" reasons to send your next email or direct mail piece. And in the next chapter we'll show you how you can keep your customers coming back for more while raising your company profile at the same time.

If you're wondering how to easily accomplish all of the ideas in Chapters 8 and 9, just add them into your marketing calendar. Work backwards – pick a completion date and work back through all your deliverables to your start date. This will ensure that you are working with an achievable plan and deadline.

Step 1 — Add Regularly Known Events to Your Calendar:

A great strategy that's worked well for us and our customers is to review annual events that pop up every year (i.e. sales and promotions you will run around various holidays) and add them to your 2010 marketing calendar. Then you can sprinkle any additional events/ideas from the list below throughout the your annual marketing calendar as needed. VerticalResponse automatically populates holidays into the calendar.

Step 2 — Review Ideas and Start Thinking:

Spend the rest of your hour reviewing the ideas below and see which ideas best suit your marketing plan or business type. You'll be surprised how handy this small investment will be in 2010!

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Holidays

Capitalize on any holiday you can! VerticalResponse customer, PetCamp, emails about March Madness and April Fool's day and weaves the holiday message into their emails. They'll even create a promotion around the holiday. Any holiday can be paired with any product or service if you're creative enough.

- ✓ **Ongoing Yearly Events:** Halloween, Christmas, New Year's, etc.
- ✓ **Country-Specific Holidays:** Depending on what countries you have in your list, there's July 4th, Australia Day, Canadian Thanksgiving Day.
- ✓ **Family Holidays:** Father's Day (note that the date is different in other countries), Mother's Day, national grandparent's week, etc..

Declare Your Own Holiday

Here are some fun examples of how you can create your own holiday that works well with your product/service.

- ✓ **Nurseries:** Plant a Tree Week - Give Back to the Environment.
- ✓ **Spa/Hotel:** Family Celebration Week - Offer activities around families from food to fun.
- ✓ **Brew Pubs:** A local brew/pub here called 21st Amendment declares the month of February 'Strong Beer Month' where they offer hearty beers. They hype it in their pub, on their site, and in their email newsletter. They also had their own parade where they marched through the city on the day that prohibition was repealed and had a hundred people follow them down the street. That stunt created some real buzz and was picked up in the local media. It made a great story for their next email campaign.

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Special Offers for the Holidays

Stuck on what to add into your holiday marketing to make yourself stand out from your competition? Think about what is going to really get the attention of your customers. In this economy you can bet that your customers are really going to be looking for deals now more than ever so make sure you give them what they want!

- ✓ **Top 10 Under \$20, Under \$30, Under \$40:** This is a real time saver for your customers at any time but particularly during the holidays or whenever you have a sale or clearance. Many people know what they want or have to spend and want to know what they can get for their money, especially if they are 'the hot products' this season. Giving them quick lists and saving them time will increase your customer sales and loyalty.
- ✓ **Free Shipping:** This is a great offer especially for comparison shoppers. Even if you are priced slightly higher than a competitor, more often than not, people will choose you if you're willing to ship for free.
- ✓ **10% Off for Early Bird Shoppers:** Why not start your next holiday season, or promotion off early and send an early bird email to your customers? Make sure you include an expiration date and stick to it, and then you'll train people for your next early bird offer.
- ✓ **Free Gift with Purchase:** For those comparison shoppers who see your offer vs. your competitor's, if you're giving more value you'll likely get the sale. Why not even combine this with free shipping? You'll be a real hit.
- ✓ **Buy One Get One Free:** Call it the "Holiday Recession Sale" and offer two for the price of one.

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Seasons

You can take advantage of the different seasons of the year to tie together special offers with different times of the year. You have 4 reasons to market to your customers/prospects each year – spring, summer, fall, and winter. Here are some examples that work for summer, and other seasons in the year.

- ✓ **Summer Wear:** Do you sell or make jewelry that looks best with this summer's hot beachwear? How about selling the beachwear itself? Highlight it by calling out a popular star or magazine featuring the look. Then highlight it in your email marketing or direct mail sends.
- ✓ **Real Estate:** Do you still have summer/vacation properties you need to sell or rent? Email your past customers with a "Don't miss out on summer" message with a discount for the "late or early bird special".
- ✓ **Hotel/Resort:** Partner up with neighboring restaurants, stores or places of interest to devise a "getaway" package to encourage traffic. Then all of the participating businesses can send emails or direct mail to their respective customer lists highlighting the discounts. The benefit? Your customers who want a quick getaway don't have to think about where to stay or what to do and you and your neighboring businesses collectively drive more traffic and sales... everyone benefits!
- ✓ **Restaurant/Bar:** Are you in an area where it's busy during the week but deserted on the weekends? Why not email special discounts to businesses in your area for special luncheons, brunches or happy hours on the weekends – the employees will get to know you and not only return with their friends and families but perhaps pass your name along
- ✓ **Business Trade Show/Seminar:** Are you sponsoring a tradeshow in the height of summer? When you send your invitations why not include discounts at theme parks, hotels and restaurants for your attendees so they make a family trip out of it? You'll be surprised at how many people will come, especially since their company will pay for the room and some part of the food.

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Create Your Own Stimulus Package.

- ✓ We've spoken to restaurant customers who say they are giving away half priced bottles of wine on slow days. Now they are getting people in the door on what used to be their slowest nights and they're staying longer. We've seen stimulus packages for tires, lingerie, jewelry, consultants, and maternity wear and more

Deadline-Driven Emails:

- ✓ **Not Available in Stores:** Wineries do a great job at offering their wines direct-only. And they focus their messaging on the fact that you can only get the wines from the winery. Some have such limited production that they have people on waiting lists to get on the winery list.
- ✓ **While Supplies Last:** If you've got inventory that will go away, promoting that this offer will end with the end of the supply is a great idea. You may even want to set "limits" on the number of products that can be purchased.

Loyalty Programs:

Loyalty programs for your customers are another great reason to send emails to your customers. If you have a system that tracks your sales by customer, be sure to send an email when customers reach a certain milestone (i.e., 10 purchases with your company) to thank them for their loyalty. In this email you could send a coupon or other offer to encourage them to buy again. Here's an example email:

Hi Loyal Customer! You've reached gold customer status! For your continued patronage we'd like to extend a 25% discount on everything in the store or on the site just for you. This will expire in 7 days so act now! Use Promo Code XRE123T, but it's for you only so don't share!

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Friends and Family Discounts

- ✓ If you've got an offline retail location, send an email about your special "After Hours" sale for your best customers and their friends. Cater it, play some music, make it a social gathering while your most loyal customers shop. They'll either bring a friend or tell ALL their friends about it. This is great for word-of-mouth marketing.

Partner Emails

- ✓ Consider sending out an email with a local business as a partnership, perhaps around a holiday-themed idea. For example you could partner with a florist to provide a discount on flowers on Mother's Day, and use this as an incentive for your business. Could you partner with another business around any given holiday and ask them for a special discount for your customers only? It might be just the thing to get them over the hump of doing something with you or buying your product or service. And as a result of the discount or special offer your partner gives, you both win!

Sporting Events

- ✓ Don't forget annual events such as Superbowl, World Series, March Madness etc. as they're great events to use for marketing efforts.

Hopefully these ideas have gotten your creative juices flowing so you can find a reason to reach out to customers through "special offers" and increase your sales.

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Communicating to Your Customers To Keep Them Coming Back — Hour 9

So you've read through our 23 ideas for sales and "special offer" emails, and you're thinking, "that's all great, but what are some soft-sell reasons to keep contacting my customers, without the sales angle?"

Below we have included some of our best ideas for keeping in touch with your customers, whether it's providing relevant content for them, building your own profile or patting your customers on the back. There's always a good reason to reach out and stay top of mind to keep your customers coming back for more.

Your Events

Host Your Own Event: Art galleries, software companies, retail shops, and consultants (lunch & learn) can all host an event and request attendees to sign up.

Email Pictures About Your Event: If you hosted or attended an event and you posted pictures of your customers on YouTube, Picasa, or Flickr, why not send an email about it! Highlight a few pictures in your email and write about the exciting event. Talk about great conversations that you had. It might get more people out to your next event.

Birthdays!

Start a birthday club where you give something special to people who sign up.

Associations or Clubs

Monitor the calendars of small business associations, for example there's National Small Business Week every May.

If you need a group vote on an issue, sending a survey for this is a no-brainer.

Didn't get enough votes? Send again to the non responders until you do.

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Industry-specific events

The anniversary of your industry (e.g., National Retailers Day, etc.)

Your Awards & Reviews

Were you given an award, reviewed or published somewhere? Your customers want to know that you're doing well. They want to know that businesses they patronize are A-List players and will continue to grow so make sure you let them know.

Pat Your Customers on the Back

You should always be asking your customers how you're doing. You can do this using a survey. When you get some great feedback, make sure you reach out to that customer and ask them if they would be ok with you promoting them on your site and in your emails. Nothing sells your product better than your customers, not even you.

Create Your Own Customer Award

Do you have long time customers you'd like to reward? Why not have your own company awards. It can be as simple as sending them an email, thanking them for their business. You'll want to define the criteria for your award, create a name for it and an image that they can proudly place on their site. It can be a great buzz-generator and who knows, your customers might tell 10 friends that they got your award, which could turn, into 10 new customers for you!

Education

Give a "How To..." or a "5 Easy Steps To...": You are an expert at what you do and we're sure that you have knowledge others want to learn about. Create a weekly topic that you can speak to that your customers will benefit from. Make your information short and sweet and give them only a taste in your emails since you'll likely want to send them to your site for the rest of the information.

Want to learn more?
http://help.verticalresponse.com/site/index/email_best_practices

Contact:
1.866.6VERTICAL
501 2nd St. Ste. 700
San Francisco, CA 94107
www.verticalresponse.com

[Twitter.com/VR4SmallBiz](https://twitter.com/VR4SmallBiz)
[Twitter.com/SupportVR](https://twitter.com/SupportVR)

The 9-Hour Marketing Makeover

Create a White Paper, Guide or Industry Report: White papers and guides can be great for B2B companies looking to promote their services to an industry. Create a guide, or white paper, on a real world problem and how it's solved by your solutions. Since you are an expert at what you do, put it on paper and tell your customers about it.

Create an “Ask The Expert” Column: You can have a feature in your email where you request your recipients to “Ask the Expert.” Then you can use that answer in your next email. You can also come up with a question you get asked a lot about your industry, products or services, and make up an alter-ego person who is asking the question. These can be useful especially if you will proactively answer some customer questions they may have down the road.

Free Consultation/Free Trial: Offer a number of hours of your services free to get newbies in the door. If free doesn't rock your boat, then offer a deeply discounted rate for them to feel comfortable. Once they see the value, they're sure to come back for more.

Industry Examples:

If you think about it, almost every day something interesting, funny or completely bizarre happens in your business. This can be great content for your marketing messages. What are you doing to inject some personality into your future marketing?

Restaurants: Write about funny stories of your owners. Include some pictures. Have a 'submit your favorite recipe' contest and publish the winners.

Retailers: Make up a funny promotion. Declare your own holiday or celebrate another country's.

Consultants: Send an email about something going on in your industry and comment on it.

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Wineries: Customers love pets and more often than not a winery has one (or some other animal living on the land). Why not do a story about a day in the life of the winery dog or a story from the pet's point of view?

Ad Agencies: Why not point out the most ridiculous, best or worst ads of the week. You can always find something funny to talk about with an ad.

Bonus — More Resources

The reasons above should help fill in your marketing calendar for 2010, and provide you with plenty of reasons to keep in touch with your customers. If you are still interested in more ideas, check out our posts on the best B2B and B2C subject lines:

50 All-time Great Retail Subject Lines: http://blog.verticalresponse.com/verticalresponse_blog/2009/10/50-all-time-great-subject-lines-that-work.html

29 Great B2B Subject Lines: http://blog.verticalresponse.com/verticalresponse_blog/2009/11/great-b2b-subject-lines.html

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The 9-Hour Marketing Makeover

Resources

Getting Started With VerticalResponse

<http://verticalresponse.com/getstarted>

VerticalResponse Marketing Tips

<http://blog.verticalresponse.com/>

VerticalResponse for Salesforce Tips

<http://blog.verticalresponse.com/appexchange/>

Updates on VerticalResponse Products

<http://blog.verticalresponse.com/product/>

List Management & Segmentation

<http://help.verticalresponse.com/lists/>

Creating an Email

http://help.verticalresponse.com/site/index/build_your_email/

Understanding Your Email Reporting

http://help.verticalresponse.com/site/index/examine_reports/

Email Delivery

<http://www.verticalresponse.com/email-marketing/delivery.html>

Creating & Sending Postcards

<http://help.verticalresponse.com/postcards/>

Creating & Sending Surveys

<http://help.verticalresponse.com/surveys/>

Webinars

<http://help.verticalresponse.com/webinars/>

Join in Conversations in the VR Marketing Lounge Community

<http://lounge.verticalresponse.com/>

Want to learn more?

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