



Email Marketing Best Practices

Your Checklist for A Successful Email Marketing Campaign

Want to learn more?

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Whether you are new to email marketing or a savvy veteran, working for a company that sends 500 emails a week or 500,000, there are certain policies you should follow to optimize your campaigns. Call them the commandments of email marketing or call them best practices; here are 18 ideas to improve your delivery, open, and response rates.

Things You Should Do

- Make sure you have been granted permission to email your recipients through an online opt-in process or have been provided explicit permission offline. Developing a positive relationship with your recipients is the most important step you can take to help your mailings reach their inboxes, so don't jeopardize it – and your company's reputation - with overly aggressive tactics.
- Ensure the mailing is clearly labeled as coming FROM the person or company that has a relationship with the recipient. If you use a FROM label that a recipient doesn't recognize, it may prompt them to unsubscribe or worse complain to their ISP about you, even if they are actually interested in your services.
- Give your recipients an easy and obvious way to opt-out or unsubscribe from your mailings and remove them quickly from your mailings if they have already done so. It's the law and it reflects favorably upon your company when you act in a responsible manner. You don't need the negative publicity that accompanies the "spammer" tag.
- Make sure your SUBJECT LINE reflects the content of your email. When recipients think they're being tricked into opening the email they often become resentful - and unsubscribe in mass numbers.
- Provide a valid postal address in each email message, as well an easy way for recipients to contact you or the company responsible for sending your email. It's the law, and it provides another avenue of communication with the customer, which is another opportunity to prove your worth.
- Only email your recipients content that is relevant to what they've requested. If you start emailing irrelevant offers, they're more likely to unsubscribe.
- Remind your recipients where you obtained their contact information and why they are receiving your message. Sometimes people forget that they signed up to receive your email, especially if it's been a while since you've last communicated.

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- Create an ongoing relationship with your list members. Building a mutually beneficial email relationship – like all relationships – takes time and care. Mail to your list on a regular basis.
- Ask your recipients to add you to their address books so they recognize your messages when they arrive. In many cases, once you're entered in an address book, your images will display properly and your emails will be directed straight to the inbox, not into the bulk folder.
- Test, Test, Test: Segment your list, try presenting different offers, using different subject lines, and mailing on different days of the week to determine when you receive the best response.
- Combine both images and text in your emails. Then, if graphics are stripped from your emails due to the recipients' preferences, at least they are left with text they can read. If you must use an image as the dominant form of communication (we know, some graphic designers won't have it any other way!), then insert a link at the top of the email that lets people read the message without interference. Also provide a link that directs your recipients to a "hosted" version as well.
- Run your email through a spam filter before you launch your campaign. If words get caught in the filter, replace them with alternatives that will pass the test before proceeding with your mailing. This easy-to-perform trial may dramatically reduce the risk of your email being mislabeled as spam.

Things You Should Avoid

- Avoid suspect rented lists. Recipients on these types of rented lists did not opt-in to receive information from you specifically, therefore, it may result in you being flagged as spam - or even worse - blacklisted by the ISPs.
- Avoid punctuation such as "FR EE" or FR^E. The use of punctuation in the middle of words causes many blocked messages since ISPs and filters are screening for this.
- Avoid overuse of punctuation. Too much punctuation,!!!! or too many "Click Here!" references raises suspicions and may result in blocked messages.
- Avoid overuse of capitalization. Abundant capitalization "ANNOUNCING A GREAT NEW PRODUCT" can be difficult to read – if it even reaches the inbox in the first place. There's a good chance the excess punctuation will land your email in the junk folder.

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- Avoid sending attachments. Sending attachments with bulk email increases the chances the receiving ISP will block it and/or your list members will flag it as spam. ISPs don't have the bandwidth to support getting a large number of emails with massive attachments.
- Avoid sending offers your audience did not request. If your list members opted-in for specific information, don't send them unrelated offers. Doing this will only upset your list members, and result in a higher unsubscribe and/or complaint rate.

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