



Email Marketing Best Practices

Your Checklist for A Successful Email Marketing Campaign

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

- ✓ **Opt-in:** Start by being granted permission to email your recipients through an online opt-in process or being 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. In addition the more dedication you have to building a quality list the stronger results you will see in the long run.
- ✓ **From Label:** 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. Once you decide on a from label don't change it for every email send, you want to continue to build a relationship with your customer and you can't do that if you keep changing their contact.
- ✓ **Unsubscribe:** 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.
- ✓ **Subject Line:** 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. Don't forget subject lines should be 40-50 characters in length with the most important information at the beginning. Anything longer will get cut off by your customers email reader.
- ✓ **Your Address:** Provide a valid postal address in each email message, as well as 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

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communication with the customer, which is another opportunity to prove your worth.

- ✓ **Content:** 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. Be creative, this is what keeps your audience coming back for more.
- ✓ **Reminders of Sign Up:** 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. This will help decrease your complaints and increase your reputation as an email sender.
- ✓ **Frequency:** 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. Every list works differently. Some enjoy daily messages, weekly messages, biweekly or even monthly messages, find out what works for you.
- ✓ **Address Books:** 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.
- ✓ **Testing:** 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.
- ✓ **Images:** 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 of your email as well. And don't forget Alt Text, the text that shows even if the images are turned off. For example if you have an offer in an image like 10% Off, then make sure to include 10% off in the alt text so people can still get that information.
- ✓ **Spam Filter:** Run your email through a spam filter before you launch your campaign. If words get caught in the filter, replace them with alternatives that

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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

- ✓ **Renting Lists:** Don't send email to 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.
- ✓ **Making it Free:** 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. In general overusing the word FREE should be avoided as well.
- ✓ **Punctuation:** Avoid overuse of punctuation. Too much punctuation,!!!! or too many "Click Here!" references raises suspicions and may result in blocked messages.
- ✓ **Capitalization:** 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.
- ✓ **Attachments:** 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.
- ✓ **Type of Email:** 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. If you have created new offers or want to get people in the door by signing them up with your newsletter. Then send them an email saying we would like to send you more info, please opt-in here to be added to an additional list. Create opt-in forms for each new type of email.

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