

Boosting email campaign effectiveness *Tips for improving deliverability and response rates – Part 2*

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This is the second in a two-part series on email marketing effectiveness, covering messaging, design & coding, and tips on delivering email to mobile devices. In [Part 1](#), we covered best practices for improving email deliverability, including selecting an email platform, authentication, reputation, and broadcast attributes.

Messaging

To improve deliverability and response rates, successful marketers are segmenting their audience and delivering messages and offers that are relevant and personalized. Personalization can occur not just in the greeting, as in “Dear Mary,” but by providing content that reflects a recipient’s interests, website behavior, and buying history. Marketing automation tools, such as Vtrenz and Eloqua, and CRM systems such as Salesforce.com, allow marketers to capture behavioral information and other key segmenting criteria. See [Demand Generation Automation for B-to-B Marketers](#) for more information on these systems. Recipients of personalized, relevant content are more likely to respond to offers and less likely to unsubscribe from your mailing list.

Best Practices

In addition to segmenting your audience and creating relevant messages and offers, there are several messaging best practices for improving email effectiveness.

- Score your email for “spaminess.” Use [Spam Assassin](#) (open source code), tools provided by Email Service Providers (ESPs), or free and subscription-based services available online ([Pivotal Veracity](#), [ReturnPath](#), [Habeas](#)) to check the likelihood that your email will be filtered into a junk folder or blocked from delivery.
- Use marketing automation tools to set up automated email campaigns. Rules can be set so emails are sent automatically when a prospect takes a certain action, such as submitting a form or downloading a white paper. These “trigger-based” messages can deliver other offers and be used to gather further qualification criteria from prospects.
- Set up a series of emails to begin a dialog with prospects and customers. Known as “drip-marketing,” this technique is a great way to nurture leads and build loyalty. For example, I recently subscribed to marketing portal. I received a welcome email, followed by weekly “tips and tricks” emails to educate me on various resources available to me.
- Dynamic content is another technique that allows one email to be broadcast, but content and images to vary based on attributes known about the recipient. For example, an executive in the financial industry can receive different copy and graphics than an IT professional in the retail industry, all from one broadcast. Most top-tier ESPs have this functionality built into their platforms.

Design & Coding

When designing the email layout, keep in mind that people tend to scan emails and seldom scroll. Keep copy short, use bullet points and interesting graphics. Make sure that the call to action (CTA) is present in at least 3-5 areas (graphical and textual). Create HTML and text versions of your emails, and make sure the HTML renders correctly in popular email clients.

Best Practices

- Since many email clients block images by default, use alt tags and text descriptions to communicate content in case an image doesn't appear.
- Over 70% of Outlook users view email first in the preview pane before deciding whether to open it. Design the email so that key messages and offers show up in this pane.
- HTML coding for emails is not the same as HTML coding for web pages. For instance, Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) should not be used for emails since the emails may render incorrectly in different email clients. Outlook displays HTML differently from Gmail and LotusNotes from Hotmail.
- Test the emails in different clients to ensure they are rendering properly and that key messages and offers are prominent. You can do this by setting up a laboratory environment of various email clients, or use one of the 3rd party scoring platforms mentioned above.

Mobile

The worldwide mobile subscriber base reached a whopping 3.25 billion in July 2007. Voice comprises the majority of mobile traffic, but mobile data contributes around 10% of average revenue per user (ARPU). *Source: Paul Budde Communication Pty Ltd.* And according to ABI Research, worldwide sales of smartphones are expected to triple over the next six years, from 10% of the overall mobile phone market in 2007 to 31% of the market in 2013. As more and more people read their email on mobile devices, it's important to design for optimal viewing.

Best Practices

- As with email clients, mobile devices render emails differently. BlackBerrys display text, Palm/Versmail display HTML without images, and Symbian shows the text portion without images. Therefore, include plain text versions of all emails.
- Keep hyperlinks short as long links will take up an entire screen and are unsightly.
- With small screens, space is limited. Keep messages and offers short and sweet.
- Place logos or branding elements and offers at the top of the email so recipients see them first.

Conclusion

Whether you are creating, designing, and delivering email to computer email clients or mobile devices, the key to boosting response and conversion rates is through testing. Test subject lines, offers, placement of offers, personalization and design. By following the best practices highlighted in these two articles and conducting your own tests, you can optimize your email campaigns to achieve the best results possible.

About the Author

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