

develop strategies that make people look forward to getting your emails.

do you have a value proposition that makes your emails worth opening?

**email may seem inexpensive, but for many they are a lost selling opportunity.**

Sophisticated direct marketers carefully plan what offers and to whom they will mail promotions. But, when it comes to email, too often they revert to a one-size-fits-all mentality, blasting all or most of their email lists with the same offer. They are happy because the feeble sales are still profitable. The real results: Customer disinterest, less attachment to, and even irritation with, your brand, and unnecessary opt-outs. In fact, many consumers mark all corporate emails as SPAM, even those to which they have opted in.

**apply the same marketing principles to email as your other programs.**

Determine your strategy. Where does email fit into your communication stream with your customers? Do you want your email to sell product in the short run, to reinforce your print message, or is it an inexpensive off-season way to communicate regularly with your customers? Once the strategy is determined, approach email with the same rigor as traditional media. This means developing an annual promotional calendar, a contact stream, segmenting messages by customer purchase propensity and best customers, incorporating intelligent recommendation into emails and applying sound design standards and brand guidelines. The goal is to deliver relevant 1:1 messaging that customers consider welcome in their inboxes. The economic rationale for this sort of planning is solid. We have seen email-generated sales for some increase fourfold when they moved to relevance segmentation.

**best practices in email mirror general marketing best practices.**

By embracing and understanding the correct approach, an email campaign can be wildly successful, whereas failing to have a strategic approach to your emails campaigns can result in no impact, or worse, be detrimental to your brand and your future ability to send email.

We recognize email as a messaging system, and our experience in both the direct marketing industry and technology guarantees the highest potential success rate for our clients in this medium. Because of repeated abuse, email recipients have been empowered not only with the ability to filter spam but to mark email that makes it through their spam filter as spam as well. We use time tested best practices in email design and deployment that assures emails make it to the mass of inboxes on your list. We go to great lengths to make sure your approved designs pass all email client and spam regulations per the FTC CAN-SPAM act, which you can find more information at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/business/ecommerce/bus61.shtm>

Below are a few suggestions to help ensure that you are following the basic industry best practices:

- **Cadence And Streams:** Think of your emails as on-going communications, with each one a single bit in a longer conversation. Establish tests to determine the best frequency and message sequencing. Send too frequently, and your open rates will drop. Certain web-based email clients are notorious for black-listing domains with too many touches, so keep the big picture in mind, especially if emails are sent from various departments in the organization.
- **From Address:** Make your email from someone, perhaps a personality within your company, or at least from a friendly sound alias, i.e., newproducts@companyname.com or bestoffers@companyname.com.
- **Subject Line:** It doesn't matter what your email looks like if nobody sees it. Whether or not someone opens your email hinges on an effective subject line. Keep it professional, yet somewhat provocative. Short and straightforward subject lines around 50 characters (or less) typically get a better response than something "cute" or "creative." There are exceptions, of

Properly planned and executed, **your email program can become a cornerstone of your brand's communications** as well as an effective selling vehicle. It has the potential to gain you new customers and to more solidly marry you to your existing customers.

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course. For example, consider longer lengths for newsletters, clearly explaining the benefit of what's inside. Avoid things known to trigger spam filters (the word "free," exclamation points, all caps, etc.). Test subject lines in every email campaign.

- **Offer:** You're competing with dozens of other promotional emails that your recipient gets, so give them a reason to open the email and click through to your website or landing page. Remember, an offer doesn't have to be a marketing offer. Valuable engagement can be driven through useful content as the primary message.
- **Trigger Marketing:** Marketers are beginning to recognize the power of leveraging user actions and data to trigger specialized messages to their target audiences based upon their factors that can be captured. This personalization increases the performance of email communications, especially when dynamically generated data can be leveraged.
- **Personalization:** Version your emails to the individual for messaging, products, and offers. Address a best customer differently than a first-time shopper.
- **Images:** Most browsers will not show images, so look at how the email comes through without the images turned on. Utilize some HTML text at the top of your email. Have text descriptions behind the images. Don't make your email one big image. Consider your audience when choosing what percentage of your email is image-based. Shoppers opted in to high-end retail emails expect sleek graphics while certain industry newsletters may only require a graphical header. Test.
- **Animation:** Many email programs do not support animation, so don't build your campaign entirely around telling an animated story because most people will just see one frame.
- **Online Email Version:** Provide a link to see the email online, so if they cannot see the graphics they can still see the email; you might even consider having a graphic rich or animated version at this link.
- **Viral:** Give customers a reason to forward your email.
- **Unsubscribe:** Your customers need to have the option to stop receiving your communications if they wish. It's the law. You must also provide a valid physical mailing address, typically in your footer.
- **Measure:** Measure not only events, but also the effects of varied streams of communication.
- **Quality Assurance:** Before sending any email, run compatibility tests to ensure your emails display properly across multiple email clients, and send a test email to verify all links work.

### email can begin the online dialogue and maintain the relationship.

Properly planned and executed, your email program can become a cornerstone of your brand's communications as well as an effective selling vehicle. It has the potential to gain you new customers and to more solidly marry you to your existing customers. Even though they are relatively inexpensive to produce, email contact streams deserve the same senior-level attention as more expensive media.