

Seven Steps to Email Marketing Success

Use these guidelines to improve reputation and delivery, streamline your list and create compelling content that generates leads and builds relationships.

1. Focus on reputation. Spam is everyone's problem. As ISPs grapple with increased traffic on their networks, the corporate costs of managing the flow of internal spam has risen above the \$10 billion mark. Legitimate senders get blocked, filtered and blacklisted – but you can take control with best practices:

- Get permission before adding names to your database and remove them promptly when requested. Encourage recipients to add you to their safe-senders list.
- Remove bounces quickly. Sending to bad addresses is a spammer signal to many ISPs.

2. Segment your list to improve performance. The latest data suggests smaller lists outperform large ones: average response rates of 42% for lists of 1,000 or less, compared to 26% for lists of 10,000 to 100,000 names according to Exact Target. That's quite a contrast. These numbers may show the effect of segmentation and targeted content. Segment your e-list in ways that make sense for your business and buy cycle. For example, online catalogs segment their lists by recency-frequency-monetary (RFM). Frequent buyers may receive a higher frequency of emails while low-dollar first-time buyers may receive periodic special offer alerts. The right segmentation strategy helps streamline communications while making all your marketing communications more relevant and effective for each target group.

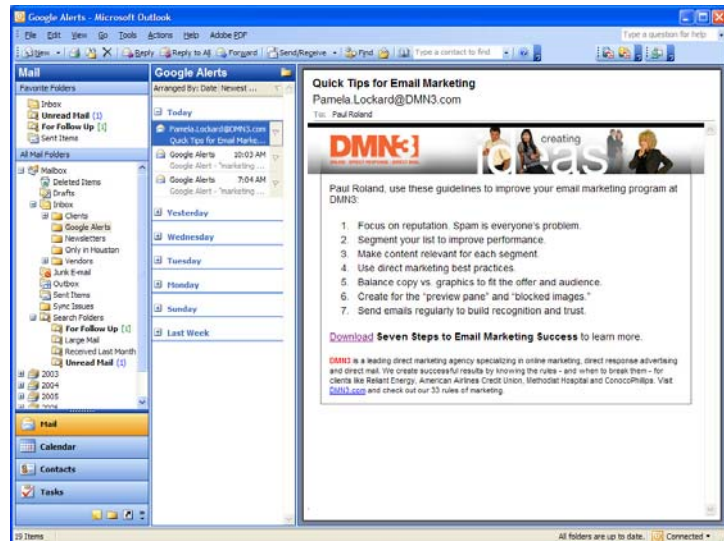
3. Make content relevant for each segment. Email is an ideal tool for building relationships. Deliver relevant communications, make it easy to unsubscribe, and focus on subscribers who appreciate what you're sending them. Relevant communications can provide a steady flow of warm leads and can be a conversion goldmine with the right strategy.

4. Use direct marketing principles. Email marketers know that best practices change with the tide in email marketing – what worked last year, may not work as well the next. However, at its core, **EMAIL IS DIRECT MARKETING** and the same principles work to ensure success: *the right message and the right offer to the right audience, at the right time, in the right way.* An appealing offer to the right target audience gives you the opportunity to build your brand, generate interest, drive traffic to a landing page, web site or brick & mortar store, or directly sell your products online.

5. Balance the copy vs. graphics to fit the offer and the audience. Email is immediate and it's all about the message – why it's important to “open this email now.” Unless you need pictures to tell your story (women's pants now 30% off), graphics are often less important than the copy. In its 2007 Email Marketing Benchmark Guide, MarketingSherpa compared B2B emails from 3,637 companies, and then surveyed the companies to determine which factors most directly influenced ROI. The top 30% of high ROI emails had more to do with words (copy, offer, subject line) than with design or graphics.

6. Create for “preview pane” and “blocked images.” In the U.S. today, more than 80% of business email consumers use Outlook, nearly 70% use the “preview pane,” and more than 50% “block images.” It's important to consider how viewers see your email, no matter what email program and functions they use.

When designing for the preview pane, think “top left” and use narrow columns to ensure viewers can see your message without touching their mouse. With the current prevalence of image spam filtering, it's best to use images sparingly unless you're selling products via email. Best practice is to ask your creative team to provide three versions for approval: 1) preview pane, 2) blocked images, and 3) full screen.



7. Send emails regularly to build recognition and trust. Familiarity, trust and relevance are key issues to recipients according to recent survey data: 55.9% say recognition and trust are primary reasons they open emails. In the same survey, more than 50% say that finding the sender's information consistently valuable is the top reason for opening their emails. Send emails on a regular schedule to build recognition. Segment the list based on response, then serve up relevant content to each segment. For the best results, use a person's name in the “From” email address, rather than the generic *info@yourcompany.com*.