



The Coffee Break Guide to Email Marketing



Know that Email Marketing can be of great benefit to you but don't have time to spend months, days or even hours researching possibilities? Sign-Up.to is here to help! We make the whole process easy and provide tools that get the job done.

To help get you started here's a brief guide to the key things you need to know. This is by no means exhaustive (that would need several lengthy books) but these are what we consider the most important tips to help you make the most of email marketing.

Building your lists:

Before you can begin email marketing you need your list of people to contact.

The key to a successful email marketing plan is permission. You need to ensure that every single person you contact has asked you to – no exceptions. Your list should be composed of people you have an existing contact with – customers, people who have enquired about your company etc. or people who have explicitly requested to hear from you – for example by filling in a form on your website.

Remember:

- Never, ever send an email campaign to someone who you haven't had consent to contact.
- Never purchase email lists.
- Make sure the people you are contacting have asked to be contacted.

Quick ways to build your list:

- Place a subscription form prominently on your site.
- Ask everyone who contacts you if they'd like to join your mailing list.
- Ensure that every form you use to collect data asks people if they'd like to receive email updates from you.

Planning your campaign:

You need to view your email marketing as developing an ongoing relationship with your contacts. Like any relationship, it's a two-way thing, you have to give your contacts something in order to get back what you're looking for (be it sales, donations, referrals or loyalty).

Key planning pointers:

- Have a defined goal for your email program, so you'll know when you've achieved it.
- Plan a series of communications – regular, expected contact works best, so let your customers know how often you'll be contacting them and make sure you keep your promise.
- Make sure each message has a real benefit for recipients – useful information, discount vouchers, special offers all work well.
- Make sure your messages contain relevant, timely content that will make readers want to open your next mail.
- If you have a number of different target audiences create different, targeted campaigns for each audience rather than one general campaign.

Next Page: Building, sending and tracking

Building your campaign:

So you've got a list, a plan and you're ready to start. Here are a few key points to remember when you're building your message.

- Size is important – make sure the entire contents of your message, images included, is less than 50Kb so it's quick and easy for people to download. Not everyone has broadband!
- Width is important too – most email clients will only display emails less than 550 pixels wide without scrolling.
- Check, and double-check your spelling and grammar.
- Never send out a campaign that is just an image. Many email clients won't load images by default, so recipients will just see a blank email. However, including relevant images that back up your text is a good idea.
- Check every link in your message to ensure they work.
- Include a clear call-to-action for your recipients.
- Make sure that the 'From Name' for your campaigns is consistent every time, and contains your company or brand name.
- The subject line has a huge influence on getting people to read your message – make sure it's short (less than 40 characters including spaces) and gives people a specific reason (benefit) to open your message, now! Don't use all CAPS, exclamation marks and words like Free as these will get picked up by anti-spam systems.
- Also make sure your subject line is truthful – this is a relationship we're talking about, if you lie, you'll get dumped!
- Test, test, test – send previews of your campaign to as many different email accounts (hotmail, yahoo, gmail etc.) as you can to make sure everything appears as you expect.
- Always include your company name and an unsubscribe link – it's the law. (Sign-Up.to does this automatically for you).
- If you're in the US or contacting customers in the US, ensure you include your physical mailing address in every message.

Sending your campaign:

Now your message is ready to go there are a final couple of points to remember:

- Timing is everything – if you've sent campaigns before, check to see when people are actually reading them – you may find that altering the time you send your message can improve results. For example, aggregate data shows that late morning/mid afternoon is the best time to send a campaign, but results vary for each audience.
- Make sure you can measure results – however you send your campaign out, make sure you can gauge success. Statistics like opening rates, link clicks and unsubscription rates are invaluable.

Tracking & learning:

Once you've sent a campaign things don't stop there – you need to make sure that you learn from every interaction with your audience. If you've got access to statistics you can ensure that every campaign you send is better than the last.

Things to watch out for:

- Open Rate (how many people opened your message) – was this unusually high or low? Factors that can affect opening rates include the subject line (was it compelling enough?); the message contents (did you check it wouldn't be confused with spam?); the time you sent the message (had everyone gone home for the day?) and even the previous campaign you sent (if you didn't live up to people's expectations, you may have lost their trust for good.)
- Link clicks – are some links getting more clicks than others? This may be due to the call to action you're using or simply the placement of the link in the message.
- Unsubscription rate – if this is more than 1% you've got a problem, you may not be targeting the right people or your content simply might not be interesting enough.
- Opening time – when are people actually reading your message? If it's some time after you sent it then maybe adjusting your send time may increase your open rates.

That's it for our quick guide. These tips should help you get more from your email campaigns but there's plenty more advice that can be applied as well. Check out www.sign-up.to if you're hungry for more!