

Ten Steps to Effective Email Marketing

Updated strategies and actionable steps to help B2B and B2C marketers deliver integrated and measurable email marketing campaigns in today's quickly changing online landscape

A successful email marketing campaign requires a diligent and thoughtful approach to the entire email marketing process.

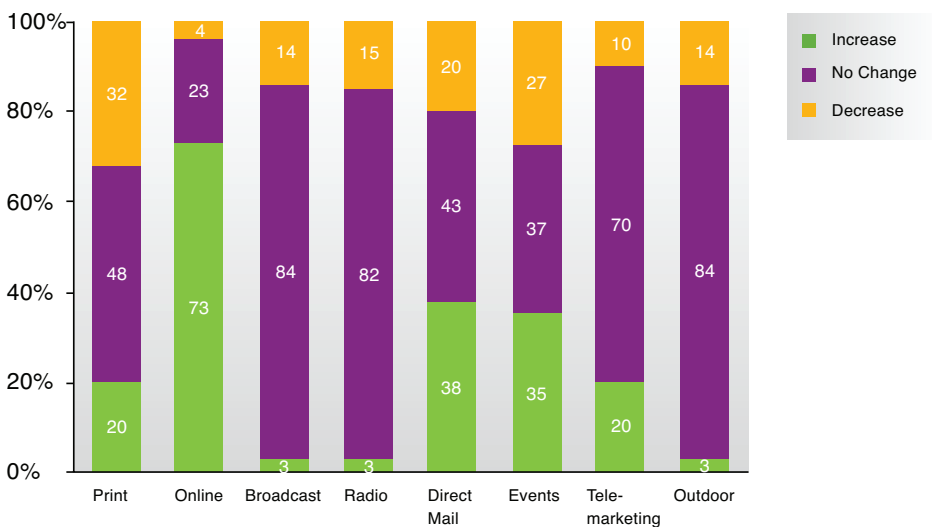
INTRODUCTION

There's a revolution going on in marketing today. New technologies continue to emerge. Communication channels are shifting and fragmenting. New social media channels change the rules of marketing and customer engagement on a daily basis. Meanwhile, the pressure for marketing to deliver measurable ROI has never been higher. Although email marketing has been around for more than a decade it is still

a complex and often-misunderstood tool. Many marketers would argue it has been both a blessing and a curse to the practice of marketing. On the positive side, email is an easy-to-use, low-cost means of connecting with prospects, customers and partners. However, these positives can quickly become negatives. Because of the low cost, there's virtually no limit to how many emails a company can send, resulting in inbox overload. Many customers and prospects feel like they are constantly being spammed with irrelevant messages, and email marketers have had to face the rise of spam filters - making it more difficult to reach intended audiences.

Customers and prospects do want to hear from companies, but the messages must be relevant. The rise of recent communications vehicles such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Wave, and SMS have gained popularity, but email is still an important and effective conduit for reaching customers and prospects, launching interactive

For the following media, what are your spending plans in 2010



B2B Magazine 2010 Outlook Survey - Nov 2009

marketing campaigns, and driving conversations via new social media and technology channels.

But email marketing is not just about sending emails. The process has many moving parts that must be well-integrated in order to provide a content-rich experience for customers and prospects. Marketers need to manage customer and prospect lists respectfully and create well-targeted campaigns to ensure that messages will be delivered and not disappear into spam filters. Campaign responses must be carefully monitored in order to evolve content and offers for follow-up campaigns.

Many email solutions can be used to send messages, but unless the recipient opens the email, engages, and takes action, the campaign will not yield results. A successful email marketing campaign requires a diligent and thoughtful approach to the entire email marketing process. Following the ten best practices outlined in this paper will help improve overall email marketing effectiveness, while navigating the quickly-changing online media landscape.

STEP 1: ESTABLISH A SINGLE MARKETING PLATFORM

Thanks to the marketing revolution, the days of “batch and blast” emails are gone. Instead, companies are now focusing on generating measurable marketing ROI. Using a single source or platform to manage email marketing processes enables better and faster campaign management, with more predictable outcomes. Conversely, to use disparate systems invites errors.

Using a single marketing platform enables automated dialogs and nurturing campaigns that target the right person with the right offer at the right time in the buyer’s lifecycle.

STEP 2: MANAGE CUSTOMER DATA EFFECTIVELY

As the breadth, volume and complexity of data have exploded over the past decade, data management has become a well-known challenge for direct marketers. Having the right data available to help target customers and present optimal offers is one of the best ways for an organization to accelerate its marketing efforts, and in order to prepare data for email distribution, it must be gathered from the multiple sources and scrubbed to ensure ongoing accuracy and compliance.

Gathering customer data: In most businesses, multiple departments gather and manage customer data, often working in silos. Many online marketing tools limit the amount and type of customer data that can be referenced. But in reality, deep data should be drawn from multiple channels such as offline connections, email response, form and survey data and company website browsing history. Powerful new software tools can help compile and track insights from all existing corporate data assets as well as create highly customized content and interactive experiences based on a complete transactional history for each customer.

Scrubbing data: Marketing programs will not succeed unless customer data is clean and in compliance with global government-regulated opt-in policies. This process includes:

- > Checking for bad email addresses (including typos such as name@yhao.com)
- > Tracking opt-in permissions
- > Learning about your customers through their behaviors and responses to your campaigns (building a profile)

- › Ensuring that email addresses are valid so you can avoid sending to accounts included in lists that are designed to trap emails as spam
- › Leveraging customer knowledge in customer targeting

STEP 3: FORM A SINGLE VIEW OF CUSTOMER DATA

Once customer and prospect data has been gathered and scrubbed, email campaign processes can be significantly streamlined by **building a single view of each customer across multiple interaction points**. Keeping this view clean and up-to-date is a critical, constant process. Allowing prospects and customers to manage and update their own data can ease the burden of maintaining updates. For example, allow customers or prospects to enter in new email addresses as they change. Handling bounced emails automatically will also ease the strain of manually updating customer records. The records should be flagged as “bounced”—and depending on the type of bounce, the email address may need to be cleared. Managing opt-in and permission-based marketing, and automatically processing bounces (including recipient complaints), will provide relevant customer data for more discrete marketing. It will also improve email deliverability by eliminating erroneous data.

Companies that segment their audience to drive relevant, timely, targeted campaigns outperform the pack—and companies that get permission to send emails and maintain clean data have the best chance of getting their messages delivered. Conversely, companies that cannot track message delivery or manage bounces typically find themselves wasting marketing dollars due to poor list quality.

STEP 4: START THE RELATIONSHIP RIGHT

As soon the right processes are in place for managing customer and

prospect data, start building a positive, trust-based relationship by shoring up options for opt-in, permissions, delivery preferences and privacy:

Opt-In - Give subscribers detailed opt-in options that make it clear what they will receive and when. When collecting email addresses, have a syntax validation in place or ask the user to enter their address twice to ensure it is valid. Also, send a triggered opt-in confirmation e-mail to that address. This will provide an opportunity to reinforce the opt-in, verify that the address is valid, and confirm what the recipient can expect to receive.

Permission - When customers or prospects opted in to receive emails, they didn't give permission to overload their inbox with messages. Respect granted permissions by sending only relevant, timely, appropriate messages—and continue to build on the relationship by asking permission for other types of communications or confirming frequency preferences.

Ask permission—again and again. Use the highest permission standard possible. At a minimum, use confirmed opt-in.

Preferences - Do subscribers prefer HTML, text or mobile messages? How often? On what subjects? Continually collecting preferences helps engage the customer or prospect and build knowledge that can be used in segmentation and targeting.

Part of respecting each individual's preferences also includes respecting when they no longer want to receive communications. It is essential to make it easy for people to unsubscribe, and to respond immediately to unsubscribe requests. An unsubscribe option removes just one uninterested person from a list—but if that person were to click “Report Spam” because they

couldn't unsubscribe easily, it could affect the ability to reach thousands of legitimately interested people.

Privacy - Customers and prospects have increasingly strong concerns about their privacy across all communications channels, and part of building trust is protecting privacy. Privacy policies should be clearly communicated and a central database that tracks marketing and operational interactions with each customer should be diligently maintained.

STEP 5: CREATE COMPELLING, RELEVANT CONTENT

Email marketing is not about doing "batch and blast" or "load, list and send," and hoping the email lands successfully. Today's buyers and consumers are educated and demand concise, relevant information that will empower them to make the best choices. Overt sales approaches are not effective. Content needs to be compelling, relevant and delivered at the right time. Emails must be personalized to garner and hold the attention of target audiences. To ensure delivery and improve results, email campaigns need to be tested, monitored and measured so successful

approaches can be expanded and unsuccessful ones abandoned.

Relevant emails pay off over time. Imagine someone gets an offer that's relevant but not interesting. They may delete that particular email—but they will be unlikely to unsubscribe from the list, and will remain open to future offers. The incremental time taken to refine and improve email content relevancy will be rewarded with an increase in response.

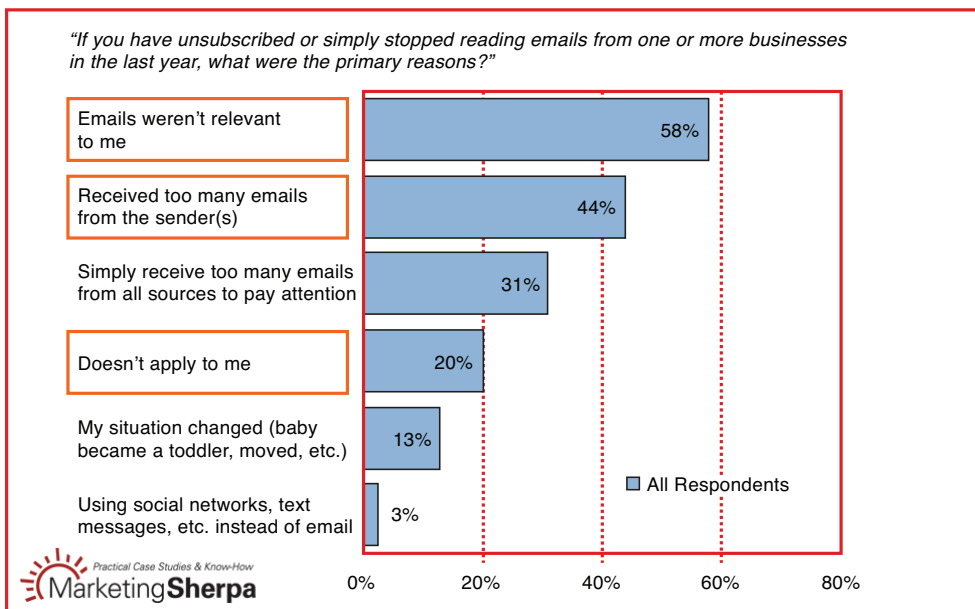
Four out of 10 subscribers "mark as spam" when they receive irrelevant content. It's critical to improve interactive marketing tactics to ensure message and offer relevancy, and increase marketing ROI. Messages need to align with the preferences and needs of customers or prospects.

To deliver relevant content, both personal relevance and external relevance should be considered.

Personal relevance takes into account demographics, psychographics, communication styles, buying behaviors, life stages, and interests or hobbies. **External relevance** considers seasonality, upcoming events, news and limited-time offers.

There are also different forms of relevance to consider within each email, including sender, subject line, message and offer:

- > Focus on becoming a relevant (known) sender
- > Use compelling subject lines to get the recipient to read the email
- > Don't try to sell in the subject line
- > Provide clarity in the message
- > Keep it simple and answer the questions "What am I asking the recipient to do?" and "Why should they do it?"
- > Provide a relevant offer or simple call to action above the "fold" of the email



- › Create dynamic, personalized landing pages based on the profile of the individual who clicks the link in the email

Once content is relevant and compelling, ensure it can be read by previewing emails in a variety of inboxes to make sure it renders correctly. See how the email will look in different email readers (including mobile environments) in multiple regions of the globe. Be sure that images display. If recipients don't understand the message, they are more likely to call it spam.

Frequency of communications is also a relevancy concern. Tune across campaigns to avoid overlap, and keep in mind the anti-spam regulations and practices when testing for frequency of communications. Let the recipient know what frequency to expect. For example, how often can a new subscriber expect to receive emails?

Don't bombard people with content just because they opted in generally. Over-communicating can result in lower response rates and higher complaints that eventually equate to poor deliverability.

STEP 6: HAVE A CUSTOMER DIALOG

The days of sending a birthday card every year and calling it a customer relationship building campaign are over. Customers and prospects now expect companies to engage them in conversations, ask their opinions, and present content that takes these conversations into account. Marketing strategies should build on these interactions and mature over time.

All of the information marketers are collecting—including demographics, psychographics, online and offline interactions, transactions and responses—deepens customer profiles and should be used to drive sustained interactions in future campaigns,

triggered by events or over time. As the complexity of dialog-based communications increases, it might be necessary to employ easy-to-use software tools to drive personalized, relevant, timely communications. Key requirements for these tools include the ability to execute triggered or event-based email marketing, deliver personalized content and automatically schedule rules-driven communications to meet campaign objectives.

Another challenge of any customer dialog is deciding which campaign a customer should receive. Customer preferences, channel constraints, line-of-business priorities and overall corporate rules can have a huge impact on the timing and distribution of marketing campaigns. Ensuring campaigns build on an individual's profile and past dialogs will allow optimization of communications based on learned preferences.

STEP 7: SPAM-PROOF ALL MESSAGES

Check content for spam. Will the wording or content trigger spam filters? For example is the word "free" used? Identify any content issues that may affect reputation. Check that links are working and confirm that the links themselves are not on any blacklists. Determine if there are any spelling or HTML errors. Perform seedlist tests before sending out the campaign to ensure there are no issues preventing the email from being delivered to inboxes.

This is more than good process. It's the law, and ensures CAN-SPAM compliance and avoids civil lawsuits and fines. In addition, by actively monitoring deliverability and automating bounce and data updates, email delivery rates will be higher and sender reputations and delivery successes with major ISPs will improve.

STEP 8: RESPOND IN REAL-TIME WITH THE RIGHT CONTENT

Aim to respond to prospects and customers with the right information at the right time. The resulting dialog will also help more accurately determine the best time to engage in a buying discussion. Use automated dialogs and ongoing nurturing campaigns to continue to engage customers, and to monitor and immediately respond to customer response cadences, lifecycles or buying cycles. In an email “batch and blast” scenario, it would be impossible to influence the desired behavior in real time. By contrast, the right software tools can quickly and easily engage the customer and take advantage of every conversion opportunity.

Create triggered alerts for customers or prospects by using their preferences to support event dates that allow them to tell you when something special is happening. Use automated emails and dynamic content to tailor the triggered messaging to the customer. This may be as simple as an event date-based email (such as a birthday email), or it may be based on their behavior (such as a new customer welcome message, prospect email with requested information, or event follow-up email). At every stage, communication needs may change, so continue to test content and frequency.

Online, automated two-way communications allow marketers to build trust and collect customer information that can drive data and customer communication strategies. Don't try to get prospects to disclose everything at once. Simple forms are the best way to collect information and build profiles over multiple engagements. Ask questions to help improve targeting, including demographics, interests, and email frequency preferences. Prioritize need to know over nice to know and build stronger engagements over time.

STEP 9: LEVERAGE SOCIAL SHARING

Everyone is buzzing about today's widely available social marketing tools. Don't let all the Web 2.0 and social media buzz be a distraction. First, define how social tools can support commercial goals and enhance—not replace—existing marketing channels such as email. Many of us follow companies or brands on Twitter, Facebook or other social networks, but as a marketer, it is important to define goals and success criteria to leverage social media effectively.

As one of the fastest growing opt-in tactics for marketers, social sharing is the new viral marketing. The biggest barrier to integrating social sharing and email is a lack of integrated thinking by email marketers to take interactions outside the email box.

There are three simple steps to leveraging social sharing. First, create an email. Next, create a microsite with social site sharing from the content library. Finally, direct the email recipient to the social site of their choice, and when the recipient shares the offer and related content with their social network, use the application to gain knowledge about any click-thrus, visits or referrals. Including social sharing in email marketing strategies will give recipients the ability to share offers—not just follow or become a fan—and will provide tremendous insight into who has been referred and who has taken advantage of the shared offer. This information is transparent and can exponentially increase reach and response.

STEP 10: BUILD A SOLID INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENSURE EMAIL DELIVERABILITY

No discussion of email is complete without delving into deliverability. Although customer data, content relevancy, dialogs and social sharing

strategies may be in place, if the message never reaches the inbox, no actions will ever be taken. Deliverability happens (or not) across many layers and, even in B2B environments, email deliverability is the second most important challenge for marketers, according to Marketing Sherpa.

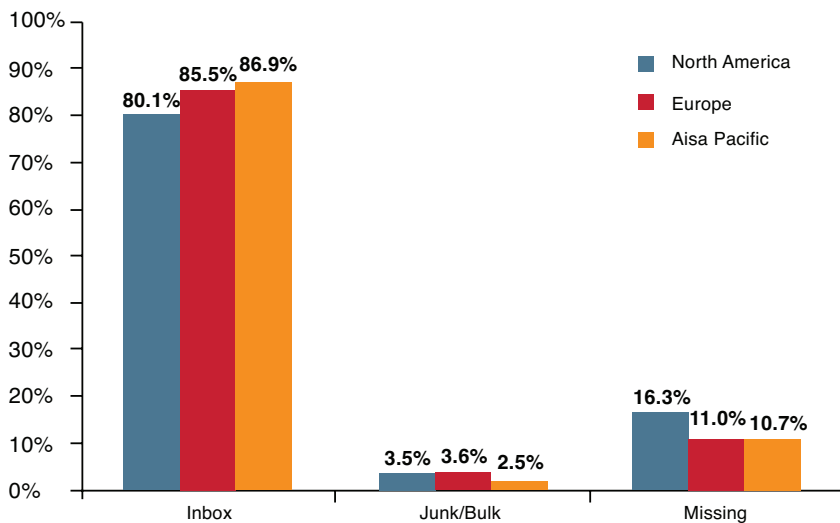
According to Return Path's recent study The Global Email Deliverability Benchmark Report, 2H2009: "North American inbox percentages remain flat with 20% of email bulked or missing. The second half of 2009 showed an inbox placement rate of just 80.1% for permission-based commercial email in the United States and Canada. This represents a slight increase as compared to the first half of 2009."

in place to provide the solid foundation to build a good sender reputation. That infrastructure includes authentication standards, certification methods, IP and Domain-based reputation management, ISP throttling, white list management, black list monitoring, feedback loops and bounce management. By leveraging email deliverability services within the same infrastructure, the benefits include lower total cost of ownership, seamless data integration, monitoring and reporting—all from a single source.

GAINING THE ADVANTAGE

Based on years of experience with some of the leading B2C and B2B companies in the world, Aprimo® has helped companies address all the challenges of email marketing. To understand how Aprimo can impact each stage of the email marketing process, consider this case study:

Global Delivery Rates, DH 2009



Folksam, a Swedish financial services provider, leveraged advanced customer analysis including studies of customer demographics, buying habits, and the impact of different life events on buyer behavior. Using this information, Folksam sped up campaign development time, acted more quickly on new opportunities and more accurately targeted the pertinent customer needs identified from the data analysis. The Aprimo suite enabled the significant change in marketing activities that Folksam sought and helped to automate the management of intricate, multi-channel conversations with the customer, via the appropriate channel, at the right time. Because the Aprimo solution is integrated with Folksam's data warehouse and customer management software, the company is able to maintain a real-time, 360-degree view of how individual customers are targeted, together with their responses.

Deliverability starts with an infrastructure and set of services that provide a foundation for good email to get through the inbox hurdle. Email deliverability infrastructure needs to be

ABOUT APRIMO

Aprimo's integrated marketing software enables B2C and B2B marketers to successfully navigate the changing role of marketing by taking control of budget and spend, eliminating internal silos with streamlined workflows and executing innovative multi-channel campaigns to drive measurable ROI. Only through the use of Aprimo's modular and on demand software, Aprimo Marketing Studio B2C and Aprimo Marketing Studio B2B, can marketers truly integrate marketing organizations, manage, deliver and track the right message targeted to the right audience over the right channel and translate Marketing efforts into measurable business impact and revenue. Hundreds of thousands of Marketers trust Aprimo to revolutionize their marketing including Bank of America, Honda, King Pharmaceutical, Pearson Education Ltd, Time Warner Cable-NY and Wal-Mart. For more information, visit www.aprimo.com.

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900 East 96th Street, Suite 400
Indianapolis, IN 46240

317.803.4300 main
317.803.4251 fax

[aprimo.com](http://www.aprimo.com)

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