EMAIL MARKETING TIPS

From Our InfoUSA Email Experts

In order to assist you every step of the way while creating an Email Marketing Campaign, our InfoUSA Email Experts have compiled lists of their best practices and things to remember when going through the process.

When creating an email campaign it's important to know what works, and what doesn't. Learning the best practices InfoUSA recommends for your email campaigns will help you to be highly effective.

WHEN CREATING AN EMAIL LIST...

✅ Encourage more email list opt-ins and expand your lists by highlighting the benefits of receiving emails from you.

✅ Make the opt-in process easy and fast. Require only minimal information to sign up for a general mailing list, and the whole process should take less than a few minutes. Any longer and you risk a potential subscriber abandoning mid-process.

✅ Incorporate a subscribe link or an email address entry box on every page of your website so that subscribing is always available.

✅ Ask for information and delivery preferences during the subscription process, as this is a good way to learn about your subscribers and collect profile details.

✅ Monitor ongoing customer attitude with occasional polls or surveys.

✅ Put your privacy policy in the subscription path so each subscriber understands that you are being up front and how his profile information will be used.

✅ Maintain email list accuracy on an ongoing basis – any change in email, postal address, status, and any other profile information should be updated in your company database.

✅ Remove a person right away when you receive an unsubscribe request. Ideally, this is done immediately through an automated process, but if not, take no longer than three days to remove the customer from your subscription lists. Someone shouldn't have to make a second request or it will reflect poorly on your business.

✅ Retain existing customers by making it easy for them to update their profile. This can be achieved through a button or link on your website and a link at the bottom of each email communication.

WHEN DEVELOPING AN EMAIL CAMPAIGN...

✅ Use only opt-in email lists to prevent spam backlash.

✅ Plan ahead. Sequential emails can create a positive, unified customer experience and enhance brand awareness.

✅ Identify your company name in the subject line to establish credibility.

✅ Pique a recipient's interest with evocative or intriguing subject lines. Try asking a question instead of making a claim or telling someone what to do. Experiment to find what works best to get your recipients to open the email and read further.

✅ Use bold headlines so readers get the gist of an email in half a second. They should know what

the email is about quickly and be enticed to read the details.

✅ Personalize your emails using the profile information you've collected. Provide content and offers based on what you have learned about your subscribers. There is a greater likelihood the message will be read if it is relevant and catered to the recipient.

✅ Find the best delivery frequency for your subscribers – static (based on a set day or time period) or triggered (based on an event, offer, etc.). Triggered frequency emails generally garner 2-3 times greater response.

✅ Find the best time for email delivery, when your customers are online and available to read your email. Industry research shows that Tuesdays and Wednesdays mornings commonly generate the best response, but you may find that your subscribers respond better on a different day or time.

✅ Use information emails as an opportunity to up-sell and introduce new products or services. Provide the content as a "for your information," but also clearly list the benefits of buying or signing up.

✅ When a client purchases a product or service, use an auto-responder to thank them immediately. This shows the customer your positive appreciation and reinforces brand awareness.

✅ Test emails with smaller groups and make necessary adjustments before doing large mailings. Catch mistakes early on before any major damage is done.

✅ When using a refer-a-friend program to send emails, always say why a recipient is hearing from you, ideally in both the subject line and the email body. This way, the reader will not treat the message as spam. Be clear that the email reached his inbox because one of his friends believed you had valuable information that would benefit him.

WHEN WRITING & DESIGNING AN EMAIL CAMPAIGN...

✅ Start with an attention grabber and place it in the top-center of the page.

✅ Plan ahead and think through how creative design and editorial content work together for single email messages or multiple emails.

✅ Acknowledge that your reader's time is precious, and move to the main point right away: What can you do for the reader?

✅ Keep it clean – if the design or the editorial content is too busy and cluttered, the reader may give up and move on to something less visually taxing. Use clear headlines and short paragraphs with adequate space so your message is easy on the eyes.

✅ Place the first call-to-action link early in the email to allow a reader to take action right away.

✅ Use headlines, bold headers, and bullet points to allow for easy scanning of information.

✅ Make the header and body content interesting and useful. You want the reader to say, "That was good information. I can use that."

✅ Keep it relevant – Do not just do the basic subject line or headline personalization. Use the profile information collected to further personalize the creative and content to be more compelling and useful to the reader.

✅ Distribute only timely and relevant information. Providing info to a reader after the point at which it may have been useful will lead to reader frustration and possibly unsubscribing.

✅ Provide a second call-to-action and link further down the email body as a reminder to click and find out more about your promotion.

✅ Design graphic elements to be large enough to interest readers, but not so large that problems occur while loading such as long load times for images. Perform tests to find the optimal quality for your creative within possible technical limitations of your subscriber.

✅ Entice with editorial content as well as design. In the event that the recipient's email service provider uses an image blocker and the graphic is not delivered, the content should compel them to manually load the image or click through to your website.

✅ Tie a series of campaigns together to create anticipation and increase interest. Maintain a unified theme and sell a "story" over three or more campaigns.

TO ENSURE YOUR EMAIL GETS DELIVERED...

✅ Follow rule #1: Do not spam. Use a clean opt-in only list that you can trust.

✅ Be proactive in monitoring delivery. Put procedures in place to verify delivery, so that when a problem occurs, you can investigate immediately and prevent future errors.

✅ Arrange for a dedicated Internet Protocol (IP) address, so that your delivery is not affected by any problems experienced or caused by other clients.

✅ Provide a clear unsubscribe option in all email messages. You should never try to force a subscriber to stay. The reader should be able to easily locate the unsubscribe link, and the whole unsubscribe process should be quick and painless.

✅ Designate an Internet Service Provider (ISP) relationship manager. This person should have good relationships with different ISPs so that when a problem occurs he knows who to call and how to resolve a issue as quickly as possible. InfoUSA

employs a seasoned Deliverability Team to handle deliverability issues for clients.

✅ Enroll in "whitelists." If you send high volumes of legitimate email, you will need to be whitelisted by major ISPs. The InfoUSA Deliverability Team handles enrollment for you prior to your email campaign.

✅ Avoid and correct being "blacklisted." A number of organizations keep track of IP addresses that send out spam, referred to as the IP Blacklist. The more widely known organizations that keep track of blacklists are Spamcop, Spamhaus, and Mail Abuse Prevention Systems (MAPS). React immediately if you find out you've been blacklisted because of an email campaign. Learn why and try to rectify the problem or misunderstanding right away.

✅ Update your list on a regular basis to keep it clean (i.e. free from out-of-date or incorrect addresses). The more bounces you receive, the more likely an ISP will blacklist you. The average ISP "hard bounce" email threshold is 10%, so you're allowed one returned message for every ten emails sent within a 24 hour period.

✅ Monitor campaign deployments across the top-20 ISPs, since they serve as a benchmark for your delivery rates. This real-time delivery monitoring should cover whether an email ended up in the recipient's inbox or bulk mail, or delivered at all.

✅ Test content through a spam filter so that you minimize the chance of legitimate email being treated as spam. For example, when you run your content through Spam Assassin, a common spam filter, a score of 5 or greater indicates a likely spam message. If your message receives such a score, you should revise the subject line and/or content and then re-test.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR WHEN YOU TEST RUN YOUR EMAIL CAMPAIGN...

✅ Know the importance of testing. Just because email is inexpensive does not mean you should forego testing. You do not want to blast the exact same email message to millions of recipients. To maximize the results of an email campaign, you will want to know which content performs best.

✅ Make sure to test at the same time of the day and same day of the week. If you introduce deviations into test conditions, you will not know if the difference in response is due to the specific content or due to the difference in timing.

✅ Test subject lines to determine which one best captures the reader's interest. The subject line should be less than 49 words. It should also be very straightforward with no misleading words (e.g. 'free', 'you've won') that do not reflect the true intent of the message.

✅ Test the creative. Test both the main image itself and the size or placement of the image to determine which configuration gives you the best response rate.

✅ Test the call-to-action message. Measure the click through rate to determine which call-to-action gives you the best response.

✅ Consider personalizing the editorial content and the design, even the "from:" address, based on customer profile information in your database. Testing how you personalize an email may reveal valuable information on what is most relevant to your recipients.

✅ Designate control groups that you can go back and compare against as you try different tests. This will help you determine what kind of lift you are getting as you change test variables.

✅ Test each link within the email (website link, call-to-action link, unsubscribe link, etc.) for every campaign. Nothing annoys a reader more than clicking a link and receiving a "page cannot be found" message. The reader is more likely to close your website and email than search for the correct page, if it is even available without a direct link.

✅ Test the format of the message. Whether HTML, or Text Only, or AOL or Rich Media, it should look as you expect it to look.

✅ Test the email platform. Do you know how the content will look in Outlook, Gmail, Yahoo! Mail, Hotmail, AOL, and Lotus Notes?

✅ Test the value proposition. Based on your testing, you should know how the audience might react to different discount levels, offers, money-back guarantees, subscription lengths, etc.

✅ Go back and adjust your content based on what you learned from your testing. Recalibrate so you can increase open rates and clickthroughs, and get the best conversion possible.

HOW AND WHAT TO TRACK IN YOUR EMAIL CAMPAIGN...

✅ Analyze the results of your email campaigns and incorporate what you learn into future efforts. The purpose of tracking is to provide useful insight.

✅ Associate different products or services with different emails to help track the effect of each product's introduction.

CALL US TODAY 888.297.0899
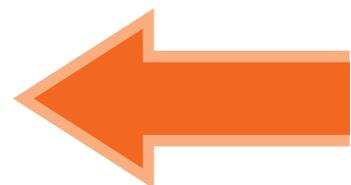
☑ Use a unique URL to connect your email recipient to your website, and measure which visitors came from your email campaign and which came from other sources (e.g. industry blogs, partner websites, etc.).

☑ Embed multiple unique URLs to bring readers to different website landing pages or specific sections of a longer web page depending on which link is clicked. For example, your email newsletter includes sections on different topics, so by measuring which link the reader clicked, you know what interests them the most, and you can use that information to predict what may interest them in the future.

☑ Determine what you want to measure short term vs. long term. Short-term metrics may be email open rates and clickthrough rates, which you can set a target to increase with your next campaign. Long-term metrics may be conversion rates and revenue lifts which contribute directly to the ROI.

☑ Measure the open rate to determine if your subject line is interesting enough to entice recipients to open the email. Compare results with your most recent control group, compare with previous campaigns, or compare to industry benchmarks to determine a subject line's effectiveness.

☑ Measure the clickthrough rate to determine if your call-to-action message convinces readers to click to your website. Compare this information with results from your control group in the current campaign, or to your previous campaigns, or to industry benchmarks.

☑ Measure and understand the unsubscribe rate. Ask people who are unsubscribing why they are doing so. Ensure the method you use to gain this information is quick and easy for the person. Remember, a person is unsubscribing for a reason; do not add another. Maybe use a drop-down list that he can choose from before he finalizes the unsubscribe, and a text box allows a person to

provide other details which may be useful to know.

☑ Determine the revenue lift that is generated directly from a campaign. This is the best way to make the business case for your next campaign.

WHEN CREATING EMAIL NEWSLETTERS...

☑ Send newsletters only to opt-in subscribers. Do not spam.

☑ Appeal to customer emotions. Your reader wants to be able to connect with what is said in the newsletter. Use both creative and editorial content to achieve this.

☑ Contribute useful information to the recipient. Be friendly and maintain a relationship with them, so that they may look forward to and be more likely to open your next email.

☑ Be relevant – in this age of information overload, people have very little time to sift through everything they receive. You want your readers to say, "Ah, this was useful. I'm glad I read this," instead of "What a waste of time."

☑ Make navigating around the newsletter as user friendly as possible. Design the content intelligently. Provide ways for readers to quickly scan headlines and content. Intra-email links can link to content further down in the email body, while other links can connect to your website. Find out what works best for you and your readers.

☑ Make the subscribe and unsubscribe process as convenient as possible, preferably less than a minute. The longer it takes to perform these tasks, the more the customer will be annoyed.

☑ Do not try to hide the unsubscribe link or button and trick the reader into staying subscribed to your newsletter. This does not work and they will have a negative association with your company/products/

services, and may even complain to friends and relatives.

✅ Allow for various email platforms, as your newsletter may display differently depending on whether it is displayed in Outlook, Gmail, Yahoo! Mail, Hotmail, AOL, or Lotus Notes.

✅ Find the best delivery frequency for your newsletter. Depending on your business, it may be a set frequency such as once a week, or a triggered frequency due to an event (e.g. a specific promotion, or information requested by the subscriber becoming available).

TO ENSURE PRIVACY PROTECTION...

✅ Provide a link to your privacy policy on each page of your website and every email communication. Forrester Research has found that 52% of buyers would make more purchases from a company knowing the company has a privacy policy in place.

✅ Know that privacy is not a just a regulatory issue but an integral part of gaining your customer's trust.

✅ Acknowledge to your customer that privacy is important to you, and that you see it as a vital part in developing a relationship.

✅ Communicate the policy in easy-to-understand, non-legal language. If the reader cannot understand the policy, then it may feel the same as if none existed. Or worse; it may appear that your company's policy is deliberately confusing and that you have something to hide about your use of customer information.

✅ Update your privacy policy on an annual basis, taking regulatory changes and customer feedback into account.

✅ Train your employees on the policy. Make sure your employees know the details of the privacy policy so they are able to explain it when customers have questions, and so your employees always handle customer information within the boundaries of your policy.

✅ Audit regularly how you handle customer data to ensure that you are not breaching your published policy.

✅ Ensure you have procedures in place to keep your customer data safe and to guard it from criminal activities.

If you have any questions about any stage of developing your email please contact an InfoUSA Email Expert at 888.297.0899.

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