



Digital
Marketing
Institute

APPLIED EMAIL MARKETING

Study Notes

Applied Email Marketing

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LESSON 1: CREATING EMAIL CONTENT

EFFECTIVE EMAIL MARKETING

Attributes

What are the attributes of these effective marketing emails?

Obviously, at the core, we've got what we hope is an **effective marketing email**.

- **Relevant content:** Is it relevant to your audience? Is it timely? Is it informative?
- **User-centric:** Does it make the reader feel as if it's personalized to them, targeting them specifically?
- **Demonstrates value:** Does it demonstrate the value of your company? Does it demonstrate the ethos, what you're trying to do, what you're all about? Your email is representing your company. It's representing your brand every single time at the personal level, at the corporate level. It's representing you and your company. What message does it convey?
- **Conveys a message:** Ideally, it conveys some sort of message that comes across. Maybe it's a story, maybe it's an action, but at least it conveys something to the reader.
- **Engages the recipient with great design:** Great design really does matter. It used to be you could probably send an email, and it wouldn't necessarily have to look that good. But now, graphic design has caught up with quality content.

Features

Your emails are going to include a wide array of features, such as animated GIFs, static images, compelling text, and the graphical interface or a user experience that looks really good from a design perspective. So those are some of the key elements to an effective marketing email.

Compelling subject line

Once again, the subject line of your email matters so much. That's almost the first thing that a reader sees. They usually see who sent them the message and what's it all about. And the 'what's it all about' question is answered in your compelling subject line.

Concise, relevant copy

Keep it short, keep it sweet, keep it compelling, and keep it interesting. Don't overdo it. Don't think that you must give everything to your audience with one email. You have an opportunity with an email, and an email marketing campaign, and plan to slowly build community, to sort of generate connection. You don't have to have everything in one single message. Because if you try to do that, what often happens is people won't pay attention. Keep it concise, and keep it relevant.

Clear calls to action

Let people know what it is that you're trying to get them to do in this email in a very clear, concise way. What's the call to action? What're you trying to get people to do? If it is confusing to the reader what you're trying to accomplish, then you're not going to get a lot of calls to action. You're not going to get people to do what you want. You're not going to have a lot of open rates in the future.

Personalization

This is probably one of the neatest things that's emerged over the years when it comes to email marketing. Because we've enabled this sense of greater and greater personalization.

You remember the first time you got a piece of direct mail. A physical, snail mail. And it had, depending on when you watch this – if we're in the far future and mail is totally gone, disregard this point. However, remember when you had the piece of mail, and it had your name on it, and it had a sense of personalization to it. It made you feel as if someone in an office somewhere had sent you this piece of mail. And it made you feel something because it made you feel special. It made you feel that this was actually personalized to you.

The same thing goes with email. Emails that make you feel as if the sender is just sending them to you and not a million people, that makes the reader much more interested. It's compelling content in a way. It's just to them. It's not to a bunch of different people. So personalization does matter.

Of course, you don't want to mess up on personalization too. How many of you have received emails that say, "Dear, "and it has an underscore? Or it has some blank insert-copy-here language where someone's forgot to input the personalization field in the database or in the email service provider software. So remember, personalization is great, but make sure you double-check to make sure that it is actually personalized to each reader.

EMAIL SUBJECT LINES

Attributes

What are some of the attributes of effective subject lines?

Use explicit, actionable language

It's important to use explicit, actionable language. Don't be vague. Keep it clear. What do you want people to do? Ideally, open it up, take a read through, maybe click on some links, share some stories, share some content. Inform them, catch their eye, give them a hook.

Avoid spam trigger words

Actively avoid those spam trigger words that we talked about in the previous module. We didn't mention words specifically, but you can use your common sense to know which words might be the words to avoid. Because clearly, you don't want to trigger those spam junk filters. The filters will say, "Nope, your message isn't getting through. You're hitting a wall."

EMAIL CONTENT

Benefits of personalizing email content

What are some of the key benefits of personalizing email content?

- **Increased click rates:** The more personalized an email, the higher your chances for increased click rates, getting more people to click on your email and to click within the content of your email. It is tailored, it is bespoke, and it is customized for those individuals.
- **Greater relevancy:** Is it relevant to me? I only have a certain amount of time during the day, the week, the month, the year, and relevant content is what I'm looking for. Don't waste my

time. You don't want to waste the reader's time. You want to make sure that things are tailored to them.

- **Fewer spam complaints:** When it's more personalized, you're going to have a lower incidence of spam, right, spam complaints. People won't be saying, "Hey, this is spam." And you don't complain that something is spam when it's relevant to you.
- **Greater customer acquisition:** Perhaps one of the more important aspects of this is greater customer acquisition. If people see content that is more personalized to them via email, they are more likely to engage. You would acquire me as a customer if you provided me with material, and information, and products, and services that are relevant to the things that I might want to buy, and acquire, and engage with.

Segmentation

Let's consider segmentation from an aligning content perspective.



Figure 1: Three sample segment case studies

Here are three different individuals, Christina, Dave, and Amanda. These are our case studies, of how you segment, how you align, because again, Christina, Dave, and Amanda are three different people, three different, unique individuals with interests, likes, dislikes, preferences, and so on.

You've got Christina. She's 21 years old, she lives in a rural location, she likes sports, and she's a student. Dave, on the other hand, is a 35-year-old, he's a parent, he works a part-time job, and he likes craft and home improvement, kind of his hobbies, right? And then Amanda. Amanda is 40 years old, she's career-driven, she's single, no children, and she likes travel and motoring.

These are three disparate individuals who have very different likes and dislikes. When you segment their content from your email lists, you're going to provide them with much more relevant, much more personalized information. Because that's what we do in every context. We always segment, so remember this with your email marketing.

Align your content to the individuals you're trying to reach. If you send content to Dave that was tailor-made for Amanda, it's not going to work. If you send an email to Christina and it's about craft and home improvement, when she wants to know about sports in a rural context, no. You send that content to Dave. Dave is your craft and home improvement guy. Or you know what? Travel. Amanda likes to go around the world, so you send her information relevant to travel, if that's the industry, if that's the list that she's on.

Qualities of well-formatted copy

What are some of the qualities of well-formatted copy?

- **Use of headings:** You've got to break your email down into digestible components. Make it almost like a miniature blog post. If you look at what makes blogs successful, it's been the way they enable people to digest content in ways that are just easier to read and easier to segment out.
- **Single-paragraph style:** If you look at most journalistic entities on the web, they're using a single-paragraph style. Not because it necessarily aligns with the old sort of copy rules of the day, but because it's far easier for people to read and digest a single-paragraph style.
- **Single link color:** Keep uniform link color across the board. Don't use a rainbow of colors for your links. Every link should be the same color, letting the reader know, "This is a link that I should click on or that I can click on," and then leaves them no room for confusion.
- **Balance between imagery and text:** Create a balance or a harmony between imagery and text. You always want to have this balance. You don't want to have too much imagery and keep a few lines of text because your text will get lost amid all these images. And vice versa, if you're going to use important imagery, don't just bury it under mountains of text. So think about how you segment your content, how you chunk it together.

Well-formatted copy takes into account these four different things, and so always keep these things in mind. And a great way, though, if you want to sort of see who's doing it well and great examples, look at blogs, look at industry, look at the sectors in which you work, and you'll see countless examples, on the web and on mobile, of easily digestible content.

Headings

What makes for a compelling heading, getting people to read and sort of look through your content within your email? You need to consider your subject line, not just the body of the copy in the email.

- **Question:** These are the subject lines that ask a question, hinting at the fact that there's an answer in the actual email. So you hook people in by asking a question, but not providing the answer. And the answer, of course, is in your email, which is a great way to engage and compel someone to click through and open up your email.
- **How to:** It's almost asking a question, how to do this, how to do that. If you want to learn more, you have to click the email, you have to go in, you have to dive deeper.
- **Announcement:** The announcement subject line is the kind of subject line that says, "Hey, guess what? This just happened. Celebrate, celebrate with us." Or, "Here, here's something new we're launching. It's something never before seen." And then it's kind of like, "What's happening behind the curtain? We'd like to announce it to you. We'd like to show it to you."
- **Number:** This goes hand in hand with the popular format of making lists in blog posts is the number subject line. The number subject line basically says, "Here are seven things that something, something, something, and so on." Most people want to know, "Well, what are those seven things? I'd like to know." The number subject line is another way to hook the reader into going into your content. The number one challenge is getting through all the static, and all the emails, and all the messaging that everybody's getting. So the number subject line is a great way for you to hook people, get their attention.
- **Curiosity gap:** Create a gap, create some curiosity, and tease the reader with something. Then say, "Want to fill in the gap? It's in the email." That's the curiosity gap. Again, anytime you can compel someone into thinking, "I wish I knew more about this," that's going to lead to a successful subject line.

- **Personalized:** The personalized subject line doesn't get used as often, not yet, anyway. The personalized subject line, though, gives the reader something about themselves in the subject line. Case in point. I've seen it on Facebook quite a bit, where there's a custom T-shirt and it has my name on it. It'll say, "Stoller" in the name of the shirt. It's a sort of graphic illustration on the shirt. Now, that's a great personalization that hooks me in every time in those particular Facebook ads because it's got my name front and center and it makes me pay attention to it. The same thing goes for an email that goes out. If it has someone's name in the subject line, like, "Hey, Eric, this post is for you," there's a greater chance I'm going to pay attention to it because it feels a little less formal. It feels more personalized. It feels as if it came from a friend, or a colleague, or someone that I already know really well.

Excessive formatting

You don't want to format excessively. Operate under the principle of less is more.

- **Bold:** Don't overdo bold. If everything is bold, then nothing is bold. And you want to make sure that you don't overdo it.
- **Underlining:** The same thing goes with underlining. Don't underline everything. Underline only those pieces of content that actually should be underlined or are interesting enough to be underlined.
- **Color:** The same thing goes with colors. Don't confuse a reader with too many colors, too much rainbow. You know, we have a lot of colors at our disposal, but keep your colors in your email marketing in line with your brand's strategy, your brand's imaging and communications guidelines. That will help you so much.
- **Italics:** If you see a lot of italics, it can turn you off. It's just not as legible, it's not easy to read, and all these things from too much boldness, to underlining everything, to issues with colors.

Maintain contrast in there as well. I think that's another important piece. And italics, all these items on this list of excessive formatting, think about how it's going to look on a small screen. You know, too much formatting can make something almost illegible. You can't read it on a small screen, so it is very important to look at.

EMAIL PERSONALIZATION

Personalization tags

What do you do about simple personalization? What are some personalization tags?

This depends on data that's collected. You can only personalize if you have data on people that you can use when you create these templates. Most of the time, you're going to have a first name, you're going to have a company name, and you're going to have a job title. So, in my case, it would be, "Dear Eric, from Inside Higher Ed, Higher Education Consultant." It's a little boring, but you get the idea. You could say, "Dear so and so of this company. This is your job." The more detail, the more information you have on someone, the more you can personalize it. And I've found that the emails that I tend to open and am consistently captivated by are the ones that show a great amount of personalization.

Dynamic content

How does dynamic content play into personalization? So, the utilization of dynamic content has been around for a long time in many different facets of marketing.

From an email template perspective, there are certain things to think about.

Purchase cycle

Are your readers purchasing certain elements or certain items on a regular basis? And you then can put up an ad relevant to those purchases. Or just say, “Hey, we know that you buy this from us every few months, and as part of that, we’re also going to suggest maybe you might be interested in this because we know what you’ve been up to.”

Subscriber behavior

If a subscriber consistently clicks on the first two stories or the first two items in your email, maybe the content at the bottom isn’t as popular, or maybe you should flip it around a little bit. It’s like A/B testing because it could be the case where people just aren’t getting through your email because it’s too long. Or maybe the graphic at the top is something that’s always been compelling, and they just never made it past the bottom. And you just think about that in a mobile context, and it gets even more messy. That graphic could fill the whole screen, and they may never even realize that you had more text near the bottom of the post or the bottom of the email.

Gender

This goes into purchase cycles, purchase behavior, and subscriber behavior.

Date of birth

If you have someone’s birthday, you can input that into your dynamic content and personalization. Every year, for example, I’ll get an email from Starbucks saying, “Hey, happy birthday. Have you gone to Starbucks today to celebrate your birthday?” It will give you a certain discount or a free drink, that type of thing.

Cart abandonment

Cart abandonment is another piece of dynamic content, particularly important for auto-responders. Suppose you went to a website, you thought about purchasing something or buying something or engaging in some transaction, and then you got distracted, or you had too many tabs open, or your computer crashed. Or you just stepped away for a little while, or you just decided not to get something, or maybe you wanted to think it over.

Cart abandonment in the context of dynamic content means that you’ll get an email saying, “Hey. Haven’t heard from you for a little while. Are you still interested in purchasing this airline ticket?” Or, “This new thing?” “This piece of electronics?” Or, “This service? Because we know you were looking at it based on your activity.”

Geolocation

In terms of dynamic content, you don’t want to wish someone a bright, sunny, warm day when they’re located in a cold, gray, wintry country. It’s just not going to play very well. Geolocation matters. If you’re sending out emails to a bunch of people in Iceland, you want to talk about relevant things to say to people in Reykjavik as opposed to what’s going on in Des Moines, Iowa. That’s where geolocation plays a major part in the dynamic content and personalization play that you make in your email marketing efforts.

Considerations

You can be more targeted, increasing the likelihood of repeat purchases, and customers like personalized content.

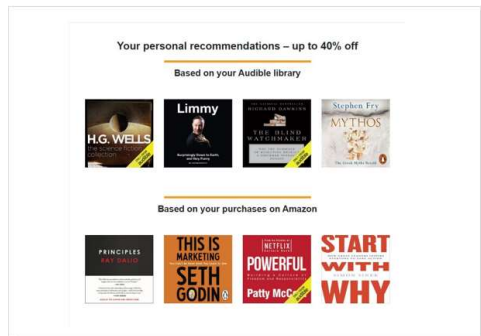


Figure 2: Example of Amazon's personalized email content

Here's an example of Amazon. Amazon is probably one of the greatest examples of personalized email content on the web. They do a great job with cart abandonment. They do a great job of sending you relevant emails based on your previous purchasing history and your behavior, and they're also very contextualized to your location and to where you are.

CALL TO ACTION

Approaches

One is a **single offer with one call to action**. One day only. Click here. You can do this. It's very simple. It can be very powerful though because it's not confusing. It's not overwhelming to the user. It gives the user one thing to do. One thing only, saying this is what you can do in order to receive this, that, and the other.

Alternatively, you can have **multiple stories, each with their own calls to action**. I think sometimes this can be very appealing especially to the big brands who are trying to get you engaged with various elements, be it content, be it product, be it service. But I find sometimes those emails can be a bit more complex to handle. What happens is that the user has so many different things that they could potentially be doing. It's hard for them to know which one to pick.

It's not that either a single offer or multiple story is better than the other; they both can have their applicability. However, it's important to realize that the user experience is everything when it comes to your email marketing efforts.

And calls to action, you only get so many chances with a reader. You want to get people to do something. You want to sort of take an email and make it turn into an action. You're not going to get that opportunity all the time, so think very tactically, think very strategically when you do that.

The hero message

The hero message is all about garnering attention. A hero message emphasizes the main goal of an email marketing campaign.



Figure 3: Example of hero content on Moz website

Here, in this example, it says, “Products to Power Your Online Visibility.” It just says what you need, what they do, no questions asked. There’s nothing vague about this. It tells you why you would interact with them, why you would engage, what’s the value to you as a consumer.

The hero message is one of those things where it’s all about the attention. And you want to get as much attention because attention is everything. And email marketing is competing for eyeballs. You are competing for people’s attention, and so remember that the hero message can be a great way for you to garner attention.

Different ways to gain clicks

It’s all about gaining clicks. Now, think about a few different things here.

- **Placement:** Where do you put the call to action in the context of the user experience? This is where marketers and communicators and strategists really need to align with user experience and graphic designers, UX/UI individuals, because, again, where you place things, how you place it, the design does matter.
- **Who’s calling who to what?:** Clearly identify who’s asking for the call to action. Hopefully, you as the reader will go ahead and do it.
- **What is in your CTA?:** What is in your call to action? What are you trying to accomplish? What are you trying to do? How are you going to measure it?
- **Design:** Think about the design overall.

Role of mobile

Remember, mobile is important. Now, use your data. For your company, maybe mobile isn’t as important. Maybe your stats say that people are going on a desktop and that’s how they’re accessing your content. That’s cool. Keep doing that. Focus on that, but always be ready to evolve and to grow with your audience. So, if your audience, your customers are going into more mobile and mobile transactions, then you too should be going with them.

NOTES

LESSON 2: DESIGNING EMAILS

PROFESSIONAL EMAIL DESIGN

Qualities

What are the qualities of professional email design?

Strong branding

Does your email convey the brand? Does it convey the sense of your company? “This is our company. This is who we are. These are the elements, the design components that you have seen throughout your encounters with our brand from the store, the website, the poster, the banner, the actual product itself.” Does it all mesh up to a strong brand experience?

Take Apple, for example. Apple’s a great company in terms of their branding. Everything that they put out via email, in their signage, online, their website, has the Apple logo. And it has a certain aesthetic to it, everything that they do. In fact, I would highly recommend just signing up for some of Apple’s emails because, again, they will give you a great example or examples of how you can use email marketing.

Concise content

Keep the content short and sweet.

Calls to action

Get people to do something. Don’t just put content out there for the world, but actually put information and ads and marketing materials that get your users, your readers, to actually do something. You’re not just sending emails out. You’re sending emails out to gain something to benefit your company, to benefit your brand.

Links back to the website

You always want to let people have the chance to say, “I want more. I want to read more, I want to engage more, I want more of your content. And where do I go? I go back to your website.”

Email display variations

You can have variations of email display.

HTML images can be disabled

HTML images, if you’re not aware of what those are, are when an image is not loaded into the email as an attachment. It’s not sent along with the email itself. It’s actually loading from a location or a URL on the web. And so what happens sometimes is those HTML images can be disabled, and this is because there’s a history of people doing nefarious things with HTML images, things like hacking and replacing those images with bad images, that type of thing, and so a lot of times those can be disabled.

Remember that when you’re testing. Don’t just test in-house on a closed server because it could look perfect in-house.

Forms can be stripped

The same thing goes with forms. Forms can be stripped from an email because, again, there are security protocols in place with most email clients that will strip away things that they think have the potential to do harm to the reader. The email clients don't care about our emails. They care about the clients themselves, the person at the desk or on the phone.

So think about, if you're going to use HTML-based images, whether that URL or IP address is white-listed. And if you're going to put forms in an email, consider an alternative way to do it. Maybe someone clicks a call to action, saying, "Click here," and it then takes them to a website where there are forms that they can fill out. In that case, you don't worry about forms getting stripped from an email.

Preview software tools

How do you preview? How do you sort of look at your content before it goes out the door?

If you're a MailChimp client, MailChimp's Inbox Inspector is a great way to preview your messaging before it goes out. Same thing, there's a Campaign Monitor. You want to preview, and you want to test.

The same goes with every type of digital engagement that we do, be it a blog post, a video, and so on. You always preview. You always take a look. And email marketing, there's no exception there. You always check. You always test. For a variety of devices, you test outside of your company's server, outside of your company's IP because, again, you never know what's going to be stripped out.

EMAIL TEMPLATES

Types

There are so many kinds of email templates out there. They can be text-only, and they can also be HTML and text.

It depends on your newsletter, it depends on your email, and it depends on what you're trying to do. If you look at big brands and you look at companies that have very graphical branding, they're going to use a lot of HTML and text because it makes sense for them. If you're doing something that's a bit stripped-down that you want to feel more like a personalized email and less of a commercial or an ad, then you might do text-only. Of course, the benefits of text-only are that it's a bit thinner in terms of the broadband that it takes, and again, if you personalize it, it can look like an email sent from a friend or a colleague.

For example, a lot of times politicians will send a text-only email, and it looks like it came from someone that you know, when it's actually a politician saying, "Hey, would you like to donate some money to us? Here's our call to action." This is as opposed to the glitzier, branded, more graphically intense HTML/text offering.

Benefits

What are the benefits for your email templates?

Pre-designed templates

- **Ease of use:** If you work with an email service provider and/or another company that allows you to create templates, these pre-designed templates can be really good. They're easy to use. They've been around for a while. You don't have to reinvent the wheel.
- **Cost-efficient:** You don't have to pay for any design work.
- **Time-efficient:** They're already there, you put in your content, send it out the door, and there you go.

Custom design templates

Custom, bespoke and tailored are all words that make things much more personalized.

- **Brand aware:** Brand awareness really does matter.
- **Professional:** Your own template that is bespoke to you is more likely to look more professional than if you use a template that your neighbor could use. If someone sends out an email and someone else sends out an email and they both look identical, it doesn't look like you really tried that hard.
- **No re-formatting:** With a custom design template, the other aspect is no re-formatting. You don't have to change around anything. It's made specifically for you, for your company, for your content.
- **Facilitates dynamic data:** They are created in such a way that enables you to sort of plug and play various bits of dynamic data, which will mean that your template is far more agile with the things that you're trying to do than an off-the-shelf solution.

Flexible email templates

What are some things to think about regarding email templates?

Mobile optimization

- **Reduce image file sizes:** Consider image file size. What looks good on a big screen and might be okay with load times that take a while, might not be okay for a mobile device.
- **Use responsive design:** Think about design that sort of accords in and out depending on screen size. That can be very important. Also, make sure that your design is intuitive, in terms of clicking. This isn't a mouse cursor. This is a thumb or an index finger that people are using. So you got to think about your design in the context of mobile, on-the-go readers.
- **Create a responsive grid system:** Responsive email templates are not the way of the future; they are the way of the now. If your email only looks good on a desktop, we've got to change that immediately. That screen size proportion does really matter, and more and more we've got screen sizes all across the board.
- **Increase size of CTAs:** The call to action on a mobile optimized email template might be located in a different place than, say, on a desktop and that is important. That call to action on desktop, you could put it somewhere and it fits really well with design. If it's on mobile, you might need to put it right away so that the reader doesn't miss that call to action.

BESPOKE EMAIL DESIGN

Advantages

- **Structured to fulfill specific marketing goals:** They are tailor-made to help you achieve your objectives.
- **Structured to fit the email clients your users use most commonly:** That is really important and is based on data. That structured design fits the client emails, not your emails, not the one you use in your office, but the ones that your readers use.
- **Unique:** Hence the name bespoke. They fit to you, they're tailored to you, and those unique designs give you far greater flexibility and promote your brand.
- **Greater consideration of text in images:** Text in images, they have to be used in a very joined-up intentional way with email design and so again, if it's bespoke it's far easier to achieve.
- **Higher click-through rates:** You can do some A/B testing, but you're going to see higher click-through rates when you have a bespoke or custom email design.
- **Branding:** Your brand will be far better represented with a custom-made email design that says, "This is our brand, this is our company, we've cared enough to create something that is tailor-made for you that has our graphics, our imagery, our look and feel, and our vibe, our tone." All that matters and that kind of goes into that persona that we talked about in the previous module.

TEXT IN EMAILS

Benefits

So what are the benefits of real text, with regards to images?

Images should never carry the meaning of the email message. Instead, they should act to support it because there is always a chance that the images will not display to your recipients. This is something that can be solved using the 'real text'. Real text is text that is readable when images have been turned off by an email client.

Real text is beneficial because it can be seen even when images don't display.

Also, emails load faster when it's just text. And that means customers are less frustrated customers. Not that customers will be frustrated if messages have images that don't load, but if you use real text, people have a chance to just look at your content, regardless of whether or not an image loads. You want to make the user experience, the reader experience, the subscriber experience easy and tailor-made and personalized.

IMAGES IN EMAIL

Considerations for all-image emails

There are some considerations to think about when we think about all-image emails.

Now, you **only send an all-image email to readers who can open those messages**. You only send it to people who you know, based on your data and your open rates, can open this. You don't want to send it to people who are just looking at real-text versions because they won't get your message.

Check your work before you send it to your list. Check to make sure the images are all loading. Check to make sure that they're not being blocked, because these are usually HTML-specific images that are loading on a server somewhere else. They're not accompanying the email.

You can **use a cascading style sheet (CSS) to format your Alt text**. A CSS essentially says if an image doesn't show up in an all-image email, CSS will modify and format the Alt text that is accompanying or describing those images that aren't appearing. So they'll basically say, "Okay, the text isn't going to just appear black and white and boring and not formatted." CSS will allow you to kind of have a backup in place in case that image doesn't show up in the email.

Balancing images with a copy

This is about optimization. This is where your graphic designer should play a huge part in the creation of your email template. It's about contrast, it's about layout.



Figure 4: Example of different email layouts, using text and image copy

In this example, you've got a lot of centering, you've got a lot of black and white. What works best? You're going to do a bit of A and B testing. You're also going to check, "Okay, people tended to click more often on this particular message than this one."

You also want to have some consistency across the themes, but again, it's okay to balance it out. Put the images here, bit of text there, but take a look. There's a lot of graphic design books out there.

One of the things that I would do, when it comes to email marketing and your templates and your design, is go forward and look at design inspiration from other areas. Web design and presentation slide-deck design, for example, can give you a sense of layout and contrast and color. These are formats that are designed for a quick read. A slide-deck, for example, has to look good and be compelling. A web page or web content or a blog post has to be compelling. It's similar to an email template.

Image downloads and open rates

Image downloads are essential in helping to determine open rates. These are part of your tracking. This is part of your statistics.

When an email is sent, there's a small piece of code that is automatically added and that request happens. When that tiny piece of code happens, there's this invisible image from the hosting web server, and that invisible image that gets loaded. Every time it loads, the reader opens the email, that image gets downloaded to their computer, and that user engagement is recorded. That user

engagement gives you a lot of data and analytics you can then use in just your data enrichment scheme.

Remember, that's how we track open rates these days is, via image downloads.

ALT TEXT IN EMAIL

Considerations

What are the considerations for Alt text?

Not all email clients show images and that's important to remember.

Also, **excessive text can detract from headings and content**. So it's really important to remember if you have a lot of Alt text, maybe pare it down. Think about what it is you're trying to convey with an image. If that image has so much content in it, that if it wasn't appearing and it was just Alt text, would that bump into the other body copy that's present on your email?

So you don't want it to be excessive because it cannot just detract, but it can distract. You want to make sure that, from the user experience perspective, it's very clear to them, it's concise, and it's clearly defined.

Best practices

What are some best practices when it comes to alt text?

What's it for? It's a description of an image for people with visual impairment. And it's not just that. It can be really helpful for people who are using email clients where they've stripped out images.

Where should it be placed? Alt text is not in the heading or off our text. It's behind the scenes.

And they're short, concise descriptions and they're used to communicate an image clearly to the reader.

NOTES

LESSON 3: INTEGRATING EMAIL FEATURES

EMAIL LINKS

Purposes

So, first up, linking. What are some of the purposes of linking?

- **Linking should be used concisely to send traffic to a website:** Keep it short, concise, and simple.
- **Avoid link stuffing:** Don't overwhelm your reader with too many links, with too many pieces of content that make them jump around. For example, if you have a short really well-written email, you want to have maybe one or two links. You want to filter your reader into the most important things in your email. Beware of this concept called link stuffing which is when you try to put as many links in the email as possible. It confuses the reader. It makes it harder for them to know where to click and to understand what's the most important thing to click on. Thinking like blog posts where people put too many links in a blog post, then it just becomes a big link farm. Again, hone it down, focus specifically on just a few links within your email.
- **Optimize for particular goals such as call to action or conversion:** You optimize the email. You hone this thing down. You get it to a place where it is sharp and sweet and concise and targeted, so it provides a value add for your reader.

Optimizing clickthrough rates

Link formatting does matter. It is important to think about how you format a link so that it's clearly identified to a reader. So that they know that, "Hey, this is something I should click on." They know what it is. So, for example, underlining of text has long been the tradition and sort of the technology of linking things on the web. It's underlined and it's a different color, generally it's a link.

Now, that has changed quite a bit with regards to things like CSS or cascading style sheets. However sometimes it's good to continue those same conventions because they are familiar to a reader. And if all your technology kind of gets stripped away if you're formatting your CSS and so on, the link behavior of being of one color like blue text or underlined or a little bit of embolden will show up.

Here are a few of the link formatting ideas.

- **Underline:** You can simply underline the link.
- **Size:** The size does matter although you don't want to make it too big. You don't want to make this sort of like massive link text and everything else around it is kind of small. You want to have it fit with the design that you're trying to go for.
- **Bold:** You can bold the text. You bold it a little bit or it's just naturally bold because it's a link that could be helpful.
- **Blue text:** There's a long history of web links being blue. And so, people will recognize that. If you look at your email client right now, I guarantee you there are links in your email client that are blue. That goes back to the history of the web. And people still recognize that and it's one of those universally known style or formatting conventions that people automatically know that blue underlined text is a link.

Benefits of strategic linking

What are the benefits of strategic linking?

- **Strategy:** First of all, it all starts with your strategy. Why are we including this link? What's the outcome? What are we trying to accomplish? You know, do we have a specific, unique URL? Is this something that's going to be measurable in addition to our other URLs so that you know that people actually went from the email to this particular web page. You can track that.
- **Actionable:** That goes to the next point of actionable. You're tracking, and you've picked the reasons why. And now you're saying, okay, you've got your call to action, and you get people to link.
- **Dynamic segmentation:** This means showing links to specific people, specific readers. Remember the earlier example of the different individuals and their hobbies and interests. Dynamic segmentation means that you're willing to provide them with links and content that fits exactly with their interests so that they get links and content that fits with what they want to be reading and why they subscribed in the first place.

Example

For example, travel companies. If you fly on an airline, they're going to send you emails all the time. It's what they do because they have to sell airline tickets. However, if you go to a certain place all the time, this place to that place and you do round trip tickets and trips to that all the time, they're going to know that. They're going to realize that and they're going to say, "Hey, guess what? We have special benefits for you because you keep going back and forth between these two hubs. Or, have you tried looking at these other places?" The dynamic segmentation and strategic linking means that they're trying to target me as a reader or as a flyer so that they can provide me with things that are actionable and customized to my experience.

EMAIL CTAS

How to utilize

Here's an example from Priceline. Here in this case it's up to 70% off on express deals. They're basically giving me the immediate call to action saying, "Hey, do this."

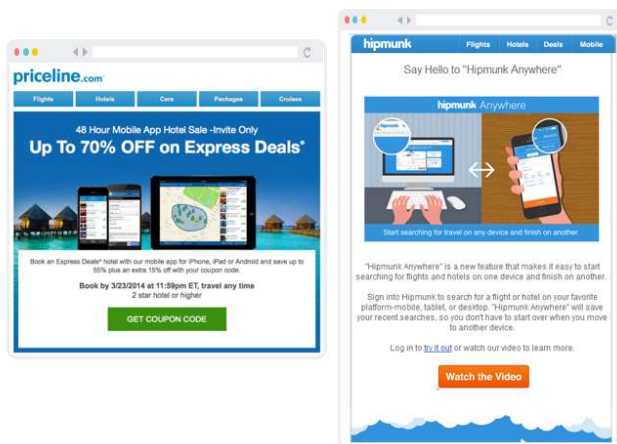


Figure 5: Example of different calls to action in emails

And the other example as well, it's very clearly identified and marked via a button with lots of contrast. If you look at the design, the design really does matter because the design gives me enough contrast even from a great distance. You don't even have to read the body copy in these

examples because visually they've given you a very clear-cut call to action visual that you could then click on and I guarantee you, some people might even click on it just because they're curious because it's so clearly defined via the graphic design. In addition to, as the Priceline example says, a lot of people are going to be excited by up to 70% off on their express deals.

A/B testing

A/B testing is really important because again it can teach you a lot about your readers. It can teach you a lot about your email list and can help you to create a more dynamic email list because you know more about your readers.

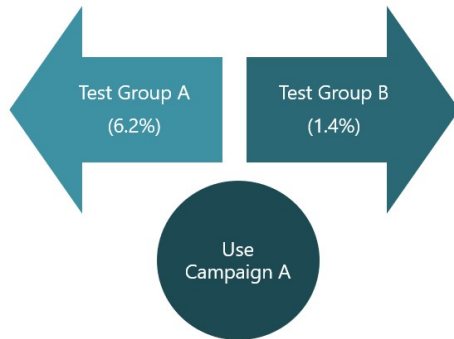


Figure 6: Flowchart showing A/B testing in action

Here's a hypothetical test. You've got test group A and test group B and 6.2% of group A actually did something and only 1.4% of test group B did the same thing. So, of course, you're going to say to yourself, campaign A is the winning campaign because that user testing it does matter because it helps you measure what works, what doesn't and it helps you figure out the behavior of the people who are on your email list. And when you figure out their behavior, it can help you in delivering content that is much more customized and tailored to their likes and dislikes. Make sure you're giving them what they want. And then further, connect that to your strategic goals and your outcomes and you see the beauty of email marketing really come to shine in that sense.

EMAIL AND SOCIAL SHARING

Benefits

This example here talks about average email click-through rates. It's amazing without social sharing that click throughs are kind of low, you know, in this sense it's 2.4% and with social sharing it's 6.2%.



Figure 7: Email clickthrough rates being enhanced with social sharing

Social has allowed email marketers a chance to **leverage the crowd**, to leverage experience and to leverage readership in a grassroots way because your email goes out to a set number of people. They may forward that email, or they may share some of the stuff that's in the email to other people. If they're shared on Facebook, if they're shared on Twitter, if they're shared on LinkedIn, if they share your content elsewhere, it populates your content all over the web, all over the social web, all over mobile devices and apps.

It's like bees and pollen. If your email is the flower, social media are the bees flying around and cross-pollinating your content all over the web, all over the social space. And as you see here with this percentage it gives you a greater reach of your content.

How do you encourage social sharing?

What are some of the methods?

- **Add shareable HTML in your copy:** You want to have links, that say, "Tweet this, share this, add this." There's a lot of plug-ins that are out there, but you definitely want to have that.
- **Include social sharing buttons in the email:** You want to have the buttons if you can. A lot of times the buttons are going to load via HTML or server-side includes. They're not going to have to be part of the email.
- **Encourage subscribers to share content:** Most of my favorite newsletters, they've constructed their calls to action or their links for social sharing in such a way that it says, "Hey, do me a favor, or if you like this a lot, it'd be great if you shared it with your friends. Be great if you tweeted it out. Be great if you post it on your Facebook page. Or your profile. Be great if you shared this on your LinkedIn account." You know, those are the ways in which you encourage social sharing. If you put high-quality content in your email, people will just do it naturally. It will just happen organically because people like to share and curate and post and see other people do the same.

And so, all of a sudden, your email subscriber list has a much greater reach, has much greater impressions and a lot of people who see your content via social shares will then go back and re-subscribe because they want to see your content too. And those are the people who then add to your overall subscriber list and it just keeps going.

Buttons

Which social sharing buttons should you look at?

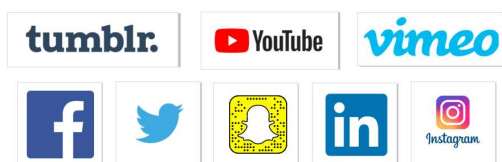


Figure 8: Sample social sharing buttons

Well, clearly there are certain social media sites that are more successful than others. And in the context of email you have to think about which apps work really well, which sites might work well in terms of the content.

If you're sending out an email to your subscribers list and it's really you know, image intensive, obviously, **Instagram** might a site that works really well. There's an image that can be shared on Instagram you know, a short thing that can be posted on **Tumblr**. **Facebook** has 1.8 billion active users. It's massive. You're going to get a lot of reach whenever anybody shares on Facebook, so if you can do that, awesome.

YouTube and **Vimeo** are video sharing sites. It depends. It depends on your content. But if you create a video that's, say, hosted on Vimeo or it's hosted on YouTube, but then the links or some of that content is shared in your email. It's natural for it to be shared socially because YouTube obviously has social media sharing capability, so does Vimeo.

Always put tweet this or share this on **Twitter** in the content of your email if it's applicable and if it's relevant because Twitter is a great way to amplify your content to get it out in front of more people. And same thing goes with **LinkedIn**. In a very similar way especially if it's a professional context.

Now, **Snapchat** is one of those ephemeral social networks. It's app-based, and so think about your content. If I'm opening an email is there a way for me to engage with it or share it in a way on Snapchat? And it could just be you read something very captivating about a brand in an email, you then flip open Snapchat and you talk about that in your Snapchat story and it gets shared. And that's a way that brands can engage in social sharing, at least on Snapchat.

Keep in mind this list of social networks and apps is going to change. It's going to always be evolving. There's always going to be a new site, a new app. And it's up to you to kind of keep your finger on the pulse to make sure that you're aware of which apps, which sites are out there that would best serve your organization.

Alternatives

What are some of the alternatives to social sharing without buttons? And this is actually a way that can be quite useful because not everybody wants to click a button to share something. Sometimes users can be almost intimidated by the idea of clicking a button.

Ensure that there's a text link alternative

This basically prepopulates a sharing field. So, in this example, you know, it says, "share this on Twitter as a tweet," and it'll prepopulate a tweet automatically. And then they can just share it on Twitter without having to click a button. It's just clicking on a link. And this is a great way for you to do certain things.

Include social network URLs in an email template

It doesn't have to be Twitter, and it doesn't have to be Facebook. You could even auto link that prepopulates to post or share something that you read on Reddit. There are all kinds of ways in which you can incorporate social media into email marketing. Feel free to use tech space links, because again if you're a Facebook developer or a Twitter developer sites, they'll give you exactly sort of the URL structure for how you can create these pre-populated links so that if someone clicks the link, it'll then pop open a window. And it'll have some of this information already incorporated into the tweet or the post or the share, and it's just up to the user or the reader to then say share or post. And it'll automatically post a link or something of your content, and idea, a comment that type of thing onto their Facebook account, Twitter or Reddit, and so on.

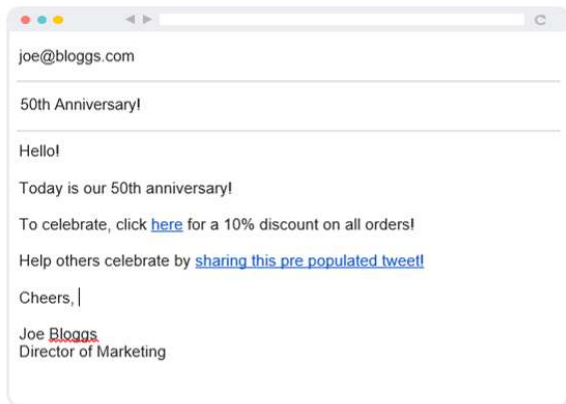


Figure 9: Sample email that includes a social sharing link

Metrics

What are some of the metrics for social sharing?

Social sharing gives you a lot of data. A lot of analytics to look at.

- **Likes:** First and foremost, of course, would be the heavy hitter in the room: Facebook likes. Facebook is gigantic. Facebook owns Instagram, WhatsApp, Messenger, and Oculus Rift. Facebook owns a lot of these massive properties that then allow you to track usage and so on. So, likes are becoming extremely popular. Look at Instagram. Instagram now has likes on comments. So, there's a lot of different ways in which likes are being measured. But likes of course on Facebook are just one of the ways in which you can measure social sharing.
- **Mentions:** These are on Twitter. And so, if there are mentions of your account or mentions of your content you could track this fairly easily.
- **URLs:** You can track the URLs. If you have custom URLs you can track, those are inbound from Twitter.
- **Forwards:** Look at forwards.
- **Comments:** Social sharing can be really useful. Think about comments in the context of an email goes out to a reader and they share it with their friends, and their friends might not even be on your subscriber list, but they found your blog post via your email, and then they go on and they comment on your blog. So, automatically you're increasing your reach and you're increasing your comments. And you can track that because you're tracking that piece of code that's shared in the email. Alright. That piece of code we talked about earlier.

NOTES

LESSON 4: TESTING EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

EMAIL TESTING

Metrics

Metrics

When testing emails, you can examine different metrics.

- **Subject lines:** You can look at your subject lines, tracking what works and what doesn't. There's a variety of ways of doing subjects. Which ones worked? Which ones didn't? Which ones do you want to try again?
- **Offer or content:** Again, you're testing this out, seeing whether the offer sounds good. Does it work?
- **Email creative and layout:** Does the email content actually have a creative layout?
- **HTML versus text:** Looking at the code. Looking at plain text. What works really well? Have your people look at your email on the most bare-bones device.
- **Email headlines:** Take a look at those. Go into different clients and take a look. Your testing is such a massive part of this because it's where you get to fix things. You get to correct mistakes. You get to iterate. You get to build. You get to see, "Okay, this is what we did before. What can we do again this time in a new way?"
- **From address:** Test different addresses to see which ones are most effective.
- **Personalization:** Which types of personalization yield the best results?

How do you track, how you measure? How you use those measurements and metrics to iterate and build and evolve your email marketing strategy really says a lot about the work you're going to be doing when you're using email for marketing.

Why is spam testing important?

Spam testing is so important. Your email service providers will help you out with this. Sometimes the rules may change on you. So you're going to be sending, creating, testing, and sending again. It's going to be this whole process that's a cycle where you're going to be creating content, sending it out, testing it, seeing if it goes in spam folders.

What worked in the past may or may not work in the future. And it's important to understand that. And it's important to just be okay with that because spam filters are just trying to help make everybody's experience with email better. And it's your job to test, send, create and just keep going through that cycle.

A/B TESTING EMAILS

Best practices

What are some of the best practices for A/B testing?

- **Test early and often:** Don't wait until the end of the process. Test this thing out. You're not actually sending it live to your list yet, so you can test as often and as early as you want. That's really important.
- **Use a random email list:** If you want, you can do some A/B testing with a random list to see how it works. And that can be an interesting way to test your email.

- **Test only one element at a time:** As with any A/B testing, you only test one element at a time because that enables you to figure out what works and what didn't. For example, we changed something in this email, and it wasn't changed in that email, and that enabled us to know what worked and what didn't. If you change a lot of elements, it's really hard to measure. It's like testing a hypothesis. You don't want to change a lot of things. You just want to have one thing. You've got kind of a control group on one hand and then the change on the other.

Email elements

So what are some email elements when you're thinking about this? And this goes into your open rate optimization.

- **Subject line:** This is perhaps the most obvious element, and it's like the first thing that catches the receiver's attention.
- **Time of send:** This is the time you send the message.
- **Day of send:** This is the day you send the message. If you send a message out on a Friday afternoon when everybody is gone or off work or they aren't necessarily thinking about the most recent, relevant sector news, they might not read it if it's a professional-context, industry-level message. However, if you're trying to sell someone something around, "Hey, 10 Best Places to Go Out for Dinner," in their city, then maybe it's actually better to send it sort of nearer to the time when they might be going out.
- **Sender details:** You're also going to have sender details. What email address are you sending from:
- **Preview text:** This is the text that the receiver can see before opening the email.
- **Body copy:** This is the main content of the email.

These are the elements which will help you in determining things like open rate. And these are testable elements.

SPLIT TESTING EMAIL ELEMENTS

Benefits of split testing

Why should you conduct split testing?

- **Increased open rates:** Split testing can help you with your open rates. It can help you increase them, because you're evolving, you're growing, you're figuring out what works and what doesn't.
- **More targeted and relevant content:** It helps you determine a more targeted and relevant content mix.
- **Increased subscriber engagement:** This is all about getting the people who subscribe on your list to actually engage with your content, to do something with it.
- **More data-driven marketing:** As with any data-driven initiative, your actions are going to be based on data, and they're not necessarily on assumption. Your gut can only get you so far. Data will be the thing that drives your actions, will be the thing that helps you figure things out.

That's where split testing can be very useful as a marketer. You get to figure out what works, what doesn't, and you're making subtle tweaks, small changes, one at a time to help you figure out what works and what may not work so well.

Gleaning insights

How do you glean insights from split testing?



Figure 10: Insights gleaned from split testing

In this particular example, you've got Variation A, Variation B, and you can look at conversions. And again, when you think about testing, this again is how you figure it out. You have to look at your metrics, look at audience, and look at whether the conversions were at a higher level with A or with B, and you just go from there. And you split it up.

A lot of testing that takes place these days, in addition to email marketers doing their testing, is via social media and apps. I see a lot of testing on things like Twitter or Facebook where you'll have friends who are on Facebook or Twitter, and they see a bit of a different interface. They see a subtle interface change, and that design change is clearly A/B testing. There's a lot of split testing going on in that social media space. And the same thing goes with email. You're going to be able to split it up. And that isn't to say that you're going to favor Group A or Group B. You're just going to be using the various splits as a way of figuring out what works the best.

And then eventually it's going to let you hone in so that everybody's getting the same message based on measurable data and measurable results.

RESPONSIVE EMAIL DESIGN

Purposes

Always remember that responsive design is important. Responsive design is design that on the web, on your phone, on a desktop, whatever platform, it will literally respond. In other words, it will accordion in terms of the stretching of the design. And everything will get a little bit smaller and smaller and smaller, and the design will shift, especially when you're looking at a mobile device.

Responsive design gives you a chance to provide content to an audience that fits the device that they're on. And that is extremely important. If you give me content via an email that only looks good on a phone, and I'm on a massive desktop display, it's going to look a little weird, a little funny. But if you give me content, vice versa, that was made to look good on the big screen but not on the small screen, what's going to happen is I'm going to have to do a lot of swiping horizontally and vertically. And it's just not going to be as pleasant of an experience, and it's going to give me a negative experience.

Increasing mobile engagement

Always think about responsive design. Almost a mobile first-design, that's also responsive to bigger screens. Now, with regards to email experience, you really want to increase mobile engagement. You could use something like a CSS animation, cascading style sheet, or an animated GIF.

Animated GIFs

Animated GIFs are everywhere, popularized on sites like Tumblr or Reddit. However, animated GIFs are great because they give you a sense of animation. And if they're loaded on an outside server and not within your email, they don't take up any space on your email.

CSS animations

The same thing goes with CSS. CSS loads very quickly on a mobile device. And again, it's friendly to people that don't have high-speed internet, if they don't have it on their phones. And so you can also be very creative.

It's like saying, in the absence of video, we're going to give CSS animation or GIFs to provide accents or information or humor or product views to the user via email.

EMAIL REPORTING

Informing optimization

Email reporting is another important aspect of optimization because, again, you want to look at your data. You want to look at your metrics. Email reporting is just crucial and reviewing it is really important. Every single email service provider offers, essentially, a similar reporting feature which is going to give you things like open rates and a lot of data, user profiles, geographic information, device and browser information. All the details that we've had previously on modern website statistics, such as Google web stats and Google Analytics.

But we now have it with the mobile web, with the email reporting as well. It's vital that you take a look at those stats because stats will tell you user behavior. They will tell you what people are doing, and they will help guide the content that you're creating, and guide a lot of other actions that you're doing, and it will help you with your segmentation.

Reporting sources

These are other sources for email analytics, email stats, such as:

- Litmus
- AWeber
- SendGrid
- Campaign Monitor
- MailChimp

Every single email service provider is going to provide you with a plethora of statistics, analytics, metrics, with regards to your email campaigns. And so take a look, work through different vendors. See who provides you with the relevant number of reports that you're looking for, the ease of use that you're looking for. Find out about the account managers, people on the other end, if you need to

call and say, “Hey. I’m having a question about our email campaign and our stats.” Is there someone you can connect with and ask a question?

You can also go onto social media, and see whether people are talking about this company in a positive way, in a negative way. I like to see if there’s any chatter on the social web that can help inform my decision when it comes to these reporting sources.

Key statistics

What are the key statistics for email reporting? Which ones to sort of pay attention to?

- **Open rate:** The percentage of recipients who opened the email
- **Total opened:** The total number of times that recipients have opened an email (This takes into account people who open the email more than once)
- **Unique opens:** The number of recipients who have opened an email (This discounts people who opened the email more than once)

Others include bounced, clicked, click-to-open rate, and the unsubscribes.

Unique opens are important. If you have 100 opens on your email, but you only have 20 unique opens, that means you’re only really reaching 20 people. Each one of them opened it maybe five times. So those unique stats are really useful to take a look at.

Bounce is important. How long did people stay on your message before they left? How many people **unsubscribed**? You know, what content works? You know, as I’m blogging and sharing on the social web, I’m always looking at the number of people who unsubscribe, because I want to see. Was it this piece of content that I shared? Am I posting too often, you know?

Sometimes you make intuitive guesses as to why people do the things they do. And other times, you look at the data to inform you as to why they’re up to doing the things they’re doing.

Click rates

What do you need to bear in mind when measuring click rate?

- **Message content relevancy:** This has to do with message, and content, and relevancy. What is the message? Was it relevant? Was it too much content? Was it not enough content?
- **Segmentation quality:** Did the message reach the people that I really wanted it to reach? Always a great question to ask because your lists are only as good as the people who have subscribed to it, and you want to make sure they’re interested in your content. And that segmentation quality does matter so much.
- **Targeting quality:** Are you targeting an audience that is, in terms of your content, relevant? You want to make sure that your content resonates and compels the individuals on your list. And that’s vital. You don’t want to waste their time. You want to be intentional. You want to be strategic with that.

Other key metrics

Here are some other key metrics for email reporting.

- **Unsubscribes:** It was quite a sad day for myself when my brother and my mother both unsubscribed from my blog, from my email list. And they just finally told me that it was because they were getting too many messages. And they had sort of subscribed because they were family members, not because they were interested in higher education social media. And I completely understood as to why they unsubscribed, but it is important to take a look at your unsubscribes.
- **Delivered emails:** You might be sending out a lot of emails from your list, but maybe only a few are getting through and being fully delivered. You might have some bad emails in there. Look at your data. Look at those emails. I'm always going through my own email list and deleting people whose emails never seem to work, because maybe it's an old email address, or they've changed jobs, and their institution has gotten rid of their address.
- **Bounced emails:** These are those messages that came back, undelivered. Why'd they come back undelivered? Well, it's hard to know. But at the same time, bounced emails are emails that aren't really good for your list because you want your list to be of active readers who will pay attention to your emails when you send them out, not people who are bounced.

Look at those metrics. They can be very informative in building out and curating and really having a segmented email list.

OPTIMIZING MARKETING EMAIL

How to optimize open rates

What are some of the methods?

Well-targeted subscriber lists

These really will help you optimize your open rates. Having targeted subscriber lists, curated, intentionally grown and nurtured over time, will definitely help you with open rates.

Familiar sender name

Make sure that people know that this is the person who's always sending the email, or this is the account that's always sending an email. If, for example, I subscribe to a social media marketer from Harvard University, and if all of a sudden, the emails from that person were coming through with a different name, it might confuse me, or it might think, "Is this real? Is this spam? Is this not a legitimate email?" You know, there's certain things, like familiarity.

Effective subject lines

In the case of my friend who writes this newsletter from Harvard, their subject line is always the same every week. "Here are the five things email that you need to read." And it gives you this sense of regularity, comfort, and routine. The routines matter when it comes to email subscriptions, and people want to get kind of tucked into those routines.

So your effective subject line really does matter, and we've gone over subject lines previously, but subject lines are the hook. They're the thing that most people see, in addition to the sender name, and you have those two chances to get people to open your email.

Optimizing click rates

What are the methods?

- **Simple and explicit CTAs:** You need to have simple and explicit calls to action. They do work. Keep it simple. Keep it explicit. Don't confuse people. Keep things simple, and they will figure it out.
- **Multiple links for the same action:** That can be helpful. Little bit of repetition, but it directs people to the same place. If you put a lot of links in your email, and they all go to the same place, then you're guaranteeing that, "Hey. No matter what link my reader clicks on, they're going to get to that place of action, no matter what." So you might have a lot of links, but it's all going to the same place.
- **Offering deals for a limited time:** Today only, we're offering this. You're going to get people to click it because, guess what, people are incentivized to click it.
- **Testing different colors:** You're going to be changing your template around, modifying it, and tweaking the design. Find out what works. And if you change something, and then, all of a sudden, everything in terms of your metrics take a precipitous drop, then you might be able to say, "Okay. We're not going to do that anymore. We're going to go back to the original color, the original design, because that's what people like." And you always want to cater to your readers.

How to minimize unsubscribes

This is important because you've got a list full of people. You want to make sure you keep them there. You've got their attention, initially. You want to sustain their attention.

So what do you do?

- **Timely:** You keep things timely. You give them information. You give them content that is timely. Relevant to why they subscribed in the first place.
- **Targeted:** You then target and segment out that content, so that it fits. The person that you're sending it to gets content that is relevant to them, so that they don't feel as if they're being bombarded with content that doesn't add any value to them, doesn't bring anything unique or special to them.
- **Relevant content to engage recipients:** Keep it relevant. In the case of my mother and my brother, the content that I was sending them was not relevant to them. Therefore, it didn't engage them. Therefore, they unsubscribed. However, my other readers on my blog have stayed subscribed because most of them work within the industry or the sector of higher education, which is predominantly where my consulting efforts lie, which means that I'm providing content that is relevant to my readers because it's industry-specific.

How to minimize bounce rates

What are the methods?

- **Remove bounced emails from lists:** If they're a bad email, remove it. Cull that email from your list, and it's okay to get rid of it.
- **Use real-time email validation services:** You're real-time curating and culling. Make sure that people know that your email is good and that it's valid, so that it's not going to maybe get black-listed, or you're going to have a bounce-back simply because your email is seen now as being a spam email.

- **Check your list for typos:** Some of those basics around grammar and typos can be very important. People make typos when they join your email list. They might mis-type gmail.com. It's really easy to transpose a letter. So sometimes you may have to go in and make intuitive jumps or guesses around what someone might have meant to type and help them with that, especially if you're getting a bounce, repeated bouncing on that particular email.
- **Provide a way for recipients to update their email addresses:** That is one of the smartest things that a marketer can do, providing their audience a way to move with them. So for example, as I've gone throughout my career, I've had a number of different email addresses, prior to getting my sort of one-size-fits-all Gmail account. Because of that, it would be great if when I subscribed to an email list when I worked at, say, the University of Illinois Chicago, that I was then able to log in and say, "I want to update, so that I can change it to my Oregon State email," or then when I left Oregon State, to say, "I want to keep being a subscriber, but I now want to receive emails on my Gmail account."

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