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Test Your Email Marketing Smarts

WANDA KENTON SMITH • APR 25, 2018

A 2017 report by the Radicati Group estimated that there are 3.7 billion email accounts worldwide, with a stunning 269 billion emails sent per day.

According to Magnetic, 44 percent of people in the United States and Canada check their personal email one to three times a day. And on the business front, a Templafy study reported that 86 percent of professionals rank email as their top choice for business communications. Email has emerged as an accepted communications tool in business .

It thus comes as no surprise that an entire community has sprung up to leverage email into a lucrative marketing platform. Specialized email marketing companies and consultants, email-specific software and design templates continue to evolve.

Like other industries, marine businesses have tapped email to deliver marketing messages as part of their overall digital strategy. But here's the question: Is your company maximizing the return on your email marketing investment?

Have you established an email marketing strategy, or are your efforts more hit and miss?

How much time, study, benchmarking and real thought and effort have been applied to crafting compelling email content and design?

How often do you test your messaging? Refresh your design?

Are there consistent branding synergies in your emails, website and other marketing initiatives?

How often do you change your CTA (call to action)?

Ultimately, how effective are your campaigns? How do you measure your successes ... and shortcomings?

If your answers leave much to be desired, perhaps it's time to revisit your email strategy. Dozens of blogs and white papers about this topic are available to improve your answers to all of those

questions and more.

My own marketing work has directly involved email marketing activity for many years. I was excited to unearth new trends and best practices to share.

Here are marketing stats and strategies to help you win at the inbox. Take this quiz and discuss the results with your sales and marketing team:

Test Your Email Marketing Knowledge!

How many business emails does an average office worker send and receive?

The average is 40 business emails sent daily, and receipt of 121.

What percent of emails are opened on mobile devices?

Two sources say that smartphones account for 54 percent or 66 percent of all email opens, with iPhones commanding the lion's share. Lesson: Be sure your emails are mobile responsive.

When are people more likely to read an email on a mobile device?

The weekend.

What is the best day to send emails if you are targeting a B2B audience?

Experts say Tuesday. Monday is email inbox overload, while Friday often involves travel and end-of-week wrap-up.

What is the best day to send emails if you are targeting a B2C audience?

Saturday. More free time to scroll. Test to confirm.

What percentage of B2B marketers say email marketing is their most effective campaign and revenue generator?

A solid 59 percent claim email marketing campaigns are their top revenue generators.

When marketing to millennials, what type of visual graphic in emails has increased in usage by 775 percent?

Emojis, whose use in emails, according to Appboy, has skyrocketed since 2015. The use of GIFs, meanwhile, doubled between 2015 and 2016. Experian says using emojis in an email subject line

can increase open rates by as much as 45 percent, a statistic validated by OptinMonster.

What are some ways to make emails more interactive and engaging?

Every email should include a concise call to action (CTA) including next-step instruction. They should be designed to generate a measurable response. The email should always offer real value to the recipient. The litmus test: Would the recipient genuinely thank you for the offer? Test different offers.

When you write an email, how should you position your message?

Your email "voice" should be conversational and personalized, using the recipient's name. The goal is to engage and build a relationship. Write as though you were addressing a friend, not communicating to a faceless "eblast audience." Separate and segment your email list into groups based on common denominators. Hone your messaging for greatest relevancy.

How do you measure email campaigns?

Email providers typically supply analytics/measurement reporting mechanisms that should be monitored and studied after every campaign to include open, click-through and share rates, along with other key trending data. Quantify the actions subscribers took when opening your email.

What are the standard open rates for email campaigns?

The DMR reports that mobile click-to-open rates in the United States average 13.7 percent, with desktop click-to-open at 18 percent. The average open rate for political emails tops the chart at 22.8 percent.

All emails should include a critical component. What is it?

Every email needs a designated unsubscribe option. When someone unsubscribes, they are communicating they are not interested in your product or service; this helps you better qualify your list. Remove her immediately.

The average email list will lose what percentage of its active contacts each year?

25 percent

What is the recommended email text-to-image ratio?

Images used strategically positively impact your email appeal. Sprinkling relevant images between text helps break up the content and invite engagement. Don't overload on the images, however, and be sure to test in advance to ensure your pix and GIFs perform on various devices. The recommended email text to image ratio is 60:40 or 70:30.

What is the maximum number of calls to action recommended per email?

There is disagreement, but many people suggest one or two CTAs is appropriate. Others argue that multiple CTAs have a better chance to engage and generate response. Test to see what works.

What are some of the most overused spam triggers to avoid?

An ALL UPPER CASE subject line, the word "Dear" before the recipient's name, an exclamation point in a subject line, the word "free," donation requests and lengthy subject lines. An astonishing 49.7% of emails is spam.

Karen Rubin of Hubspot wrote a great blog post about this critical topic:

<https://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/30684/the-ultimate-list-of-email-spam-trigger-words.aspx>

What is the danger of buying an email marketing list?

Email pros highly discourage purchasing email lists from outside sources, for a few sound reasons. Who knows how legit the list is? And consider the potential for complaints (and fines) when recipients receive unwanted and unsolicited emails.

What's the scoop on subject lines?

Every email marketer worth his salt knows that the subject line makes or breaks open ratios. You've got seconds to capture someone's attention as he scrolls down his inbox, so avoid the mundane and invest the time to create something catchy. Consumers say that the subject line compels them to open an email 50 percent of the time.

According to author Madhu Gulati, a comprehensive study involving 260 million emails delivered from 540 campaigns bore out some important findings. Subject lines with six to 10 words generated the highest open rate, at 21 percent. Subject lines with five or fewer words generated a 16 percent open rate, while those with 11 to 15 words hovered around 14 percent. On the mobile front, the more concise the subject line, the better. Zurb's TestSubject <https://zurb.com/playground/testsubject> allows you to see how your subject line will appear on mobile devices.

Check out 164 Best Email Subject Lines to Boost Your Email Open Rates, by Mary Fernandez:

<https://optinmonster.com/101-email-subject-lines-your-subscribers-cant-resist/>

What's the recommended frequency for email campaigns?

It's the million-dollar question everyone wants answered, but there is no simple answer. Every email audience differs. Omnisend suggests splitting subscribers into two groups. The first control group should receive the same frequency of emails you've been sending, while the second group doubles the frequency. Test for a month or two and then compare the open and click-through rates, unsubscribes and conversions.

Testing and tweaking is the best formula for finding the winning frequency factor.

A final email tip borrowed from one of my sources: Create a digital folder to collect outstanding emails that command your attention and compel you to open, respond or share. Invite members of your team to continually add to the treasure trove. As you pay attention to what attracts you, you'll likely uncover cool new concepts and strategies. Over time, this gallery of emails can serve as a springboard for new ideas.

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