

# An Introduction to EMAIL MARKETING

How to Execute &  
Measure Successful  
Email Marketing



## AN INTRODUCTION TO EMAIL MARKETING

Presented by Mark Parent

“Effective marketers should be able to tie every single lead, customer and dollar back to the marketing initiative that created them. This is how marketers can prove their worth, and understand how to more efficiently reach their audience.” – **Mark Parent**

Mark Parent is an inbound marketer and President of Inbound 281 Inc., a best-in-class Metro-Detroit marketing firm delivering marketing technology solutions that increase marketing efficiency and convert prospects into revenue.

Whether it's strategic planning, marketing R&D, content development (such as this eBook) or producing and planning live events, Parent is deeply committed to providing the strategies and technologies his customers need to solve their business problems and deliver the predictable and repeatable ROI they crave.



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## QUICK EMAIL MARKETING **FACTS**



Email opens on mobile devices increased by 34% from April 2011 through September 2011 as compared to the previous six-month period.



Mobile email usage is at its lowest on Monday, desktop email usage is at its lowest on Sunday, and webmail email usage is at its lowest on Wednesday.



“Finance” and “shopping” show above average webmail views as compared to other industries, at 49% and 48%, respectively.



The industries leading the way in mobile email views are, not surprisingly, “social networking” (27%), “publishing” (26%), and “entertainment” (27%).

*“Your email marketing campaigns should be part of a holistic approach to educate your contacts.”*

Companies often list email as one of their most powerful marketing channels. To this day, the size of your email list is a demonstration of your reach and thought leadership. However, your email marketing campaigns should be part of a holistic approach to educate your contacts about your company. Your marketing emails need to be complimented by other efforts, such as search engine optimization, content creation, social media engagement and behavior-based nurturing. So when reading this ebook on email marketing, keep the big picture in mind.

In the following pages you will read about the top challenges email marketers face and how you can combat them. You will also learn about the types of communications you can send to your contacts. Use the best practices shared here as a roadmap to your email marketing success.

CHAPTER 1

# 5 EMAIL MARKETING CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

Email marketing is a powerful channel but also one that presents many questions and difficulties. MarketingSherpa surveyed 2,735 companies and asked them to rank the significance of 12 common email marketing challenges. In this chapter, we will focus on the top five challenges and suggest some ideas through which you can address these issues.

**1**

Integrating email data with other data systems

Improving deliverability

**2****3**

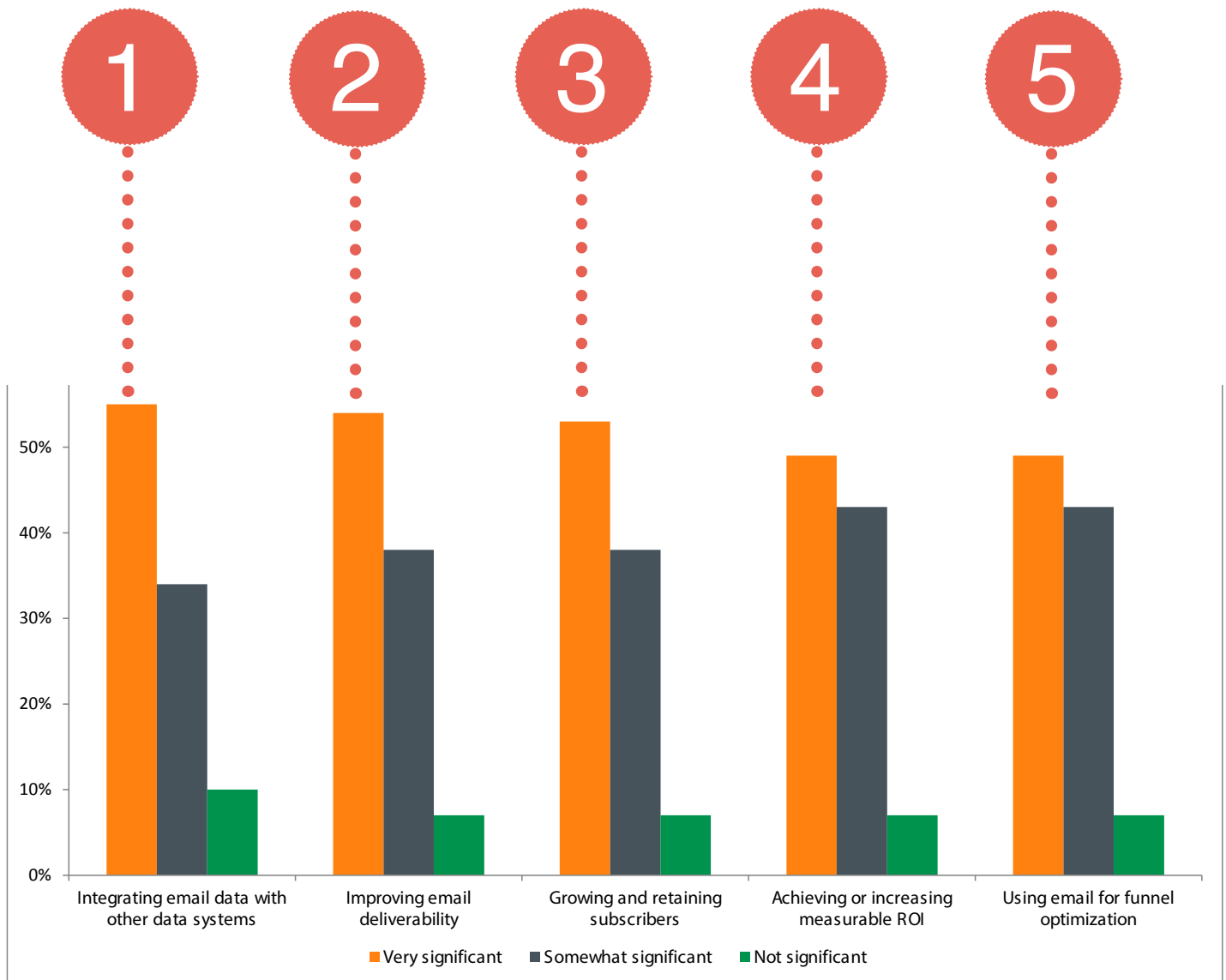
Growing &amp; retaining subscribers

Achieving measurable ROI

**4****5**

Using email for funnel optimization

The survey respondents ranked these five challenges as “very significant.” What is even more interesting about this data is that it seemingly contradicts the survey responses in [MarketingSherpa’s Previous Email Marketing Benchmark](#). The number one challenge for email marketers was “targeting recipients with highly relevant content.” While differently phrased, this challenge basically overlaps with the idea of integrating data systems in order to allow for powerful segmentation. Let’s dive into each one of these challenges individually.





## CHALLENGE

1

# Integrating email data with other data systems

Marketers want to amass valuable data across their different channels. For instance, they might like to see the possible relationships between landing pages and emails or to track the sales process of an email conversion. In addition to the obvious reporting benefits such integration provides, it also opens the door to a much more enjoyable experience for email subscribers.

Just think about it--if you could bridge the gap between email marketing performance and social media activities, landing page conversions or new customer acquisitions, you are that much closer to optimizing your sales funnel and delivering content that your community loves.



“Other data systems,” including form submissions and activities on site, can point you to the resources your recipients are truly interested in. In that way, you have a clear understanding of how to further engage them through careful targeting and segmentation.

## SOLUTION

## 1

# Integrate your data systems



## GET YOUR HANDS ON THE RIGHT TOOLS

In order to integrate your email marketing with your other data systems, you need to use **marketing software** that allows for that integration to take place. In fact, integration is the foundation on which Inbound 281's software was built as it connects SEO, blogging, lead management and reporting with email marketing and lead nurturing.



## THINK SEGMENTATION

Combining your different marketing databases allows for clear segmentation and ability to better target your customers and prospects with relevant email messages. Once you have access to an integrated marketing system, keep your buyer persona in mind and focus on the opportunity to target the right audience with the right message.



## DEVELOP CONTENT

The more targeted your email campaigns, the more content you'll need. Key to promoting relevant content in email is to provide an offer that is connected to the initial request. What action have your contacts taken on (or even off) your website? Offer them content that fits with their intent and their needs.

## 2

## CHALLENGE

## Improving deliverability

Deliverability rate is the percentage of email messages delivered to your recipients' inboxes versus the total number of messages sent. It tells you how many of the emails bounced back and if that number is high, it's a sure sign of inactivity. There are soft bounces and hard bounces. The soft bounce is temporary and occurs when an email server rejects an incoming message. For instance, when your recipients' inboxes are full. A hard bounce, on the other hand, is less benign and represents a permanent error to deliver an email. This generally occurs when the addresses you send to are bad or don't exist.

## Why are marketers so afraid of low deliverability rates?



Low deliverability rate might get you blocked by ISPs (internet service providers). If your list is loaded with inactive emails, you don't have a sense of your true complaint rate. While many marketers just look at total complaints over total list size, ISPs are actually looking at total complaints over number of active email users.

ISPs can also mark abandoned email addresses as spam traps. This means that, even if you acquired emails in a legitimate manner, the abandoned addresses may have morphed into spam traps. Aside from all the ISP problems, low deliverability rate also means you are wasting money sending messages to nonexistent addresses.

## SOLUTION

## 2

## Practice good email list hygiene



### REGULAR MAINTANANCE

Clean up your email list by removing those addresses that are no longer engaged. You can identify these addresses with metrics such as opens, clicks, or website activity.



### A STRICTER OPT-IN PROCESS

If you have a really serious problem with deliverability, you might want to redefine your opt-in process to prevent invalid emails from getting on your list. Either ask people to enter their email twice or experiment with double opt-in.



### PREFERENCE CENTER

Make sure your recipients have an opportunity to update their email addresses. Invite them to your preference center from every email you send. That might also help you with segmentation and achieving higher

## CHALLENGE

3

## Growing &amp; retaining subscribers



In MarketingSherpa's survey, marketing professionals shared that their third most serious challenge in respect to email marketing is growing and retaining subscribers. No wonder! Increasing the size of your email list and keeping your contacts engaged in your messages is no easy task. These challenges receive two common responses:



To grow their email database, marketers sometimes purchase lists. This practice will surely get you into trouble: it might add invalid addresses to your list and thus pollute your entire database. Even if the addresses you acquired are valid, the new recipients will most likely not be interested in your content and either unsubscribe or not engage with your emails altogether. Both of these alternatives are undesirable.



To retain subscribers, a lot of companies send fewer emails, thinking that the communication frequency might in some way define engagement. Rarity of emails means they are more special, right? Wrong. Frequency of emailing, as we have established in our [Science of Email Marketing](#) research, doesn't necessarily negatively impact subscriber retention.

## SOLUTION

## 3

## Earn your email subscribers

**CLEAR VALUE PROPOSITION IN EMAIL OPT-IN**

Don't purchase email lists, but earn your subscribers. Be clear to your target market about what they will get out of subscribing to your emails. Give them a clear description of what the value proposition is. For example, will your emails offer: (1) tips and tools on how to run their business more efficiently, (2) product updates from your company, or (3) special offers via email? Your audience will want to know "why" they should subscribe before they decide to clutter their inbox with even more emails.

**SEGMENT LISTS TO MATCH YOUR PRIORITIES**

Are you concerned that you are emailing your subscribers too often? Give this thought a break and instead ask yourself if you are emailing the *right* people with the *right* message. In order to retain your email subscribers, you'll need to provide them with ongoing value that is targeted to their needs. Make sure you are segmenting based on knowledge you have about your recipients.

**OPTIMIZE & TEST**

Don't limit your email testing to subject lines. Embrace testing of various elements in your email marketing efforts to optimize email performance. For instance, you can do [A/B testing of landing pages](#).



## 4

## CHALLENGE

## Achieving Measurable ROI

Achieving measurable ROI (return on investment) is another challenge that marketing professionals face in the land of email marketing. In other words, it's difficult for them to connect the dots between the messages they send out to prospective customers and the moment when these subscribers get further engaged and turn into customers.



Interestingly enough, this problem is tightly connected to challenge number one - integrating email marketing with other data systems. When your marketing channels are not speaking to one another, it's hard to identify how they affect conversions. For instance, you might see that your email blast got a 3.4% click-through rate (CTR), but can you also see if that communication contributed to generating new leads? What is more, do you see if it resulted in any new customers?

## 4

## SOLUTION

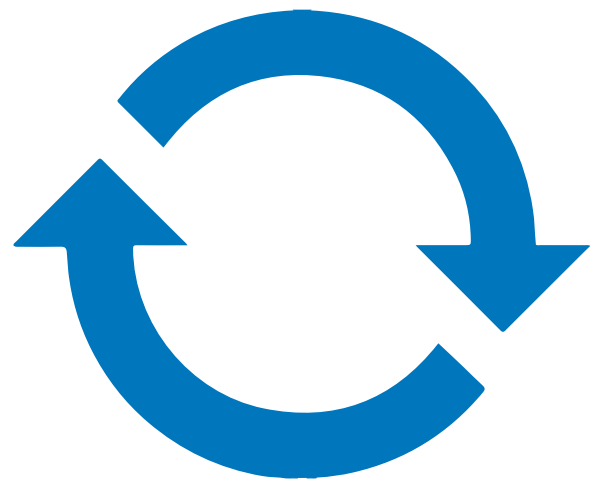
## Close the marketing loop



## CLOSED-LOOP MARKETING

The solution to achieving measurable ROI from your email marketing campaigns is to practice closed-loop marketing. Follow a contact from the point of visiting your website through getting further engaged (viewing other web pages, downloading resources, clicking on your emails) to her final conversion into a customer. Implementing closed-loop marketing empowers you to track leads from their initial channel through a first conversion all the way to becoming a customer. Such intelligence, in turn, enables you to identify your most powerful marketing channels and assign clear value to each of them. In this way, you will be able to measure the ROI not only of your emails, but also of your other efforts, which might include social media and blogging.

Close the loop between your marketing initiatives. [Learn about Inbound 281's closed-loop marketing system.](#)



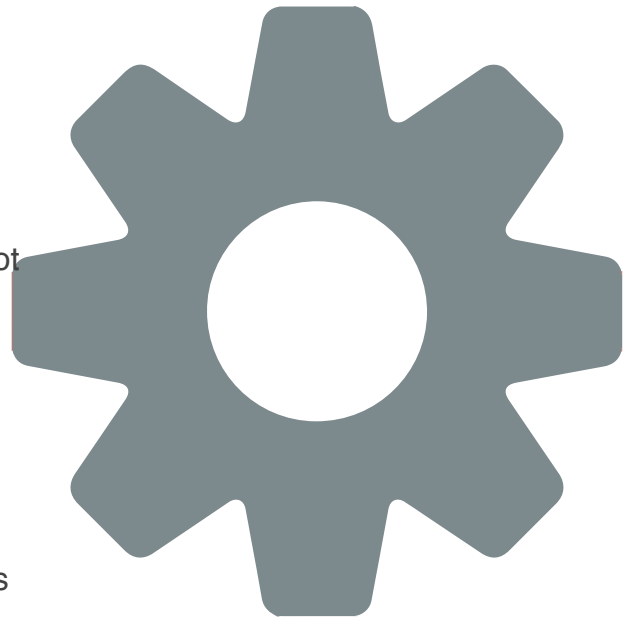


## CHALLENGE

## 5

## Using email for funnel optimization

As mentioned in the introduction of this ebook, email campaigns should be only part of your holistic marketing approach. Email cannot be truly fruitful just by itself, but can strengthen your other initiatives. (Just like you cannot use social media in vacuum, or only rely on blogging, or trust that search engines optimization is enough to meet your goals.) The real power comes from achieving a strong marketing mix. This, however, seems to be a challenge for marketers. How do you optimize your sales and marketing funnel with emails?



Most marketing professionals are accustomed to sending one-time email blasts that are not necessarily related to the actions of their email subscribers, their interests or needs. Such a practice doesn't help push leads down the sales funnel, but can alienate them.

## 5

## SOLUTION

## Nurture your leads



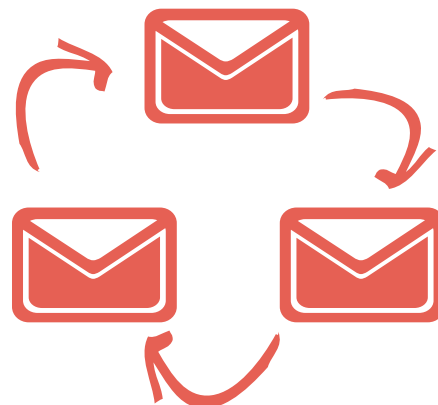
## LEAD NURTURING

Lead nurturing sometimes goes by other names: marketing automation, drip marketing, auto-responders, etc. Simply put, lead nurturing is a system that allows you to send an automated series of emails to an early stage lead in order to pre-qualify them before handing them over to your sales team.

If it typically takes your leads a month to make a purchasing decision, then make sure you're spreading out your communications to keep them engaged throughout the month. By taking this approach, you save your sales organizations time because you educate and qualify the lead overtime.

Among some of the key benefits of lead nurturing is that it enables marketers to establish contact with their fresh leads fast and stay top of mind for potential, and even current, customers. In comparison to email marketing, lead nurturing is also relatively easy to set up because it is automated and doesn't need a ton of maintenance over time.

Become effective at nurturing your leads.  
[Learn about our lead nurturing program.](#)



CHAPTER 2

# 6 TYPES OF MARKETING EMAILS

## “ Different types of email formats have different goals and advantages. ”

Whether you are just starting with email marketing or you have some experience sending marketing emails, you have probably asked yourself about the types of communications you can send out.

Should you nurture your subscribers with weekly newsletters? Are dedicated sends better at optimizing your sales and marketing funnel? What about email digests?

These are all valid questions that marketing professionals should consider when selecting the right format that meets their email marketing goals.

In this chapter, we will discuss the different types of marketing communications and their respective advantages and disadvantages. This information should help you make an educated decision about picking the most appropriate email format and how to go about using it.



## 1

## EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Many business and organizations send email newsletters in order to stay top of mind for their recipients. In this section we will cover some general guidelines for using newsletters as the foundation of your email marketing program.

## Define your goal

Before we get into the nitty-gritty details of creating email newsletters, you will need to determine your goal. What is it that you want your email newsletter to achieve? You might want to nurture your existing contacts and become the first brand they think of when they need a product or service in your industry. This would be a fantastic goal if you are a B2C company. Or your goal might be to increase sharing so that you attract new people to your list. As you define your goal, think about what **metrics** you can use to track your progress.



## Advantages



### BRAND AWARENESS

Similar to newspapers, newsletters create a certain anticipation in readers. Whether it is a daily newsletter or a weekend communication, you get into the habit of receiving it. If you enjoy the content, you will most likely stay subscribed to the newsletter and look forward to getting the next email. By building a habit in your email subscribers, you enable them to recognize your brand and associate it with a positive sentiment.



### REPURPOSE CONTENT

Newsletters generally contain information that you have already published. Many companies do quick summaries of their most popular blog posts and link to the articles from their newsletter. In this way, they bring subscribers back to the company website and engage them with more company content.



### DIVERSE CONTENT

Email newsletters give you the freedom to include different types of content that might be important to your organization. For instance, the same newsletter can contain a popular blog post, a new offer, an announcement of an upcoming event, information about a discount and a link to a survey.

## Disadvantages



### DILUTED CALL-TO-ACTION

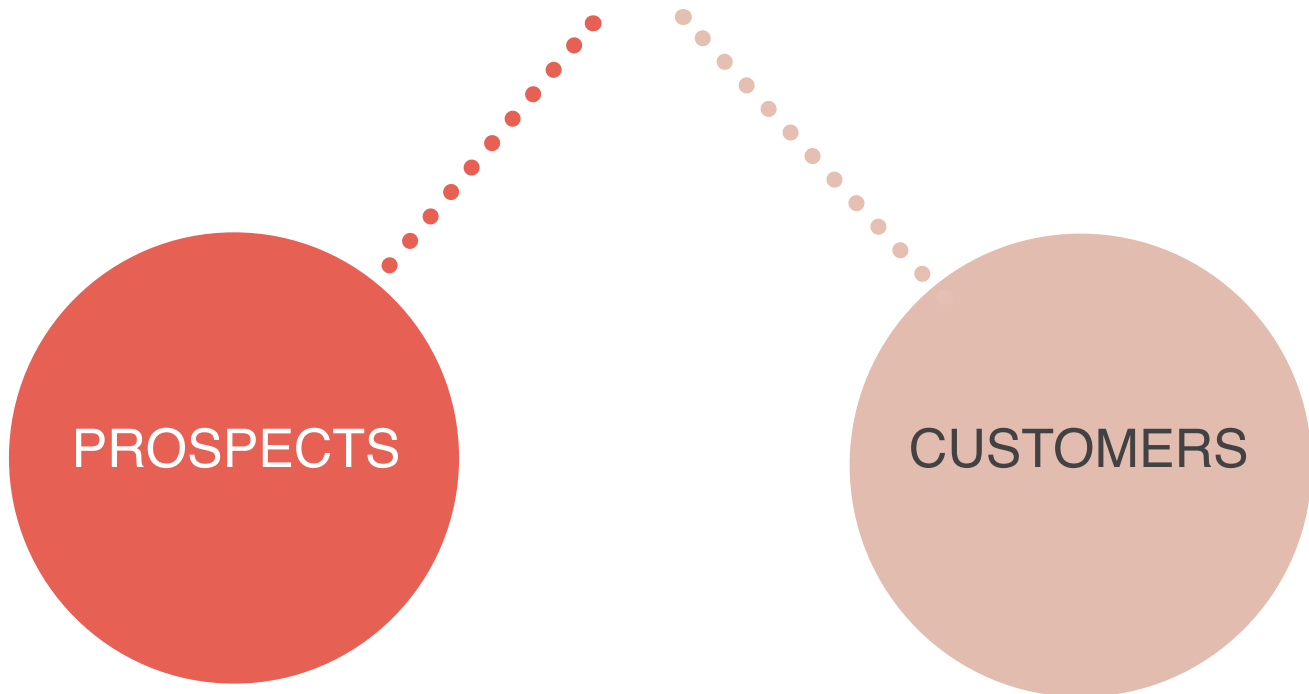
Due to their format--a compilation of information--newsletters can be overwhelming and ignorant of a specific call-to-action. If you include a series of blurbs or article summaries, the attention of your recipients will most likely be spread across these tidbits of information as opposed to staying focused on a certain element. Of course, you can address this by prioritizing the most important information at the top of the newsletter and include a clear call-to-action after/alongside each block of text.



### DESIGN

With newsletters, the layout becomes a much more complicated task than it is with dedicated email sends. You'll have to spend some time deciding on the right placement of images and text, alignment and prioritization of information. Thankfully, there are a bunch of websites out there to help you with these efforts. [MailChimp](#), for instance, offers a package of 36 basic, flexible templates you can use to get started.

# NEWSLETTER

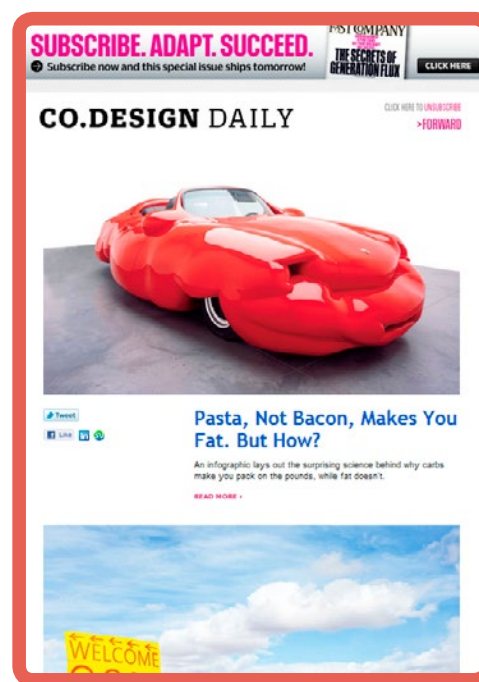
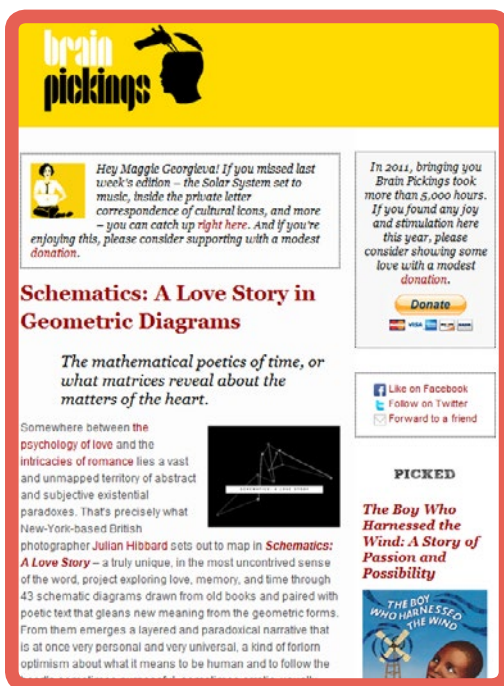


Newsletters are great not only for marketing to prospects, but also for nurturing your existing customers with company news and events, product announcements and feedback requests. Such ongoing communication will help you retain happy customers and collect valuable insights about them. What are the tidbits of information they click on the most? Can you upsell to them at all? Don't forget that your existing customer base can also spread the word about your company and share resources that you publish with their network.



# Stay Focused on the Goal

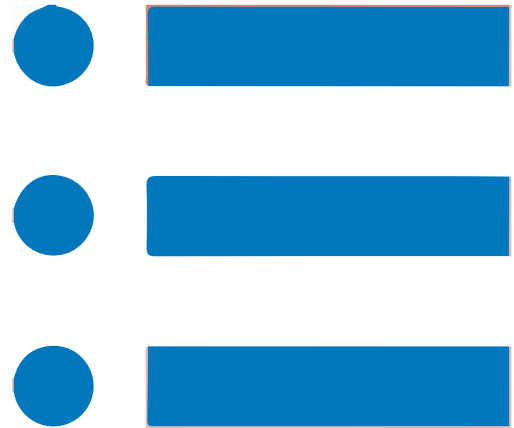
As you work on your newsletter layout and content creation, stay mindful of your goal and make sure you are working towards meeting it by prioritizing calls-to-actions at the top of the email.



The two examples above are of **Brain Pickings'** weekend newsletter (to the left) and **Fast Company's design** daily newsletter (to the right). These emails are always packed with useful and entertaining information, a sure sign of high clickthrough rates and an engaged audience. On the top of each newsletter, you will spot a call-to-action which invites people to either donate or subscribe.

# 2 ..... DIGEST

Similar to newsletters, email digests provide summaries of existing information and offer a snapshot of a specific time frame, e.g. a week or a month. Traditionally, digests highlight the most popular pieces of content that new readers will also gravitate towards. For instance, you can receive a digest of top books to read or movies to see. Some software companies send digests of usage data (e.g.) [Like our monthly performance digest.](#)



Digests should be easier to consume than newsletters because they generally consist of lists and links. That helps subscribers scan the email quickly and click on the parts that they are most interested in. The goals of a digest and a newsletter will most likely overlap. Remember to place the most important call-to-action at the top and measure clickthrough rate and conversions. If your goal is to drive traffic to specific pages, monitor CTR closely and don't forget to optimize the pages to which you are sending visitors.

//

[Meet the New Twitter](#)  
 If you've downloaded the new Twitter app to your phone, you may have seen the new Twitter online by now. I'd have to get @bgardner or @rafaltomal over here to make a serious run at how the separate elements of the redesign really shake out, but I like it.

//

[3 Email Marketing Techniques You Haven't Seen](#)  
 All right, I'm a bit of an email nerd. If you are too, these won't be completely foreign to you, but they're a good reminder of what works when it comes to email list conversion.

//

[What Truly Matters in Business and in Life](#)  
 With his trademark generosity, Chris Guillebeau makes an attempt at answering this question (and more) in another stunning manifesto. No opt-in required.

//

[4 Industries About to be Transformed by the Internet](#)  
 You might take a glance at this article and say "Yeah, duh!" and that's fine. The question remains: how will these changes affect what you're working on?

//

[How to Use Instagram to Tell \(and Sell\) Your Marketing Story](#)  
 If you're an Instagram freak, you'll love this. If, like me, you're not on Instagram, John makes a good, indirect case for thinking creatively about your marketing.

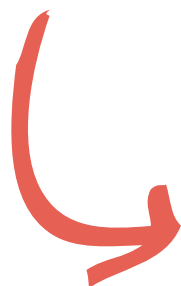
//

[You're Not as Busy as You Think](#)  
 A solid reminder that, though busy makes you feel good, it does not necessarily mean you're doing good work. Less is more?

Here is an example of Copyblogger's email digest that includes links to important articles and short blurbs describing what the reader will learn about after they click.

The digest's design can be much simpler than that of newsletters. Of course, you can build a few different versions and test which one receives more engagement from subscribers.

Like newsletters and based on the goal you've set for them, email digests can be sent to different target audiences. One popular option is the blog digest which collects notifications about the articles you publish throughout a certain time frame and releases an email with the links. If you are **blogging using our platform**, your subscribers will have the opportunity to set up this type of digest.



**Blog Post Notification Emails**

Viewing mailing lists for email georg20m@gmail.com

List name	Date Joined	Subscription Type	Unsubscribe
reportsubscribers (on page Weekly Marketing Cast with David Meerman Scott and)	Nov. 21, 2010, 7:57 p.m.	Every post <input type="button" value="Update"/>	<input type="button" value="Unsubscribe"/>
subscribers (on page Blog)	Oct. 11, 2011, 12:57 p.m.	Weekly Digest <input type="button" value="Update"/>	<input type="button" value="Unsubscribe"/>

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## 3

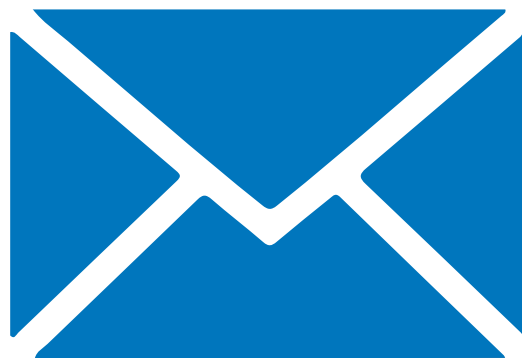
## DEDICATED EMAIL

Dedicated emails, or also known as stand-alone emails, contain information about only one offer. For instance, you can be notifying your target audience about a new whitepaper you have released or invite them to attend an event that you are hosting.

Dedicated emails help you set up the context to introduce the main call-to-action. In this sense, they are similar to [landing pages](#).

Dedicated sends are generally used to reach out to your entire email database, a practice that is not necessarily efficient in optimizing conversions and minimizing unsubscribes.

While there are instances when all of your subscribers should be notified about a specific marketing campaign, such as a timely new offer or an upcoming event, in most cases you would want to segment heavily based on your subscribers' different behaviors and interests. More on that, in the *Lead Nurturing* section of this chapter!



## Advantages



### FOCUSED CALL-TO-ACTION

Unlike newsletters, dedicated sends can focus on really driving results for one call-to-action. As a MarketingSherpa case study of Kodak's successful list growth tactic [explains](#), "These calls-to-action were not stuffed at the end of a newsletter or tacked onto another message. They were the focus of a dedicated email, which gave them much more impact."



### EASY TO BUILD

Once you have your email template in place, building dedicated sends should be easy. You will generally grab some of the information already on the landing page, make a few tweaks to it and spend most time on nailing down the subject line. Unlike newsletters, dedicated emails don't need to include many graphical elements to separate the different blocks of text and prioritize information. Here, the entire email revolves around a single message.



### FAST TO MEASURE

Naturally, if you have one main message and call-to-action in your dedicated send, it will be easy for you to track progress. You can quickly check the email CTR, landing page views and conversions, and follow the long-term ROI.



## Disadvantages



### LESS CONSISTENT

With newsletters, marketers generally stick to a specific schedule. For instance, you might create a weekly newsletter that goes out on Tuesday mornings. Or your company might be sending a weekend newsletter summarizing information published throughout the week.

With dedicated sends, the schedule is less clear and, potentially, less consistent. You might use dedicated emails when you have published a new offer (which might be sporadic). Even if you decide to maintain a specific schedule, your subscribers might not realize it or expect communication from you because there is no clear connection between the separate sends.



### HOMOGENOUS CONTENT

As dedicated sends contain one message, it's tough to include a shout-out about some other campaign that might also be important to your organization. The workaround is to utilize the P.S. or to decrease the list size and use part of it for the second call-to-action you want to introduce.

## 4

## LEAD NURTURING

As an inbound marketing tactic, lead nurturing is all about understanding the nuances of your leads' timing and needs. By getting these details right, you set yourself up for success. Lead nurturing introduces a tightly connected series of emails with a coherent purpose and full of useful content. In this context, lead nurturing offers more advantages than just an individual email blast.

## Advantages



## IT'S TIMELY

Study after study shows that email response rates decline over the age of the lead. In his [Science of Timing research](#) Dan Zarrella, Hubspot's Social Media Scientist, discovered that there is a positive correlation between subscriber recency and CTR, one of the key metrics of engagement. You need to use lead nurturing campaigns to take advantage of this dynamic.



### IT'S AUTOMATED

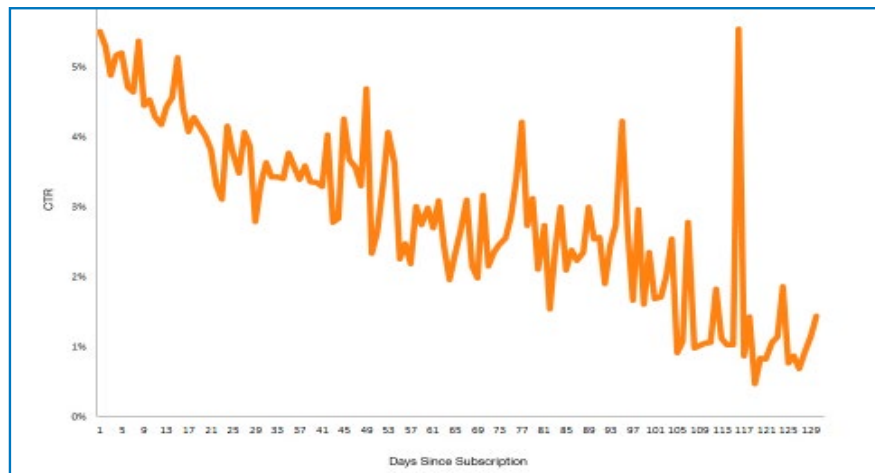
Once you set up **lead nurturing**, emails are sent out automatically according to your schedule as new leads come in. This leads to a high return on a low investment. You might launch the campaigns and forget about them, but the emails will be doing the work for you, helping you qualify leads and push them down the sales funnel faster.



### IT'S TARGETED

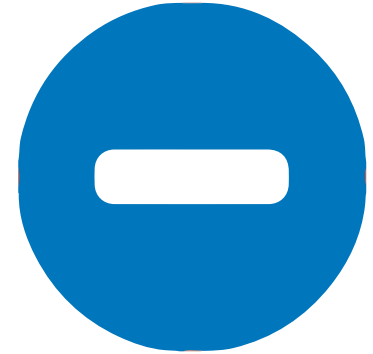
Studies show that targeted and segmented emails perform better than mass email communications. Lead nurturing enables you to tie a series of emails to a specific activity or conversion event. You can craft your follow-up email based on the action a lead has taken on your website, thus showing that you are aware of their interests in the topic and what they might need next. Based on this information, lead nurturing emails can highlight reconversion opportunities that tie back to their earlier interests.

#### Effect of Subscriber Recency on Clickthrough Rate (CTR)





## Disadvantages



### GENERATES LESS CONCURRENT BUZZ

With dedicated sends to your entire email database, you can generate a lot of buzz around your brand. There is an explosion of engagement resulting from the simultaneous forwarding and social media sharing (especially if you have Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook sharing links in your email). Lead nurturing cannot quite achieve the same buzz effect because it is programmed to schedule fewer emails to segmented audiences. So while there will still be sharing, you won't see a huge spike in traffic and conversions on a specific day. Rather, the visits and leads will trickle in.



### PASSIVE TRACKING

Because lead nurturing is automated and marketers often forget about it after they've set it up, it also tends to be under reported. Make sure your lead nurturing campaigns include unique tracking tokens and revisit your **marketing analytics** to evaluate performance and prove the ROI of your efforts.

## 5

## SPONSORSHIP EMAILS

All the types of marketing email we have discussed so far assume that you are sending communications to your own email database. If you want to reach a different audience and gain new leads, you might want to try out sponsorship emails. You pay for including your copy in another vendor's newsletter or dedicated send.



Sponsorship email campaigns are one component to a paid media strategy, which could also include pay-per-click (PPC), display advertising, mobile advertising, affiliate advertising, etc. In this paid media universe you have the benefit of being specific when describing the target audience you want to reach. For instance, you might want to focus only on Asian American females in the 30 to 40 years-old range.

Generally, you'll have to design your email copy or ad placement in alignment with the specifications listed by the vendor. Check if the partner has any size restrictions or image suggestions. Provide them with both the HTML and plain text version of the copy in advance.

The key element in sponsorship emails is to evaluate the vendor. Make sure you trust that they are a credible partner before you proceed with the relationship.



## Advantages



### HIGHLY TARGETED

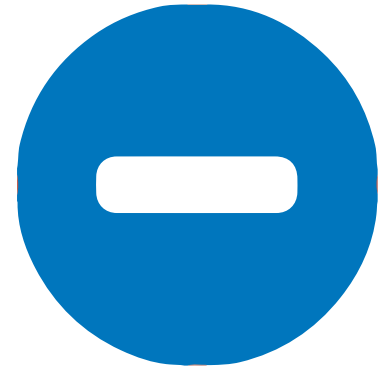
The biggest advantage of sponsorship emails is that you can be specific in defining the segment you want to reach. Get granular in identifying the different characteristics of your target audience--number of employees, geographic location, their interests and challenges, etc.



### EXACT ROI

There is a very specific investment in sponsorship emails--you know how much you are paying the vendor. Now you only need to track the results you are getting (visits, leads, sales) in order to determine what is your return on the cost you have paid. Knowledge of the exact ROI will help you fit in your marketing budget and build accurate marketing reports at the end of the quarter.

## Disadvantages



### IT'S PAID

Sponsorship emails are being sent to people who you haven't earned as subscribers (they didn't opt-in to your list). In this context, you have to pay in order to get content in front of them. Vendors offer different payment packages and here you enter the land of negotiation. Some of the most popular options are paying a flat fee, paying based on a CPM (cost per thousand impressions) model or paying per new lead acquired.



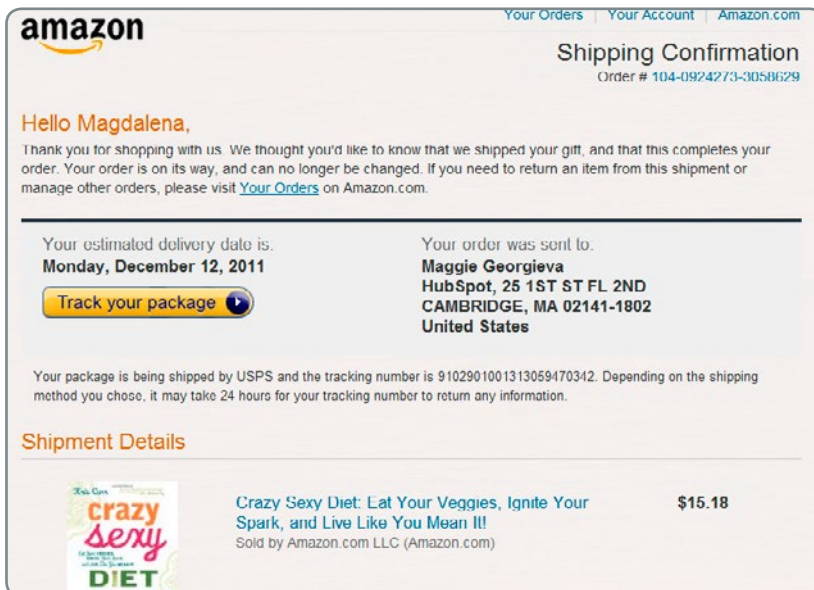
### DEDICATED RESOURCES

Sponsorship emails and management of the vendor relationship require a big marketing effort and tight control. "For this style of sponsorship to be successful there needs to be a dedicated team behind it that understands data, brand synergies, and the ability to unearth unseen co-branding opportunities," writes Jackie Fast, Managing Director at Slingshot Sponsorship. If you have a small marketing team, it might be tough to take full advantage of sponsorship emails.

6

# TRANSACTIONAL EMAILS

Transactional emails are the messages that get triggered by a specific action your contacts have taken and enable them to complete that action. For instance, if you are signing up for a webinar, you will fill out a form and then receive a transactional (thank-you) email, which gives you login information in order to join. If you are using a double opt-in, people will receive an email asking them to click on a link in order to confirm their registration.



Transactional are also the messages you receive from eCommerce sites like Amazon that confirm your order and give you shipment information and other details.

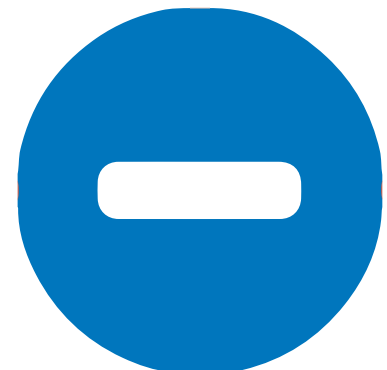
## Advantages



### HIGH CTR

Recipients anticipate transactional emails because they help them complete an action. That is why they open them and click on them. Take advantage of this dynamic and include a highly customized call-to-action (maybe even as a P.S.) to leverage the fact that the subscriber is fresh and very actively engaged with your email communication. [Jupiter research](#) shows that marketing content in transactional messages help increase revenue and brand recognition.

## Disadvantages



### CREATES AN OBSTACLE

Sometimes the idea of taking yet another action discourages contacts from completing their activity altogether because it seems to them like they are jumping through hoops.

CHAPTER 3

# 9 EMAIL MARKETING METRICS

“ *To assess your email marketing performance, you must conduct ongoing trend analysis of several key metrics.* ”

To assess your email marketing performance, you must conduct ongoing trend analysis of several key metrics. That way, you can compare each campaign's performance against your own averages to know whether a specific campaign outperformed or underperformed your internal email benchmarks.

Your email service provider (ESP) should provide a wealth of reporting on each campaign and on your ongoing email performance. In this chapter we will cover the most important email metrics to measure and how you can use them to improve the performance of your email marketing program overall.



## 1

**BOUNCE RATE****DEFINITION**

The percentage of total emails sent that could not be delivered to the recipient's inbox, known as a "bounce."

**HOW TO USE**

Use this metric to uncover potential problems with your email list. There are two kinds of bounces to track: "hard" bounces and "soft" bounces.

Soft bounces are the result of a temporary problem with a valid email address, such as a full inbox or a problem with the recipient's server. The recipient's server may hold these emails for delivery once the problem clears up, or you may try re-sending your email message to soft bounces. Hard bounces are the result of an invalid, closed, or non-existent email address, and these emails will never be successfully delivered.



## 2

**DELIVERY RATE****DEFINITION**

The percentage of emails that were actually delivered to recipients' inboxes, calculated by subtracting hard and soft bounces from the gross number of emails sent, then dividing that number by gross emails sent.

**HOW TO USE**

Your delivery rate sets the stage for email success or failure. To have any chance of engaging a customer or prospect with an email campaign, that message has to get delivered to their inbox.

Look for a delivery rate of 95% or higher. If your delivery rate is slipping over time, you may have problems with your list (e.g. too many invalid addresses). If one particular campaign has a lower than average delivery rate, examine the subject line and content of that message. Perhaps there was some element that may have been flagged as spam by corporate firewalls or major ISPs, causing many more message than usual to be blocked.

# 3

## LIST GROWTH RATE

### DEFINITION

A measurement of how fast your email list is growing. Calculate your growth rate by subtracting opt-outs and hard bounces from the number of new email subscribers gained in a given month. Then, divide that number by the original list size.



### HOW TO USE

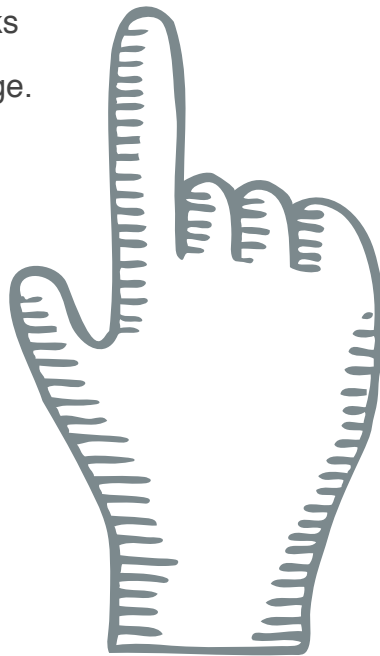
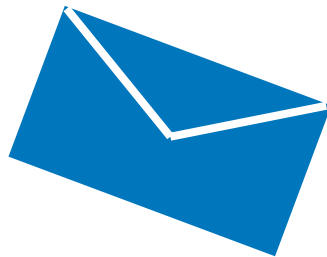
Email list growth rate is important because a healthy email marketing program needs to be continually refreshed with new names. Many of the addresses on your email list will naturally “go bad” over time, as people change jobs, switch ISPs or email programs, or just forget their passwords and create new accounts. According to the popular marketing resource MarketingSherpa, the natural churn rate of an email list can be 25% annually or higher, which is why you must continually work to add new contacts to your email database.

# 4 ..... CTR

## DEFINITION

The proportion of the audience who clicked on one or more links contained in an email message.

Organizations can calculate CTR either by dividing unique clicks by the number of emails delivered, or by dividing total clicks, including multiple clicks by the same recipient, by the number of emails delivered.



## HOW TO USE

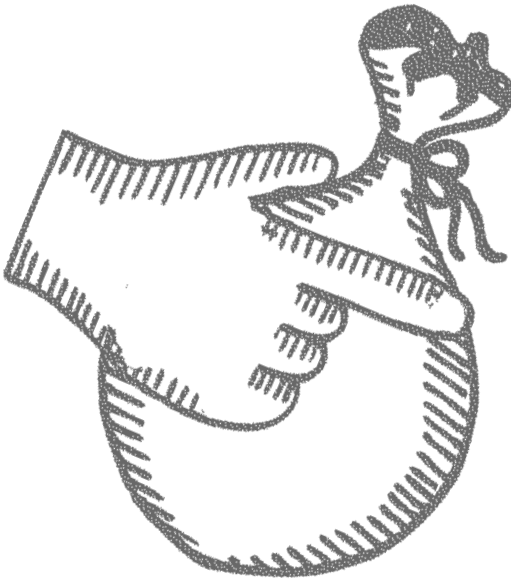
Monitoring email CTR is a cornerstone of email marketing analytics, because the CTR indicates whether the message was relevant and the offer compelling enough to encourage recipients to action. But CTR can vary widely by the type of message sent. For example, email newsletters often have higher CTRs than promotional messages, and transactional messages – such as emailed purchase receipts – often have the highest CTR of all the messages your business sends. For that reason, it's best to benchmark your CTRs according to the different types of emails you send.

## 5

## EMAIL SHARING

**DEFINITION**

The percentage of recipients who clicked on a “share this” button to post email content to a social network and/or who clicked on the “forward to a friend” button.

**HOW TO USE**

Sharing rates are another indicator of the value and relevance of your email messages. Email offers that get shared or forwarded outside of your own house list can end up being your best performing campaigns, because you’ve drastically increased the reach of that message by tapping into the viral nature of your subscribers’ social networks.

Watch your sharing rates carefully to discover which types of articles and offers tend to get shared the most, and use that knowledge when planning future campaigns.

## 6

## CONVERSION RATE

**DEFINITION**

The percentage of recipients who clicked on a link within an email and completed a desired action, such as filling out a lead generation form or purchasing a product.

**HOW TO USE**

Conversion rate is the ultimate measure of an email campaign's effectiveness. The higher your conversion rate, the more relevant and compelling the offer was for your audience. However, conversion rates are dependent on factors beyond the original email message, such as the quality of your landing page.

**Measuring conversion rate** requires integration between your email platform and your web analytics. You can perform this integration by creating unique tracking URLs for your email links that identify the source of the click as coming from a specific email campaign.

## 7

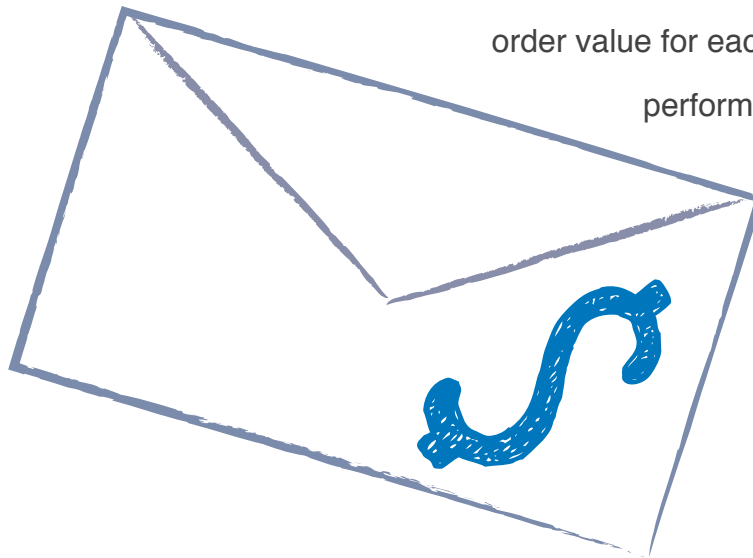
## .....REVENUE PER EMAIL SENT

**DEFINITION**

A measure of the ROI of a particular email campaign, calculated by dividing the total revenue generated from the campaign by the number of emails sent.

**HOW TO USE**

This metric is ideal for ecommerce marketers who generate a lot of direct sales from email campaigns. Again, it requires integration between your ESP and your ecommerce or web analytics platform. If you are already tracking conversion rates, you also can collect the order value for each conversion to perform this calculation.



## 8

## OPEN RATE

Open rate is a metric that many marketers use to measure the success of their campaigns, but it's an unreliable gauge for several reasons.

Most importantly, an email is only counted as 'opened' if the recipient also receives the images embedded in that message, and a large percentage of your email users likely have image-blocking enabled on their email client. This means that even if they open the email, they won't be included in your open rate, making it an inaccurate and unreliable metric for marketers, as it under-reports on your true numbers.

“*Open rate is an unreliable gauge for several reasons.*”

The flipside of under-reporting is the fact that open rates can be manipulated by writing catchy, even sensational subject lines that get recipients to open a message but then leave them feeling misled by the message's content. For that reason, it's better to focus on click-through rate as a better measurement of a successful email send.



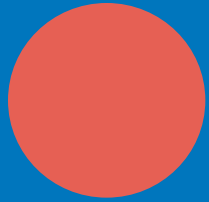
## 9

## UNSUBSCRIBE RATE



As with open rates, the unsubscribe rate isn't a reliable picture of the health of your email list. Many subscribers who are tired of receiving email messages from your brand won't bother to go through the formal unsubscribe process. They'll just stop opening, reading, and clicking on your email messages.

Again, tracking your click-through rates and conversion rates is a better way to monitor subscriber engagement and interest. But checking your monthly unsubscribe rate is helpful for calculating your overall list growth rate, and to watch for sudden spikes after a particular email campaign.



# CONCLUSION & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

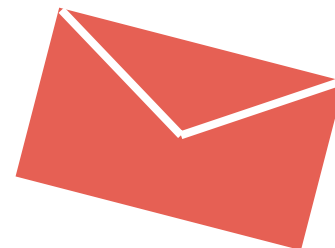
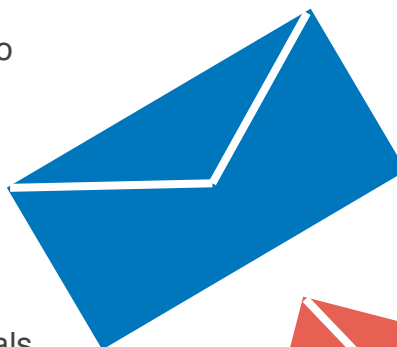
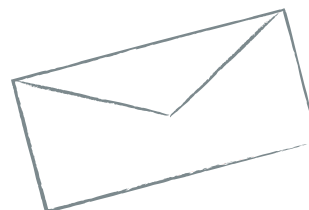
“*Email marketing is a powerful channel for driving real business results and achieving measurable ROI.*”

Email marketing is a powerful channel for driving real business results and achieving measurable ROI.

In this ebook we discussed the top challenges you will most likely face in email marketing and suggested ways to solve these issues.

We also covered six types of marketing emails, giving you some guidelines about the different formats you can create based on your individual goals and needs. Lastly, we talked about the metrics that you should monitor in order to define success.

By reading this ebook you have acquired a great foundation to your overall email marketing strategy. If you are interested in learning more about optimizing your emails, Contact us today at 800-834- 4910.



## ABOUT INBOUND 281

### WHO WE ARE

We are a digital marketing agency dedicated to helping our clients navigate the digital landscape, connect more meaningfully to their customers, and inspire their audience with purposeful content. We do this by leveraging inbound marketing and web design strategies for business, corporate, and enterprise marketers.

### OUR MISSION

Our mission is to use our inbound approach to develop leading-edge digital marketing plans, perceptive strategies, and valuable solutions to help you engage your customers with more two-way conversations and personal interactions to support revenue generation.

### READY FOR A CONVERSATION?

If you are interested in a comprehensive plan that combines website design, email marketing, social media marketing, content development, and automation – or if you'd just like to learn more about how an inbound marketing plan can complement your established branding and communications strategies to meet your organization's unique needs, reach out and have a conversation with us.

**TALK TO US**



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