

Tips for Successful Email Campaigns

Email has become an expedient, cost-effective way to deliver marketing messages to targeted audiences, but its explosive growth has been met with mixed response. Overwhelmed by a flood of daily emails, companies and individuals are increasingly relying on automated tools to filter out the glut of emails landing in inboxes. And fed-up email users are going even further, sometimes labeling *any* unsolicited email as SPAM and even going so far as to file abuse complaints against the senders. Currently there are no widely-accepted rules, practices, policies or laws that help the legitimate marketer make the right choice for sending out a proper marketing campaign using email. Legitimate marketers are struggling to adapt to the anti-SPAM hysteria and are looking for guidelines for reaching their audience using email without being accused of being a spammer.

Media Net Link has spent the past three years designing and developing a web-based email marketing system called Contact Beacon which gives companies the opportunity to market to their clients and their prospects. Both through assisting clients and using Contact Beacon for our own marketing efforts, we have come to understand the many facets of email marketing and the grey areas that exist in attempting to deliver promotional email messages without being labeled a spammer. Our goal in this paper is to convey some suggestions for legitimate marketers to follow when creating email campaigns.

Unlike others in our field, we do not adhere to the dictum that any unsolicited email is SPAM. We do not believe that a legitimate company should be prevented from using email for selling their products and services to new prospects. Our whole economy hinges on the ability of companies to solicit business from other businesses and consumers. Sure there are lots of complaints about direct mail, cold calling, and other prospecting techniques, but without them our economy would crash. We believe that as long as we have "Do Not Call " lists, "Do Not Mail" lists and, perhaps better, "Unsubscribe" lists, then companies that abide by these rules should not be seen as despicable, or worse, criminal.

What we are advocating is a better approach to email marketing, that if adopted will prove to be a far better solution than just stopping all unsolicited emails period. Our goal is to define the criteria that separate legitimate marketing efforts from those of the classic spammer, and to make suggestions for legitimate businesses to follow to achieve better results from their email marketing efforts.

Our Top Ten Email Marketing Success Factors

1. **Be legitimate** – Any email you send to a prospect or client should be as straight forward and clear as possible. The direct mail industry has done a great disservice to us all with their misleading tactics to get recipients to open the mail. They have learned that if they can get you to open their mail, the chances of you buying go way up. Those who use the same approach with email marketing will find this is a poor way to gain respectability. If you don't want your emails to be caught in SPAM filters, or deleted without even being opened, avoid bait and switch teasers and other techniques that are now associated with spammers. A sure way to elicit SPAM complaints is by using a misleading statement in the Subject line or putting an ambiguous name in the Sender line. Obey the CAN-SPAM legislation. State who you are and why you are sending this email. Be up front and honest.
2. **Build Toward an Opt-in List** – The success of your efforts rests on the quality of your contact lists. There is a huge difference between the lists of legitimate email marketers and the lists of spammers who are trying to attract anyone they can get.

Buying a million emails for pennies a name will do almost nothing to help you build your opt-in lists, and blasting messages to lists like this will likely and justifiably result in a backlash of SPAM complaints. Worse yet are lists obtained by automated web crawlers, which may contain email addresses that are either bogus or were planted on sites just to catch spammers. No legitimate company should send messages to an email address that starts with "info@". Nor should you be sending emails to lists that have long rows of emails that follow a sequence: aaa@, aab@, aac@ and so on.

Similarly, don't expect exceptional results from contact lists filled with email addresses from free email providers. Hotmail, MSN, gmail and Yahoo mail subscribers are so inundated with SPAM, the chances of your getting past their sophisticated filters grows less and less each day. It's almost impossible to avoid these email addresses in your lists- even our lists contain some of these email addresses- but as a policy we strive to get alternate emails from our recipients. Even third party lists bought from reputable list services may not contain contacts that are a close fit to your specific target market, or may cost too much to make it a viable source. We believe that building lists with legitimate company email addresses from recipients who have opted-in are the best lists of all.

The current trend is heading towards the legal mandate that will require marketers to use only opt-in lists, where recipients have expressly allowed you to send information to them. Building an opt-in list should always start with your existing customers, clients and other contacts who already have a relationship with you.

Bucking the opt-in trend, we don't require your lists to be opt in lists. We believe a legitimate marketer should be able to prospect to targeted audiences that are likely to appreciate his message. We believe the recipients of messages are adequately protected as long as there are easy and real ways to get off the list, hence our next point.

3. **Honor All Unsubscribe Requests** – Always include a working opt-out link so that recipients can easily unsubscribe. Some people are afraid of unsubscribing from junk email for fear of conveying to the sender that their email address is legitimate, thereby making them the target of more junk mail. But spammers are the only ones who try to avoid providing opt-out links in their messages. The CAN SPAM Act states you must offer both an electronic and a traditional mail method for recipients to unsubscribe. Obey the law and make it easy to unsubscribe from your list. Go the extra step and offer your phone number as well. Any legitimate company should be happy to pare their lists over time to only those recipients that want to hear from them.
4. **Build Professional Templates** – Email is so cheap and quick to create and deliver that anyone can be a marketer. The best way to distinguish your message from the spammers is to deliver professional looking emails that clearly state their legitimacy and brand. Jamming a bunch of poorly worded, worthless text into your content or delivering poor quality images (and nothing else) will get even the most accepting of us angry. Get professional. Using well branded, clearly focused, email templates in HTML format is a must. Not only does HTML provide a great way to track your messages, but it raises the level of professionalism for all marketers who are trying to maintain this platform as a viable marketing arena.
5. **Target Your Sends** – Know your audience and only deliver messages that are relevant to that audience- whether that is a prospect, client or customer. Doing mass email blasts is a poor way to market your products and services, and it is a sure way to get you kicked off Contact Beacon. We believe it is imperative to know your clients and prospects and

target your messages to those who might be interested. With Contact Beacon, it is easy to create customized messages for various target audiences quickly and affordably.

6. **Keep Your Message Short and to the Point** – The beauty of sophisticated email marketing is that you can create concise messages, yet have the ability to offer more information for those that desire it. Your initial introductory emails should be professional, to the point, and should contain links to your website for those that want more information. Getting a prospect to go to your web site is a sure sign the prospect is interested in what you have to offer.
7. **Plan Your Campaigns Ahead of Time** – And Stick with them! Email marketing is no more successful than any other method if poorly planned and poorly executed. One shot email blasts do not work for a number of reasons. We have learned the best way to achieve results is to build campaigns that include various messages delivered to contacts in succession over time. Read our [Multiple Touch Marketing](#) paper written by the Contact Beacon marketing department to learn more about developing an email marketing campaign.
8. **Track Results and Use Them** – A great benefit of the email marketing channel is that it gives marketers immediate and detailed information on the behavior of those who receive marketing messages. Pay attention to *who* is reading and who is not. Don't be lazy and just send the same message to everyone on your list time and time again, regardless of how they respond. With Contact Beacon, you can send different follow up messages only to those who have previously shown interest or only to those who have never responded. Pay attention to *what* is being read and what is not. Some subject lines are going to be more appealing to your audience and have better open rates; some content will elicit better click-through rates. Experiment with different subject lines and vary the message content to determine what is most effective. Then focus future campaigns on the marketing pieces that deliver the best results.
9. **Email Alone is not Enough** – There are so many ways you can enhance your marketing efforts using today's email platform. Integrating your web site into your email marketing campaigns will produce better results if you do more than just create a link to your site from the email. Devising the optimum campaign takes into account all the points above plus the classic marketing rules of the road. Each time you cut corners, you run the risk that by limiting your message, you confuse and alienate your audience. If you are going to do email marketing at all, do it right!
10. **Sustain Your Efforts** – As with any marketing approach, you will have more success if you sustain your efforts and continue to refine your message and approach. Remember that not everyone is ready to act on your message at any point in time. Email marketing is most successful when it becomes a means for building and sustaining brand awareness and for strengthening relationships with customers, so that when prospects or customers are ready to act, they already recognize your name and think positively about your brand. Delivering a variety of messages such as promotions, newsletters and invitations with links back to your website gives recipients many opportunities to remember your name and to reach out to you when they are ready to act. And don't rely solely on your initial list of contacts; build your contact lists over time too. Encourage new subscribers by placing a sign up form on your website (we provide free HTML code for this) and by placing paper based sign ups in your place of business and on any forms that your customers fill out for you.

Follow these 10 simple steps and you'll achieve much greater success.



delivering clear direct communications

For more information about using Contact Beacon to create and execute successful Email marketing campaigns, please contact us.