

AdRoll's Ultimate Guide to Email Marketing



Have you ever tried to fly a kite? It's a simple enough concept, but half a dozen factors play a role in achieving success.

Email **HAS** to be the equivalent of a kite flying in the digital marketing world.

You have the wind (an addressable audience), you have a frame (your email template), your cover (the email copy and call-to-action, or CTA), and the tail (that little something extra to keep your email campaigns flying high).

With all of that, let's not forget the string. The string is the element that allows a skilled marketer to remain connected to their audience, strategically operating to maximize lift and accommodate changing audience behaviors. Without the right techniques, marketers can find their proverbial kites stuck in trees or dragging along the ground.

Ambitious, direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands recognize the importance of email marketing — and why wouldn't they? [According to Statista](#), a leader in market and consumer data, it's projected that there will be 4.3 billion email users by 2023. To put that into perspective, this population represents more than half of the world — an audience looking to learn, connect, and consume.

So how does one get started constructing a successful email marketing campaign? This guide will walk you through the process from start to finish — from building email lists and writing copy to automating deployment and measuring results.

Let's get your email campaigns soaring!

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Building Your Audience

A number of years ago, I was promoting a book that I'd written with a friend of mine. One of our first campaigns leveraged an influencer and her massive Facebook following. This audience aligned perfectly with our demographic — the sheer number of followers guaranteed our success. Or did it?

Of the emails we sent, and the hundreds of thousands of impressions we generated, the influencer campaign failed to produce a single sale. I came to realize that I'd created a list of people that fit a certain description but failed to include an established relationship or those people who had some level of purchase intent.

How often have we been on the receiving end of emails that miss the mark? Our inbox is full of them — brands that haven't earned a connection, emailing content we have little interest in.

When building an audience, thoughtful planning can deepen a relationship where hasty, ill-conceived communication can disrupt them. Considering this ahead of time goes a long way in capturing email addresses, maintaining engagement with readers, and delivering value.

Here are some strategies we've come to utilize in our audience-building efforts to establish relationships and meet the needs of those we engage with.

Finding the Right People

Gain notoriety by actively contributing to online communities

Sometimes, establishing your expertise and generating interest requires that you surround yourself with the most passionate people in the space. Becoming active with online communities provides you the opportunity to contribute to discussions and produce informative articles.

Not only will you benefit from shares across large networks, but it's also not uncommon for active members of these groups to be featured on blogs or podcasts — “gigs” that allow you to promote your website or email list. Regularly put together compelling content, and you'll see your traffic increase and audience grow.

If you're wondering which communities to get started with, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Slack offer excellent forums for like-minded individuals to share information and expand their professional networks.

Pop-ups

Okay, we'll first qualify that pop-ups presented at the wrong time, or pop-ups that are obtrusive or too frequently used, can be

annoying. Conversely, a well-timed, contextually driven pop-up can be a welcoming gateway to more information if a visitor to your site is looking for it.

Sumo, a third-party provider that works to increase site traffic for small businesses, [conducted a review](#) of nearly two billion pop-ups. They found that those with clarity, context, and value, substantially increased email subscriptions. The highest-performing pop-ups among those reviewed even saw a 40% conversion rate.

To establish clarity, context, and value with your pop-ups, we recommend a few best practices:

- Avoid triggering pop-ups immediately when your visitor arrives at the site.
- Consider using scroll percentage as a way gauge interest before presenting the invite.
- Create pop-ups that reflect the content on the page.
- Ensure that exit-intent pop-ups feature your most compelling offers — discounted subscriptions, free swag, and gated content test particularly well.
- Never hide the exit option. Allow people to click off the side of the pop-up to close.

Keep sign-up forms short and auto-fill where you can

Similar to our findings with pop-ups, keeping sign-up forms short, sweet, and contextual helps to streamline the process of joining an email list. It also helps to build trust and reciprocity as opposed to

triggering fears of an unwanted sales call.

There are a few strategies that growing brands have begun to use to reduce the burden of email sign-up. Here's a couple that we're fond of:

- Consider using Google sign-in to capture important information about users.
- Utilize contact information enrichment through a service like Fullcontact, Peoplelooker, Clearbit, or Pipecandy.

Note that these services can be expensive, depending on the number of contacts you're looking to enrich. However, depending on your business goals, the cost can be well worth the insights you obtain. These insights can also allow you to add greater personalization with the email campaigns you create, increasing the likelihood of success.

If it's critical to your business to build a list using work emails, make sure to specify that requirement in your form.

Avoid buying email lists from third parties

Much like the example I shared above, leveraging audiences that you haven't earned a connection with will result in poor performance. It's much more effective to use these resources to build brand awareness or to drive traffic to your site.

Segmenting Your Audience

Once you have your audience, it's essential to track what makes them unique.

The first areas that D2C brands typically focus on are demographics (age, gender identification, location) and firmographics (business size, number of employees, etc.). This information about your followers is made available through built-in reporting tools, depending on the social media platform you utilize.

Other popular segmentation strategies include:

- **Evaluating your audience based on email engagement.** This could mean creating segments based on a subscriber's interaction with a specific message (target those who opened or clicked a campaign) or based on their interaction with your email categories (for example, after-sales announcement emails vs. new season product newsletters).
- **Categorizing users by the industries they operate in.**
- **Bucketing your audience based on where they are in their customer journey.** Have they recently discovered your site? Are they active users of your services? Are they ambassadors of your brand?
- **Determining the value that each customer brings to your business.** High-value customers may warrant a different message than low-value customers.

Constructing Your Email

This is the kite cover. The colorful part, the part that gives your kite personality and substance as it glides through the air. From an email marketing perspective, email content is the area that marketers think most about. For the hours that we spend pouring over flowery language and fancy designs, it's the area that we most often get wrong.

As you think about building your email, you should rely heavily on the audience you have decided to message, what they represent, and what they're looking for. From here, it's easy. Well, not exactly — but you've already taken an important step that, [according to Hubspot](#), 42% of marketers leave out when planning their email marketing strategy.

Once you have a sense of who you'll be communicating with, you can create something with relevance and impact. In this section, we outline the most critical elements of an email. This will allow you to create a professional design that reinforces your brand while increasing the likelihood your audience consumes the message and takes action.

Rich Text (HTML) vs.

Plain Text

Rich text (or HTML) is another way of referring to emails with all the bells and whistles — image-heavy, highly formatted messages that recreate the look and feel of your website.

Plain text, on the other hand, comprises the simplest of messages — basic, text-only communication that prioritizes deliverability and emulates the type of email you might receive from a friend.

So, when building an email campaign, which is better to use? It's got to be the visually oriented, well-structured variety of emails, right? Well, it's not quite that simple. [In a study by Marketo](#), plain text emails regularly outperform the open rate of rich text emails by more than 10%. [Other studies](#) have indicated that the difference in open rates can be even more substantial than that.

But why would the content of your email impact whether or not it's opened? Well, it doesn't — not directly, anyway. Spam filters love plain text emails. By the sheer nature of how email works, sending a plain text email can increase the chances it'll be delivered and, therefore, opened.

So what's the verdict, you ask? Should you use plain text or rich text to build your email campaigns? The answer again comes down to your audience. Rich text communicates professionalism — a key factor in why marketers are [20% more likely](#) to choose rich text over plain text. Plain text conveys simplicity and familiarity — an

element that can help the writer connect with the reader.

We're among the population of marketers that use both. Leveraging both rich text and plain text is another way to customize your email campaign to fit your objectives and address the uniqueness of your audience. We suggest that you consider each of these when planning out your strategies.

Structuring a Rich Text

(HTML) Email

Optimize for mobile

Audiences are experiencing email via mobile more than ever before. In fact, [according to Emailmonday](#), nearly 50% of emails are read using a mobile device. Building your emails with a mobile-first mentality will improve the customer experience and keep them coming back.

We'd note that in our tests, "mobile-friendly" template designs aren't always as friendly as the designers would lead you to believe. Before deploying your email campaign, check out the email on your mobile device to ensure that there aren't any strange artifacts or awkward alignments.

Headers

As you're building your template, we suggest that you incorporate a header image. This can take the form of a banner, or even just your company's logo. Using a header image helps your rich text email feel more official. If you choose to go the banner route, your header can even help set reader expectations or summarize your message.

Margins

Margins are important, especially for emails read on the desktop. When building or selecting a template, we recommend margins that make up between 20—30% of your vertical space, split between the left and right sides of the browser.

We also recommend that these margins are a different background color than what you select for the body of your email. This will help focus the attention of readers on the content you worked so hard to put together. Like many marketers out there, we use a light grey background for our margins.

Padding and line breaks

Padding and line breaks are additional tools we use to focus the reader's attention and allow your message to breathe.

[A recent Microsoft study](#) found that marketers have less than eight seconds to leave an impression. Using visual aids in the form of padding and line breaks can take a wall of text and make it easier to scan and consume — getting you closer to that eight-second window that you need to engage your audience in.

Content

Now, on to the heart of your email. ❤️ To help this guide become an active resource for building your email marketing strategies, we wanted to share some dos and don'ts for each piece of the email you work on.

Subject lines

The subject line is one of the most important parts of an email. In fact, according to a 2019 study by [Convince & Convert](#), 33% of email recipients open an email based on the subject line alone. This illustrates the importance of taking your time to craft a subject line that's both relevant and engaging.

Here are a few priorities you should consider when setting up your subject line:

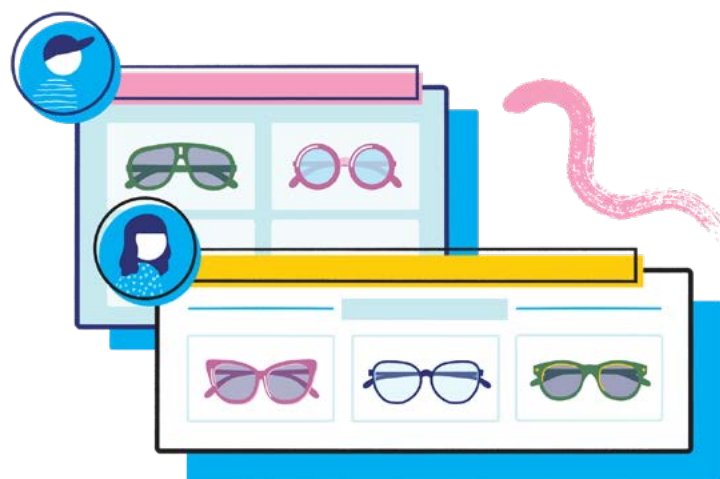
1	Capture the purpose of your email in the first 5 words of the subject line
2	Avoid language that is negative or overly sensational (i.e. lose, avoid, cancel, bad "make money fast", "you won")
3	Target a subject line under 50 characters
4	Limit the use of exclamation marks to one instance
5	Evaluate your subject line by excitement, urgency, and promise

Personalization

Speaking as directly to your audience as possible will help build that coveted relationship. But how do you go about personalizing emails at scale?

First off, you're never going to be exact in this effort. Tailoring your message to reflect individuality while at the same time sending thousands of messages is always going to be an imperfect effort. That said, there are considerations to be made to avoid the one-size-fits-all approach and create the illusion of personalization. Here are a few things that we recommend:

1	Create email content variation based on the audience segments you set up
2	Leverage built-in email functionality to populate the recipient's first name
3	Recognize the recipient's time zone when sending your email
4	Localize your emails based on the regions of the world your audience represent



Email Copy

Email copy should be short, concise, and personalized. To achieve this, we recommend the following:

Easily Understood	Avoid complex words and sentence structure
Focused	Keep your email to a single topic
Short/Concise	Use less than 125 words, reducing paragraphs to bulleted lists where possible
Persuasive	Limit your message to your 3-5 most interesting ideas
Scannable	Your email should be easy to navigate and easy to understand


Check out our [email copy template](#) to get started!



The CTA

The CTA is typically tied to the purpose of the email. What is it that you would like the reader to do — visit a landing page, adopt a product, update their contact information? There's a lot to think about when building a CTA.

The table below should help you identify which type of CTA is best suited for your campaign:

Type	Usage	Example
Text-based CTA	Using text-based CTAs are often most appropriate with multiple calls to action within a single email. We use this type of CTA when educating on multi-step processes or outlining more than one resource that customers can take advantage of.	Click here to start improving your Brand Awareness
Passive CTA	From a marketing perspective, we try and avoid this type of CTA. We would only recommend using this CTA if you have regular interaction with the user beyond the emails you send.	"Give us a call if you are interested in learning more about Brand Awareness."
CTA Button	The CTA button is less descriptive than other types of CTAs but creates visual emphasis in the body of your email. CTA Buttons are commonly used to promote product adoption or optimization.	

Prepping your images

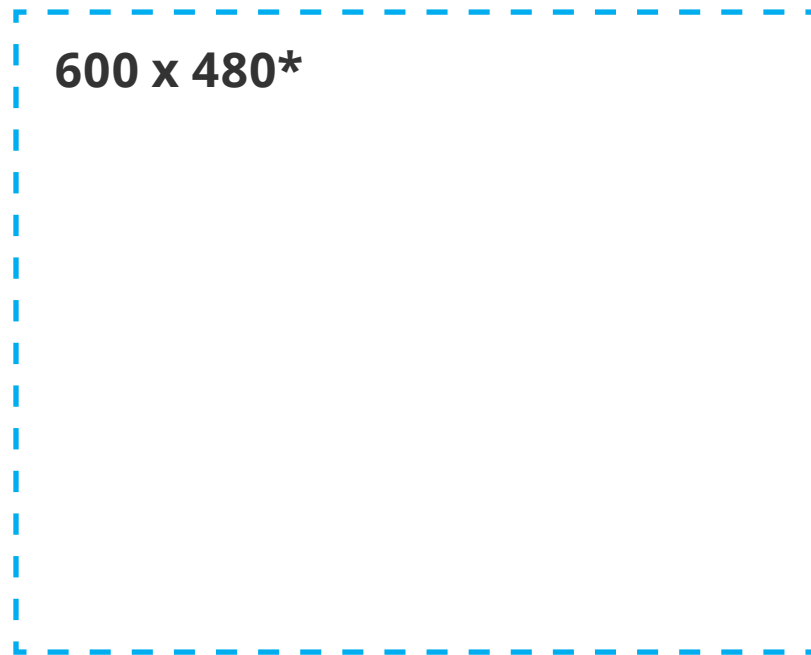
Everyone loves images, right? Images go a long way to add personality to your emails, explain complex ideas, and increase the rate of consumption. When using images, however, you'll want to balance things like file size and image quality. This will help your emails load quickly and maintain engagement with the reader.

The table below compares commonly used image files and the benefits that come along with using them:

Type	Pros	Cons
PNG	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best quality, regardless of content• Supports full transparency• Great for text• Can fix some distortions caused by other file types• Doesn't compress when uploaded	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large file size
JPG	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smaller file size	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distorts image to reduce file size• Doesn't work well with text• Doesn't support transparency• Compresses when uploaded
GIF	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smaller file size• Supports basic transparency• Doesn't compress when uploaded	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited to 256 colors• Images can appear grainy if they use web-unsafe colors

Image dimensions/resolution

Along the lines of image file types, dimensions and resolution play a critical role in how your email looks and loads. For most images, you should target less than 600 pixels on the longest side and around 480 pixels on the shortest side.



*Displaying at 1/2 scale

For large-format images, make sure that they take up no more than 30% of the email. Our tests have shown an increased likelihood that using such large images can negatively impact deliverability.

Video

While video is a great way to engage your audience in various places across the web, including a video in the body of your email can be a tricky proposition. In fact, most email clients we tested failed to support embedded video at all.

FULL Embedded Video Support	LIMITED to NO Embedded Video Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apple Mail• Microsoft Outlook• iOS• Samsung Mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gmail• Hotmail• Yahoo!• Thunderbird• GMX Mail• Zoho

Given the relatively limited support for embedded video, we recommend using a clickable image that redirects to your website or the platform your video is hosted on.

Here's an example of how you might set up this image:



Animated GIFs, in case you're unfamiliar, are a series of compressed images strung together to create an animation or video clip.

Similar to our recommendation around large format images, animated GIFs should be used sparingly — paying close attention to the size of the file and length of the animation. Failure to do so can result in truncated emails or deliverability issues.

There are a number of free animated GIF generators if you already have the video ready to go. One of our favorites is [EZGIF](#).

Avoiding Spam Filters

It's checklist time! Here are some of the most effective ways to prevent your email from ending up in the spam folder:

- ☐ **Audit your email lists every few months.** Remove individuals that fail to engage with your content. This will signal to email service providers (ESP) that your emails are valuable to their customers.
- ☐ **Avoid excessive use of symbols or punctuation in your subject lines.** Too many exclamation or question marks can send your message straight to spam.
- ☐ **Stay away from ALL CAPS.** Doing so tells ESPs that the email may meet professional standards.
- ☐ **Maintain a high level of email engagement.** High open and click-rates suggest that the emails you're sending are relevant to the audience. Strive for a greater than 30% open

rate and an 8% click rate.

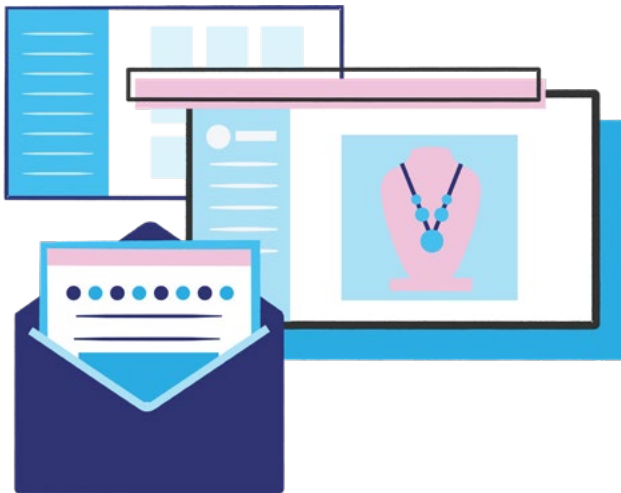
- ☐ **Avoid sending from your personal inbox.** Instead, send your emails through a reputable provider. These providers take precautions to authenticate your emails and increase the likelihood of delivery.
- ☐ **Consider signing your emails with your name as opposed to an organization.** While not always possible, this checkbox tells the ESP that a person was behind the message and not a spam bot.
- ☐ **Include the address of your business at the bottom of the email.** Providing your physical location can create legitimacy with spam filters that are scanning your message for harmful or unwanted information.
- ☐ **Add an unsubscribe link to your message.** Not only is an unsubscribe link required for marketing emails in many parts of the world, the option tells the spam filter that “there’s a way out” if the email content fails to interest their customers.



Launching Your Campaign

So far, we've covered a lot of ground. We discussed building an audience, creating segmentation, and also outlined best practices for putting your email together.

Next in line is how to launch your campaign. There are a few different ways to structure your email sends. Determining which one to use is essential to the outcomes you're hoping to drive.



Types of Emails

Much like selecting a mode of transportation, you wouldn't take a jet plane to the grocery store or ride a skateboard cross country. So, when launching your email, how do you marry your method of delivery with your campaign's objectives?

Here are the most common types of emails and when to use them. Their varying purposes allow you to take a holistic approach when communicating with your audience:

Types of Email	What it is used for
Broadcast	This type of email is also referred to as a stand-alone or one-time email. It is often used for announcements or periodic check-ins.
Sequence	Sequences are a series of emails intended for walking your audience through a process, building anticipation, preparing your audience for an upcoming event, or emphasizing a particular theme.
Newsletter	Newsletters are emails sent on a set schedule. These emails can center around regular product updates or trending topics. They can also provide a summary for recently distributed content or roll up information relevant to your audience segments.
Automated Emails	Automated emails are prewritten messages triggered by certain audience behaviors or predetermined metrics. These campaigns are typically more time consuming to set up but require much less maintenance over time.

Before Launching Your Campaign...

Think about the timezone of your recipients and test the optimal time for your list

This isn't about you — it's more about your recipients' convenience. The best time to send an email is Tuesday to Wednesday, late-morning (around 10 am), or early afternoon (around 1 or 2 pm).

Track the links with UTMs

Most email marketing tools will give you the option to track your links. This is an excellent start to gathering meaningful insights. [UTM parameters](#) are the best way to analyze what people do on your website after they click-through from your campaigns.

Pro tip: Check out the Campaign URL Builder by Google. This is one of the easiest ways to add campaign parameters and track your campaigns in Google Analytics.

Make sure you're mobile-friendly

As mentioned earlier, [48% of emails](#) are opened on mobile devices. This makes the use of a responsive template imperative for the success of your campaigns. Make sure that, before pressing the send button, you test your emails on mobile devices as well.

Maximizing Performance

Once you've crafted the perfect email and selected the delivery method, you may be interested in finding other ways to improve your campaign's performance. Go no further!

With each email you send, you're going to learn a lot. From finding your voice to determining the topics your audience is most interested in, you'll continuously find ways to better engage your audience. You'll also likely discover that a single communication channel may not be enough to generate awareness and drive intended outcomes. Remember, we only have eight seconds to leave an impression.

Imagine for a moment that we only had one opportunity to catch the name of a song we really liked, or a few moments to absorb the details of a complicated explanation. The human brain is designed to forget about things from time to time.

What's that 18th-century proverb? "If at first, you don't succeed, try, and try again." As marketers, we have to leverage repetition to help get our point across. That means that a successful email campaign should probably include more than just...email.

So, which tools should you focus on? Here are several things you should consider as you're trying to make the most of your message.

Leveraging Advertisements and Email Retargeting

For the more critical email campaigns, an often-used performance maximizer is paid advertisement. This marketing activity can help to emphasize a theme, tap into a seasonal promotion, or encourage sign-up.

There are a couple of different ways to use ad campaigns to enhance your email strategy. The first is to start with advertisements and then to email those who visited your site. The great thing about this technique is that you can engage both known and unknown populations, the latter potentially driving increased brand awareness and sign-ups.

Another option is to start with emails to known populations. As a follow-up, you can target the audience you messaged with retargeted advertisements. The benefit of this is that you can isolate those who opened your email or those who expressed interest by clicking on your call-to-action (CTA). This can be a less expensive route if your audience is typically engaged and simply needed a well-placed reminder.

Brands that maximize email with complementary advertising

and retargeting strategies have often seen a substantial increase in their return on investment (ROI). [BustedTees](#) is one of these brands, realizing a 390% return on investment as a result of a unified email marketing and paid advertisement campaign.

Complementing Email

Marketing with Onsite

Messaging

Similar to the advertising route, reinforcing your email campaign with onsite messaging helps to recall the message and remind your audience of the actions they need to take. Onsite messages can be used in lots of different ways. Here are a couple of strategies that you might leverage to maximize your email performance:

- **Leverage a discreet pop-up to highlight an email exclusive coupon.** It isn't just about receiving a coupon — it's receiving a coupon at the perfect moment, just before you're about to make a purchase decision. Reminding a customer with a pop-up that they have yet to apply that coupon might be just what it takes to get them to convert.
- **Reference your recent email as part of an audience survey.** Do you ever notice that sometimes it takes a well-timed question to heighten your senses and get you to pay attention to your surroundings? Sometimes a simple survey question on your website underlines a key message in your

email or a piece of content that you wanted to draw attention to:



Hey there! Did you happen to read this month's newsletter about optimization? How helpful did you find our personalized tips?

If you're looking for software to help manage onsite messaging, here are a few that we would recommend you check-out: [Pendo.io](https://pendo.io), [UserIQ](https://useriq.com), [Quickblox](https://quickblox.com), [AppCues](https://appcues.com).



Analyzing Results

Remember how we talked about the importance of creating an audience checkbox for each step you take? Analyzing results is another one of these steps that will get you closer to your audience if you put them first.

If you think back to our kite flying analogy, this is holding tight to that string while monitoring what's happening high overhead. A gust of wind that you weren't planning on or a lull in the breeze can send your kite flying awkwardly toward the ground.

To prevent this scenario and to ensure that your performance is as predictable as possible, we recommend gathering all of the data you can get your hands on. With most email marketing tools, this shouldn't be a problem — these solutions are typically set up with reporting features to help you understand how your emails are doing.

As you're reviewing this data, it's also essential to have a clear understanding of your primary objective. That's objective — singular.

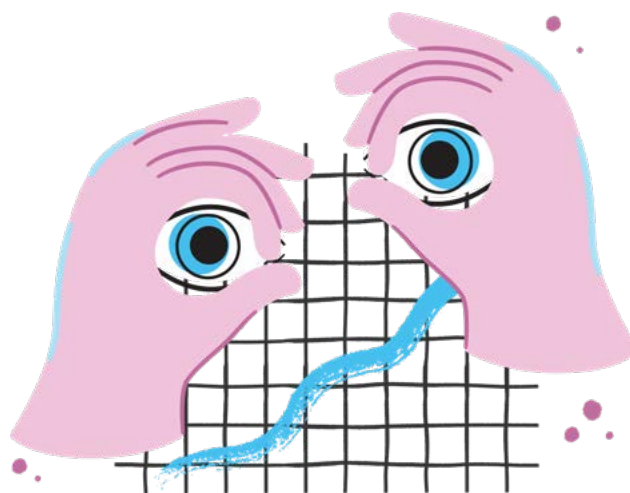
When you're getting started with email marketing, there's often the temptation to address every opportunity that stands before your

brand with a single email campaign. We've found it much more effective to operate with a unified objective to maintain focus and accurately measure impact.

This one objective you identify can represent a few areas of growth. Maybe your objective is as simple as readership retention. Many brands focus on the number of sign-ups they can drive or the sales volume they can produce.

Whatever your objective ends up being, making sure you analyze your email's contribution to this objective is critical. The exercise output will help you develop new ways to structure your content and orient your strategy.

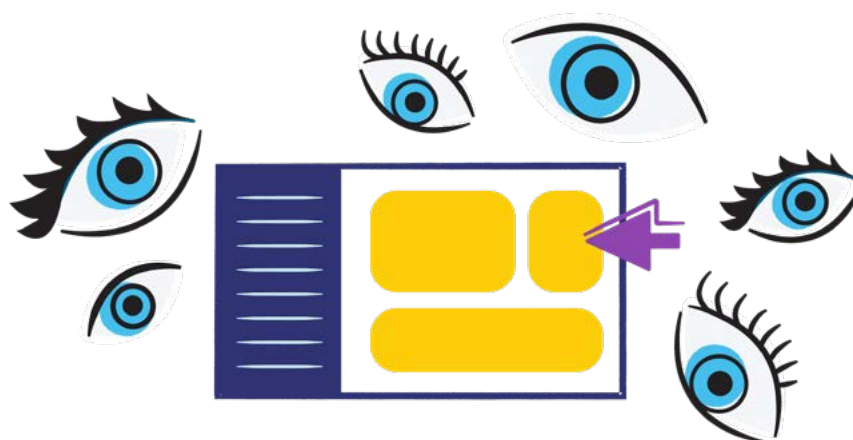
To help make this process more intuitive, we've outlined some of the different metrics we analyze to gauge customer interest and email performance and provide additional tips to be mindful of.



Vanity Metrics

Vanity metrics represent measurements that offer some insight into the success of your email campaigns. Here are the more common vanity metrics used to measure performance:

Metric	Definition
Open Rate	The number of recipients that opened your email divided by the total number of emails delivered.
Click Rate	The number of links clicked divided by the total number of emails delivered.
Click-to-Open Rate	The number of links clicked divided by the number of emails opened.
Bounce Rate	The number of emails that failed to be delivered divided by the total number of deliveries attempted
Unsubscribe Rate	The number of users that unsubscribed to your emails divided by the total number of emails delivered.



The Ideal Email Cadence for Your Audience

Now that we've covered the basic steps of creating an email campaign, let's focus on other email best practices, starting with the email cadence.

Marketing teams are continually searching for the perfect email cadence. Since audiences and industries vary, and consumers continue to adjust their expectations and preferences, this is a common question without a single definitive answer. However, it's important to analyze because email workflows that aren't optimized can miss opportunities to convert more, or even offend recipients.



Send One to Two Emails per Week to Keep Your Audience Engaged

When looking at click rates for bulk emails, sending between four and eight emails continues to be ideal — or, one to two emails per week. However, sending less frequently results in a similar drop in performance as sending more often. So, it's essential to focus on keeping your audience engaged. If you lose their interest, they'll likely fail to click through to your site in future emails. But, always resist the temptation to send daily emails as it'll annoy your audience, and your messages may find themselves in the spam folder.

Send Between Four to Eight Bulk Emails per Month

The typical merchant is only willing to send between one and four bulk emails per month to their subscribers. However, based on open rates for broadcasts, optimal results are achieved when companies send between four and eight emails per month.

Test this monthly limit and see how it affects your audience's open and click rates. But, start slow to avoid scaring off subscribers early on. It's incredibly challenging to get them back once they unsubscribe or mark your emails as spam.

Keep Your Email Volume Consistent

If you send a hundred emails one day and 10,000 emails the next, your internet service provider (ISP) may flag you for a massive spam attempt. By breaking up your sending volumes, you can achieve a consistent level and remain clear of ISP red flags. If you need to send a large number of emails through a new account, build up the list gradually. Email workflow automation can help to streamline the sending process and ensure quality content reaches the right audience at the optimal times.

Try Sending Emails at “Off” Times

It's important to think about your recipients' experiences. Most companies that send emails will send at a time that feels clean or whole, like 11 am, 12:30 pm, and so on. Try sending your emails at 11:11 am or 12:37 pm instead to arrive before/after other bulk emails. If your email is educational, you can also experiment with off business hours such as during the weekend or in the afternoon.

Your Audience Will Reveal the Ideal Email Cadence

The frequency of emails suggested here is a terrific starting point for finding the ideal balance for your recipients. However, remember that your audience is unique. Pay close attention to the data — open, click, conversion, and spam rates — and make adjustments as needed to optimize your results. If you listen, your audience will tell you what content, times, and cadence they prefer. To begin, focus on a consistency that aligns with your customers' buying cycle and limit emails to those of high quality. Don't just create emails to hit a target quantity.



Setting Up an Onboarding Series

When it comes to businesses and dealing with customers, first impressions really do matter — so it's really no surprise that most companies consider the welcome email as one of the most important emails in the customer onboarding journey. However, many brands don't go that extra mile to invest time in creating an automated welcome email sequence, which is what draws the line between a good impression and a lasting one.

Love at First (or Second...or Even Third) Sight

On average, sending a series of welcome emails yields an average of [51% more](#) revenue than a single welcome email. There are a couple of reasons why. First, customers are at their peak interest and are hungry to learn more about your brand and products. Statistically, they're more likely to open your emails.

Second, a welcome email series can serve as the fallback net in


case the end-user doesn't engage with you right at the beginning. Perhaps they missed the first email and it's the second one that will pique their interest. Expanding the window to connect with the subscriber gains you multiple avenues to educate and sell the user on the most important aspects of your business, including sign up instructions and product introductions.

Through trial and error, you can test to see what content resonates best with customers so that you're able to optimize future email campaigns. In addition to accruing a treasure trove of data, you're also doing right by the customer — [74.4%](#) of new subscribers expect welcome emails with great content. They're looking to your company to fulfill a need, so give them the best experience possible to get what they want, ASAP.

What Makes a Great Welcome Series?

Poorly thought out emails not only lead to low engagement but can contribute to a consistently high number of unsubscribes as well. Let's go over how to keep the email list healthy and subscribers engaged:

- **Make them feel good.** Greet new users, thank them for joining your community, and celebrate them. Excite them for what's coming up and make them feel good about their decision to sign up.
- **Share your brand values.** Introduce your brand to your new



subscribers or customers. Delve into the most unique aspects of your brand story and capitalize on the company's values. Establish yourself as an expert in your industry and build trust.

- **Point to the good stuff.** Point new subscribers to the engaging content you've already produced (blog, help center, social media). This is valuable to them while you drive traffic to your own channels through email.
- **Show that you care.** Ask them a question to learn more about your customers and find out what their challenges are and how you could help.
- **Create a great experience.** One of the best benefits of a welcome series is the customizability because you're able to [map the journey](#) you want new subscribers to take. Think about what you'd like your subscribers to learn about your product and set expectations on how they can use the product in the best way possible along with the results.

Big Impact With Little Work

One of the biggest misconceptions is that building a welcome series is too time-consuming to bother with. Truth is, they're not any harder to create than a regular email campaign.

To start, decide on the length of your sequence. This sets the expectations about the email frequency and depends on your own marketing strategy and how you want to build your relationship with your new users. Then, decide what type of content you want to highlight. Your goal is to be educational and get these new subscribers excited about the possibilities you can offer them with

your product or service. Think of your ICP, their challenges, and content they would value most.

Although It's always daunting when you first start out, just remember: You can always experiment by adding or removing steps in the sequence, or changing the order in which you'll deliver each email. Keep optimizing your emails in the campaign until you find a sweet spot where your subscribers are responsive to your call to action.

Some Things to Consider...

A welcome series is always an excellent idea, but make sure you don't break any of these cardinal email marketing rules:

- **Don't overwhelm your subscribers.** Nobody has time for too-long emails and your new customer certainly doesn't need to learn everything about your brand and product in the first-ever email.
- **Don't assume that every new customer will have exactly the same experience.** Some people need more time to start experimenting with your tool. Others will dive right in. Some people are ready to make an upgrade right after a trial and others aren't. Take that into consideration when creating your automated welcome emails so that you cater to all these different segments. As mentioned earlier, you can also create different versions of emails based on the progress your new user has made in exploring your product and send relevant content to their stage in the customer journey.

- **Welcome emails shouldn't be email verification or confirmation emails.** Confirming the email of a new subscriber is super important for the health of your email marketing list, but welcome emails serve a different purpose and should be separated.
- **Take mobile experience into consideration.** Don't overdo it with images and animated banners. This is your chance to create a memorable first impression but no need to add too many elements in your email.



Setting Up Cart Abandonment Emails

In addition to an onboarding series, you should also consider incorporating cart recovery emails into your email marketing strategy. Why? Because [98% of consumers](#) don't make a purchase during their initial visit to a site. Customers abandon carts or leave a site for a variety of reasons, from unexpected shipping costs to checkout errors.

Sending an effective cart abandonment email sequence is one of the most effective ways to bring visitors back to complete their purchase. Here are some tips to setting up and writing effective cart abandonment emails:

Tackle the Timing

Timing is everything when it comes to cart recovery campaigns. Your first email should be sent within an hour of the cart abandonment to take advantage of the time the item is still top of mind. Emails sent within an hour have [an average conversion rate of 4.5%](#), while emails sent more than 24 hours after cart

abandonment convert [approximately 2.6%](#).

Additional follow up emails can be sent 24 — 48 hours later. It's best to space the emails far enough apart to give the customer time to consider the purchase and to avoid bombarding customers with multiple emails over 24 hours. Each email should offer new messaging and increased urgency.

Focus Your Message

Remember, you're emailing customers who initially wanted to buy your products and changed their minds at the last stage. Since they're already aware of your brand and your products, you can keep the content short and straightforward. You won't know what caused them to leave, so the message should focus on the product they liked enough to add to their cart. Use a photo and a description to remind the customer how great the product is and why they originally put it in their cart.

Offer Discounts or Coupons

Customers have become accustomed to searching for deals or discounts to come back to complete a purchase. While discounts will cut into your profit, they might also build loyalty and increase your total sales amount.

Also, something to think about: [28% of shoppers](#) abandon their cart if they're faced with unexpected shipping costs. Consider free

shipping to incentivize a customer to come back and complete their purchase. Straight discounts off the purchase price are also useful — but make sure customers don't try to game the system by adding items to their cart just to get the discount.

Rethink Timing and Frequency of Your Email

Sometimes, people don't open their emails because of the timing. Analyze your data — when are people opening your emails most often? Test different times. And, as already mentioned, give your customers choices regarding when they'd like to receive emails and how often. There isn't a universal "best" time, but it depends on whether you're sending emails to consumers or business executives.

Always Test

As with any email campaign, you'll want to do [A/B testing](#) for every element of your re-engagement email campaign content, as well as the timing and frequency.

A Deeper Dive Into Subject Lines

The subject line is the first thing that email recipients see in their inbox. It's your introduction to the viewer, and it determines whether they will choose to engage with your brand or not. Those 40 characters could get someone excited to read your email or annoy them enough to send it straight to the junk folder. So, it's essential to get this right.

Subject Lines to Engage

Engagement is all about delivering value or entertainment to your audience. If they're convinced that your email has something they want, then they'll open it. Your subject line is like a store window that entices passersby to enter and explore.

Use the recipient's name to personalize the subject line

"Hi, [first name], are you looking for deals on a new couch?"
Personalized subject lines are [22% more likely to be opened](#).

If you have information about the person you're emailing, use it in your subject line to warm your conversation.

Use referrals to create a sense of familiarity

"[Name of referrer] recommended that I get in touch," lets your prospect know right up front that you have a mutual contact. It immediately establishes trust before they even open the email.

Pique their interests with the promise of a question

"Question about _____," can be [a great subject line to increase opens](#) since recipients will need to click to find out what it is you want to ask.

Be very clear about what your email offers

People get annoyed at emails (and companies) that waste their time. Let your recipient know [what your email offers and why they must open it](#). This is especially applicable if you have a special offer for them. Place the value upfront to entice the recipient. For example, "[eBook] 2020 Style Trends for the Chic Executive," could be enough to get a busy corporate fashionista to open your email.

Don't trick your recipients with a promising subject line and then underdeliver with the actual offer. For example, a subject line promising "50% off all items" creates certain expectations for your subscribers. Imagine if you only offer 50% off for a limited range of items — your subscribers aren't going to trust you the next time you send a sales promotion.

A/B test your subject lines

Once you come up with a few subject lines that your team is excited about, A/B test them to see which ones are most effective with your audience. The customer knows best, in this case — let the data guide you.

Create a log of the A/B tests you run, the time you send the email, and make sure to document the performance of different subject lines. This will make your life so much easier!

Use shorter subject lines to be mobile-friendly and add emojis (when appropriate)

Space is limited in subject lines. If you want the entire subject to be viewable on mobile devices, the limit is 30-40 characters.

Emojis have become more popular in recent years because they express a lot in one character, and they result in higher open rates. [56% of brands](#) that use emojis in their subject lines have a higher unique open rate than competitors that don't. Emojis help your email stand out in a crowded inbox, which is the first and most significant hurdle. However, it's crucial to ensure that emojis fit the tone of your message and suit your brand before using them. For example, it would be off-putting if a funeral home used emojis, but it's cute for emails about kids' toys and dog treats. 🐶

Subject Lines to Re-Engage

Re-engagement email subject lines follow the same general principles as the engagement emails, but they come with their own unique features. Since marketers lose contacts to both unsubscribes and email list decay (industry experts estimate decay of [22.5% per year](#)), it's essential to maintain contact with the people on the list who still receive your emails. Many of these subscribers ignore your messages, so you need an enticing email strategy to reconnect with these people and the power of strong re-engagement email subject lines.

This process will require a series of emails, not just one or two. One study found that [14% of subscribers who receive re-engagement emails read them, but the number increased to 45%](#) for subsequent emails. So, don't be dismayed by your first attempt. Keep trying and test out the following best practices. When creating re-engagement email subject lines, it's important to consider the recipient's inbox experience. Often, the person lacks the time and patience to review all of their emails. Many of them have ignored your emails for months — maybe even a year. So, what will make them finally pay attention?

Use a personalized, targeted offer to catch their attention

People will always notice when an email has their name in it. It signals that the sender knows them and that they've connected in the past. Something like, "Sarah — 50% off your favorite items right now," might entice Sarah to click and see what she could get.

FOMO can strike if she doesn't click.

Celebrate an anniversary

For example, ModCloth celebrates six-month anniversaries with a treat [in the form of a coupon](#). This way, they can re-engage their audience with an enticing offer and celebrate their relationship. The anniversary provides a positive spin and just enough motivation to test the recipient's sincere interest.

Use actionable or emotional words

Appealing to the recipient's emotions can help to increase open rates significantly. Whether you use amusement, suspense, guilt, excitement, or another emotion, depends on your brand and strategy. People also respond to words that entice action.

Evoke FOMO

Your audience is already ignoring you, so you have little left to lose. Try the bold approach to catch your audience's attention. You can lead with a big promise or offer and tell them that time is running out. Some examples might be, "Only 20 spots left! Sign up before Friday to get 50% off." Or, you might go bigger with, "\$1000 shopping spree or 50% off — click to see what you won."

Reference previous conversations to let them know it's not spam

For sales outreach emails, subject lines like, "Here's the information you asked for," can boost open rates. It refers to a previous conversation or interaction with the recipient, so they know it's not

junk mail. And, even better, it's something that they wanted, so they will be interested in getting it (and opening the email).

Finally, test the breakup email

If the contact still isn't engaging with your emails, it's time to consider cleaning them from your list. If they continue to ignore you, it's better to remove them, so they don't pull down your engagement numbers.

A subject line like, "Is it really over?" with a breakup email can push a contact to re-engage with your brand. Or you could try, "My final attempt." Breakup emails are their own art form, so learn more about them in this [useful resource from HubSpot](#).



Why Your Email Subscribers Aren't Converting

While it's highly effective when used well, email requires thoughtful attention to detail in order to drive sales. After speaking with dozens of marketers about their email marketing performance, we've pinpointed five reasons why emails don't convert and come up with solutions you can implement today:

The Sender Is Easy to Ignore

The identity of the sender is one of the first things your customers see when an email hits their inbox. If you use a company name only, your customers may not open the email because it feels impersonal. On the other hand, if you use a person's name as your sender, customers may ignore it because they don't immediately know who it's from.

Solution: Set your next email up for success by changing your sender details to follow this format: [First Name] [Last Name], [Company].

Make it work for you: Try testing the names of several employees at your company to see which generate more opens. Do female names have higher open rates than male names? How about names with two syllables vs. names with one? Get creative, and make a note of your observations.

Your Copy Isn't Concrete

Janet Choi, from email automation provider Customer.io, has found that [concrete language makes you appear more credible](#) and helps readers make better decisions more easily. Abstract language, on the other hand, confuses readers and discourages them from acting. Concrete sentences are also quicker to read, cutting the time it takes for your customers to get to your CTA.

Solution: Email copy should be concise. Think of what you're trying to say, and how you can say it in as few words as possible, before hitting send. Once you've written your copy, scan it for examples of abstract language and see if you can replace them with more concrete phrasing. Succinct messaging will help to increase email conversion rate success across campaigns.

Make it work for you: [This article](#) explains the difference between abstract and concrete language and shows you how

to write more clearly. If you want help condensing your copy, [download the Hemingway App](#). Just paste in your copy, and the text editor will highlight sentences that are too long or confusing.

Your CTA Doesn't Set Expectations

If you get a promotional email and find yourself totally confused about what you're supposed to do with it, it's likely that the CTA isn't clear. The CTA is the reason you're sending your email. It should tell your readers explicitly which step to take next and give them a heads-up as to where they'll be directed. If you're an event marketer, for example, and you're creating an email campaign to bring attendees back to your site to finish purchasing tickets, a weak CTA would read "Buy tickets." A stronger CTA would say, "Finish where I left off."

Solution: Avoid using vague CTAs (e.g., "Check it out" instead of "Browse new arrivals") and CTAs that include multiple options (e.g., "You can read more about it in our whitepaper here, or start a free trial"). Keep your CTAs simple, clear, and specific.

Make it work for you: Improve click-through rates by using buttons instead of hyperlinks. If you can, keep CTAs above the fold so recipients don't have to scroll.

Your Images Are Distracting

Adding the right images can dramatically improve your click rates. Images can also boost email deliverability, which means your email is less likely to go straight to the spam folder. But if your images take too long to load, have nothing to do with your message, or take up too much space in the email, they can work against you.

Solution: Use images that support your email message by providing a visual counterpart to the text or a preview of what the reader will experience after clicking the CTA. Keep image files small, compressed, and high-resolution to ensure that your email can load quickly. Share important messages and CTAs in text as well, in case the images don't load. And be sure that images don't make up more than 30% of an email — otherwise, your message may land in the spam folder.



Re-Engagement Email Campaigns

If you're finding that subscribers aren't engaging with your emails, it's essential to re-engage them before they're gone for good. Not only will you lose business from those customers who drop out, but if your engagement levels decrease considerably, you may run into trouble with ISPs blocking you as a low-quality sender. So, what can you do to slow the leak? Win back your customers with re-engagement email campaigns.

Determine Who Your Inactive Subscribers Are

Before you start a re-engagement email campaign, you need to know who your inactive subscribers are. Depending on your business, you can categorize inactive subscribers as those who haven't opened your emails for a given period (three to six months) or those who haven't opened a certain number of your most recent emails. You might also consider a subscriber as inactive if they open your email but never click links or make a purchase.

Categorize your inactive subscribers according to their actions and how they subscribed to your email. Analyze their past browsing and purchase history and their [demographic, such as age, location, and gender](#). Think about your business model, buying cycle, and what behavior you'd expect from your prospects. Once you know what motivates your customer, you can personalize a re-engagement email campaign that entices them.

Automate a Personalized Re-Engagement Email Campaign

You can automate the segmentation of your email list by types of inactive subscribers and then send them personalized re-engagement [email campaigns](#). Usually, you'd want to send about three emails spaced a week or two apart (assuming they don't engage). For customers who engage by opening your email, clicking on a link, or visiting your website, you'll want to send them on a different email follow-up path from those who remain inactive.

Your re-engagement email campaign should be as personalized as possible. Some ways of personalizing include referencing products your customers have bought or viewed in the past and giving personalized recommendations. Always address email subscribers by their first name or call out their company's name in the email.

[Voice varies by company brand](#), but in most cases, the tone of

your re-engagement emails should be warm and conversational. A bit of humor in the subject line is never amiss and helps your email stand out from the deluge of other emails in your customer's inbox. Humorous body copy also keeps customers reading once you get them to open the email.

Plan Your Email Re-Engagement Campaign

Let's assume you've decided on a three-email re-engagement campaign. There's no set format; you'll need three things: an attention-grabbing subject line, compelling body copy, and a strong CTA. Check out the examples below:

Email 1

- **Grab their attention in whatever way you think will work best for that customer.** You might show them new items related to previous purchases, share links to guides, or white papers that rank among their interests.
- **If you're a D2C business, consider offering a choice of products with an element of surprise.** For example, Birch Box shows its customers two different beauty product boxes right in the email. One image displays the contents of the box, and the other image shows a surprise box that's "personalized to your beauty profile."
- **Provide a link to update your app if you have one.**

- **Ask your customers to indicate their preferences for the content of emails they receive and the time they arrive.**

You might also ask how frequently they want to receive emails. For example, some people might want to be emailed several times per month, and others might want a bi-monthly digest.

Email 2

- **Ask your customers why they aren't engaging.** Did they expect their email subscription would have a different type of content? Have their circumstances changed? What would it take for them to engage? What do they want from your content? What problems do they have that you may be able to help them with?
- **Once again, provide value in the form of a link to helpful information.**
- **You can also ask your customers to update their preferences in this email if you didn't in email one or if they failed to do so.** Remind them that they signed up for your list.
- **Point out new services, products, and benefits particularly if they relate to the customer's interests.**

For example:

- Do you offer new customer service options?
- Do you have a new loyalty program?
- Are you carrying an exciting new product line related to a purchase they made in the past?

Email 3

(Fun fact: This email is sometimes called the “Breakup Email”) 💔

- **Create some urgency.** Tell your customer this is the last email from you if they don’t indicate they want to keep receiving them.
- **Give them a last chance to update their email preferences.**
- **Consider making your customers an offer they can’t resist.** This could be a discount, free shipping, or a free add-on when they buy a particular product. Be sure to mention the offer in the subject line of your email.



Tying Display Ads With Email Marketing

It's becoming essential for companies in the D2C online space to tell a cohesive and personalized story about their products and their brand. Why? Because big brands like Nordstrom are doing it (and they're absolutely nailing it). However, leveling up your marketing strategies to compete with corporate giants is easier said than done — compared to small businesses, they have a lot more money and much bigger teams. So, how do you break through the noisy marketplace? Let's explore how interweaving your display advertising with your email marketing strategy can help you stand out.

Consumers Expect Consistency

Whether customers are engaging with your email marketing efforts, your web ad, Facebook ad, or any other display ad, they're going to expect all of the information to match. And not just the information, but the tone and design, as well. Giving consumers

varying experiences across different mediums and channels isn't just clunky and unprofessional — it can also cause confusion.

For example, let's say you see an ad that says, "Get 10% off our selection of women's shoes if you use code SHOES10." Sounds great, right? But then you see another ad for that same company via an email that says, "Choose from our selection of dresses. Use code DRESS10 to get 10% off." At this point, you might be thinking, "Well, which is it — do I get a discount on shoes or dresses?" This may not seem like a huge deal, but it's best practice to stay consistent so that your customers don't get their wires mixed up.

This scenario happens quite a bit (even with big companies!) because people assume that email and display are siloed methods. You have your email marketing manager and a digital marketing manager, and they're focused on doing the best thing for each. However, these strategists have to play together and communicate in order to make the messaging and experience cohesive.

It's All About Timing

It's crucial to align display ads and emails with timing. For instance, let's think about what an email marketer would do to re-attract customers who went as far as the checkout cart and then abandoned it. They'd build a cadence for re-engagement: A few hours after somebody abandons a cart, an email would be sent out that says something along the lines of, "Hey! You left this in the cart, come back and buy!" If action isn't taken a day or two later, another email is fired out, saying, "We've noticed that you

still haven't finished your purchase." If a lack of action exceeds that point, the emails start to become less about reminders and more about re-hooking that customer's interest: "Finish your purchase, and we'll tack on an extra 10% off!"

Now, imagine applying that cadence to display ads. You'd be coming at customers from all sides — not just from their emails, but through a mixture of ads on different pages, as well. When your emails are working to re-generate interest, an ad campaign should always be running alongside them.

For instance, if a customer abandons a cart on your website, you can serve them emails and dynamic product ads showing them the items left in your cart. The key is to find a solution that'll enable you to align your ad and email strategies with a customer's journey. The alternative is to continually serve ads regardless of how long it's been, and that could be a huge time and money suck.

It Takes a Lot of Planning (But It's Worth It)

It does take significant planning and thought to build out a strategy where email, display, and search work in tandem. Even if you're a small company, you can build as many as 10-20 campaigns just so that you can hit your target customers at the right time. But, by spending adequate time interweaving your campaign strategies, you'll be able to meet your goals more effectively and provide customers with the best experiences possible.

Ready to See Your Email Campaigns Soar?

In this guide, we covered each of the fundamentals associated with building an effective email marketing strategy. Email is a powerful tool that will help you share your story and grow your brand.

As you get started, take the tips of these guides to heart. By making a concerted effort to speak directly to a well-crafted audience, produce content that's professional, concise, and value-driven, and to measure the performance of these messages frequently, we're confident that your email performance will reach great heights.



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