

Marketer's Guide to

Email Strategies



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STRATEGIES TO OPTIMIZE EVERY CUSTOMER INTERACTION

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By Amanda Ferrante, Associate Editor

Amanda Ferrante is Associate Editor at Retail TouchPoints. Working closely with industry analysts and experts, Amanda reports on the latest trends, case studies and retail technology centered on customer experience. Focused on social media and mobile commerce, Amanda follows consumer-driven applications for retail. Her articles have been syndicated on RetailWire and industry blogs.

Top 5 Trending Email Strategies

The Marketer's Guide to Email Strategies offers a compilation of industry-related trend pieces from email marketers, analysts and vendor executives, to give you, the email marketer, a heads up on how email is changing and how to optimize your deliverability and rendering. Email communication is critical, as prospective buyers and consumers were inundated with upwards of 247 million emails per day in 2009.

To give you an overview of some of the trending topics in email marketing strategies, we've compiled **5 Email Trends**, with insight from leading email analysts and vendors.

1. Ditch the Batch Blast Strategy

- Traditional tactics are moving toward a targeted approach, where email marketers can speak to customers throughout sales cycle, taking segmentation to a new level. More email marketers are abandoning the traditional batch blast strategy and taking a more segmented approach to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of email campaigns.

2. Get Social - It's no secret that social media is an imperative and integral part of any marketing strategy, and email offers an enhanced capability for marketers to offer sharing features within email messages. From a multi-channel marketing perspective, marketers need to be equipped with the tools to integrate sharing into emails to drive cross-channel demand. Email marketers have to integrate with social networking sites and tools for a multi channel marketing approach.

3. Select & Segment Sharply - Consumer segments have evolved online at a different rates. Surprisingly, the 55-65 age group is now engaging in email marketing, which means

that marketers are tasked with creating campaigns that are specific to their needs. Marketers should ask themselves how they engage with various age groups to optimize response. Teens, for instance, respond better to text messaging, so perhaps it means sending email campaigns via SMS.

4. Smarter by going smaller - To serve various segments efficiently, remember that more emails doesn't necessarily mean more revenue. That mentality, combined with blast batch, is now trending outward and urging email marketers to respond better to email recipients based on a targeted approach.

5. Integration - Now more than ever, integration is becoming an important component for an overall email marketing strategy. ESPs are learning how to integrate with an e-commerce platform, product review platform and analytics to offer marketers high-level data on recipients. Integration enables smarter marketing with trigger-based campaigns. This concept can be tapped for shopping cart abandonment to compel shoppers to come back, or embedded within product review requests. This is a great way to engage customers post-purchase, which can also reinforce the social media aspect and give consumers a role in your

business.

The Marketer's Guide to Email Strategies includes industry-related trends and cohesive strategically tactics, as well as contributed columns from email marketers and analysts. The guide explores topics like cross-channel integration, leveraging social media tools, questions to ask your ESP and an ESP directory.



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3 Factors to Optimize Inbox Deliverability

To optimize the deliverability of email messages, one expert said an imperative for marketers is to monitor their actual inbox placement rate (IBR), or the percentage of email messages that are delivered straight to the inbox, which is something most ESPs do not report. While ESPs report a delivered rate, which can tell marketers that the ISP accepted a message, marketers need to keep their eyes open to glean insights from data to get messages to subscribers effectively and efficiently.

The problem of inbox placement is real, said Stephanie Miller, VP Global Market Development, ReturnPath. Our research shows that globally, about 20% of permission-based marketing messages never reaches the inbox. That's significant. So this is a real problem. It happens to all of us. Even if we have permission and a good brand, and think we're generally following best practices.

Miller stressed the importance of a good sender reputation, and offered three key factors to ensure that marketers can keep themselves on the safe list and optimize email deliverability.

- 1. Complaints** - These occur when anyone clicks the spam button, which typically happens because subscribers don't find value in message itself. This can happen because messages come too frequently, because they're not relevant or targeted, the subject line was confusing or the subscriber is busy. Miller advises marketers to remove complainers from file. Take actions to reduce complaint rate (change content; timing). It only takes a small number of complaints for a sender to get on the list for filtering. Marketers can ask their ESP for help with this. Miller said marketers need to remove complainers from your file and put them on your suppression list, which is the best way to take action to reduce your complaint rate. For instance, if recipients are complaining about welcome message, that might be an actionable item to change. Miller noted that this is a key way for marketers to affect complaints most readily.
- 2. List Hygiene** - This includes how marketers source data and collect subscribers, for example, via conference or web site forms. What you do with the data that's on file? A good list hygiene strategy can help email marketers avoid spam trap (an address set up by a mailbox provider or spam filtering company to catch spammers).

If you have good practices in place to eliminate any old address or malformed addresses, you will be unlikely to get a spam trap, Miller said. I think it's a notion that comes from the direct marketing world, when buying a file of names in your market was a common practice.

However, Miller said, email has advanced as a channel and consumer service, so this practice no longer works. Marketers will be immediately blocked and it will damage brand relationship. Miller also noted that tolerance for BtoC subscribers is higher than BtoB subscribers.

- 3. Infrastructure** - Most marketers outsource infrastructure to IT or a broadcast vendor like an ESP. There are in-house and on-premise solutions designed to be supported by a vendor. Factors monitored include: MX record and reverse DNS, which sits inside the source code of HTML to communicate valuable information to the mailbox provider. Many marketers are tempted to outsource inbox deliverability to their vendor, when that's a mistake, because the marketer owns it," Miller said. "A good vendor will have you with your inbox placement, but they don't control it. Miller advises marketers not to blame your vendor for poor inbox deliverability. Infrastructure is important, but it's less important to inbox placement than complaints. This is something that needs continual manage-

Questions to ask your ESP

1. Can you show me my actual inbox placement?
2. How often do you review our bounce processing rules? Updated?
3. Can you compare our engagement and response rates to your other clients in our vertical? Suggestions on where we fall?
4. Do you alert me when anybody who's in an IP range in mine is blacklisted?
5. Have you signed me up for all of the ISP feedback loops and removing complainers from our file?
6. Can you provide metrics for inbox placement?

Is your email marketing solution tailored to your business objectives?

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By Sally Lowery, Director of Demand Generation, Bronto Software

Sally Lowery is the Director of Demand Generation at email service provider Bronto Software. In her role, she manages tactical and strategic lead acquisition, multi-channel marketing, marketing automation and the integration of marketing concepts. Sally has over 11 years of extensive experience in traditional and online marketing in both the BtoB and BtoC space.

4 Ways to Use Email to Fuel Social Media

The lines between email and social are blurring, and the marriage of the two will be a critical factor in the future marketing landscape. According to Marketing Sherpa's 2009 Social Media Marketing Benchmark Guide, only 60% of marketers polled are effectively planning and executing on social media. For many organizations, social media exists within a silo, making it difficult to measure and define success. As social media evolves, defining how that program plays a role in your multi-channel marketing program is essential. In eMarketer's June 2010 poll, when asked what marketers' objectives for integrating social media and email, only 63% enable recipients to share email content with their social networks. Here are four tactics you can use immediately to fuel social media with email marketing:

- 1. Give options.** Not every customer is created equal. They have different needs and explore across different channels. By promoting social media engagement within your email marketing program, you allow your customer to choose when, where and how they will interact with your brand.
- 2. Expand your reach.** Use email marketing to drive fans, followers and more. If you already have a loyal subscriber base, why not give them the option to engage with you elsewhere? Whether it's including a social header/footer or giving more prominence through a promotional campaign, leverage your email marketing program to expand your reach.
- 3. Just SWYN it.** Allow email sharing across social media channels. The Share Within Your Network tool allows your customers to easily share relatable content from your email program. This is another way to expand your brand reach through a loyal advocate.
- 4. Create Content Worth Sharing.** It should go without saying, but if you want to influence social media with email, make certain your email campaigns are relevant and engaging to your customers. If the content is stale, self-promotional, or doesn't create value, you aren't furthering your brand or your customer relationship.

Don't just take our word for it, social media and email marketing can become a high value proposition when integrated. Bronto's client, the National Aquarium in Baltimore, was able to grow their social media channels by 17% leveraging email marketing. Their first launch into utilizing email to drive social media engagement was during the holiday

season in 2009. The marketing team created a Holiday Gift Deal campaign exclusive to Facebook fans and Twitter followers during a 10-day period. The campaign was introduced to newsletter subscribers and members in late November and featured in their December newsletter issue. The National Aquarium's marketing team continues to iterate on how they can incorporate a strong social media strategy into their email marketing program.

Don't forget, social media can also help build your subscriber base, allowing you to engage in a more dynamic and relevant manner with your customers.

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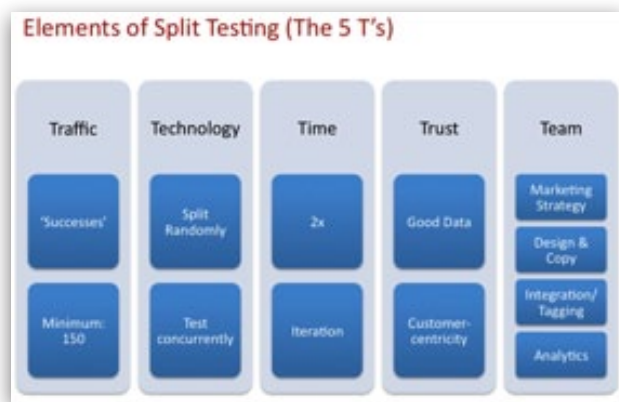
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By Brooks Bell, President, Brooks Bell Interactive
 Brooks Bell is the CEO of Brooks Bell Interactive, a firm that specializes in full-service testing for landing pages and email (a data-driven niche in online marketing). Brooks has built a leading data-driven marketing firm with a name brand client roster, including Chase Bank, The Washington Post and GoToMeeting.com. Prior to founding Brooks Bell Interactive in 2003, she was a Co-founder of novelProjects, a web design firm (now part of Atlantic BT).

The 5 Ts of Testing

Testing has become a buzzword in online marketing in the last two or three years. Marketers have discovered that testing makes it possible to increase conversion rates by as much as 500% without increasing marketing spend! It's an exciting trend, especially in the context of tightening budgets and declining click-through rates.



So, what is testing, and how is it done?

In theory, testing is simple: present your customers with at least two competing marketing experiences in your live campaigns, and then measure response (This is called a Control/Champion and a Challenger.) Once you've determined a winner, you test again! By iterating your creative, you can incrementally improve on your original results by incredible amounts.

Despite the buzz around testing, it's not for everyone. There are 5 Ts in Testing to help you determine if you can reap the benefits. The five Ts are **Traffic, Technology, Time, Trust** and **Team**.

1. Traffic

Traffic is the first T in Testing. According to statistics, your campaigns must be seen by hundreds or even thousands of customers to accurately detect which message is winning. This is called **statistical significance**. It's the likelihood that you would have the same results 95% of the time if you repeat the test.

Not having enough traffic is the most common barrier to testing. Anyone can test, but if it takes several months to achieve statistical significance, then it may not be worth your time or investment.

2. Technology

There are several testing platforms including Adobe Test&Target, Google web site Optimizer, SiteSpect. They are powerful technologies, but should be incorporated once you've mastered the basics. These technology capabilities are minimum:

- You need to be able to **split your traffic** into each of your test groups. This means randomly exposing each customer to a test experience.
- You need to be able to **track the behavior** of your customers in each test separately using your web analytics tags.

3. Time

Giving your testing program enough time is crucial. Testing takes at least twice as long as a standard campaign. There is more creative development, more planning and more analysis. Testing should not be treated like a single campaign or individual project. It's actually a broader shift in thinking about marketing. In fact, the key drivers in your marketing results, such as your offer emails, subject lines, newsletters should all be tested constantly and even indefinitely.

4. Trust

When it comes to testing, you need to trust your data. This means that you need to have strong web analytics. It has to be so trustworthy that you are willing to take action based on the results, even if it goes against your intuition.

5. Team

Lastly, testing requires the cross-functional skills of a team. First, a marketing strategist needs to decide what to test. Then, a designer and a copywriter need to create the campaign itself. Then, a web developer needs to build the page, tag it, and launch it. You'll need the support of IT to split traffic to each of the test cells, and QA everything to make sure it doesn't break anything else on the site. Lastly, you'll need some help from a web analyst to pull reports and interpret the results. It can be a big effort, but it's worth it!

Testing is a proven strategy that is still an untapped way to make marketing more measurable, accountable and effective. With lots of time, traffic, a strong team, trustworthy data, and good technology; you'll have the right recipe for a winning testing formula.

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Bronto

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Bronto Software is an industry-leading email marketing service provider, focused on improving email marketing success for online retailers and marketers around the world. By offering an efficient, effective, web-based software application, Bronto gives marketers the power to build relationships directly with their target audiences and customers.



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Return Path

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Return Path helps top-brand companies be more successful with email marketing by providing the world's leading inbox deliverability solution. We invented the Sender Score, an email reputation measure based on data contributed by ISPs and mailbox providers. We offer free access to our Sender Score at: www.senderscore.org.



Silverpop

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As social media has emerged as a staple in marketer's toolkits, many Email Service Providers (ESPs) are now integrating social capabilities into their applications. The new capabilities are aimed at capitalizing on the growing reach and extended sharing tools within social media channels, and may give marketers the opportunity to extend their email...



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By Adam Needles, Dir of Field Marketing/BtoB Marketing Evangelist, [Silverpop](#)

Adam Needles serves both as an advocate for BtoB marketers — listening to their needs, and participating in dialogue at key marketing conferences and events on behalf of Silverpop and serving as a key author of Silverpop's Demand Generation blog — and also as an evangelist for Silverpop's B2B audience.

5 Ways BtoB Email Deliverability Impacts Demand Generation Programs

BtoB marketers today must master a myriad of constantly evolving skills and disciplines. Let's face it: within this growing pile of concerns, email deliverability is probably at the bottom.

I once viewed email deliverability as a problem only faced by consumer marketers. As BtoB marketers, we often send email in small batches or, ideally, one-at-a-time through dynamic or triggered nurturing campaigns. Plus, the people we're selling to have a vested interest in improving the efficiency of their businesses, so they want to hear from us, right?

I now realize I had the wrong perspective. I was looking at email deliverability through the wrong lens. Email deliverability isn't a technical issue; it's a business issue. Successful lead management depends on it. Conversions depend on it. Revenue depends on it. In fact, email deliverability is a critical element of success in your BtoB marketing activities — touching several aspects of our demand generation programs. Still not convinced? Here are five things to consider:

1. Low deliverability rates can significantly impact top-line revenues and bottom-line profitability: For low-volume, high-dollar sales organizations, missing even a few deals can have a major impact on overall performance. Losing a qualified opportunity because of an inability to nurture via email can affect close rates and revenue earned and harm top-line revenues. Similarly, having sales people nurture unqualified prospects is very expensive — as much as 30 times more expensive than automated nurturing — and significantly raises the ultimate cost of a sale.

2. Email-based BtoB marketing campaigns are becoming more popular — increasing clutter and opportunities for mistakes: SiriusDecisions reports that the number of marketing campaigns targeting BtoB buyers is up from an average of 15.4 campaigns per week in 2006 to an average of 20.3 campaigns per week in 2010. And Forrester indicates that 89% of BtoB marketers use email — making it the number one outbound marketing tactic for this segment.

3. With long buying cycles email deliverability problems can take you out of the buyer's consideration set at a critical time: Nurturing emails engage potential buyers over an extended period of

time. So, if your nurturing messages are not getting through you may be off the radar when your prospective buyer is making key decisions. Many BtoB marketers think they can avoid the hassle of analyzing message content or worrying unnecessarily about deliverability issues. Elements as seemingly benign as image-to-text ratio and the volume of emails delivered from the same address can lead to blocked messages and even blacklisting.

4. Corporate barriers to deliverability can be more challenging than those in consumer marketing: MarketingSherpa notes that private blacklists (a blacklist compiled by a company) are actually used more frequently than public blacklists (41% versus 35%). If a sender has a bad reputation, they'll get blocked at the top level, and never even make it into the dreaded corporate junk mail folder.

5. Many marketing automation vendors lack best practices and many BtoB marketers are aiming too low when it comes to deliverability: Many marketing automation providers still operate primarily on a shared IP infrastructure — not a best practice as it can negatively affect delivery rates. While a respected provider will work to ensure that all its clients are distributing relevant messages to opted-in recipients, even despite their best efforts, not every sender will follow best practices. So keeping clients' deliverability reputations separated can be crucial to deliverability success. A shared IP address can render delivery rates as much as 10-15% percent below what best-in-class providers are able to deliver. A sender following best practices, including unique and dedicated IP addresses, should be able to achieve a deliverability percentage in the high 90s.

BtoB marketers spend a tremendous amount of time nurturing each and every contact with powerful, relevant messaging, and the medium of choice is email. Yet too many BtoB marketers don't take the time to ensure these messages are making it into inboxes. And, if not, what changes need to be implemented to correct this problem? By setting their goals higher and partnering with vendors who can help make those goals reality, deliverability can become yet another challenge that BtoB marketers have mastered.

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