
MARKETING KIT

Six Steps to Mastering Email Marketing



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First step: Build your list

Grow your list

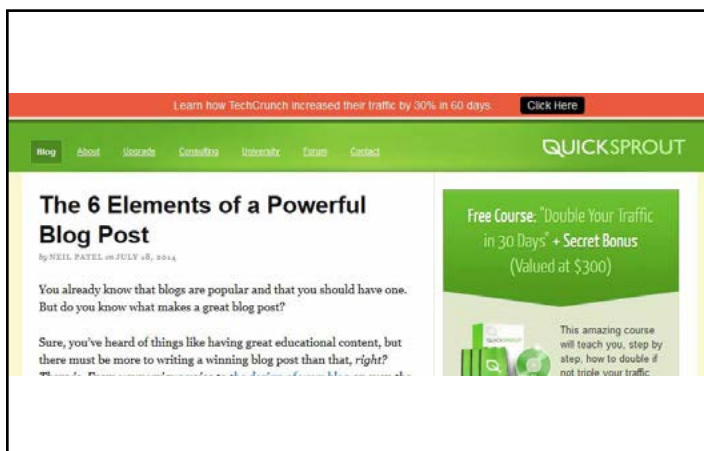
Collecting contact details from website visitors is crucial for any business. When your visitors give you their contact details, it's the first yes on a "yes ladder" to eventually becoming your paying customers.

Here are examples of 10 proven tactics to increase newsletter subscriptions.

1. Header Bar

This section is prominent, and it can be made to float down with navigation so it's always there. Adding a countdown to create sense of urgency and combining it with a good value proposition can serve as subscription booster. To add such a toolbar to your website use HelloBar, ManyContacts, or similar solutions.

Here's a great example from Quicksprout:



Why does it work?

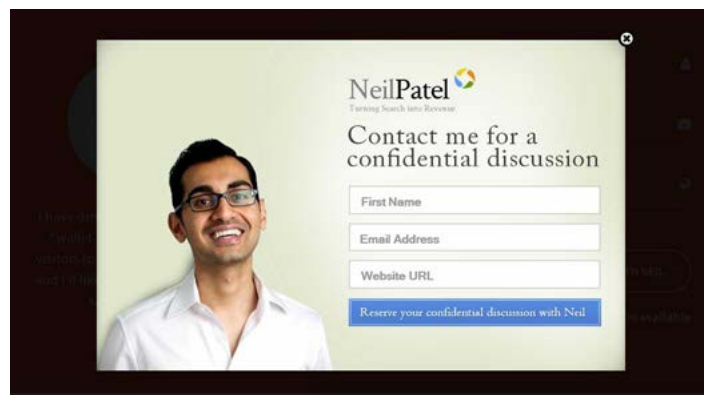
- The color of the toolbar differs from the overall design's color palette, so it is noticeable.

- Its value proposition is to share free knowledge about how a well-known brand (TechCrunch) has increased its traffic—and visitors would like know about the tactics that industry leaders use.

2. Pop-Up Notice When Users Go to Close the Website Window

The idea behind this is to track users' behavior (mouse flows) and display a notice at the very moment when they're trying to leave the site. It's powerful because visitors don't expect it. The element of surprise gives you a chance to pull out your big guns and offer something new and fresh that can grab visitors' attention one last time. Use services such as BounceExchange, Picreel, or Marketizator to add it to your website.

Here's a nicely done notice from Neil Patel:

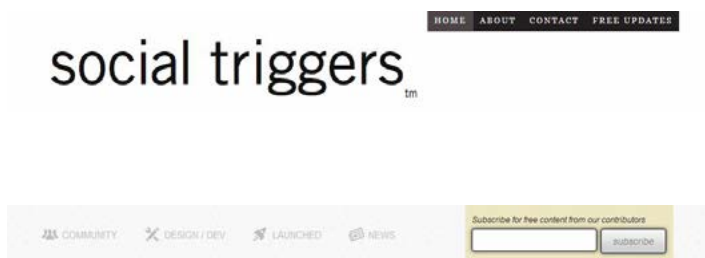


- Neil's picture provides credibility and personality.
- It's interesting how Neil is trying to get personal with the user. Notice the emphasized "confidential" aspect of the value Neil's offering.

3. Top-Right Corner

The top right of a website is a prime spot for an email signup form. Visitors expect an option to be available here. Placing one there serves you well, especially with visitors who are already convinced that your offer is worthy the exchange. Additionally, placing it in the menu structure or right next to it makes it easily accessible and visible all the time.

Here are two examples from Social Triggers and LaunchRock. They are similar because of the placement, but different because of the approach they take:



- Social Triggers makes opt-in a part of the menu, redirecting to a separate landing page with copy that enhances subscription.
- LaunchRock makes the subscription stand-out a little more compared with the rest of the design, and offers subscription with just one click—the easy way.
- Both have based their value proposal on offering something for free, and they use “free” in the copy—one of the most powerful words for getting attention.

4. At the End of Every Post

If someone has read your post to the very end instead of just scanning around, that means he/she paid attention to the content and found it valuable—a perfect opportunity to ask them for their email address.

Here’s an example from Visual Website Optimizer’s blog:



- It’s placed right underneath the content, so anyone who just finished reading can take the step and sign up.
- The value proposition is clear: convenient tips, in e-book form, straight to visitor’s inbox.

5. On Your “About” Page

About pages are usually one of the most high-traffic pages. People want to know what your blog is about, who you are, and what they can learn from you. Why not give them the option of subscribing while they are reading about you?

Derek Halpern, the face behind Social Triggers, does this very well:

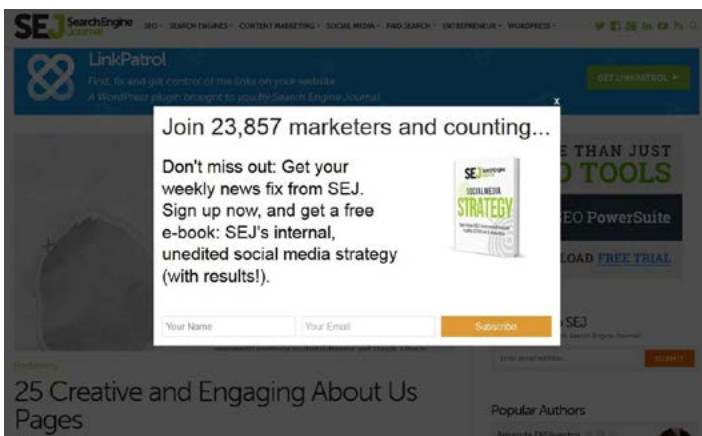


- The About page is really long, so it has three opt-in forms, placed strategically within persuasive copy. (In the above image, you see only the first form.)
- Derek's face gives credibility to the website and builds trust, and he positions himself as an expert whose knowledge can help your business.
- The value proposition clearly indicates how subscribing is going to help you grow business.

6. Pop-Up Box for First-Time Visitors

Acknowledge a visitor's first time to your site. You can redirect them to content prepared especially for beginners and position yourself as an expert. Use a plugin such as Hybrid Connect and add a well-designed lightbox popup to your site.

Here is a great example from Search Engine Journal:

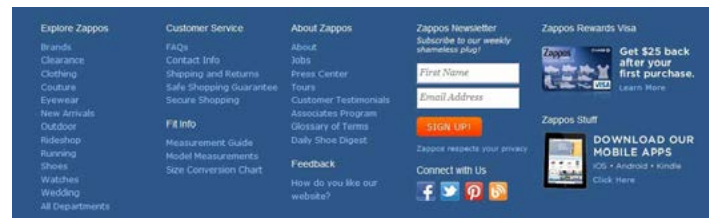


- The numbers create credibility: There is a big community who finds SEJ helpful.
- The copy is playing on a combination of fear of loss ("Don't miss out!") as well as gain—stressing that the content is valuable because it works ("with results!").
- Consider how the e-book is presented: It looks like a real book. And you can get it for free!

7. The Footer of Your Website

A user who has scrolled down to your footer is normally an engaged visitor. So why not add a call to action here?

Here is good example from Zappos:

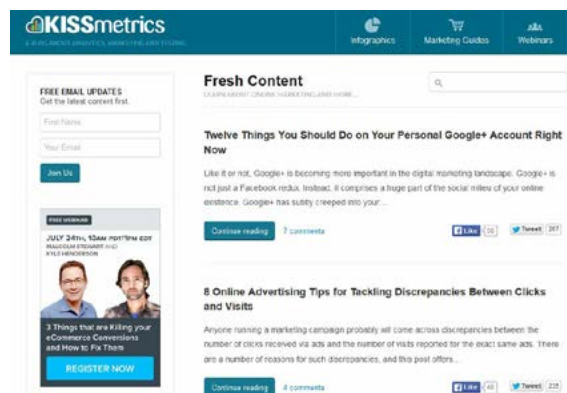


- It is placed adjacent to special-offers CTAs.
- The form is easily visible because of the contrasting colors.
- Copy says that the offer is shameless plug, which makes the message lighthearted, creating a positive impression and making the brand more human.

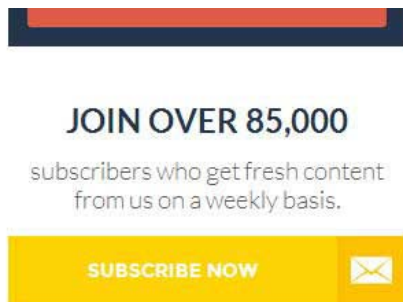
8. Sidebar

The top of a site's sidebar is definitely the most common spot that site owners will place their forms. It's prominent, catches the eye, and quite easy to implement on most websites.

Here are examples from KissMetrics and LeadPages:



- It's immediately visible.
- It plays on exclusivity/competitiveness: Be the first to get info.
- Instead of “subscribe” it uses “join us,” suggesting community.
- It's in the same frame as webinar registrations, so the smiling faces of the experts hints at the expert community you're walking into.

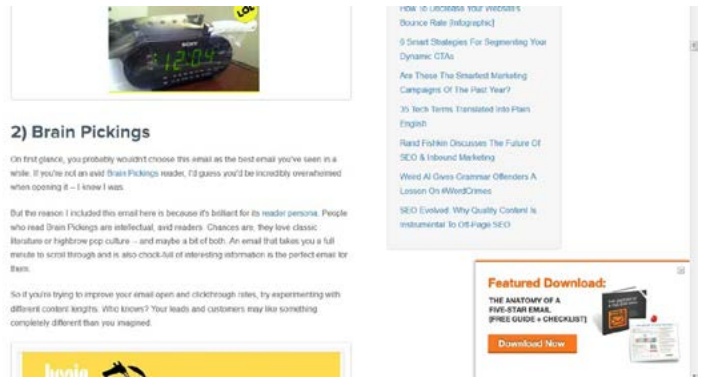


- Using a number provides social proof: 85K subscribers suggest that the content is of value for a wide range of people.
- “Fresh” suggests that you'll find new content to learn and benefit from.
- Notice how all it takes is the click of one button: The visitor isn't asked to fill in fields—a low commitment. After the initial interest, and the creation of momentum comes the pop-up notice and the user is asked for an email address.

9. Content-Aware Sliding Popups

A sliding popup shows up only when a visitor has scrolled down to a particular part of the website. It offers content related to the content on the page being currently visited.

HubSpot's content-aware sliding popups are a good example of this strategy:



- The content in the popup differs from site to site, and it is relevant to what caught the visitor's attention; the freebies are relevant and most likely interesting for the visitor.
- It grabs attention because the user doesn't expect something to pop up in the margins of the page.

10. Splash Page

A splash-page is a variation of a landing page that shows up only to first-time visitors. It's similar to the popup that's shown upon first visit described above, but unlike it it's shown immediately, not after a certain amount of time on the site.

This splash page from Timothy Sykes is something that we can learn from:



- It speaks money. In big letters. All across the splash page.
- Trusted brands add credibility to Timothy's stocks advice.
- Numbers serve as verification of his knowledge.
- The opt-in form is easily visible, unlike the "continue to website" option at the bottom—so it gives the impression that you need to leave contact details to gain access.

One serious thing to consider before trying this last tactic: It works if you have a well-established reputation outside your blog; that is, people know you before they get to your website, and you have a lot of traffic. If those two conditions aren't met, you can lose traffic by using this tactic.



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Improve your list

In marketing, we're on a constant quest to connect with new prospects, new customers, and new email subscribers. So cultivating a high-performing email contact list should be a top priority for all marketing professionals, no matter what their core business.

Why? Well, the average email list churns about 30% every year. A successful email marketing strategy should include a whole slew of activities to keep that list lively and growing.

Here are four easy steps to help build your list—and boost your business.

1. Make it insanely easy to join your mailing list

Journalists are taught to make the most important details of a news story prominent and easy to find; in fundraising, development pros learn to lead with their ask, followed by supporting facts to establish need. Marketers should follow the same model when presenting an email signup form on their website.

Many company websites corral links in footers for the sake of design; sure, it looks clean, but that's a surefire way to miss opt-in opportunities.

Don't make site visitors work to make a connection. Put your signup form at the top of your homepage and alongside some other engaging content. You'll get the most eyeballs possible on your form without requiring site visitors to scroll all the way down to the bottom.

2. Spread the word; rinse, repeat

As marketers, we're all storytellers. In marketing, your story is at the center of your strategy. Every organization should have 3-5 key messages ready to share with prospects at any time. But many organizations fail to plug those messages into channels that can help grow their list, resulting in missed signup opportunities.

Adapt one of your core messages to create a clear call to action for prospective subscribers. Then, use that new messaging to promote your company's signup link on social media—not just once but continually.

Your social audience has already shown interest in your organization, so don't play hard to get! Invite friends and followers to take the next step in engagement by sharing your signup link across social channels regularly.

While you're spreading the word, don't be afraid to harness the social power of your staff and stakeholders. These

“insiders” have a vested interest in your company’s success, and they can be some of your best ambassadors.

Also ask those in your inner circle to share your emails with their social networks, or encourage them to post a link to your signup form on their personal social channels so you can get more exposure with new audiences. Third-party validation is powerful, and the really successful brands do a great job of using their fan base.

3. Be a (strategic) tease

There’s no better way to show the value of being on your email list than to share snippets of emails on your own social networks. Previewing the goods (your valuable content) can entice interested consumers to sign up for future messages, which is a really big deal.

Email conversion rates are 40 times that of Facebook and Twitter, so moving someone from fan or follower to email subscriber puts him or her in a really good position to become a customer.

So take the time to provide a strategic sneak peek of your email content on social media; you’ll draw in quality subscribers who really value what you have to say in the inbox.

4. Create connections from everyday touchpoints

If you’re like most people, you send scores of emails every day; now, consider all the emails your colleagues send, too. Each recipient of all those emails could be a future member of your contact list. So consider making a minor change to your company’s standard signature block by adding a signup link to each employee’s standard email signature. That simple step makes every sent email a gateway for someone new to join your list.

Events are also a great forum for collecting email addresses. If you regularly attend networking functions, conferences, or professional meet-ups, consider ways to convert introductions into signups. A simple pad of paper and pen will do in a pinch, or you can use mobile apps to avoid the messy

handwriting guesswork and automatically populate your list with new connections.

One of things I love about marketing is the ability to use different channels and strategies to accomplish the same goal. Consider deploying a combination of these four simple steps to open up all kinds of new avenues for adding email subscribers.



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Second step: Get them to act

Get people to click

In the crowded consumer inbox, everything is at a premium—especially the recipient’s time.

Consumers are doing a cost-benefit analysis on a minute-by-minute basis—even if they don’t know it. They’re weighing the pros and cons of their routes home from work. They’re debating whether to pay the extra shipping to get that online order in a hurry. And they’re gauging the benefits of opening all those emails cluttering their inbox.

The major challenge to marketers: how to create a click-worthy message that gets opened.

In a typical inbox, people only have three pieces of information to consider when deciding whether to open an email: the “From” name, the subject line, and the preheader text. That’s not much.

Shrinking attention spans and itchy delete fingers make it crucial to get those three elements right.

Tip No. 1: Go with a ‘From’ name they know and trust

What’s the quickest way to get someone to ignore or outright delete your email? Make the “From” name something they don’t recognize.

The sender’s name is the first thing people see when browsing their unread mail, so it’s the first test your email has to pass on its way to Open Land.

Most brands simply use the name of the organization; if you want to add a personal touch, select a person at your organization to pair with your company name. For example, Emma’s newsletter comes from me (“Director of Content Emily Konouchi”), but we also include the Emma brand name so our subscribers don’t wonder, “Who is this Emily Konouchi, and why is she emailing me? (Delete.)”

But don’t overthink it: You simply want subscribers to know exactly where, and who, the email is coming from.

Tip No. 2: Forget about the formula for the perfect subject line

There isn’t one. (Trust me, we’ve checked.)

Every audience is different, so experiment and split-test your messaging to find out what resonates most with your subscribers. That said, here are a few pointers.

Make it short and sweet. Keep these two important numbers in mind:

- The first is 32. That’s the number of characters iPhones allow before cutting off the subject line.
- The other is 50. Exceeding 50 characters can sometimes land your email to the dreaded spam folder. If you have more to say, continue your thought in the preheader text.

Be clear, but compelling. Busy subscribers are only scanning their inboxes, so don’t get too clever with your subject line. It might be hilarious, but you run the risk that they’ll miss the joke—and skip your message altogether.

Instead, provide a clear and specific preview of the content they can expect to see when they open. By all means, be creative, but don’t bury the lead. Use the subject line to tease the content so that your audience can’t resist clicking and opening.

Find inspiration in your own inbox. Southern lifestyle magazine and Emma customer [Garden & Gun](#) recently sent a mailing with this subject line: “A Mississippi Roadside Marvel.” This subject line is great because it says you’re going to see something awesome, but it doesn’t give away all the goods. It forces you to open to see for yourself. (And, in case you’re wondering, it worked. The mailing went to 60,000 contacts, and the open rate was nearly 40%!)

Tip No. 3: Don't skip the preheader text

The preheader text (you'll often see "View Web version," or similar language, as the preheader) is another opportunity to catch the eye of recipients scanning their inbox. And the nice thing about it is that it allows you to add content without extending the subject line beyond the cutoff point.

You can use the preheader to tease the content of your mailing, provide a strong call to action, or include a personalized greeting. The allowable length varies by email client, but we recommend keeping it under 75 characters to be safe.

And just as you would subject lines, test different language to see what works. It just might take your open rate over the top.

Tip No. 4: Design for mobile first

Any design choice you make in the interest of engaging mobile readers will work well on a large screen, too. The mobile experience is all about letting your content shine, so adjust the header height to 50-100 pixels, and make text and image decisions that enhance the experience for your mobile audience.

Don't forget to give your content breathing room. Extra line breaks, dividers, and alternating background colors distinguish messages in your email no matter where it's viewed.

Break content up into sections with bold headlines and use a [responsive template](#) to help your emails look great on any device.

Email often drives your subscribers to do something: Make a purchase, visit a website, or watch a video. Make sure the place you're driving them to is also mobile-friendly. If you aren't linking to sites automatically optimized for mobile, like Shopify, Wistia, or Formstack, at least make sure you're sending readers to a page that's easy to navigate on a small screen.

Here's the big takeaway: Simple is better.

People are constantly bombarded with emails, so be transparent about where the email is coming from and the content it contains. It's the best (and quickest) way to ensure a click-worthy message.



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Calls-to-Action

Creating great calls to action (CTAs) is more than possible, yet so many links in brands' marketing emails remain unclicked. Many of those emails are never even opened in the first place.

Over 100 billion business emails sent and received every day, according to The Radicati Group's Email Statistics Report. Marketers can cut through that clutter by focusing their efforts on strong CTAs. By doing so, they can drive customer engagement and boost revenue.

Placement advice isn't 'one-size-fits all'

Where you place your CTA depends on the length of the email. For shorter emails, a bold CTA high up in the email body tends to work best. In longer emails, however, it can pay to integrate it in multiple places, which gives the reader several opportunities to engage.

The key is to make sure that you're clearly showing recipients what they need to do, without creating distraction.

Also important to keep in mind is the number of CTAs. That number will ultimately depend on the goal of your email.

If the aim is to encourage people to sign up and drive revenue, then just one CTA is necessary in most cases. However, if you're trying to get users to interact in multiple ways, it can be helpful to add different options for doing so—such as through email, Twitter, Facebook, or even the company blog.

Your customers prefer short and sweet

What a CTA should do is inherent in the term itself. Effective CTAs clearly indicate what action the recipient should take. The body of the email highlights benefits; the CTA closes the deal.

A short and sweet CTA is best. You should also provide clear directions for the next steps. Phrases that are often employed in CTAs include “Shop Now,” “Learn More,” “Request a Demo,” or “Register Now.”

The only time additional information should be included is if it actually adds value or reduces anxiety for the customer reading the email. One way to make the click less nerve-racking for the reader is to include a customer testimonial next to the CTA as evidence, or guarantee, of credibility.

For all CTAs, a direct correlation is a must between the content of the email and the destination of the link you want clicked. For instance, don't make readers click on a “Register Now” button and then send them to the homepage; instead, send them directly to the sign-up form.

Design is more than just aesthetics

Many marketers are undecided about whether to use a text link or a button for the CTA. When considering which to use, look beyond the aesthetics and think about how your customers will view the message. It's important to take into account the type of device your customers are using,

because images show up differently—or sometimes not at all—on different devices.

Design the email to accommodate the majority of your customer base.

The most important aspects of a CTA are its visibility and functionality. Accordingly, employ workarounds that give the email the right look and feel: It's preferable to build the CTA in HTML, rather than using an image, because doing so will mean the majority of subscribers will be able to see it. Also include a text link for those reading on devices that support only plain text.

If you plan to include multiple CTAs, it's helpful to make it clear which among them is the most important.

Try not to use the same CTA in every email marketing campaign. Aim to use a unique and interesting CTA that puts a new twist on more common phrases. For example, an uncommon CTA might read “Join other fanatics like you today” or “Start receiving the care you deserve now.”

The CTA is the strongest, most important element of any email, so take time to consider its placement, wording, and design. Don't be afraid to be creative to make your brand stand out, create urgency, and build excitement.

The CTA can significantly increase email engagement and conversion, so it's important to plan your campaign thoroughly and consider the true power behind effectively mapping to those three elements.



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Third step: Keep people interested

Overcome email fatigue

After surviving the competitive holiday season, many marketers could use a break. Unfortunately, new challenges come with the turn of the calendar page.

Many people feel compelled to clean hypothetical house at the start of each new year—purging clutter, conquering unhealthy habits, and opting out of emails from the brands that crammed their inboxes in December.

So, how can modern marketers deal with this detox mode—and make sure their messages aren't lost in the New Year's clean sweep?

Here are three simple steps to connect with post-holiday email fatigued subscribers.

1. Show subscribers you've got more to offer than deals and discounts

If I'm paring down my subscription list after a major purchase or buying season, the brands that offer me valuable content along with their offers are much more likely to make the cut.

In the wake of the holiday crunch, most consumers are less interested in "save big, limited time, act now" messages. They may not need anything from you right now—but they're still looking for content that offers relevant and shareable industry insight, inspires positive change, and builds continued trust in your relationship.

That kind of content shows subscribers you value them even when they're not in active purchase mode—and goes a long way toward encouraging retention.

The beginning of the year is the time to show your brand's worth as a long-term investment. Share evergreen tips and advice that are related to—but not all about—your product

or service. Offer a free e-book or whitepaper sharing projections or trends to watch during the year.

It's a great time of year to position yourself as a thought leader in your industry or mindspace, and the best way to accomplish that goal is to regularly share relevant content that makes your subscribers click—and then makes them think.

2. Offer a steady stream of customized content through an automated series

Yes, I know: It seems counterintuitive to create a series targeted to email-fatigued subscribers. But hear me out.

When strategically planned and properly timed, an automated series establishes your depth of expertise and shows consumers you have valuable information to share—and that you know how to break that content down into bite-sized nuggets that won't tax their attention, their schedule, or their inbox storage capacity.

First, select an umbrella topic relevant to your recipients' business objectives. You can probably look to your own first quarter plan for great ideas on content that will resonate with your audiences: Think "organization" and "optimization" to start. Those concepts are practically universal this time of year.

Once you know what you want to say, create a schedule and a mini-messaging plan for this push. For example, you might send 4-6 messages every few days. Or, consider offering subscribers a weekly "Top Five Tips for the Year" countdown.

The goal is to create meaningful, periodic touchpoints over the course of a few weeks to remind your subscribers that you're a valuable resource year-round—not just during the holidays.

3. Give customers the option to connect a little less frequently (You know, if that's what they really want)

We get it. Seasons change. After the holidays, many subscribers don't want to sever the relationship with your brand, but they definitely want to hear from you a little less often. The customer who wanted your sales emails twice a day in December may feel harassed by that level of contact now.

However, with some savvy handling, you can maintain the contact by simply scaling back your contact strategy.

Consider offering a way for readers to manage their subscription preferences. An "all or nothing" model can alienate consumers who want to hear from you only on their schedule. Instead, build some flexibility into your subscriber services and allow customers to deal with their email fatigue by reducing contact rather than eliminating it completely.

Make it easy to "turn down" the conversation volume—but continue to share valuable content on a schedule that appeals to each user.

With that said, remember: The average email list churns by about 30% every year. If a few subscribers decide to opt out of your list, it's OK—because new subscribers are everywhere!

Put equal emphasis on finding new contacts and retaining the ones you already have, and you'll be well positioned for success in 2015.



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Constantly innovate

There's still room for innovation in email marketing.

Many are quick to write off email as old-fashioned, but think about the customer experience: Members of your audience no longer sit down to check their Hotmail account once a day or once a week; email is now a habitual part of the consumer and customer experience.

People refresh their email while waiting in line at the grocery store. Bills and informal updates alike are filtered through their inbox. Social media updates are delivered to the email inbox, even as social is predicted to overtake or eclipse traditional email.

Speaking to a group of marketing executives at Yes Lifecycle Marketing's Innovation Day, Chris Marriott*, vice-president of services and principal consultant at The Relevancy Group, said innovation in email is tied to the customer conversation. Email marketing geared toward driving sales is formulaic, yet the conversation shouldn't stop after a sale. If marketers don't keep their end of the conversation up between purchase cycles, they risk becoming irrelevant or forgotten.

The solution is what Marriott described as a permanent campaign, or a never-ending customer conversation. Here's how to initiate that conversation.

Ask the right questions

"Ask questions. Ask what you want the customer to do after he or she has done what you originally wanted them to do," Marriott said. He then compared the ideal marketing campaign to former President Bill Clinton's approach to politics some 20 years ago: As soon as he was elected to the presidency in 1993, he began campaigning for his second term.

"The media dubbed it 'the permanent campaign,'" Marriott said. "Think of your customers as part of your permanent campaign. If you want to keep the dialogue going, what do you do after they've opened, clicked, and completed a

purchase? You have to continuously be campaigning and setting the stage for the next purchase.”

Embrace the Three Cs

Most marketers are so focused on their goal that they’ve forgotten how to talk to customers, Marriott said. “‘Buy-now’ messaging quickly becomes tired and turns to noise,” he said.

Campaign emails can be divided into three major types: content, context, and conversations.

- 1. Content emails are straightforward:** They may not be geared toward driving customers toward an immediate purchase, but they provide information (not necessarily related to the brand) that readers might find interesting. An example for a millennial clothing retailer might be a roundup of major music festivals attended by that demographic. Content emails are an easy way to keep the conversation going, so long as they’re timed appropriately and they remain relevant.
- 2. Context emails tell consumers why they should care.** They’re a soft sell for the brand and what differentiates it from competitors. A spa might share the sorts of products it uses and how they tie into its philosophy of serving customers.
- 3. Conversations are key.** Conversation emails make an ask (or the ask, if the end goal is a sale). Conversation emails mobilize subscribers, asking them to share feedback, share photos of them using the product, make a purchase, etc.

Marriott described the “permanent campaign” as a fourth, underutilized type of email communication.

“Permanent campaign emails fit into the lifecycle marketing model,” he said. “Most importantly, permanent campaign emails are, by their nature, perfectly timed when customers may be ready to purchase again.”

Watch for smoke signals

The consumer conversation is a two-way street. Although marketers should tailor the types of emails they send to their customers and their stage in the purchase cycle, they should also be on the lookout for signs that a customer is ready to purchase again.

“In a permanent campaign, marketers can readily and easily respond to ‘smoke signals,’ or signs that consumers are about to purchase again,” said Marriott. “Here, data is key. Unusual website or social activities are indicators that a customer is ready to purchase and that email communication should be adapted as a result.”

Automate

Marriott maintains that at least one-third of emails should be automated based on customer behavior. He described targeting as one of the most underutilized tools despite being a fixture of a permanent campaign.

The Relevancy Group tested welcome campaigns and abandoned shopping cart campaigns for major brands. It found that few are acting on two of the most basic signals that consumers are interested in a brand: offering their email address and placing items in their shopping cart.

To capitalize on the rapport established by content, context, and conversation emails, set up processes to act upon signs that a consumer is close to purchase. If you don’t succeed, use that piece of the customer’s history to influence future messaging. If items are left in a shopping cart, feature those products in follow-up emails and retargeting programs.

Although continuously communicating with customers, marketers still have an end goal: Don’t let permanent campaign efforts go to waste by failing to act at the appropriate time to achieve that goal.

Consider the consumer perspective

From the consumer perspective, all communications coming from your brand should be natural and seamless. If you’re

engaging in a conversation about mutual interests, they won't be surprised if you eventually make the ask.

Beginning the conversation anew, however, can be jarring. "If a brand contacts me every three months with only an ask, I'm going to wonder why they deserve to be in my inbox—even if I've purchased before," Marriott said.

Fundamentally, a permanent campaign is a never-ending conversation that happens to have a periodic end goal. When you mix the appropriate types of communication and automate your reaction to customer signals, your customer won't be taken aback by a hard sell so long as they "know" the brand.

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Michael Fisher is president of [Yes Lifecycle Marketing](#), where he is responsible for conceiving and deploying integrated multichannel solutions. His 20-year career in relationship marketing includes positions at Alterian and Epsilon.

Fourth step: Don't forget mobile

Optimize mobile open rates

There are a lot of guides out there to help you increase your email open rates. Why? Simple: unopened email is a dead email.

Doesn't matter if your visuals seduce, your copy persuades, or your CTA compels. Unread is dead.

But here's the thing: Almost none of those guides focuses on the one thing that matters most in getting your emails opened: mobile optimization.

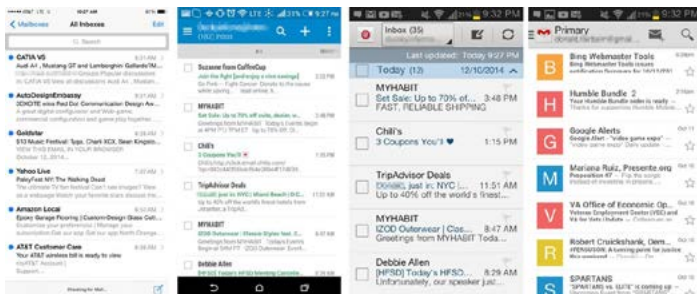
Just how important is mobile optimization to your email strategy?

A whopping 67% of all emails are first opened on a mobile device, according to [US Consumer Device Preference Report: Q1 2015](#).

Thankfully, a few email marketing providers are finally offering genuinely responsive design templates (unlike many of the old, one-size-fits-all approach). And yet, only 21% of marketers have an advanced mobile email strategy, eConsultancy's Email Marketing 2015 Census discovered..

To dramatically increase your mobile email open rates, let's take a look at exactly how to optimize the only three lines that matter.

Here's a series of screenshots of major mobile default email displays:



Notice what they all have in common:

In each, only three lines display automatically: the subject line, the first line, and the From line.

That's it. Just three. And that's exactly why those three lines are the only lines that matter for getting your emails opened.

1. Subject Lines

On average, you'll have 20-30 characters available for your subject lines. Once you exceed that limit, your subject line gets cut off or wraps down to the next line, thus displacing the second "ONLY line that matters."

That means, in either case, less is more.

In fact, for maximizing email open rates, the optimum number of words in the subject line is 4-15, per MailerMailer, and 6-10, per Retention Science.

Of course, the next question becomes what words you should actually use in that limited real estate...

- **Personal words.** Use your recipient's first name. Use the words "you" and "I." Use slang, colloquialisms, emoticons, and unique punctuation. Above all, make it human. The more real it appears, the better the open rate becomes.
- **Emotional words.** As in all marketing, lead with desire, pleasure, or pain. Work at loading the one key benefit right into the subject line in the same way you would your value proposition.
- **Pop words** (as in, "popular culture"). "Subject lines referencing movies or songs were opened 26 percent of the time, while emails with more traditional subject lines were opened 16 percent of the time," [Retention Science points out](#).

2. First Lines

The key here is personalization and conversation.

The first line of your automated emails should read as much like the first line of a real email as possible. How do you do that?

Joanna Wiebe of CopyHackers.com fame is a master at this. Here's a quick sampling of some of her recent first lines:

1. *today, does the promise of a/b testing match the reality?*
2. *is copy everything... and are you ready for what comes with 'everything'?*
3. *inside, is ogilvy's most famous quote - not the giants one - out of date?*

Even her confirmation emails smack of personality:

Voila! Download your files, consume 'em... and craft better-performing copy... faster... and with more confidence.

My two most successful emails recently were both incredibly personal and conversational:

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Fast Company Article Regular - Blog Newsletter (segment) Sent on Thu, Sep 18, 2014 12:48 pm | <input type="checkbox"/> | 61.7% | 25.0% |
| | | | Subscribers | Opens | Clicks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 5 Lessons from a "Failed" Copywriting Pitch Regular - Blog Newsletter (segment) Sent on Wed, Sep 10, 2014 01:24 pm | <input type="checkbox"/> | 57.1% | 25.0% |
| | | | Subscribers | Opens | Clicks |

The Fast Company Article simply started like this:

Hi << Test First Name >>, This is freakin' awesome ... for both of us!

And the 5 Lessons from a "Failed" Copywriting Pitch was even simpler:

[Subject Line] I am a failure ...

[First Line] Hey << Test First Name >>, Now there's a great subject line. ;-)

In both cases, as you can see, the results were fantastic.

3. From Lines

I'll keep this last point short: Unless you're Coca-Cola, Nike, or Old Navy, all your automated emails should come from a real person.

What that really boils down to is simply entering a real name (not a brand name) and real email into the From line in your mail client.

In other words, avoid at all costs from lines like support@yoursite.com, customerservice@yoursite.com, sale@yoursite.com, or, worst of all, the dreaded word "auto" in any and all forms.

* * *

So, before you fire off your next email campaign, take the time to optimize the ONLY three lines that matter. Why? Because if you don't, they might be ONLY three lines your audience ever sees.



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Writing for mobile

When Google announced that mobile-friendliness will influence a site's ranking on search results pages, the need to move to responsive design was never clearer.

And, although designers have been quick to change their ways, not enough has been said about the impact of responsive design on copywriters.

Yes, copywriters, those wielders of winsome words. We still exist and we spend a lot of time contemplating how our expressive text can best complement those wonderful graphics.

We know from reading social trends that users don't like to read too much of what our craft produces, and we're not taking it too personally. We all know that good copy is still relevant. It's what perks up content, guides users through the most forward-thinking layout, and generally improves the experience on that optimized, mobilized, utterly amazing site.

So, copywriters out there (and other content producers), here are six tips for this brave new world where your services are still really needed.

1. Defer the desktop

Yes, responsive design is all about a seamless cross-platform user experience. You're writing for the desktop jockey as well as the mobile user, but let's face it: Mobile trumps desktop. And soon, wearable trumps mobile. An increasing amount of browsing and researching now happens on the tiny screen (although more buying is done on desktop).

One of the easiest ways to check that your content will work on a mobile device is to set your browser window to phone size. You'd be surprised how much you find to edit when your copy doesn't fit the screen. You can also see what your website content looks like on different-sized screens with free tools such as responsivepx.com or responsinator.com.

And think of this limitation as a blessing in disguise: Chances are your desktop site is bloated anyway and cries for some strategic editing.

2. Write tight

Strive for text blocks of 100 or fewer words. Eliminate "that" and "which" whenever you can. Use fewer clauses and learn to love possessives to efficiently modify nouns, as in "this article represents a year's work" vs. "this article represents the work I did in one year." However, using possessives as modifiers means brushing up on some tortuous grammar lessons on apostrophe usage (it helps to subscribe to apstylebook.com).

But don't scale down copy so much that you lack clarity, which could be the killer of your site. You don't want to leave a user confused, lost, or disappointed.

3. Harness your headlines

There's no way around it: You're going to have to shorten headlines or write longer ones that can break without losing meaning. Go for clarity, not clever.

If possible, especially when teeing up longer pieces, write headlines that tell people exactly what to expect when reading the piece. For example, "Eight Reasons Copywriters Can Make or Break Your Campaigns."

4. Take a designer to dinner (often)

Copywriters need to work hand in hand with designers and developers to get the requirements for the responsive site and craft the perfect copy that will complement complex layouts.

Remember that page elements will shape-shift and the copy will also be part of those moving elements. The copy is not simply words on the page any more, but part of the design. And watch out for tricky elements, such as tables, that may not shift the way you'd expect.

To understand more about what happens to your words and their arrangement, take a look at this [primer on responsive design content](#).

5. Rethink your gig

Work on becoming a content expert. From a practical perspective, you can stop that archaic system of getting paid by the word, which doesn't pan out well when you're now asked to author a content-rich 300-word story instead of the longer 1,200-word piece of yesteryear.

Much more important, though, is to work on gaining the skills to develop an appreciation for the metrics and strategy of publishing. Content experts look at the user experience analytically and holistically, offering expertise on what resonates—through words, images, etc.—as they work closely with graphic artists and the entire team.

6. Love experimentation

Writing for marketing has always demanded a certain amount of experimentation, and responsive writing is no exception. Many copywriters have been in this new world for several years, but now, more than ever, everyone is going to be expected to write responsively and responsibly.



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Fifth step: Mix the media

Using video in email

[Video can be key to conversions and sales](#), a recent study confirms. For email marketers, using video should be a no-brainer, but the email-video combo still feels like a rare pairing. [Only 25% of marketers](#) surveyed last year reported that they used video in their marketing, and a quick look at my own inbox supports that statistic.

But the emails with video are the ones that I (and many others) find most memorable, so why aren't more marketers using them?

If you've been at this marketing thing for a while, you know that video and email were tough to combine: You had to find a place to host the video, and you had to create a custom thumbnail to include in your email. But with the accessibility of YouTube, the dawn of HTML5, and the rise of mobile email opens, all of that is changing.

It's now much easier for email marketers to show off their brand and provide a ton of value with video content.

Here are four ways to make video plus email a winning combination.

1. Teach your audience

Most of us are visual learners. That may be why [Mario Batali](#) incorporates video in email to teach subscribers different cooking techniques. It's simply more engaging and effective than a step-by-step list of instructions.



A HOW TO VIDEO & RECIPE FROM MARIO BATALI

WATCH THIS! Watch this: How to make Pici



COOK THIS! Make This: Pici with Ceci

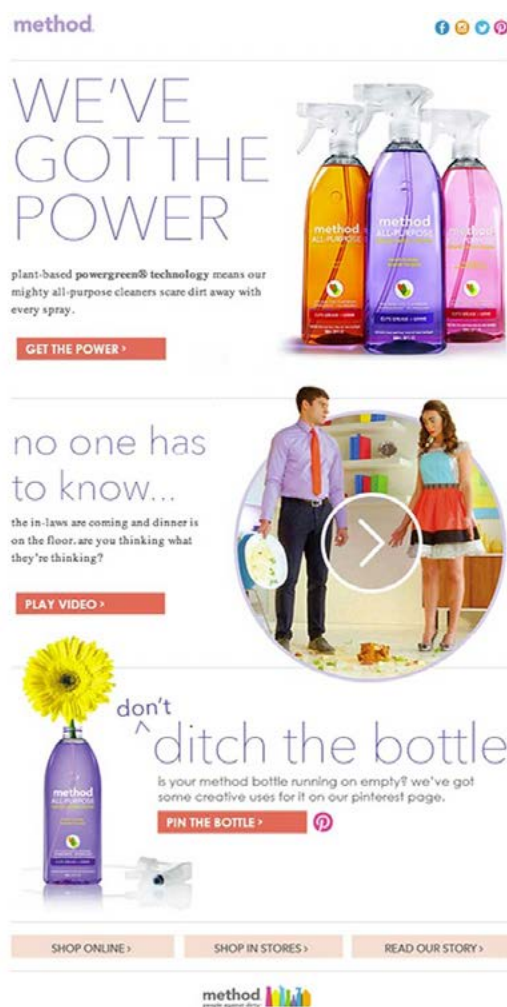


Batali's brand is all about making delicious food accessible to home cooks, inspiring people to try something new in the kitchen. In the above-depicted email, [the video about making pici](#) is a mere 46 seconds long, and it's got an energy to it—the music, the way the chef salts the hand-rolled pasta—that keeps viewers engaged all the way through.

The presentation of the video in the email is hitting all the right notes, too. Who wouldn't want to watch a video (or take a bite) of that pile of pici?

2. Tell a story

In an email that showcases the power of its cleaning products, [Method](#) linked to a 30-second [video featuring those products in action](#):



The advertisement features three Method All-Purpose Cleaners in orange, purple, and pink bottles. The text reads: "WE'VE GOT THE POWER" and "plant-based powergreen® technology means our mighty all-purpose cleaners scare dirt away with every spray." Below this is a "GET THE POWER >" button. The second section shows a man and a woman in a kitchen with a large play button overlay, with the text "no one has to know..." and "the in-laws are coming and dinner is on the floor. are you thinking what they're thinking?" followed by a "PLAY VIDEO >" button. The third section shows a purple Method bottle with a sunflower on top, with the text "don't ditch the bottle" and "is your method bottle running on empty? we've got some creative uses for it on our pinterest page." followed by a "PIN THE BOTTLE >" button. At the bottom are buttons for "SHOP ONLINE >", "SHOP IN STORES >", and "READ OUR STORY >".

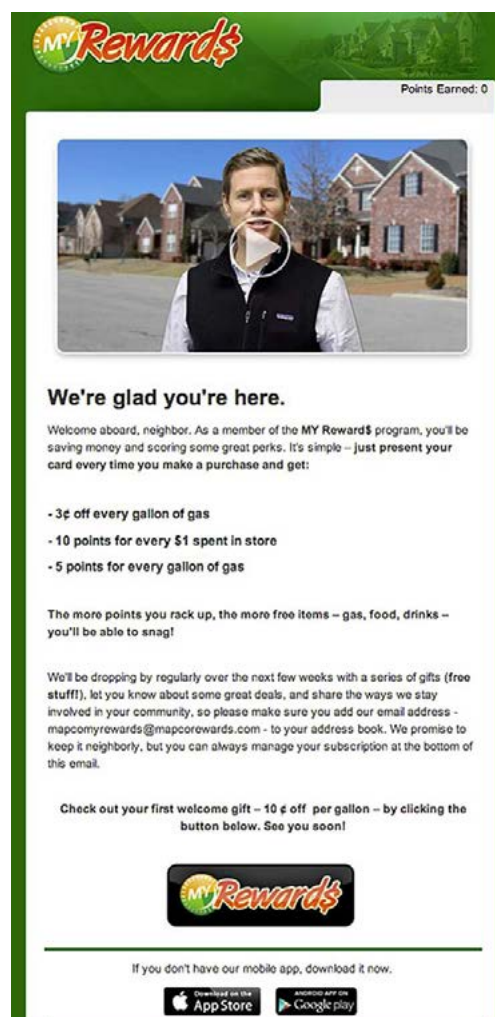
In the video, Charles has dropped the chicken on the floor moments before the couple's parents arrive for dinner. In half a minute, we're presented with a problem and a solution, with a healthy dose of silly suspense in between. Method stays true to its brand with the color scheme depicted in the video and the quirkiness of the characters.

In the email itself, the video thumbnail shows the doll-like characters breaking out of the container of the image, which is a subtle nod to the way Method does marketing (and product development) differently from the rest of the pack.

3. Speak directly to your customers

On their own, [welcome emails](#) typically have four times the open rate and five times the click rate of other bulk mailings. [Videos can boost email clicks](#) by as much as 300%. So including a video in a welcome email is basically an engagement powerhouse!

[Mapco](#) created a series of welcome emails for its MY Rewards program members, and the first email in the series links to a [video with a welcome message](#)



The email features the MY Rewards logo at the top left and "Points Earned: 0" at the top right. The main content is a video thumbnail showing a man in a vest speaking. Below the video is the heading "We're glad you're here." followed by the text: "Welcome aboard, neighbor. As a member of the MY Reward\$ program, you'll be saving money and scoring some great perks. It's simple – just present your card every time you make a purchase and get:"

- 3¢ off every gallon of gas
- 10 points for every \$1 spent in store
- 5 points for every gallon of gas

The more points you rack up, the more free items – gas, food, drinks – you'll be able to snag!

We'll be dropping by regularly over the next few weeks with a series of gifts (free stuff!), let you know about some great deals, and share the ways we stay involved in your community, so please make sure you add our email address - mapcomyrewards@mapcorewards.com - to your address book. We promise to keep it neighborly, but you can always manage your subscription at the bottom of this email.

Check out your first welcome gift – 10 ¢ off per gallon – by clicking the button below. See you soon!

At the bottom, there is a MY Rewards logo and buttons for "Download on the App Store" and "ANDROID APP ON Google play".

The video adds a personal touch to the new relationship and sets the right expectations for future emails.

By making the video the focus of this automated email, Mapco sets itself up for a lot of clicks—which means most of the MY Rewards members hear everything Mapco wants them to hear, at just the right moment.

4. Pull back the curtain

People want to feel like insiders, so give your email subscribers a peek inside your business. When Emma (where I work) sent an email to announce its tenth annual Emma 25 program, we included a [video about how Emma started helping small nonprofits](#):



Help us give away 100 free Emma accounts to deserving nonprofits!

We're celebrating **10 years of Emma 25** by awarding email marketing service to **100 nonprofits** around the world.

LEARN MORE



That means we're on the lookout for 100 small community causes who could use free email service from Emma to spread the word about the big stuff they're doing.

Maybe you know a few? Or are one yourself?

[Watch our video announcement](#)



Emma relies heavily on subscribers to help spread the word about the initiative, so we created a video appeal starring our own staffers. The video pulled double duty: It explained a new goal of getting eligible nonprofits in all 50 states to

apply for free email marketing for life, and it also showed off the culture at Emma by inviting our email subscribers to “hang out” at our office for a couple of minutes.

We chose to design the thumbnail with an off-center play button so readers could see our teammate Christy's expression, which clearly caught her mid-sentence. We wanted potential clickers to ask themselves, “I wonder what she's saying?”

Tips for optimizing your video for the inbox

1. Thumbnail design matters

Don't let YouTube determine what your thumbnail should be. Video-hosting platform (and expert video marketer) Wistia recommends being more thoughtful about what thumbnail to display in an email. The most successful thumbnails are those that raise a question. Using people in your images can also invite more clicks in your email, so you might want to freeze the frame on a friendly face.

2. Ask yourself, 'What happens next?'

Unless you're using HTML5 to pull off the one-two punch of video plus email, your readers will likely click away from your email to view your video. What else is on that landing page?

Maybe it's your YouTube channel, and it's packed with more videos about your brand. Or maybe it's a carefully crafted landing page that invites visitors to fill out a form to get more valuable content. Or maybe the video is hosted on your blog, where viewers can easily discover more about you.

Asking “what's next?” forces you to create that path and line it up with your overall marketing goals.

3. Put videos in mobile-optimized emails

These days, when over half of all email gets opened on a mobile device, using a responsive email template ensures you're creating a great experience for small screens. But even if you're not, you can make [design decisions that appeal to your mobile audience](#), and it can pay off.

Use a single-column layout and size video thumbnails to at least 46 pixels so it's easy for thumbs to click and play. Some 92% of mobile video viewers share videos with others, the Interactive Advertising Bureau report, so if you can get the click, you're well on your way to reaching more people with your brand message.

* * *

No matter how you decide to bring video and email together, make sure you're watching your results and testing along the way. Every audience is different, and making small changes to thumbnail design or video length can help you get one step closer to digital marketing greatness.



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Graphic design for email

Creating stand-out campaigns are much easier done when graphic designers and brand managers are in the loop on current trends.

A close look at the most successful ad and Web designs of the past year reveal five key trends to embrace now: real-life photography, motion video graphics, flat page designs, soft [color schemes](#), and bold, textured fonts.

Below we explore in detail some top visual design trends in photo, video, color, illustration, and typography and why they make the accompanying examples so memorable.

1. Photo: Real-Life Imagery

Instagram filters have taken the social media world by storm and have expanded into all areas of visual design. Posters, magazine ads, email ads, landing pages, and even website design often include photographs of both people and food that have an Instagram-like look to them in an attempt to appear authentic and trustworthy.

For example, Burt's Bees Baby uses light and color filters in the majority of its Web advertisements and even crowdsources banner ads through Instagram contests.



Another interesting visual design trend is the depiction of real people in real-life scenarios, including women of all walks of life, not just the petite, flawless model-types. When designs do include models, they represent all ethnicities, ages, and body types. Designers are looking to make ads and even art much more believable and realistic.

Here's another example... In January, Aerie, American Eagle's sister brand, launched an "Aerie Real" campaign featuring unretouched photos of everyday women.



2. Video: Motion Graphics

The combination of smartphones and video sharing through YouTube and Vimeo has made online video popular. Landing pages, ads, and website designs are all incorporating some form of motion graphics. Trends in motion graphics include full-screen video backgrounds, flat design, GIFs, compositing, and real-object stop-motion graphics.

In March, Yahoo! Launched Yahoo Motion Ads, a new ad format that couples high-quality brand images with [subtle animation](#) to create “high-impact” experiences on Yahoo’s login page.

Google introduced a similar landing page with the launch of [Google Now](#). Even AriZona Beverage Company incorporated [motion graphics](#) on its homepage.



3. Illustration: Flat Design

The flat design trend that took off [last year](#) is still going strong, especially in illustrated visuals, such as full-screen backgrounds and video as mentioned above. Flat designs take the minimalist approach by dropping many of the traditional interface design techniques that give objects a 3-D appearance, including drop shadows, gradients, and textures.

Havaianas Sandals and Oreo both use flat design to place all the attention on their products.



4. Color: Soft Pastels

Radiant Orchid (18-3224) was Pantone’s [color of the year](#) and led the pastel color trend for 2014. Even many flat designs, which usually incorporate bold colors, seem to be transitioning to a softer palette this year.



Backgrounds, videos, photographs, fonts, and other graphic elements in Web and print design alike seem to be sporting not-so-loud colors.

Pantone is prominent across the color schemes of big brands, such as Cadbury and Crest.



5. Typography: Textured Fonts

Print designs have always had the advantage of dynamic, textured fonts over flat fonts found in Web design.

Now, though, [typography design](#) can be as influential in conveying identity as the photography, video, and illustration techniques outlined above. Textured fonts can push the boundaries on normal, 2-D designs and give new meaning to brands, as they did for Chipotle and Triscuit.



* * *

From magazine ads to website design, these are visual design trends that marketers should embrace. The next time you take on a new design project, consider how real-life imagery, motion graphics, flat illustrations, pastel colors, and textured typography can elevate your brand.

Consumers are constantly being stimulated with exposure to hundreds of different advertisements daily. To break through the clutter, marketers need to focus on trends that resonate with customers.

By using these popular design strategies that we saw emerge in 2014, brands will more easily catch the eyes of their target audiences. Variations of these concepts are continuing to seep into the marketing plans of more and more brands, which will have an impact on where the trends head next. Marketers need to stay on top of the industry to predict how to be successful.



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Sixth step: Always be testing

A/B testing rules

A/B-testing your marketing emails can be a profitable game-changer. In fact, there is no better way to determine the impact a design, copy, or scheduling change can have on the success of your email campaigns.

But if you're unfamiliar with [A/B testing](#) or you're just getting started, it can be an overwhelming project to take on. Here's a list of do's and don'ts to steer you in the right direction.

1. Do run tests that have recurring benefits

If you've done your research, you know you can test a myriad of variables in your emails. And although some of them might be intriguing (what would happen if you alternated capitals and lowercase in the headline?), some tests are unnecessary. Don't rely solely on how-to-A/B-test articles like this one to inform your testing schedule. You can, however, use them for inspiration to find factors that are relevant to your specific audience.

For example, if you're testing images for a sports apparel company, you could test variables such as product images on backgrounds, using models in your images, or showing posed shots versus action shots. (You can use a free photo editing tool, such as [Pixlr](#), to manipulate your images.)

Try to choose global factors that will apply to all of your future emails before worrying about smaller considerations that won't appear too often in your campaigns.

Be patient with yourself here: A/B testing is a science; learning what to A/B-test is an art.

2. Don't test factors that are one-email specific

Sometimes your one-off emails have an exciting topic or they provide the opportunity for new A/B tests. But if you

will have a Happy New Year's email only once a year, and you're not advertising products in them, don't bother testing the size of your snowflake graphic.

Testing changes that have reoccurring applications means they'll have a bigger impact on your business. Focus on tests that may be less exciting for the moment—but much more likely to have impact in the long run.

3. Do test like a scientist

Do you remember your middle school science fair projects? Ms. Morgan told the class that you needed a control factor, a variable factor, and a hypothesis to make a test credible. Well, class is back in session. Make sure you isolate all other factors as much as possible when creating your A and B tests. Preferably, your A test is the control, and is representative of your current email. The B test is almost identical, but altered by one factor.

So if you're testing subject line length, here is a **bad** test:

A: Get a move on, pal!

B: T-SHIRTS FROM \$4.99 ON SALE NOW DON'T MISS OUT

Those two differ on length, punctuation, capitalization, and content.

A **better** test would be:

A: Pick up T-shirts from \$4.99

B: Pick up T-shirts from \$4.99 in dozens of styles & colors

Test one thing at a time and keep your sets of recipients random.

4. Don't use before and after tests

Testing one week against another may seem like an OK test as long as all other factors stay the same... but it's innately flawed. The week it's sent out could be the very reason/factor it does better or worse, skewing the results of your test.

For an A/B test to be truly valid, you must send the emails at the same time on the exact same day (excluding, of course, tests where the test factor is delivery day of the week or time).

5. Do read data as observations

Data can get confusing if you leave it in the numbers. Test B resulted in a 5% lower open rate but 8% higher click-through rate. Great? Use plain English statements to communicate what happened.

If you are looking at opens: *For everyone who received the email, did this test improve their open rate?*

If you are testing for an internal element:

For everyone who opened the email, did this test improve the click-through rate?

For everyone who opened the email, did the test drive more orders?

For everyone who clicked through the email, did this test change their likelihood of ordering?

Breaking down the results of your data, using plain English, clears up what has actually changed and what information is unrelated to your A/B test.

6. Don't call it too early

It's great to be so excited for the results to pour in that you're refreshing Mail Chimp (or ["Mail Kimp" for you Serial listeners](#)) every 30 seconds. But the first two hours of campaign responses are not representative. Early

responders may react differently than those who take a while to find and open your email.

A good standard is to wait at least 24 hours before examining your data. (But the cool kids give it at least 48.)

7. Do give yourself a reality check

Don't run a test you think will be statistically insignificant; it wastes precious time and resources. Or, if you're not sure, save those tests for a rainy-day email when you don't have anything else to test.

So, what makes a test statistically significant? It means enough people have changed their behavior that you are 95% sure the difference in results are not random. For example—if you have 100,000 subscribers and get around 200 orders from an email, how many new orders would make the results significant?

A quick way to find out if you've got something big on your hands is to run the numbers through a free app called [VWO](#). Here, your control should be your A test (say, 50,000 visitors and 100 orders), and the variation should be your B test (say, 50,000 visitors and 125 orders).

Leave the math up to the machine. If the results are "Yes!" you've got yourself a change that's proven significant.

8. Don't over-test for your sample size

Know the limits of your email list. If you have 25,000 subscribers, you won't be able to run four variations in a single week. Breaking the list apart that much would skew your data and prevent you from seeing real results.

There's no hard-and-fast rule for amount of subscribers vs. numbers of variations, but as you break apart your sample size more and more, the results become less significant for each test. Again, use the VWO calculator to see what kind of results you need for each variation.

9. Do act on your results

Once you've gotten your data back from the test and you've translated it into actionable observations, act on it! If the size of the image associated with your call to action (CTA) has increased click through rate (CTR) by a significant amount, change the size. The tests that are significant can often lead to other tests that are significant.

Next, try testing the color, copy, or placement of the CTA to see what happens. On the other hand, if moving your product images around isn't affecting your results, stop testing it. Once you've sniffed out a good direction of tests, follow the scent. But, remember, one test at a time!

10. Don't assume results are permanent

The very reason for A/B testing is the unpredictable and invariably changing landscape of email, e-commerce, and consumer behavior. With that in mind, don't set A/B test results in stone. You need to not only test a factor multiple times (because environmental factors and chance could create varying results) but also question the results (and re-run the tests) every few months or up to a couple of years, depending on the nature of the factor being tested.

CTA variable findings might last years, whereas "trendy" changes in subject lines (such as personalization) could feel old to recipients in a matter of months. Or maybe your audience has grown sick of emojis. You might want your brand to appeal to a new, younger segment with punchier copy, but if everyone is doing it... it's not cool anymore. And remember, you're working with 95% confidence intervals, not 100%.

Better safe than sorry—so keep testing!



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Learn from your mistakes

Even the most experienced email marketers make mistakes—sometimes time and again. This article discusses five such mistakes and offers tips so you don't sacrifice your emails to the junk folder.

1. Leaving the Subject Line for Last

You spend all that time perfecting the creative, the message, the positioning, copy, offer, content, disclaimer, targeting of the audience, and you're getting ready to launch. Wait... that's right, you still need a subject line! Hurry, just use the email header! This mistake happens more than you would think. Suddenly, the subject line becomes an afterthought.

Remember, if the subject line does not catch your subscribers' eye, the rest of the email will be irrelevant, regardless of how awesome it is, because it won't be opened; that's why the subject line is often referred to as the gatekeeper.

Tip: Begin your subject line strategy from the start so that you have time to research past performance; also, email it to your inbox and your co-workers' for input, to help further tweak it and perfect it. Take the time to create a subject line that YOU would open based on those previous steps and on subject line best-practices. Then, continually test to see what resonates with your specific audience.

2. Mailing Irrelevant Content

Emailing content that serves the agenda of the company but doesn't take into account what the recipient would find valuable seems like an obvious hazard. However, with immediate goals looming and marketing initiatives that need supporting, this mistake can easily become reality.

If you want to keep subscribers engaged, you need to create a consistently positive experience for them, and a big part of that is tailoring the content to meet their needs and interests. Otherwise, you will eventually have an inactive audience on your hands. And keep in mind that

re-engagement campaigns require more resources—and, though essential, they are generally not as effective as a strong retention strategy to begin with.

Tip: You can achieve content relevance by sending tailored content to strategically segmented audiences, created based on actions taken by the recipient. For example: opens, clicks, purchases, and sign-ups are a few common actions that are used to create segments. Creative (including copy) can be further positioned to speak to these delineated audiences. Out of all the optimization available in email marketing, segmentation, if done correctly, provides the notable metric lifts companies are looking for.

3. Expecting New Creative to Immediately Lift Metrics

Although changes in creative (including template updates) can improve user experience and strengthen your brand, do not expect an immediate lift in metrics. In fact, you might even prepare for an initial drop.

Humans are creatures of habit, and new creative, although greatly improved, does not always translate to increased response, at least not initially. Do not let that fact dissuade you from updating your creative, but do keep in mind key features of the creative that can provide an improvement to metrics, such as the placement of the CTA and number of products offered, to name a couple.

Tip: A/B-test your creative updates to make minor tweaks and optimizations—before deciding to embark on a complete overhaul. If you do decide you go the more daring route, keep in mind that metrics may dip, but then eventually return to normal, if not eventually lift down the road after subscribers become accustomed to and anticipate your breathtaking emails. If they don't, try something new, or consider returning to the original template and optimizing it.

4. Focusing Only on ROI

One of email marketing's strengths is its ridiculous(ly good) ROI. However, don't let ROI become the sole focus of your email marketing program. Email marketing is relationship

marketing. Yes, even in B2B lead generation with a purchased list (but please do not purchase your list). It is up to you to create positive experiences that over time will build the strength of your brand image, which will translate to more revenue generated.

Sure, you can blast out emails left and right, and squeeze every ounce of engagement out of the audience. After all, if 10 mailings a week are good, 20 must be even better, right? Unfortunately, even your best friends can get on your nerves if they start showing up at your house every day, at odd hours of the morning and on weekends, because you happened to answer his/her call on Friday night.

Tip: Balance is the key, so carefully monitor open rate and click rate to find the right balance. Use a weekly/monthly email calendar, planned in advance, to set a frequency strategy and keep track of how often you are mailing your audience, including various segments.

5. Thinking Email Exists in a Silo

Though often characterized as an autonomous channel, email produces the best results when used as part of a multichannel approach. Email is powerful, but it should not stand on its own.

Teams within Marketing will benefit tremendously by sharing information about the performance metrics and takeaways of the channels they're responsible for. Email performance can be directly related to the quality of product or offer, for instance, or it can be boosted with relevant display ads or the awesome efforts of your creative department.

For example, when the product team finds that offering a set of merchandise increases the average order value by 50% over offering a single item, it would benefit you to utilize (or better yet test) this information in your email promotions.

Tip: Set up reporting meetings with players responsible for various channels to discuss email performance and optimization plans.

Just as there are a lot of things you should do in email, there are clearly a few things that you should not do. This list was created based on witnessing, first hand, the mistakes that come up time and time again. Any more you think should be added to the list?



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