Email Marketing Guide

for Professional Services Firms

Hinge

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Introduction

Email marketing is one of the most sophisticated tools in the online marketing toolbelt. When used effectively, email can form the backbone of a successful content marketing campaign, generating and qualifying inbound leads while maintaining an ongoing (and measurable) line of communication with your audiences. No wonder the average return on investment for B2B email marketing is a cool 127%.[1]

Unfortunately, many professional services marketers aren't making the most of email, treating it like a simple direct mail campaign that just happens to be digital. Some are even actively undermining themselves, using poorly conceived strategies that alienate their audiences with off-target messages. The rewards are real, and so are the risks. The question is, how can you stay competitive and take full advantage of everything email marketing has to offer – without falling into the same traps as too many hapless service providers?

We created this guide to give you straightforward answers – no matter how much experience you have with email marketing.

»   **Chapter 1: How to Grow Your Email Contacts Organically**
    Before you can start emailing folks, you'll need folks to email. Even some seasoned marketers make huge mistakes as they build their contact lists. So how do you do it the right way?

»   **Chapter 2: Beginners' Techniques for Email Marketing**
    Just getting started? Learn how to begin on the right foot with a thoughtful strategy, time-saving software, and tips for crafting effective subject lines.

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1. http://blogs.position2.com/b2b-email-marketing-2013-statistics-infographic

Introduction

With this guide, you'll be prepared to embark on an email campaign of
any scale, sidestepping the pitfalls and making the most of email to form a
lasting connection to your audience.

1 How to Grow Your Email Contacts Organically

Before you can reap the full benefits of email marketing, you need a list of contacts to actually, well, contact. And not just any old list will do: it should be both robust and full of individuals within your target audiences.

So, how do you attain and build this list?

Let us start with an impassioned plea.

Stop buying email lists. Make a solemn vow to stop right now. It can be tempting, of course: with a metaphorical swipe of your credit card, you magically have 10,000 shiny new contacts. Your firm might purchase email lists because it's routine, or out of uncertainty about how to get contacts otherwise. But there's a better way.

While a handful of purchased contacts might end up interested in your services, here are some simple, yet compelling reasons why they aren't worth the time or investment:

» **Purchased email lists aren't targeted contacts.** They might be of a particular demographic or located in your desired geographic region. But in all likelihood, these contacts don't know who you are, what you do, or what you stand for. They haven't expressed interest in your products or services. They may not need them — now or ever. No one appreciates unwarranted emails.

> Purchased email lists aren't targeted contacts.

» **You could get flagged as spam.** If these individuals don't know you and didn't raise their hands to receive your emails, they may flag them as spam. If this happens often enough, you can get blacklisted and your emails will be banished to digital oblivion.

» **Software quality standards.** Most email marketing software platforms (the good ones anyway) require that imported contacts have opted in to receive your emails. We'll cover the benefits of this software later in the guide.

A better way?

If you're not buying your list, where are all those contacts going to come from? Let's take a look at some more targeted, sustainable avenues to grow your list organically:

In current emails. Leverage your existing contacts. Encourage them to share and forward your emails to their networks by having social sharing and email buttons. Include a subscribe button as well to seal the deal when your email reaches those new individuals.

Calls-to-action on your website. If your firm has embraced content marketing, you likely have some great pieces under your belt. If you're offering valuable and educational content (like whitepapers, guides, and eBooks), put this content behind a registration form on your website. In exchange for your content, require readers to provide their email address.

Online events. Online events such as webinars or Google+ Hangouts are another way to garner email addresses when individuals sign up to attend.

Offline events. Collect email addresses when you're at offline events like tradeshows, conferences, and networking events. If you've had in-person conversations with these individuals, this gives you a unique opportunity to send them personalized emails afterwards and continue to foster these relationships.

Partnerships. Strategic partnerships are a great way to expand your reach. Find firms that have similar target audiences and offer complementary products or services. Then, look for mutually beneficial partnership opportunities. Could you host a joint event? Would swapping content be valuable for your respective audiences? Can you share research findings?

Leverage your existing contacts. Encourage them to share and forward your emails to their existing networks.

Social media. Social media is today's word-of-mouth. It's a relatively simple, yet incredibly powerful tool to spread your message. Share new pieces of content, events, and offers with your social networks. You never know who might share your content and bring about a whole new level of interest.

Keep your registration simple

With all these tools in your arsenal, the final hump is to actually get readers to fill out your forms and provide you with their email addresses. Here's the tough question: How much information should you require?

Your registration form should be simple enough so that signing up is quick and doesn't become a chore. Conversely, you want enough information to be able to cultivate these prospects well.

Here's potential information you can request:

» Name
» Phone number
» Email address
» Company name
» Website
» Job function
» Industry
» Location

Pick the top 3 criteria that are most important for your firm and those that are critical to nurturing leads well.

The leads that come in will be at various stages of the sales cycle. Once you've captured their information, you have an opportunity to provide true value through relevant and educational content. This will help to push them through the sales funnel – when they are ready to purchase, you'll be top-of-mind. Prospects now understand who you are, what you're capable of, and what it might be like to work with you. And if they become a client, they'll be the best kind: an educated one.

Ensuring that you have a robust, targeted list makes all the other work that goes into an email campaign worthwhile. Now that we know who we're emailing, let's get this show on the road with our *Beginners' Techniques for Email Marketing*.
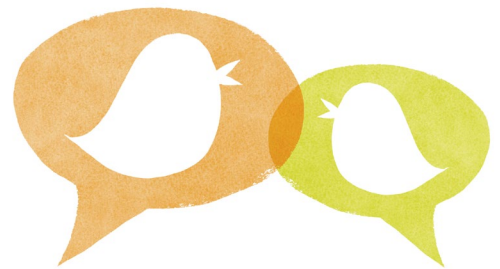
Social media
is today's
word-of-mouth.

2 Beginners' Techniques for Email Marketing

If you don't have much experience with email marketing, it's important to start with the basics. Master the fundamentals of a solid campaign and you'll have a sturdy foundation once it's time to move on to more advanced techniques.

So how do you get started? First, you'll need to decide exactly what you're setting out to do.

Setting goals

In order to succeed, an email campaign has to be focused and deliberate. Some firms make the mistake of throwing a mess of ideas against the wall of their audience's inboxes, hoping anything will stick – but that's a surefire way to annoy people and shrink your list. Likewise, you want to avoid the opposite extreme of sending emails so irregularly that audiences forget about you.

Developing specific goals and a clear vision of what you want to gain from email marketing will give your strategy direction, helping you navigate the middle path and connect successfully with your audience. Some goals might include:

» Offer relevant educational content to build your brand awareness and reputation.
» Increase website traffic by increasing the average click-through rate from X% to Y%.
» Grow your email list by X number of subscribers.
» Decrease the percentage of unsubscribes from X% to Y%.
» Increase your percentage of qualified leads from X% to Y%.

When possible, include specific numbers in your objectives. This precision will provide clarity of purpose and make it easier for your firm to quantify your successes. When determining your goals, be sure to keep in mind that marketing is an ultimate means to sales. Don't turn your emails into direct sales pitches, but don't lose sight of the endgame either.

Many of your broad goals may be annual, but creating mini-milestones is just as essential. For a simple place to start, set quarterly objectives. If you want to get more granular, you can even define monthly goals. Conducting progress checks periodically and systematically throughout the year will help to ensure that you stay on track.

But what does your track look like? What are your emails about, and how often are you sending them?

Finding the right topics

Once you understand your goals, you can identify the right email content to support those goals. In other words, once you know why you're talking to your audience, you can figure out the right things to say.

First, make sure to align your email content with the rest of your marketing efforts. Everything you send ought to be relevant to your email audience and consistent with your brand messaging. Your emails may focus on:

» **Your firm's content**
   This may include the release of guides, eBooks, and whitepapers, or upcoming events like webinars and speaking engagements. Similarly, you might invite your audience to subscribe to your blog or read case studies and profiles on your website.

» **News and trends**
   Email content may focus on breaking news and trends, both within your firm and the industry as a whole. Keep your audience up-to-date on major, relevant developments in your organization and the marketplace.

» **Hard offers**
   At the appropriate stage in the buying process, you may offer your audience closer engagements such as complimentary consultations or reviews.

Everything you send ought to be relevant to your email audience and consistent with your brand messaging.

Once you've nailed down the fundamentals of your content, ensuring consistency with the rest of your marketing efforts, it can be very useful to take a data-driven approach. You can conduct keyword research to find search terms and topics of interest to your audience, or see which topics perform well on your existing platforms by looking at social media and Google Analytics.

For further insight on relevant topics, you might consult your sales and business development team for questions and objections that arise frequently from prospects. Stay up-to-date on what's trending in the news and on social media, and keep track of marketplace trends through industry websites, tradeshows, and conferences.

Whatever content types and topics you choose, it's crucial that you include a call-to-action in your emails. This prominent, aesthetically appealing message may urge your audience to download a piece of content, get in touch to schedule a consultation, or click through to your website. Whatever action users take, it should encourage further engagement – and you should make sure that you can measure its success through analytics.

Creating your calendar

How often should you email your list? You don't want to contact your audience so often that they unsubscribe out of annoyance, but you don't want them to forget they ever signed up for your emails, either.

There's no precise "Goldilocks" frequency. Context is key: the right frequency for your campaign will be dictated by factors including your particular audience and the type of content you send. But the following guidelines are best practices that apply to any professional services firm:

» **Be consistent and predictable.**
   Always send emails on the same days. This builds a familiar rhythm – audiences like to know what to expect and when to expect it.

» **Keep your word.**
   Email as often as you promised when people signed up. If they subscribed to a weekly newsletter, email them weekly.

» **Know your capabilities.**
   Determine how often you can send out emails based on your available resources – and try to be realistic.

There's no precise "Goldilocks" frequency. Context is key.

Consistency and sustainability are essential. In order to achieve both, plan out your campaigns in advance. Make sure your resources are in place so you have time to properly craft and refine topics, copy, and design. And as you build out your calendar, consider the emails you're sending both individually and as a group. Are they varied enough to keep your subscribers engaged and educated? Do they align with your overall marketing goals over time? These are questions you'll need to revisit regularly.

Choosing the right software

There's a wide range of email marketing software available today, with applications designed to handle the specific needs of many different sizes and types of firms. Some focus simply on helping you manage and streamline your communications with an ever-growing list, while others act as hubs for many of your different digital marketing tools and efforts: a one-stop shop for making blog posts, checking analytics, and more.

So how do you go about picking the right tool for your firm?

First, consider your budget and the scope of your needs. Do you want your email marketing to be integrated into a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system? With a CRM, you'll be able to better manage contacts, coordinating your emails and your website more seamlessly. This functionality may not be necessary for every single campaign – but for larger campaigns targeting offers to a range of different audiences, a full-featured CRM can make all the difference. If you're looking to make unique targeted offers to different segments of your email list, you'll want to keep this need in mind.

Other software capabilities to consider include:

» Analytics and reporting functionality
» The size of list the software can manage
» Spam checking abilities
» Whether the software is able to create surveys or polls directly in emails
» Autoresponse functionality
» Social media integration
» Templates and customization capabilities

Apart from software capabilities, you'll want to consider two more essential factors. What kind of email deliverability track record does

Consistency and sustain-ability are essential. In order to achieve both, plan out your campaigns in advance.
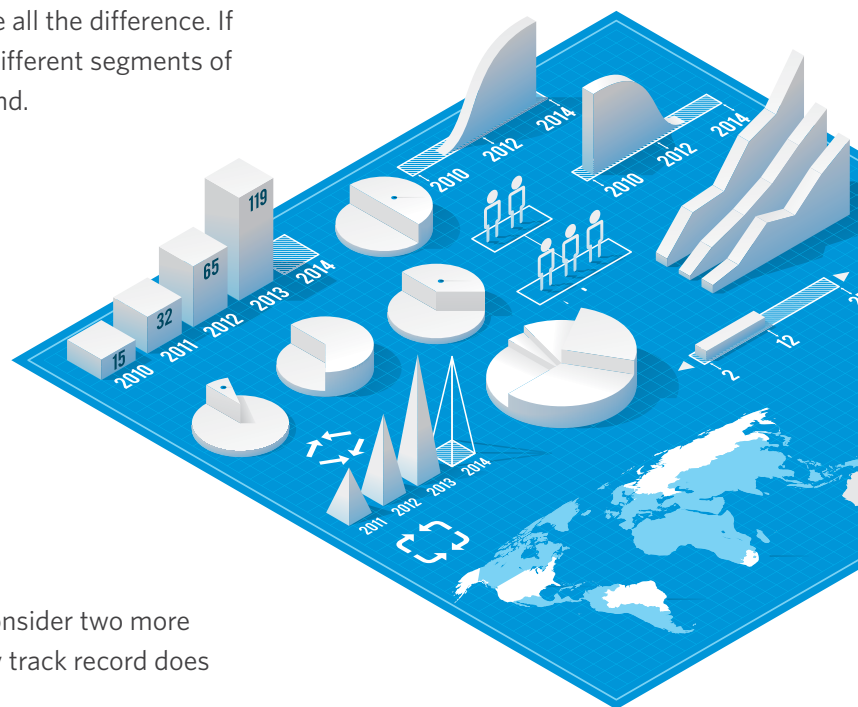
the tool have? Are its emails blacklisted? Whitelisted? A reputable company should be able to demonstrate results. For starters, some of the most widely used and well-known marketing software tools today include:

» Salesforce
» Infusionsoft
» HubSpot
» MailChimp

Salesforce, Infusionsoft, and HubSpot are full-fledged marketing platforms with integrated email functionality, while MailChimp is a dedicated email marketing tool. As you explore the available tools, consider your requirements in terms of both software functionality and service – what type of customer service and support do you expect to need? Look ahead to how your needs and abilities will scale: how do you expect your needs will change in a year or two?

Crafting subject lines

Once you've got the right content, a detailed calendar, and software to power your campaign, you're finally ready to get down to emailing your list. But first, you'll need to write a subject line.

For most of us, this is a familiar challenge. You've probably spent a few minutes pondering the precise subject line to use for a tricky or important email in your personal life. Moreover, we all receive a barrage of emails everyday, all clamoring for our attention. Happily, this means we have some context to consider what works and what doesn't.

Put yourself in your audience's shoes and think about what kinds of subject lines you're most likely to open. Consider the sender of the email in addition to the subject line – would it be most appropriate if this message came from a named individual, a particular team, or the firm as a whole?

In the subject line itself, take a straightforward approach, avoiding gimmicks and sales-oriented pitches or posturing. Not only will many readers tune out when a subject line looks too much like a hard sell, but words like "free," "help," "reminder," and "click here" often get emails flagged as spam by email providers. Try to demonstrate value to readers, indicating the benefit they'll receive by opening and reading the email. Be descriptive, honest, and concise, trying to stay under 50 characters. Typically, it's best to maintain an even tone, avoiding exclamation points and all-caps.

Along with the language you use, think about how readers are viewing your emails. Many will be reading on mobile devices, meaning their inboxes will likely preview fewer characters for the subject line and body text. This only compounds the need to achieve maximum descriptive impact in the shortest space possible.

As email marketing grows more sophisticated, marketers are gaining new tools to test for the most effective subject lines. In the next two chapters, we will explore more advanced techniques like split A/B testing, which allows you to test your list's response on different subject lines for the same email, and find out just what makes for a successful offer strategy.

Ready? Let's get started.

3 Building a Better Email Campaign

You've got the basics of email marketing down, sending well-targeted content according to a thoughtful calendar. Now it's time to step up your game and make your campaigns as effective as possible.

Offer strategies

What action do you want leads to take when they read your emails? We've already touched on the importance of calls-to-action, but how can you make them more successful?

First, design a variety of calls-to-action targeting leads at different stages of the sales cycle. Early-stage leads, for example, may be interested in an offer for your new pieces of premium content. Leads further along in the sales process may find progressively closer engagements useful: think webinars and complimentary consultations. This lead nurturing strategy is the beating heart of a content marketing campaign[2], and calls-to-action through email are one of the primary vehicles for this nurture. Developing a comprehensive offer strategy – deciding which audiences to target with different types of offers, and when – will help you maximize the impact of your offers.

When creating calls-to-action in individual emails, it's important to make your messages as clear as possible in content, language, and aesthetics, taking special care to communicate the value that readers will gain from following the call-to-action.

In terms of design, make certain that the call-to-action is highly visible, standing out from the rest of the email. Instead of a simple link, for example, create a visually striking button. Place it above the

2. http://www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/the_lead_nurturing_guide

fold (so that most users will see it immediately, without having to scroll down) and make it obvious that the button is a link. Use HTML instead of image files to create these design elements to ensure maximum consistency across inboxes and devices: some users won't see images at all.

As you work to optimize clarity and visual impact in your calls-to-action, you should also consider the following best practices:

» Include only one call-to-action in each email.
» Include the value that readers will get from following the call-to-action.
» Repeat the call-to-action within your email – two or three times, say, depending on the length of the email.
» When appropriate, create a sense of urgency by presenting a deadline.

Finally, it's important to think about what happens once the user actually clicks the call-to-action. They should find themselves on a page that clearly delivers what they expected to find. If that's a blog post, they should see the blog post. If it is a piece of premium content or a webinar sign-up form, they should find themselves on an appropriate "landing page" with any further instructions that may be necessary. Make sure your landing page copy aligns with the call-to-action.

Important analytics to monitor and how to adjust accordingly

Now, how do you evaluate whether your campaign is accomplishing its goals? We've discussed the importance of analytics, but that's a big topic. Which metrics should you be watching?

The answer differs from firm to firm, and it depends on your goals. Key metrics to consider include:

» **Size and growth rate of your email list.**
How large is your list, and how large do you want it to be? How quickly do you want it to grow? The importance of this metric will vary according to the priority you place on building your list.

» **Email open rates.**
You can break this number down to look at the total number of opens for an email, the rate at which recipients are opening, the total number of unique opens, and the unique open rate. The

Now, how do you evaluate whether your campaign is accomplishing its goals?

"unique" metric eliminates duplicate opens from the same user from the equation. These measurements can help you gauge the effectiveness of your subject lines.

» **Click through rates (or CTR).**
How often are recipients clicking through your calls-to-action? You might measure total clicks, the overall click through rate, unique clicks, and the unique click through rate to see whether your emails are accomplishing their goals.

There are also "warning" metrics that may indicate your email strategy is not working as it should. Your bounce rate measures the rate at which your emails are returned by recipients' servers – in short, they never got the email at all, perhaps because the email address is wrong. A high unsubscribe rate may indicate that your audiences aren't finding your content useful, or they're feeling harassed. You'll also want to consider the number of complaints from subscribers marking your emails as spam.

For more positive, business-oriented indicators, you may want to look at your total number of conversions and your conversion rate, as well as the activity of late-stage leads. You may also want to measure the total revenue you've generated from email marketing. It's important to remember that email campaigns take time to work, but ultimately, you'll want to ensure that you're seeing a return on them. If not, it's time to reevaluate your approach.

Marketing automation

Marketing automation is software that simplifies many marketing and sales efforts by automating repetitive tasks. This software can qualify and nurture leads, as well as provide relevant and educational content based on your prospects' behaviors, delivering a more robust and targeted campaign with less ongoing effort.

Generally, this software integrates with your CRM and expands on its capabilities. In fact, several of the more sophisticated CRMs that we mentioned in the last chapter include marketing automation functionality. In addition to helping you manage your contacts and segment your list, or integrating your email marketing with your blog and social media presences, these programs can help you conduct

"smarter" email marketing:

» **Drip marketing**

In a drip marketing campaign, messages go out to prospects or leads at specified times – relative, for example, to when they subscribe. In this type of campaign, the pace and order of content is preset, but the individual receives it on a more personalized basis.

» **Trigger marketing**

This type of campaign delivers communications based on prospects' or contacts' behavior, such as clicking on a link or downloading a specific piece of content. This allows you to target your audiences in a highly personalized way.

There are a number of marketing automation software solutions available. The best fit will depend on your firm's specific needs, but some of the most popular choices include:

» Marketo
» HubSpot
» Eloqua
» Infusionsoft
» Silverpop
» Pardot

In order to get the most out of marketing automation software, it is important to ensure that its capabilities align with your needs: if you won't require trigger marketing functionality, for example, it won't be advantageous to pay for it. But for firms embarking on ambitious campaigns, this software can deliver enormous value.

Now that we've explored intermediate tools and practices, it's time to go even deeper. Let's move on to the techniques of email marketing experts.

4 The Art of Advanced Email Marketing

You've spun up an impressive email marketing engine. Now it's time to go even bigger with advanced testing, dynamic content, and responsive design.

The A/Bs of testing

Testing your emails is one of the most important steps in email marketing. Why? When practiced correctly, careful and assiduous testing often drives dramatically improved deliverability, open rates, and click-through rates.

One of the simplest forms of testing is known as A/B or split testing, and its simplicity drives its power. In an A/B test, you create two variations of one email – differing in only one particular respect – and send them to a small percentage of your total recipients. Half of the test group is sent Version A. The other half receives Version B. The result, measured by the most opens or clicks, determines the winning email, and that version is sent to your wider body of remaining subscribers.

Elements to test

Which elements should you test? There is a range of possibilities – the crucial thing to remember is that you must test only one variance at a time. Some of the most common elements for testing are the "from" name, email address, subject line, and pre-header (a message placed at the top of an email, complementing your subject line and often visible from the inbox). These are the elements that impact whether recipients open the email in the first place.

> Testing your emails is one of the most important steps in email marketing.

Other useful elements to test include:

» Timing – both day of week and time of day
» Design – both desktop and mobile
» Copy
» Calls-to-action
» Offers
» Social media links
» Footer
» Landing pages

An A/B test is successful when you find a statistically significant variance in the performance of your emails. Use this insight to power the remainder of that email campaign with the element that resonated most with your audience, while using the lessons learned about these elements in your future emails.

There will be times, however, when an A/B test isn't statistically significant enough to determine results. This means that both elements work just as well. The test hasn't proven anything other than the elements' comparable effectiveness. Don't worry if this happens. You have learned something and can now focus on creating a new A/B testing experiment that compares two different elements of your emails.
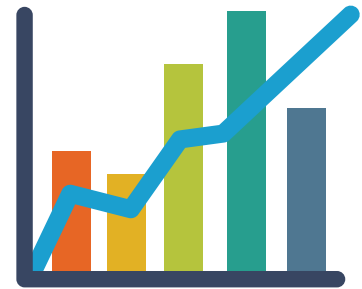
Six rules for A/B testing emails

1. **Start small.**
   If you're new to email testing, start with simpler elements such as the "from" name and email address, or the subject line. These elements don't require much time or creative work to generate different versions, but can provide valuable insights into your audience that may be useful when testing more complex elements.
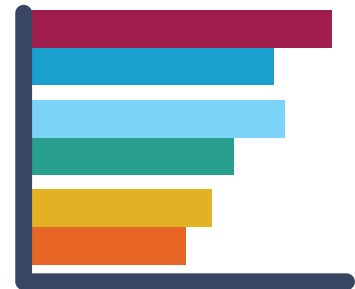
2. **Test one element at a time, and send on the same day of the week and time of day.**
   In order to know what caused changes in your results, you need to know which element is responsible for the changes. If you test more than one element at a time, you won't know whether the change is caused by one of the elements, the combination of the elements, or none of them.

   Be sure to send emails being tested on the same day of the week and time of day, as these can influence performance.

If you test which day of the week or time of day is best to send emails (very valuable knowledge to gain about your audience), again, test one element at a time and keep all other elements unchanged.

3. **Test representative samples of your list.**
    Instead of performing tests by splitting your entire list into segments, use representative sample segments to determine which email performs best. Then, send the "winning" email to the majority of your list. The sample segments should be small, yet large enough for the results to apply to your full list. Aim for a sample size of approximately 10%-15% of your list. Choose the contacts in your sample segments randomly so results aren't biased.

4. **Give tests time before analyzing results.**
    Wait for the results of your email to peak and begin to go down before determining results. Depending on the timing of your email, the behaviors of your audience, and other factors, results can vary dramatically within the first 24-48 hours.

    Some elements of your email can have a significant impact on when results will peak. For example, if your email contains an offer that can only be redeemed within 24 hours, it's likely that most email recipients will act immediately or shortly after receiving it. However, if your email contains an offer that can be redeemed within one month, email recipients are likely to take longer to act.

5. **Take all results into account, not just specific metrics.**
    It's important to not focus solely on the metrics you want to improve, such as open rate. If your open rate increased, but the number of spam complaints and unsubscribe rates also increased, that is important to note and correct in future emails.

6. **Keep track of tests.**
    Keep a record to keep track of elements tested and the results. Refer to previous tests and identify trends. Categorizing your tests makes it easy to search or filter by type. For example, subject line could be a category. A spreadsheet is a good tool to use. Some email marketing tools also enable you to keep records of tests.

Keep a record to keep track of elements tested and the results.

Rendering the right way.

Have you ever opened an HTML email only to have the images, text, or other elements look strange, or you weren't able to see them at all? Has an email appeared fine when you opened it on your desktop computer, but when you opened it on your mobile device, it didn't look right? Most likely, the organization or person that sent you the email didn't test it in all email platforms and email clients to ensure that it appeared as they intended it to.

There are three types of email platforms:

1. Desktop platforms (like Outlook)
2. Browser platforms (like Gmail)
3. Mobile platforms (like an email app on an iPhone)

Within each type of email platform, there are over 70 email clients. Litmus Email Analytics reports worldwide data on email client popularity. The top 10 email clients and their percentage of the market share as of March 2014 are:

1. Apple iPhone 26%*
2. Outlook 14%*
3. Apple iPad 12%
4. Gmail 11%
5. Apple Mail 8%
6. Google Android 7%
7. Outlook.com 6%
8. Yahoo! Mail 5%
9. Windows Live Mail 3%
10. Windows Mail 2%

Other email clients include AOL Mail and Mozilla Thunderbird.

It's important to note that email clients can only be detected if the images in the email are automatically displayed. Outlook 2000 and Apple iPhone are two email clients that display images by default. This likely inflates their market share compared to other email clients such as Yahoo! Mail, which does not automatically display images.

Each email client uses different underlying technology, which makes HTML emails appear differently in each one. Sometimes the same email client will change what underlying technology it uses from version to version. For example, Outlook 2003 uses Internet Explorer 6 to render HTML. Outlook 2007 and Outlook 2010 render HTML using Microsoft Word.

With the large number of email platforms and email clients out there, as well as multiple versions of the same email clients, testing emails in each one can be daunting. While you can test HTML email rendering manually by setting up email accounts on all of the email platforms and clients and sending test emails to each one, this process can be very time-consuming. For firms that send emails frequently, it's just not practical, particularly if errors do occur: fixing an HTML issue in one email client can then cause a different issue to occur in another client. Many manual tests may need to be done to ensure the email eventually appears correctly.

Fortunately, most email marketing solutions now have a preview feature that enables you to see how HTML emails appear in most email platforms and email clients. There are also services available from Litmus, Email on Acid, and others that enable you to test HTML emails on every email platform and email client.

Right message, right audience, right time

For professional services firms, email marketing is all about getting the right content in front of the right audience at the right time. Sounds simple — but in reality, this can be difficult to execute effectively. According to results of a 2013 BtoB Magazine email marketing survey of B2B marketers, the greatest percentage of respondents—58%—cited delivering relevant content as the biggest challenge and opportunity they faced in the next year.

Dynamic content, also referred to as "adaptive," "personalized," or "smart" content, are elements of an email that change based on information about the recipient. This information is stored in the recipient's contact record in your email marketing solution, CRM solution, or database, such as their name, location, industry they work in, interests, or past interactions with your emails or other marketing

> Email marketing is all about getting the right content in front of the right audience at the right time.

activities. Dynamic content creates an experience that is customized specifically for the recipient.

Delivering dynamic content requires an email marketing solution capable of this type of customization. There are two basic types of dynamic content:

1. Variable Substitution

Fields are placed in the email template representing recipient attributes and are automatically customized for each recipient. One of the most popular is inserting a recipient's name in the email greeting. While variable substitution can have great value, it only allows fairly simple levels of personalization.

Dynamic content creates an experience that is customized specifically for the recipient.
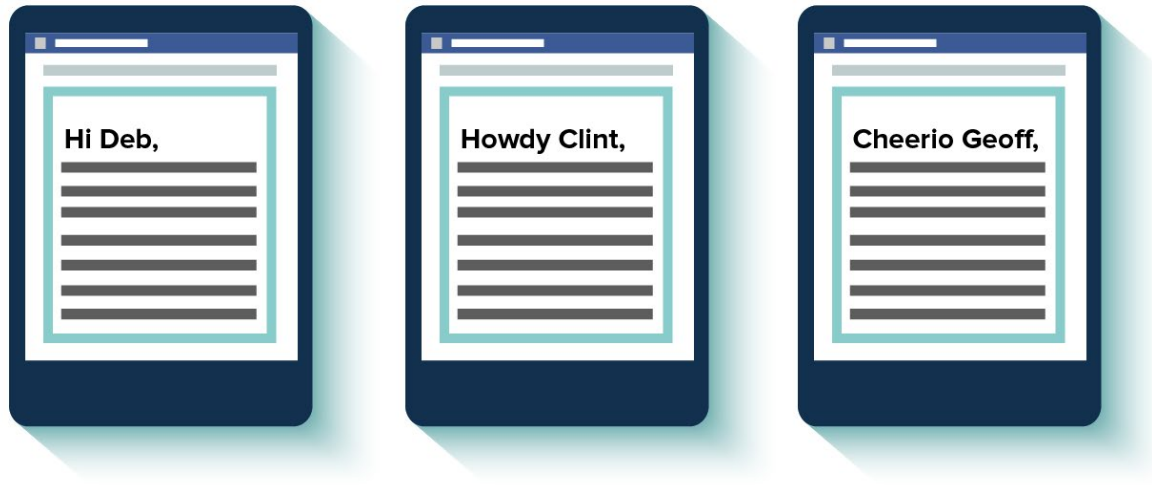

Variable Substitution

2. Content Insertion

This is very similar to variable substitution, but goes a step further to enable entire sections of content (phrases, paragraphs, images, etc.) to be inserted based on recipient attributes. This inserted content may itself contain variable substitution fields to further customize it.

It's important to keep in mind that using content insertion can have a big impact on the production process. Each piece of dynamic content must be created, proofread, and approved, which some firms may find challenging.
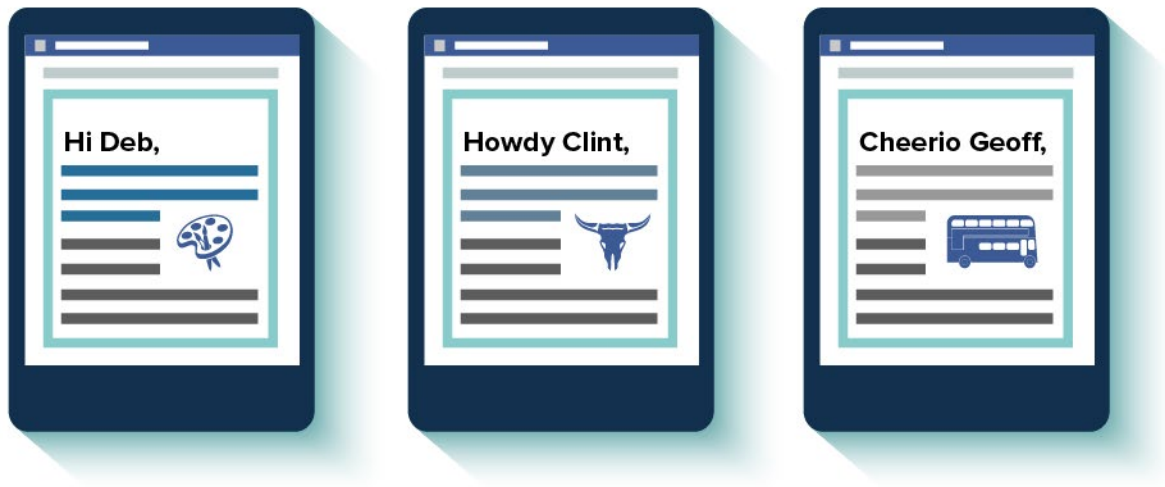
Content Insertion

3. Going mobile with responsive design

Responsive email design, sometimes called "mobile design," ensures that an HTML email automatically readjusts in order to display appropriately on the device on which it's opened, whether that is a desktop computer, mobile smart phone, or tablet.

Responsive Design

According to a study by Litmus in December 2013, 51% of email opens take place on mobile devices. To ensure you're engaging recipients who open your emails on mobile devices, your email marketing strategies need to include a lighter format and a mobile friendly layout.

Making emails readable and able to be interacted with on any device means adapting what they contain and how they are built. Here are some basic guidelines for making responsive email design work:

» Use a relative width of 100 percent rather than a fixed/absolute width of 600 pixels (or other) in email templates.

» Use media queries in emails to instruct the email client to use different CSS styles depending on the display characteristics of a device.

» Build on a single column template to optimize readability, as most smart phone screens arrange content vertically. Eliminate or minimize lateral scrolling as it makes the email harder to read and interact with on mobile devices.

» Reduce or simplify the content in your emails.

» Ensure that the call-to-action is visible without scrolling.

» Call-to-action buttons must be 44×44 pixels minimum to be large enough for mobile users to use their finger to click them.

» Make image file sizes small to ensure they appear quickly.

With effective, dynamic and mobile-ready emails, you will be utilizing the techniques of the most successful email marketers out there. Through persistence, thoughtful testing and metrics, and careful iteration, it is possible to achieve truly ambitious email marketing goals and build increasingly strong connections with your audience.

Reduce or simplify the content in your emails.

Conclusion

In this guide, we've explored how successful email market-ers connect with their audiences and nurture leads to build a strong backbone for their online marketing efforts. At its best, email marketing can be a vibrant and rewarding line of communication for your firm and your audiences.

Like all online marketing efforts, email marketing takes diligence and continuous iteration, finding the best solutions and strategies for your firm. With the tips in this guide, you can find the right path for your firm in the most informed way possible, with all the tools you need to achieve lasting success.

About Hinge

Hinge specializes in branding and marketing for the professional services. We are a leader in rebranding firms to help them grow faster and maximize value.

Our comprehensive offerings include research and strategy, brand development, award-winning creative, high performance websites and marketing outsourcing.

Hinge conducts groundbreaking research on professional service companies. We have identified a group of firms that grow 9X faster and are 50% more profitable yet spend less than average to get new business. We can show you how they do it.

To view our full library of research reports, white papers, webinars and articles, please visit www.hingemarketing.com/library.

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Help Us Make this Guide Even Better
We want to hear from you. If you have any suggestions to improve this resource, please drop us a line:
info@hingemarketing.com.

Thank you!

Additional Resources:

Further Resources

If you're ready to learn more about email and online marketing strategies, we've created several free resources to get you started.
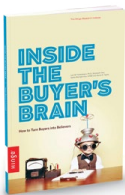
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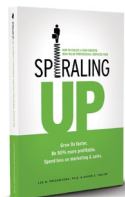
Online Marketing for Professional Services

Inside the Buyer's Brain: How to Turn Buyers Into Believers

Spiraling Up: How to Create a High Growth, High Value Professional Services Firm

Kits and Guides

The Lead Nurturing Guide for Professional Services

The Marketing Planning Guide for Professional Services

Ask About Our Programs

Visible Expert℠ Program

Designed to help individuals cultivate an authoritative online presence in their area of expertise, the Visible Expert℠ Program delivers the tools and strategy required to build personal reputation and visibility in the marketplace. Based on extensive research, the Visible Expert℠ Program helps experts become recognized industry leaders.

Visible Firm℠ Program

Designed to deliver more referrals, higher profits, and faster growth, the Visible Firm℠ Program will build a powerful marketing platform to engage your audiences and build your visibility. Based on the most extensive research into high-growth firms ever conducted, the Visible Firm℠ Program will ground your marketing in science and leverage your firm's expertise to draw in the right audiences.

High Performance Website Program

The High Performance Website Program makes your website into a lead-generating machine — bundling a beautiful new site with a suite of powerful of online tools. Designed from the ground up to attract the right visitors from search engines, a high performance site uses educational content, smart offers, and custom features to engage and convert qualified leads.

Branding Program

Our Branding Program is designed to carry your firm's reputation confidently into the marketplace by giving you a suite of powerful branding tools. Based on extensive research and analysis, our branding strategies increase your firm's credibility and visibility in your industry. The services will also differentiate your firm and provide clear, compelling messages for each of your target audiences.

For more information, call 703.391.8870 or email us at info@hingemarketing.com.