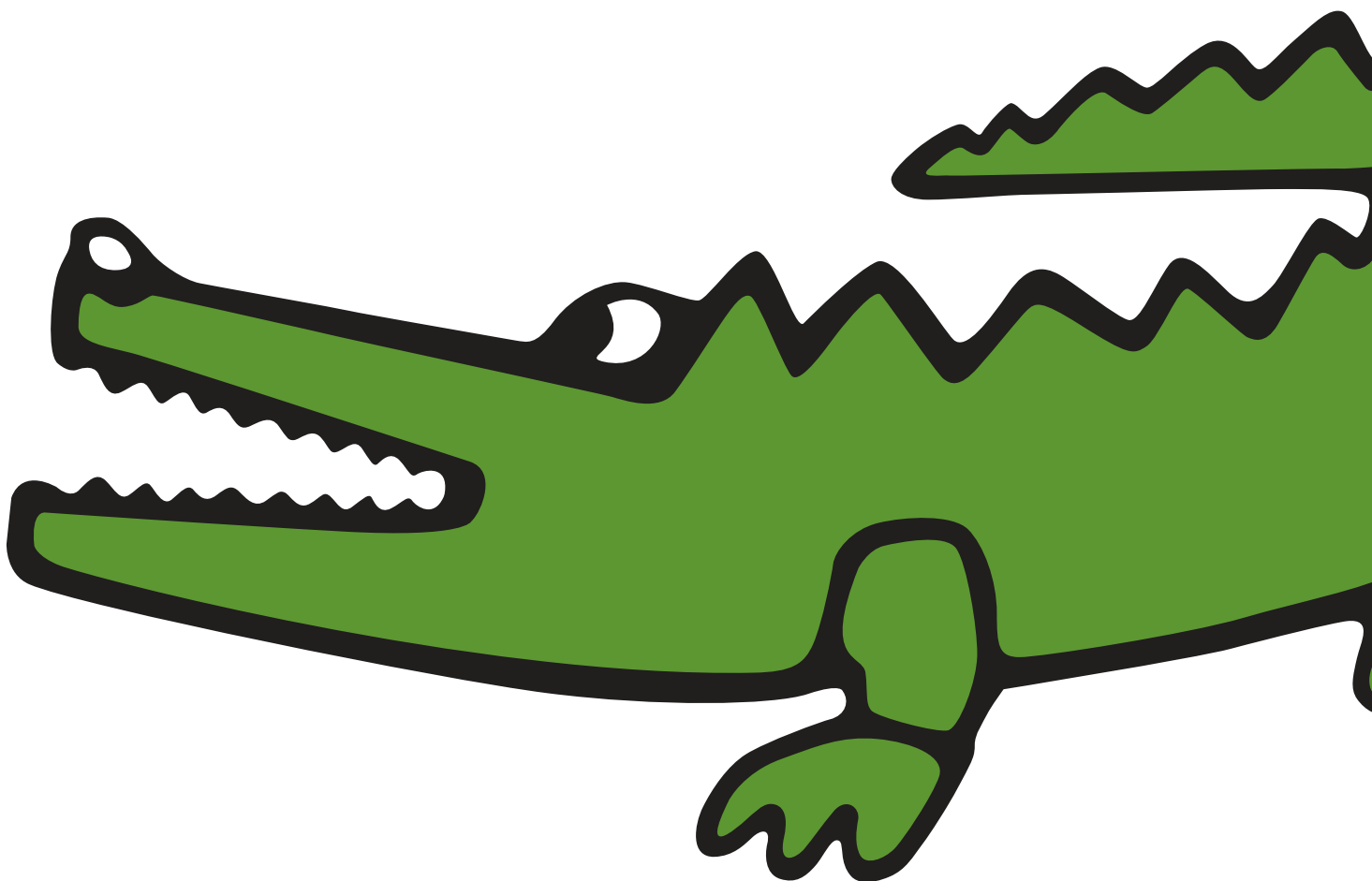


# COMMUNIGATOR®

## teach yourself email marketing

a useful compilation of hints & tips for all marketers  
with a remit for email marketing campaigns  
teach yourself email marketing



## Introduction

Email Marketing has been, and continues to be, one of the hot topics for all marketers, unfortunately not always for the right reasons. Whilst in essence it should be relatively cheap and easy to do, all too often people have failed miserably and have been left somewhat disillusioned. However, email marketing is rising in the ranks of importance for marketers and should form an element of an integrated and well-thought out marketing strategy.

According to Forrester Research, 88% of marketers are expecting email effectiveness to increase in the next three years. To see the sort of returns that are always spoken of with email marketing, we encourage people to take control and implement best practice. To help you achieve your campaign objectives, we have compiled some useful pointers on the various elements you need to get right.

## Building Your Audience

You could have the best creative, most compelling subject line and irresistible call to action, but if you haven't thought about who you are sending it to, all your hard work goes down the pan.

Data strategy is an integral part of email marketing campaign planning. Excellent creative can be undermined by a failure to identify those contacts with a high propensity to respond. Invest time and budget in data collection and reap the rewards. Opt-in data is increasingly difficult to buy or lease from data providers and data collected on your own website is, by its very nature, of better quality (cheaper) and of more value to your business.

How many unique visitors a day do you get on your website? How many of them are you able to communicate with again? Visitors to your website have taken the time to seek you out or have found their way to your website courtesy of the marketing budget invested in SEO and PPC. Don't let this expense be wasted – capture those visitors on your homepage by offering something of interest, e.g. newsletter/industry hot topics subscription, whitepaper downloads, event registrations or entry to a free draw for an iPod/bottle of champagne/book on relevant topic etc.

### Keep it simple

Don't put off potential prospects by presenting them with a lengthy form asking for details ranging from mailing address to inside leg measurement. Keep it simple; first name, last name, email address. You will be able to gather more information about them and their interests from subsequent email campaigns. Tell them that by entering their details they are subscribing to receive further information from you – this should help to keep the unsubscribe rate down as they will be expecting/wanting to receive communication from you.

### Technology

Using an email marketing package that includes web capture functionality streamlines this process. A web capture form is created in the software and included on your website as an iframe. Results are fed directly back to the contact database enabling automated triggered campaigns. For example, a person has subscribed to receive late availability offers for holidays in Spain. In the web capture form they are able to tick their preferences, e.g. family holidays, tennis holidays etc. A triggered email is sent on submission of their details to thank them for subscribing. The message is a reassurance

that their details have been successfully received; it communicates the framework for future emails and gives them contact details/links to the website for reference. Capturing preferences in this way enables intelligent marketing – campaigns promoting the type of holidays in which they have expressed an interest are targeted and relevant.

### What not to do

Don't go to the effort of capturing a prospect's details on your website, feeding them into your contact database and then let that contact sit there with no contact for 6 months. Chances are, when you do get round to sending them an email campaign, they will have forgotten that they subscribed, will class the communication as SPAM and hit unsubscribe.

### Summary

If you want a good email list – build one! And then make immediate and intelligent use of it.

## Data Cleansing

Data cleansing is one of the most tedious, fault prone and time consuming tasks that comes under the marketers remit. Customer and prospect information tends to degrade at rates as high as 4% - 6% per month, with companies going out of business and employees changing jobs or titles. Compounding this, marketers often find employees have entered data incorrectly, incompletely, or in the wrong field in CRM.

### Gather data correctly in the first place.

When data is gathered via a form on your website keep it simple so that subscribers don't get bored inputting information. Use field validation rules – is the data in the telephone field a number? Does the email address contain an @ symbol? If you have an in-house telesales team gathering data on outbound calls, have they had sufficient training on the CRM system or database? If they are only able to garner the first name of a contact it needs to be entered in the first name field and not last name otherwise emails will be addressed to Dear (blank space).

### Use Email Marketing for Data Cleansing

Each campaign sent presents an opportunity to cleanse existing data and to add to it in terms of preferences and interests. Use pre-populated fields in surveys and web capture (registrations for events etc) and allow the recipient to update their details.

With CommuniGator's solution, the data can either be updated directly in the database or stored for approval in a holding/reconciliation space. This method is the 'safest' to ensure that relevant data is not over written by someone entering the wrong info to the wrong fields.

Having email marketing and CRM systems that don't integrate not only prevents the effective measurement of ROI, but hampers effective marketing – particularly in a multi-channel scenario.

### Tips for data cleansing and using the data

- Don't talk to your existing contacts like you have never met them

- Don't send multiple campaigns with the same message/offer unnecessarily
- Try not to lose track of contacts who change jobs – nurture the relationship so they let you know when they've moved on
- Don't miss an opportunity to talk to the client at a personal level
- Select new prospects based on what you already know about your contacts
- Clean up profanity and nonsense text in data
- Check your original data capture form – will you use all the fields you ask subscribers to complete? Stop collecting data on your website that you don't have the confidence/need to use in your marketing.
- Don't try to do all the work yourself – encourage contacts to make use of 'update your details/preferences' forms

## Summary

Use of accurate personalisation in email marketing campaigns generates increased response rates, in addition, the Data Protection Act of 1998 states that 'Personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date'.

## Surveys

Surveys are a little-used, but powerful tool for marketers; they are a quick and easy means of gathering new information (market research) and of cleansing existing data. Traditionally, customer surveys and market research were carried out by direct mail or by telephone. However, by using surveys as a call to action in your email marketing you are able to gather and analyse results in a matter of hours rather than weeks. In addition to a fast response, surveys conducted by email are significantly cheaper than DM – particularly if you have a large target group to reach.

## What they're good for

- Customer Satisfaction - An effective way to find out what your customers think about you, as a company, and your products or services. Surveys communicate the fact that you value the subscribers' opinions. Critical feedback is a motivator to improving the service/information/event you deliver.
- Event Feedback – Gain useful feedback on what was good/bad about an event you hosted in order to make the next one better.
- Data Cleansing – Enable customers and prospects in your database to update their contact details and preferences, e.g. how often they want to receive emails, what interests them, do they want to receive HTML or text emails etc. You can 'fill in the gaps' of useful data which will make subsequent communication more relevant and, therefore, more interesting to the recipient.

## Creating a Survey

Surveys can be set-up using page conditions to serve-up questions according to the preceding answer. In this way you can avoid asking your recipient something that is irrelevant to them and save time. In campaigns where a survey is used as a call to action in CommuniGator's software the number of survey responses is reported on the results overview page. On the survey tab we can easily see the number of surveys completed, yet to be completed and also, very importantly, those abandoned. A high abandon rate can mean the survey is too long or that the line of questioning is too intrusive.

Some email service providers have "in-email" survey capability, meaning recipients see and can complete the survey in the email body. At CommuniGator, we don't believe this is the best method. Outlook is different from gmail, which is different from Lotus Notes; if the technology doesn't work with all of them, you won't get the results.

CommuniGator's software builds surveys on a landing zone – this means you can set the scene and outline the incentive in the email with a one-click through to the survey page.

## Question types

### **TextBox - Single Line**

A single line textbox allows text to be entered in a single line for information such as "first name," "last name," or "company name."

### **TextBox - Multi Line**

A multi line text box allows more text to be entered for a question than a single line textbox. Typically, a multi line textbox is used as a comment box for open ended questions.

### **Radiobutton - Single Select**

A radio button allows the user to select a single option from a predefined list.

### **Checkbox - Multi Select**

Checkboxes, also commonly referred to as tick-boxes, allow a user to select more than one option from a predefined list of answers.

### **Dropdown List - Single Select**

A dropdown list, allows the user to select one option from a predefined list.

### **ListBox - Single Select**

A listbox displays a list of items in a box, and a user would select one item from the list.

### **ListBox - Multi Select**

A listbox multi select allows the user to select multiple options from a predefined list. The user would hold the control key on their keyboard when selecting more than one option.

## Increase Response Rates

We live in an increasingly busy world and the majority of people are unlikely to take 5 minutes out of their day to complete a survey without an incentive. This could take the form of a free whitepaper, voucher/discount code to spend on your website, free registration at an event, 2 for 1 offer etc. However, make the incentive relevant to your business.

Always tell the recipient how many questions are in the survey and how long you expect it to take them to complete it. This sets realistic expectations and reduces the abandonment rate (people that give up half-way through). Two minutes or less to complete is a good rule of thumb.

## Summary

Surveys are most useful when your email marketing solution is integrated with your CRM package. This enables all survey answers and/or contact data fields to be written directly back to CRM to update existing data.

Surveys that are brief, avoid jargon in the questions and offer a relevant incentive, are most effective.

## Campaign Planning

### *What's the right frequency for email?*

Frequency and relevance go hand in hand. Only talk to individuals in your audience when you have something to say. The idea that "it's Thursday and I've got to blast my email" is (or should be!) a thing of the past. Marketers have a few opportunities to engage their customers & prospects. You can't afford to waste that touch, so don't. If

you don't have something relevant to say to your audience, don't say it. Some marketers say "twice a month is best." Others say "every Thursday." Still more say "Ask your subscribers when they want to be mailed." The reality is that frequency IS all about relevance. Say something when you have something to say - and when you don't, keep quiet.

One of the challenges marketers are facing in this area comes from the general economics of email - as sending email is so cheap, marketers often don't care if they're sending to a group of people that don't respond in order to get the 1 out of 1000 that does. It is shocking how pervasive this type of thinking is. Part of this thinking stems from marketers who are often under pressure from management to generate max revenue per campaign, even when that comes at the expense of the brand and customer relationships.

Often, there's another issue to be solved: control of the house list. Everyone in the organisation wants to use the email list to get their own message out, without considering how much email list members are receiving from other departments.

Here are some quick tips to determine the right email frequency for your organisation:

## Frequency

There's no quick answer. It depends on the goals for your email and the type of content you send. Some rough guidelines:

**Mail at least once a month/quarter.** Mail less often than this, and you risk being forgotten by recipients. Quarterly is the bare minimum if you want to keep your brand or company name top of mind (a common email goal). If you do not communicate regularly, you risk diluting the power of permission that you achieved when you acquired them as an opt-in email subscriber – if you have signed up for various newsletters, updates and alerts from trusted websites and brands, but don't hear from them for five months, you may grow disinterested or -- worse -- forget that you granted them permission to send you email communications in the first place.

**Never more than once within 72 hours**

With regard to a general newsletter or promotional piece, you should abide by this rule or run the risk of generating unsubscribes and low response rates. Exceptions to this are if the email is triggered based on breaking news (e.g. BBC Breaking News) or other timely content.

**Let content be your guide.** Look at what you provide readers and you'll get a feel for proper frequency. Analyse how often the information changes and how quickly readers must receive it to act on it.

**Frequency segmentation.** Some organisations offer daily email newsletters as well as weekly summaries of the same content to give readers a choice. Ask customers directly what frequency they would prefer at the time of opt in. This will save time on segmentation and ensure that your customers get exactly what they want. Many companies wisely use list segmentation to determine the types of content and offers in order to send different customers, but you should also use this technique to determine optimal frequency rates. While one group of customers' responses may be higher with mailings every week, another group may respond better with a monthly frequency. Marketers should adjust frequencies for different types of customers based on list segmentation.

**Work within your resources.** A daily email requires many more resources than a monthly. Better a well-done monthly email than a shoddy weekly or daily.

**Watch for trends.** Declining response, open, and click-through rates can be signs of list fatigue. Though some decrease is normal, watch carefully and cut back frequency if you see a problem. Don't assume if the unsubscribe rate is stable you're OK. Many people

prefer to forward email directly to their delete folder rather than unsubscribe. These people have 'emotionally unsubscribed'.

### Use your metrics

Frequency should not be as simple as "we don't mail to our customers more than twice a month." Just like any marketing and sales program, email marketing campaigns should be adapted based on the responses to each program. Email provides marketers with more info than almost any other marketing medium, and this data should be used to evaluate and establish your frequency mix.

Tailor future campaigns to those who have expressed an interest in your product or service, test the creative and offer, and then send it about a week after their original click-through. Keep a close eye on their response.

### Rules should guide, not restrict

The key to establishing the right email frequency with your customers, as in every aspect of email marketing, is to plan, test, adapt, analyse and refine. Each marketer will find that different rules apply for their customers. Establish guidelines for your business, but always be flexible as customers' desires and preferences are quick to change.

## Improve & maintain your Email Reputation

If your compelling and creative email campaign that adheres to all best practice guidelines is getting filtered out before it reaches the recipient, it might not be the content, but your **reputation** that needs attention.

In the complex world of email marketing with an ever-increasing volume of SPAM circulating the networks, reputation management with individual ISPs and email receivers remains a critical aspect to getting your commercial messages delivered to your intended audience.

If your deliverability rate is low (you should be aiming for 90%-95%) it is not too late for email marketers to improve their reputation.

### Monitoring Your Reputation

Here is a list of resources that your IT department should be familiar with to help monitor your reputation:

- **Feedback loops** - ISPs can put together lists of subscribers who complained by hitting the "report spam" button. Among the ISPs offering feedback loops are Yahoo!, Hotmail, AOL, United Online, Road Runner and USA.net.
- **Microsoft's Smart Network Data Services** - This service provides a summary of how each of your IP addresses looks to Hotmail.
- **Filtering company reputation sites** - such as Ironport's Senderbase and Ciphertrust's Trusted Source service.

### Tips to Maintain a Good Reputation

1. Avoid changing your IP address. Brand-new IP addresses with no volume history are subject to limits, or throttling, and more stringent reputation thresholds.
2. Regularly review your reputation data across a broad set of sources, monitor:
  - o Complaint rates (how often recipients identify your email as spam)
  - o Unknown user rates (how many bad email addresses you attempt to send to)

- o Spam trap hits (how often your email is sent to an address set up to catch unrequested mail)
  - o Infrastructure issues (how your system is configured to send email)
3. Before making any significant changes to your campaign, e.g. content sent or the frequency of sending, test the changes with a small portion of the list and measure your complaint rate. If the new emails draw more complaints than usual for your campaign, have a rethink. Something as simple as changing a "From" address can cause a spike in complaints.
  4. Quarantine data. You can isolate email sent to newly acquired addresses from a separate server until you can determine its quality. If the data shows higher than average hard bounces, draws a lot of spam complaints or generates spam-trap hits, don't use it or ask the source of the data to verify the addresses and opt-in status.
  5. Be vigilant about your unsubscribe process. Getting opt-outs off the list as quickly as possible is key to minimizing complaints. Test the unsubscribe process before each campaign send to ensure that it works.
  6. Once you've signed up for the feedback loops, take any complainers off your list right away.
  7. It's important to manage unknown users (also known as hard bounces). Take regular looks at the percentage of messages sent that could not be delivered at receiving mail servers because the user doesn't exist. Make sure you are removing unknown users (many email marketing software packages will automatically suppress against hard bounces).

### Strategies to Fix a Bad Reputation

1. Consider running a third-party assessment that analyses your infrastructure, your practices, ESP/affiliate relationships and external sources of information. Numerous third-party tools exist that can give you tasks to act on.
2. If the data shows an unknown-user problem, clean your list. Make sure that your bounce classification rules can find unknown users and pull them.
3. If the data shows you're getting caught up in spam traps, here are three solutions:

I. The quick, easy fix: Immediately stop mailing "inactives"

II. Localize spam traps

This takes more time and IT work, but localizing spam traps is altogether necessary for some emailers. Segment your list by several dimensions (data source, click/open activity level and age of list seem to work best).

Send each combination of these dimensions -- starting with inactive addresses first -- through a unique IP address to see which ones hit spam traps (by reviewing some of the data sources above).

III. The painful fix: Re-permission your list

Time consuming, but one thing that always works in eliminating spam traps is to re-permission your list; send a message that says: "If you want to keep receiving these messages, opt-in here." Then, only email those subscribers who click. While this fool-proof method eliminates spam traps, it will obviously result in a loss of subscribers, so

it's best used as a last resort.

**4.** Look at your campaign from the subscriber point of view. The likeliest cause of a bad reputation is a high complaint rate, so inspect your email campaign to see where you might be setting poor expectations. Make your offers clear and don't use misleading subject lines.

As an example, subscribers sometimes don't understand what they are signing up for. Or they think they are signing up for one type of email (e.g, a newsletter), but get something different (like weekly sales announcements). This will result in complaints.

**5.** Make the unsubscribe process as quick and easy as possible. For example, don't make subscribers sign-in to unsubscribe. Give them multiple options to opt out: through email or by phone. The easier you make the process, the less likely you are to generate complaints related to subscribers feeling like they have no other choice but to get off your list.

**6.** If you are getting blacklisted it could also be due to \*identity\* issues that you can repair. Check for:

- o Incorrect records
- o Sender authentication configuration issues
- o Basic DNS setup problems

**7.** Make sure your automated repairs are at the top of the list; IT problems can be addressed quickly in comparison to changes in people's perceptions.

### Checklist for Marketers new to email marketing

Email marketing has been around for years as part of the marketers toolset for lead generation and customer retention. However, there are an incredible number of marketers still that are approaching the medium for the first time.

Here are some pointers:

**Step #1.** Set up your system with all the current authentication methods, including SPF, and Sender ID.

**Step #2.** Sign up for all available whitelists.

**Step #3.** Sign up for all available feedback loops.

**Step #4.** Use a seed-listing tool to regularly monitor where your mail is delivered.

**Step #5.** Start slowly. Some ISPs put throttles on the amount of mail a new IP can send as a way to help fight spam. With the ISP not knowing anything about a new IP, they are initially more cautious with the amount of mail they let through.

**Step #6.** Review your reports to see if there are any major issues before you launch your next email campaign.

**Step #7.** Test templates. Make sure your templates are still appearing the way you expect them to, and that they aren't affected by a new IP address.

**Step #8.** Ask your audience to add you to their safe sender list. If you are changing your "From" address, make sure to send out a notification to your customers before the change. This way, they can add the new address to their address book, and you are more likely to get into their inbox.

## Design & Copy

### *Best Practice Email Marketing Design*

There are some design agencies that will design a web page and deliver it as an email template; be warned - this does not give good results.

**Not for the web**

Forget HTML design for the web, designing an email template is totally different. Your message must display correctly across dozens of clients and platforms, each with its own quirks and compatibility issues.

When designing within or importing designs into CommuniGator the best way to create templates is to take it back to basics – using inline styling and not CSS. When published, all formatting is consistent across all email providers (due to the inline styling). We advise against using images at the top of your email – the first 6 lines are visible in the preview pane and have the most impact. Use these 6 lines to get your message across and increase open rates.

A well planned and cleverly designed email will reap the best results. When a poorly designed email goes bad, all impact is lost.

**Do's and Don'ts**

Do	Don't use
Keep your design simple	CSS in your email
Create plain HTML headers	Overuse HTML functions
Minimise the size, 650 pixels wide (max)	- Layers
Personalise	- Scripts
Include	- Background images
- Unsubscribe	Spacers
- Link to web version	Animated GIF's
Use Alt tags	Flash
Create a text version	Media files
Test and test again	Forms in emails
Run the spam checker	
Use a good subject line	

**1. Take advantage of the preview pane**

Always include preview pane friendly code in your designs, this uses basic HTML to render colour, branding and information before the email has even been opened or approved.

**2. Code emails by hand if you can**

Programs such as Word / FrontPage are not ideal for designing HTML emails, because these "WYSIWYG" (What You See Is What You Get) editors typically add extra code that causes havoc with certain email clients. Although CommuniGator cleans this code when pasted into your design, it is better to have an HTML programmer code your email template by hand to keep it clean. Otherwise, use programs such as HomeSite or Dreamweaver and remove any unnecessary code by hand.

**3. Do not use canvas background images (they don't display in most email clients)**

Do not use background images in tables or as a canvas background, background images have always been a problem within Lotus Notes. Now Office 2007 uses Word to render email this is more of a problem. See January's hints & tips.

**4. Avoid pixel spacer gifs**

Pixel spacer gifs are used to force widths in table data cells to aid formatting, spammers use them, so you shouldn't.

**5. Avoid using Cascading Style Sheets.**

CommuniGator does support CSS but, as far as best practice is concerned, inline styling is a better option. Your designs will be delivered exactly as they should be. CSS on a Website can simplify the coding process and ensure a consistent style, but in HTML email, they can cause incorrect rendering in some email clients or simply get stripped out or overwritten. CSS can still be used in all its glory on landing zones.

**6. Keep HTML emails from 500 to 650 pixels wide**

HTML messages that are wider force the recipient to scroll horizontally to see the whole message. Messages that are too wide are especially problematic when users give your email only a quick glance in a preview pane.

**7. Validate and check your HTML content**

Using the Validate HTML button built into CommuniGator you can quickly validate your email design code ensuring its conformance to W3C recommendations and other standards. CommuniGator has a spam checker allowing you to check your content before you send your campaign.

**8. Avoid scripting in your emails**

Do not use scripting in your email designs, take advantage of the built in functions of CommuniGator. Save any bespoke scripting for your landing zones, including Java Script.

**9. Link to a Web version of your email message and a text version**

This benefits recipients whose email clients don't render your email properly, no matter how carefully you format it. To create a link to a copy of your email just simply link to landing zone '0'. As CommuniGator is capable of sending a 2 part Mime message don't forget to include a text version with your design.

**10. Use image alt tags**

These show one or two words describing an image or an action when the image doesn't display because of slow loading time or default image blocking.

**11. Use horizontal layout rather than vertical**

This allows readers who scroll down in the preview pane to see more content in the pane. Eliminate story layouts and "skyscraper" ad formats that are more than the pixel equivalent of 4 inches deep.

**12. Don't overuse HTML functions**

Keep the use of HTML functions to a minimum, for example, layout items such as layers are a bad idea. Don't use any scripts in your emails other than the built in CommuniGator functions.

**13. Text Version**

Always include a text version of every email that you design, CommuniGator will automatically send a 2 part MIME message, if the HTML version is blocked the text version will be delivered in its place.

**14. Good subject lines**

Writing subject lines for promotional emails and newsletters is made much harder by the huge amount of spam sent on a daily basis. More and more people are becoming less and less patient when it comes to scanning their inbox.

You need to write a subject line that appeals to your readers and immediately lets them know that your email is not another piece of spam. Using CommuniGator's 'Custom links' you can personalise your subject lines. For example 'John, here is this month's Hints and Tips email from CommuniGator'

**CommuniGator recommend...**

Taking it back to basics – use inline styling and not CSS. It is best practice to use CSS and, as a consequence, many of the problems listed above disappear. Our built-in HTML editor has the same formatting icons as Microsoft Word to make it easy to format your HTML to the way you want it to look. When published, all the formatting will remain the same (due to the inline styling). We also advise not using images at the top of your email – the first 6 lines are visible in the preview pane and have the most impact. Use these 6 lines to get your message across and increase open rates.

***Eyetracking and Layout***

When it comes to email design, marketers might be better off worrying about how the email design works as a whole in relation to the reader's screen, rather than it being

'creative' or pretty. Emails aren't like print magazine ads where people like their eyes to be entertained, email recipients assume there will be copy to read and a decision presented that they need to consider acting on.

The audience has made an open decision based on your "from" address and "subject" line. Now you're on step two of the process. Recipients want to know quickly that they've made the right decision to view your email - that it's relevant to them. Next they want to know what the call to action is. Sometimes flashy design can interfere with that.

Recipients are extremely fast at both processing their inboxes and reading email newsletters: the average time allocated to a newsletter after opening it is just 51 seconds. To call it "reading" is a stretch - as participants fully read only 19% of newsletters. The predominant user behaviour is to scan emails. More often than not, readers only skim a small part of the newsletter or glance at the content before dismissing it as uninteresting or irrelevant to them.

Your reader should be able to glance at the top of the email and know immediately if it's worth reading. Eyetracking studies claim that email text intros are skipped, however, if you insert links in the intro they will get clicks - if they are relevant.

An HTML email layout needs to be strategically thought out. Most, if not all text should be in HTML, not contained in the images. Think about your email with all images hidden. Better yet, take a look at a version with all images removed from your creative. Is there a header image that takes up a huge amount of vertical space? This could push your text down far enough that it's not initially seen. Are the calls to action visible? If not, make sure they are at least repeated in a text link format. Be sure to apply alt tags to any images so there is at least some way of identifying them with images turned off.

#### Tips:

1. **Make the message easy to read** – and to act on - move your call to action as close to the top of your creative as possible to keep it "above the fold". Also, it's a good idea to keep it as a text link so that if images are blocked it is still visible.
2. **Retain your brand image in the creative** - stay consistent with your brand, be consistent with your email marketing creative to help with instant recognition and trust. Logos can be re-created using text and colours; they do not always have to be represented as an image.
3. **Heading and sub-heading copy is crucial** - users scan the headings and then, if relevant, clickthrough - they don't spend a lot of time reading the body copy. Make your heading clickable.
4. **First two words of the headline are important** - recipients tend to fixate on the first two words of headings, so just as it is for subject lines, it is the first words that are crucial.
5. **Readers scan down the left side of an email**- while this is dependent on the design of the email, the left column is often most important.
6. **Large fonts work well** to draw the eye.
7. **Don't be afraid of using space** to separate your main points. Information in bite size chunks is easier to digest.

#### *Tips for writing email copy*

Email is a fast, inexpensive, and effective way to communicate with your various audiences, especially when compared to direct mail, call centres and other traditional marketing channels. However, people are overwhelmed with the number of email messages they receive daily. In addition, they are inundated with direct mail,

telemarketing, print magazines, and TV ads and will only pay close attention to what is immediately important.

Whether you're preparing editorial or commercial content, make sure it is distinctive. Useful insights, product tips or 'how to's' are examples of content that make an impact. Make your content so good that your readers pass it along. Don't just feature links to articles written by other people. This is helpful content, but doesn't brand you as strongly as if you create your own.

**\*Subject line**

Write a succinct subject line – maximum 6 words. Your subject determines whether your email is read or not. Misleading or clever headlines (not related to your message) don't work.

**\*Get to the point**

Present your information in small packages. Recipients tend to scan through emails so use lists and bullet points to help highlight your messages. Always have a link in your email that enables the recipient to view the email in a browser. When it comes to informational and educational content, readers typically have a greater attention span.

**\*Use the preview pane**

The top of the email – preview pane - is by far the most important area. This is the first section recipients will look at. Having your calls to action at the top of the email will help achieve better results. The objective or call to action should be repeated at the bottom of the email so the reader doesn't have to scroll back up.

**\*Tone**

To engage effectively with your readers think about who your audience are and write accordingly. B2C emails promoting holidays will have a more personal/friendly approach than perhaps a B2B email offering a technical whitepaper. This will enable you to create a closer bond with your reader and gain their trust. Develop your own voice or distinctive style. People like reading the words of other real people more than plain "corporate-speak". Use humour when appropriate; it humanises the copy.

**\*Length**

Choose an appropriate length for your message. It is best practice to have a short email highlighting the main benefits followed by additional detail on one or more landing zones.

**\*Relevance**

Don't regurgitate direct mail copy. No-one will spend time reading anything that has no relevance to their needs. Ensure that the copy focuses on issues of interest to your target audience and send different emails to different segments to achieve this.

According to Marketing Sherpa's Email Benchmarking Report 2007, agencies and marketers agree: business people want information they can act on more than articles they can think about. Tactics outscore strategy by a significant margin.

**\*Realism**

Recipients get numerous offers in their inbox each day claiming to be the answer to all their problems. By the nature of the world we live in consumers are becoming sceptical. There is no such thing as a free lunch. Set expectations of your offering to a realistic level and they will be more receptive than if you call everything 'Free' or 'The Best Ever' (not to mention the SPAM score you will incur by using these terms).

**\*Personalisation**

Personalisation in your copy is essential if you want to develop the relationship with your customer. This goes beyond 'Dear First name' and should include something that is relevant to the recipient such as the name of their account manager in the sign off.

**\*Consistency**

Be consistent with the 'from' and 'reply to' email address so the reader recognises who the communication is from and knows what to expect. This will impact your open rates.

**\*Repetition**

In email copy there is little space for you to repeat yourself. However it can help to repeat certain aspects of your copy in key positions. For example, the subject line and

information in the introduction should be re-enforced in any final calls-to-action you have.

When planning your communication schedule, bear in mind integrating your email marketing efforts into all of your customer acquisition and retention programs to get the best results. With integrated CRM and email marketing solutions you should actually be able to predict what content your customers want next. This proactive approach to anticipating customers' needs can only help strengthen your relationship with them.

### *Personalisation and Relevance*

*What do we know about the recipient and how can we use that to send them a more engaging email?*

The use of personalisation in an email provides an opportunity to communicate with individuals at a more intimate level. Most email marketing solutions allow personalisation to be included anywhere within the body of the email as well as within the subject line. These days, recipients expect to be addressed by their name - especially if they have subscribed to receive information from your organisation, even more so if they are a customer.

To maximise the benefits of personalisation it is important to review the type of information you would like from individuals at their point of registration. As a minimum; aim to capture first and last name. Other data, such as previous purchase history, enquiries or preferences, may be of equal importance depending on the nature of the business and the use to which the data will be put, bearing in mind that any data must be relevant and used appropriately.

By referring to personal data/preferences within the email the marketer is able to increase the level of relevance to the recipient. A relevant and engaging email should translate to higher conversion rates. At all times data is captured the individual must be told of such data capture and given the opportunity to object.

Salutation is the obvious and most simple form of personalisation but there are many other methods:

#### **The Content**

Most email marketing solutions can also provide for the delivery of dynamic email content whereby the content and images of an email are personalised to each individual's specific profile. A newsletter can be personalised in terms of different interest areas; using dynamic content rules you can include or hide topics in line with individual contact profiles and preferences.

#### **The Landing Page**

The landing page can be tailored further, especially if you have used your email for targeting different segments. Content can then be personalised according to customer preferences – but only if they are already a registered user (for receiving info from you as a prospect or customer).

We recommend making good use of the data you are in possession of about your customers. By using an email marketing application, businesses can track audience behaviour from every campaign they run to see which people opened the email and what links were clicked. From this intelligence, future campaigns can be devised to achieve the sought after goal of one-to-one marketing.

#### **Precautions**

In some ways personalisation can work against you:

- Garbage in, garbage out. If some records in your database have missing or mixed-up fields, you can end up with odd constructions, such as:

Dear ,  
We hope you've been enjoying the copy of you purchased from us back in .

or:

Dear Brown,  
As a valued customer.....

- There are different views on using personalisation in the Subject line; in some cases it sounds artificial, or 'SPAM like'. And if you use an informal Subject like "Hi, John!" the recipient will expect to find a message from a personal friend. He or she will be annoyed when they instead find a commercial message.
- Be sensitive to privacy concerns. Don't overdo it. An email with too much of the recipient's personal information might seem like an abuse of privacy.

Whether you personalise your email marketing messages or not, it's important to get the tone of voice correct for your audience.

### *The Importance of Subject Lines*

An important part of your email is the subject line. It's what people look at and a well thought out, relevant and interesting subject line will help people decide if they should open your email or not.

Unlike a newspaper headline or brochure title, the subject line is presented out of context with your email and website. Users cannot scan the surrounding information to help them get an understanding of what's coming.

A good subject line explains what the email is about in terms that appeal to and motivate the reader. It is a micro version of the email content.

Your subject line is also competing with other subject lines in an inbox. If it is dull or meaningless, it's not going to be opened. Unlike other marketing material, anything vague, cheesy or too clever is also liable to be dismissed.

Two basic principles to bear in mind with different types of email communications - one is meant as more of a hard sell (general campaigns), the other is a soft sell and vehicle for strengthening your brand through information (newsletters). Newsletter subject lines should be informational and general campaign subject lines should be to the point without overselling.

### **10 Tips for writing subject lines:**

#### **1. Be truthful**

Don't create a misleading subject line - this will only annoy the reader once they open your email and find that there is something other than what they expected in the email. Don't stretch the truth in the subject line or promise more than the email can deliver. Readers will distrust you if your subject line doesn't reflect the email content.

#### **2. Keep it short**

With only 40-60 characters - that's 6-10 words - to put across your message, any subject line needs to get straight to the point. If you can provide a summary of the contents of the email in your subject line, you are, in effect, pre-selling the reader about the contents of the email. Ensure that your subject instantly grabs the attention of your reader and intrigues them enough to open up your mail.

Make sure the cut-off doesn't occur in a crucial word, such as a price or date. Use the EmailLabs subject-line checker see how your subject line renders in the leading desktop and Web email clients:

[http://www.emaillabs.com/tools/from\\_subject\\_line\\_tool\\_popup.html](http://www.emaillabs.com/tools/from_subject_line_tool_popup.html)

### **3. Personalise**

Include some form of personal motivation in the subject line – make it relevant –use subject lines based on users' product or content preferences, interests, past purchases, Web visits or links clicked. Consider using powerful words for example, discover, how to, find out. Remember, however, to avoid words commonly associated with SPAM such as sex, free, ££, price, cost, etc. Create value in the phrasing by framing the email as an invitation.

### **4. There is no formula**

What works in one campaign might flop with the next. A discount offer should be worded differently from an up-sell, and both are different from a breaking-news announcement. Even if you are sending out similar campaigns, you shouldn't recycle a subject line. You need to stand out each time, yet be familiar to the reader. Where appropriate, urgency drives action. Set a deadline: "Book holiday by end Jan for discount;" "Last remaining places at email seminar."

### **5. Support the "from" line**

The "from" line tells the recipient who sent the email, and the subject line sells the recipient on opening. If your "from" line lists your company name, you don't have to repeat it in the subject line, but do consider branding your subject line for example, with the name of the newsletter, so that it will stand out in your recipients' overflowing inboxes.

### **6. Open rates don't always measure subject-line success**

Remember that your objective is not necessarily high open rates, but to have a high response rate to the call to action.

### **7. Watch out for SPAM filters**

There's a fine line between "catchy" and "spammy." Don't SHOUT (caps lock); it's widely seen as a spammer/scammer trick, can trigger spam filters and isn't considered to be good email etiquette.

### **8. Write and test early**

Writing the subject line is often the last and most hurried step in email campaign development. It should be the other way around. As you plan the email campaign, start thinking about what will go into the subject line. That will help you sharpen your campaign's focus and may even change or tweak the offer or article focus. Ideally, you should test subject lines on a segment of your list.

### **9. Review subject-line performance**

See which subject lines delivered the action you wanted – the most conversions, the highest average sale per order, the highest click-through rate, etc. This analysis should drive content and product selection strategies, but it can also show you what information is most relevant or useful. Subject lines that include action-oriented statements such as "tips" or "how to.." perform well.

The use of [COMPANYNAME] as the first word can help achieve high open rates.

Example:

**CommuniGator Hints & Tips (consistently achieves open rates of 50+%)**

However, just having a newsletter title and date can be boring, using "artistic" subject lines confuses busy people and a single item highlighted may not spark enough interest. An effective method is to ask a question, when reading questions it's very easy to subconsciously answer yes. Make sure the content of the email reflects the answer or solution to the question posed. But be careful that your question does not appear 'SPAM-like'.

**10. Continue the conversation**

Sending email more frequently than monthly or quarterly helps you create a conversation with your readers. Your tracking reports should show you what their hot topics are. Feature those keywords or issues prominently in the subject line where appropriate to capture readers' attention.

**Are there any legal issues?**

The EU states the sender must identify themselves clearly when sending marketing emails, so make sure you clearly identify yourself in the 'From' field.

Being upfront about who you are keeps you on the right side of the law. If you are cryptic your email is more likely to be treated as SPAM.

**Conclusion - Secret to Success**

Email marketing subject lines are arguably the most important part of your entire campaign. Why? If your email was not opened or read, your efforts were wasted, your message was not heard, and your products/services were not sold. Recipients filter their inboxes faster than ever before, deciding whether to delete or read an email just half a second after reading the subject line.

It seems like a lot of fuss over 50 little characters. But those 50 characters may have the greatest impact on your email's success. It pays to get them right. It's as simple as this, your subject line should describe the subject of your email.

*The Power of Landing Zones*

*A Landing Zone in the world of email marketing is: "Specific page(s) forming an integral part of an email marketing campaign which are designed to achieve a marketing outcome".*

A landing zone is intended to maximise conversion rates, it is the element of the campaign where the recipient responds to the call to action, whether that's a white paper/case study/brochure download, registration for an event or simply data capture/cleanse where a visitor fills in an online form. Landing zones are sometimes known as a microsite, which is specifically set up for a campaign, typically with its own campaign URL.

**Define landing zone objectives**

- Achieve registration typically to generate a lead which leads ultimately to sale.
- Profile and qualify the visitor in order to deliver more relevant follow-up marketing communications.
- Explain the value proposition offered by the company to differentiate from other vendors the visitor may visit during the buying process i.e. '*answer the visitor's questions*'.
- Communicate the brand values of the organisation running the campaign.

- If the visitor doesn't want to disclose their details at this time, provide contact details for traditional sales channels such as a phone number, or give the visitor reasons to visit the company website or engage them through other relevant content or offers.

## Tips to Improve Your Landing Zone effectiveness

### Define Your Conversion

Before you start to design your landing zone, define the conversion activity. For a newsletter landing zone, the conversion activity is entering an email address into a form and clicking "Accept."

### Repetition of email promotion

45% of landing zones don't repeat the email's call to action. Repeating the email's message on a dedicated landing zone will help reinforce the conversion.

### Match the creative

This is another way of reinforcing the conversion goal - matching the look and feel of the email will reassure the customer that they have arrived at the right place.

### Use of forms

If you have to ask for customer data on the landing zone, make it clear why you need this information. Distractions kill conversions. Strip any unneeded elements from the page. Autofill fields where possible.

### Research

Build a profile of your ideal visitor. Keep this person in mind when creating your landing zone and keep everything "on target." Your email campaign funnels traffic to your landing zone, so visitors are expecting a very targeted message.

### Stay Focussed

Avoid the urge to promote or link to other areas of your site. The point of the landing zone is to prevent your visitor from wandering. You want them converting, not clicking around to other parts of your site.

### Important Elements Above the "Fold"

Pay attention to the virtual fold (the bottom of the screen before scrolling). Place enough content above the fold to allow your visitor to make a decision about your offer.

### Lead the Eye

Use typography, colour and images to your advantage. You can be more creative on a landing zone than in an email. Place the important stuff (whether it's your copy or your image) close to the middle, and never distract your user from that focal point.

### Test, Test, Test

After you have finished the landing zone, test it with a small user group. Go over a checklist:

- Is the LZ focussed?
- Does the message match the initial email?
- Have you reduced all distractions?
- Is critical information above the fold?

## *Trigger-Based Campaigns*

All the elements above go a long way towards building a successful email campaign, but campaigns should not be built as stand-alone modules. As every marketer continues on

the quest for higher response and ROI, triggered campaigns as part of an overall strategy are becoming more and more popular due to their high subscriber relevancy and response.

Triggers are a specific kind of auto responder that creates an up-sell or cross-sell email that marketers have crafted to be sent automatically whenever a user initiates an event within a given campaign or on a website.

Effective triggers depend on assigning the most contextually relevant offers to the user's already demonstrated interest. It's impossible to overstate how vital the relevance is to the effectiveness of any trigger effort. The recipient's interaction with your email creative is a window into what sort of offer he or she will respond to next. You have to be ready to develop the right kind of creative to have available for any trigger offer. Triggers allow you to reach people the moment they're most likely to read and respond.

However, in the whirlwind to implement such high impact programs, it's easy to lose focus on the subscriber experience. To truly optimise results, and foster your relationship with the subscriber, keep these tips in mind:

- **Plan triggered or follow-up campaigns carefully.** It is easy to set-up a 'Welcome' or 'Confirmation' triggered email and forget about it, but it is advisable to re-visit your emails every month and read them afresh – is the content still relevant? For example, pay attention to any seasonal references or information on products which are no longer available. By sending an out-of-date or irrelevant email when someone signs-up immediately gives the impression that you haven't thought about what you are doing. All benefits of using a triggered campaign could be lost in an instant.
- **Remember to set frequency limits.** Don't bombard your audience. It is possible that they may sign-up to receive information on more than one topic/event/product, thus generating a myriad of triggered emails. If they are swamped by emails from you they will quickly lose interest and may miss reading the one that contains exactly the information they need. To avoid this, prioritise campaigns and set frequency limits to keep your audience engaged, but not switched off.
- **Don't forget about recency.** Behaviour-based campaigns work well due to their timeliness and relevance. If a supermarket you use frequently for your purchase of bulky items emails you a shopping list to remind you to reorder the goods again, you will likely do so. However, if you have just bought a holiday for the summer you are unlikely to book another one until the same time next year and by asking you to book a holiday say, a week later, will have a negative conditioning effect on response.
- **Abandoned shopping carts.** An extremely smart tactic to bring back lost sales is to check-up on those people who never complete the checkout process. If you have already captured the customers' email address, you can easily send them a friendly message informing them that you're currently trying to improve your checkout process, and you apologise if they found anything confusing. In addition, you might want to give them a coupon code as an additional incentive for bringing them back.
- **Add an "email me when in-stock" feature.** Anytime a customer visits a product detail page that displays an "out of stock" notice, give them the option to be emailed if the item becomes available again.

## Summary

Trigger-based campaigns work best and are easiest to execute if you work out a plan or blueprint in the beginning. Decide on a common behaviour that would be easy to trigger a message off, e.g. newsletter subscription via your website, and create that 'Welcome' message. Once you have optimised the results from a well-managed campaign targeted

to your database, you'll never look back and will find that you've created a seamless response-driving, trigger-based email program.

## Deliverability

### *Deliverability – Avoiding Spam Filters*

Did you know that 'Viagra' scores the same on a spam filter as the phrase 'Click here'? The majority of ISPs now utilise stringent filters to block out undesirable mail often referred to as Spam. More and more legitimate email is being junked before it reaches its recipient, often because of perfectly innocent text content, information in the email header, and even file size.

The task for the email marketer is to keep one step ahead of the spammers so that popular spam phrases and words are avoided. The trouble is, as soon as a spammer spots that their tactics are being caught they change tack accordingly, so keeping up with their game is difficult.

For many people, all email marketing is Spam. Without knowing the concept of permission based marketing, this is often the case. Understanding Spam will help you avoid the risk of creating emails that are given that label. Reassuring customers and prospects that what you are offering is not Spam and gaining a good reputation is hugely important in getting your communication to reach them, both now and in the future.

#### The Point System

To determine whether an email is Spam or not, spam filters assign points to various elements of the campaign, including content, subject line, html structure, unsubscribe text, creative and data. The occurrence of just one "spam phrase" probably won't trigger rejection - except some which the filter considers notorious. But even if you don't use notorious phrases, other Spam words can add up. Using more than one of the phrases on the list is not advisable. For example, if you used the phrases "free quote" and "free access" you would score 5.5 points. Best practice is to achieve a score under 5 to maximise the chance of getting through. Here are some to be aware of in your email newsletters - and ads contained in your newsletters.

#### 10 spam phrases to avoid:

Consolidate debt	No obligation
Over 18	Free trial
Click to remove	This isn't spam
Increase Sales	Urgent
Sign up free today	Lowest price

#### The CommuniGator Solution

In the same way the spelling and grammar check works in Microsoft Word, CommuniGator has developed a SPAM checker, which allows you to scan your emails before you send them out, helping you to create an email that will not be stopped by SPAM filters.

When the SPAM checker encounters a word as Spam, i.e. the word 'free' or finds a word which is suspicious, it will highlight those words to you and ask you to change them, and in some instances suggest alternatives.

### *Bounce Management*

After sending the latest newsletter, event invitation or product announcement to your audience, you may have received notifications from a recipient's mailserver that your message could not be delivered. Undeliverable emails, "bouncebacks" or "bounces" are becoming more and more of a challenge for email marketers.

Depending on the size of your list and your emailing frequency, you may routinely receive hundreds of these notifications after a broadcast! According to recent stats from the Email Marketing Council of the DMA, 8-9% can be expected for hard bounces whilst soft bounces are between 2.8% for retention campaigns and 4.9% for customer acquisition campaigns.

Removing each recipient from your list that no longer has a valid email address can spare you and your inbox from subsequent onslaughts, but did you also know that, if you continue to send emails to invalid email addresses, you may end up on some third-party "spam" or "black" lists and will then be unable to send your messages even to those who have subscribed?

Why are bounces a concern for email marketers? Because customer acquisition is expensive, and email bouncebacks could mean the loss of customers and prospects that cost you valuable marketing budget to acquire.

#### Bounce Glossary:

- **A "Soft Bounce"** is often a temporary problem. It happens when the mail server confirms the recipient's email address, but even so, cannot deliver the message. The recipient's mailbox may be full or inactive, the recipient's mail server may be temporarily down or the connection may have been broken.
- **A "Hard Bounce"** is a message that's permanently undeliverable because the address is non-existent or invalid, or because the recipient's mail server is blocking your mail server. It could indicate a mistyped email address.
- **"Blocked"** - The recipient's mail server is blocking you from sending email to them. This usually happens if your email has a high SPAM score.
- **"Auto Reply"** - An email auto-generated from the recipient, usually indicates that the recipient is out of the office for the time being.
- **"Unsubscribe"** - Indicates that somebody wants to unsubscribe from your list.
- **"Challenge-Response"** - The recipient subscribes to an email service whose aim is to eliminate all unauthorized emails. The Challenge-Response system works by requiring human intervention in order for emails to reach the intended recipient.
- **"MDN"** - The message is a Message Disposition Notification, commonly known as a "read receipt".

#### Why so many bounces and what can you do about them?

##### Email address churn in your house list

People change ISPs, jobs and email addresses regularly. Often you'll be the last to know. Some email address churn is normal, but the erosion of your house list can have a seriously negative impact on your bottom line.

##### What can you do?

Check with sales, support or someone on the front line in your company, and follow up by phone or by snail mail to recapture valuable customers and prospects.

In addition to your unsubscribe link in your email, consider adding a note saying, "If you plan to change email addresses, or if you prefer to receive this newsletter at another address, please email us."

Remember, it is 7 times less expensive to market to an existing customer than it is to acquire a new one. The effort will be well worth your time.

**The use of free email accounts**

Many people who use free email accounts do so as a secondary mailbox. As a result, they do not check their mailbox often. Free email accounts, and some paid accounts, can hold only a limited amount of email, resulting in newsletters and advertising email bouncing back as undeliverable.

**What can you do?**

You can try the same techniques as above and, assuming you have the recipient's permission, you could use snail mail to obtain their new email address. Try sending a postcard asking them to revisit your site to update their profile. The postcard should include a URL leading to the profile update area of your site.

**Spam filters and blocking**

ISPs and corporations are paying close attention to incoming email in the effort to block spam, or unsolicited email. Anti-spam filters scan email 'From' and subject lines as well as email body copy for certain language. They can also detect mailing patterns, frequency and volume. Your legitimate, permission-based email could be bounced back to you by a spam filter, or your mail server might be flagged as a potential spam source. In either case, your messages won't make it through.

**What can you do?**

Use an email marketing service with a strong permission policy and an active anti-blocking team. Solid email marketing companies develop relationships with ISPs to be sure their customers' permission-based email gets through. A good email marketing service gets more attention than you could ever get on your own.

Ask your audience to help. If your email is being blocked at a particular company or ISP, ask recipients to contact their postmaster and request to have your email "un-blocked", ask your audience to add your 'From' address to their safe sender list.

**And then...?****Analyse your bouncebacks**

You should be using an email marketing service that categorises bouncebacks and provides detailed reports that allow you to view and manage bounced email addresses. Take the time to analyze your bouncebacks and remove hard bounces from your list. It should also be easy to correct obvious typos in your list (e.g. ".con" instead of ".com").

**Monitor your "reply to:" address**

Many recipients are fearful of using the unsubscribe function as it has been used by spammers to verify an address, rather than as a legitimate unsubscribe function. So, be alert to unsubscribe requests coming to your "reply to:" address and permanently remove those email addresses right away.

***Email Marketing to BlackBerrys***

According to new MarketingSherpa data, 64% of key decision makers are viewing your carefully crafted HTML email on their BlackBerrys and other mobile devices - there is a strong chance that your email looks awful. Find a BlackBerry and see for yourself. You don't have to send text-only emails to reach BlackBerry users. If you're dedicated to gaining an edge, there are ways of delivering richer media experiences to the BlackBerry crowd.

Because no standards exist regarding how an email is displayed on a mobile device, it is easy to say to send email as text-only so it renders better for BlackBerry users. But many marketers simply cannot abandon HTML, which is why multipart MIME comes into play. Multipart MIME is an email format that includes both an HTML and a text-only version in the same message and displays the version that the user's system is set to show. Systems that can't show HTML should show the text version instead, assuming

your email client understands MIME format.

### Tips:

- Use 8-point fonts - you want to make the body text a small but viewable size.
- Character space is limited, so make sure that your company name is immediately recognizable and that the subject line includes a compelling call to action in the first 15-25 characters.
- Busy people don't read their BlackBerry email -- they scan it. Subscribers aren't likely to scroll through the full message. This is why the subject line and first screen need to really grab your reader's attention so they'll mark it and follow it up later when they're back on a PC.
- Keep relevancy in mind. Subscribers are more likely to delete your message without reading it if you send it to them too frequently or if it's irrelevant.
- Don't hotlink names of people or places if you want your BlackBerry readers to be able to see the words. If you want to include a link, use the full address, such as <http://www.communigator.co.uk>
- If a user opens an email on their wireless, the same message will typically appear opened (and no longer bolded) on their email system back at the office, so it's very important to get them to flag it so they remember it later.
- Use a text-only header and a sentence or two that places the \*hook\* of the offer at the very top.
- Place logos and images below the text, perhaps on the second or third BlackBerry screen. This way, your PC audience gets a more dynamic message, but your BlackBerry users still get the message right away. CommuniGator 2007
- Keep subject lines short, using only key words
- Put the \*subject\* first in the subject line. For instance, if your email is for a seminar, "seminar" should be the first thing they read in the subject line.

### Know the recipient's preference

Ask your audience if they are a mobile reader. Ask people if they plan on reading the email in a BlackBerry/mobile during the sign-up process. Then, segment them with a dedicated file or send your email using multipart MIME. Research the data you already have. To get started, some marketers are testing text-only \*identifier\* campaigns, using subject lines that are specifically designed to get the attention of BlackBerry users. For the copy, the idea is to create a one to three sentence message explaining that you would like to know if they normally read your email on a mobile device or on a PC. Create a link for them to record their preference.

### Special BlackBerry landing page

An option several marketers are testing is a separate landing page for BlackBerrys, where they provide a link at the top of the email that immediately alerts the reader of the opportunity to click on it ("BlackBerry readers, click here"). You need a truncated HTML page, the two common screen sizes for BlackBerry models are: o 320x240 pixels for the newer versions (8700/8800 series and 8300/"the Curve") o 240x260 pixels for 8100 (also called the Pearl) and 7100 series If you decide to create a mobile landing page, put the link for the mobile landing page link below the text message, so users read the message first and foremost. It's worth a test. Having the link above the text might influence users to click on the link more, or it might distract them so it may be better after the message.

### Technical Tips

- Keep the header to 50 pixels high and 320 pixels wide

- Don't use any scripts within the HTML page
- Javascript is not supported by mobile environments.
- Always limit the size of your HTML page to 200K or under. BlackBerrys have tight restrictions in terms of the cache, and your message might not get displayed in full.

## *Seasonal Campaigns*

Think of the holiday season as an opportunity to communicate with your audience. This is one of the few times of year that your email has a good chance of being opened – everyone enjoys receiving Christmas greetings. Having gone to all that effort, do you really want them to receive something that anyone could have sent or which has been signed off by someone they've never heard of? Like all communications, the best Christmas cards (hard copy or email) are the ones which have a strong message - and Happy Christmas isn't good enough. Use it to reinforce your brand and say something positive about the company. Like all good communications, the ones which manage to say something personal are the ones that work best. The use of e-cards is increasing year on year; often they are accompanied by a (slightly apologetic) rationale which has to do with saving trees or giving money to charity but this is no excuse for poor creativity. It's an opportunity to show your stuff.

**1. Get the calendar out** Spend some time thinking about what you want to achieve from your email campaign. If you want to drive sales, look at your customer's buying habits and use them to inform your campaign. Put a timeplan in place with a strategy to nurture those organised shoppers who will be buying gifts early, as well as the last-minute panic. *"The timing of your holiday campaign is crucial."*

*"Consider that during the holiday season, workers might take more half days. Do you think it would be best if your mailing was delivered first thing in the morning? Think strategically."*

### **2. Design**

Christmas gives you the opportunity to be really creative with your design so that your email stands out and supports the point of the email, rather than getting in the way of your message. Be careful with html design – it looks good, but use the wrong code in your template and it will get caught in spam filters, resulting in the email not being delivered.

### **3. Target your emails**

'Tis the season to invest in targeting. Jupiter Research published findings earlier this year showing that targeted email can produce a 500% increase in revenue, so get the most out of your Christmas campaign by segmenting customers into groups and tailoring email content to suit.

#### **Focus:**

*"Everyone is busy this time of year. Make your campaign easy to remember by focusing on one offer over a longer period rather than on multiple offers over shorter periods. One generous promotion will be remembered amongst the multitude of competing offers sitting next to it in the inbox."*

#### **Be considerate:**

*"Increasing the frequency of your mailings during the holiday season might irritate some of your recipients who are accustomed to a regularly paced delivery cycle. "*

*"They might even think that it's the start of a more aggressive strategy and request to opt-out. If you are going to increase the frequency of your mailing during the holidays, let your recipients know in advance, and specify what they can expect to receive from you during the period."*

### **5. Test**

Send variations of your email to different customer groups and compare the results - try sending different gift ideas to male and female customers. The information you build up will prove valuable for future campaigns. Experiment with every email you send so positive results increase with each email sent throughout the Christmas season.

## 6. Subject line

Keep it short and sweet, and ensure it stands out so that your customers will be dying to open the email and find out more. Aid deliverability by avoiding the use of CAPS, exclamation marks or words like 'free', 'enormous' and 'exclusive'. Include a call to action.

## 7. Call to action

This is one of the key elements of every email you send. Make it as easy as you can for the customer to know what the message is and what you want them to do - if you want them to buy something, display relevant information, images and pricing for the product with links to a page where they can purchase it. Always drive customers to your website as this is where they will spend their money.

### Be compatible:

*"There are more and more email clients and hosts out there. Your email looks different across many of them. If you haven't already, open email accounts with as many different providers as possible so that you can test your message on Hotmail, Yahoo, Gmail, Outlook Express, MSN and others."*

*"Also consider how your HTML will render in Firefox and IE. Do what you can to ensure that the quality of your message holds firm across multiple platforms. Sometimes, simplicity does wonders."*

## 8. Go viral

There is no greater marketing tool than word of mouth. Make it as easy as possible for your customers to pass information on by adding a forward to a friend option. And, of course, make sure there's something in the email that's worth shouting about!

## 9. Clear for landing

Driving customers to a website is pointless if they can't fulfil the promises in the email. The landing page must be relevant to the offer or call to action in the email and should complement the design of the email to reinforce brand identity - if you've gone for a dancing Father Christmas and holly leaves in your email then your landing page needs to match!:

*"Don't forget the ultimate goal of your campaign - conversions. "Make your call-to-action clear and easy to take on your landing pages. If using a shopping trolley, ensure that it is working properly."*

## Summary

Following the advice above will help you to create best practice HTML emails and build and deliver a targeted, personalised email marketing campaign program that will produce results. Using an email marketing solution streamlines the process and enables accurate measurement of responses and further segmentation of your audience as a result of expressed preferences.

**Contact us for a consultation or a product demo:**

**Tel: 01252 899590**

**Email: [info@communigator.co.uk](mailto:info@communigator.co.uk)**

**Web: [www.communigator.co.uk](http://www.communigator.co.uk)**

## Appendix

### Useful URLs:

Marketing Sherpa:

<http://www.marketingsherpa.com/>

E-Consultancy:

<http://www.e-consultancy.com/>

Email deliverability blogs:

<http://www.email-marketing-reports.com/deliverability/>

List-Unsubscribe.com:

<http://www.list-unsubscribe.com/>

AOL Postmaster site:

<http://www.postmaster.aol.com/>

AOL Feedback Loop

<http://postmaster.info.aol.com/fbl/index.html>

United Online Feedback Loop

<http://www.unitedonline.net/postmaster/whitelisted.html>

SPAMCop

<http://www.SPAMcop.net/fom-serve/cache/94.html>

Abuse.net

<http://www.abuse.net/addnew.html>

Ciphertrust's Trusted Source service:

<http://www.trustedsource.org>

Return Path's Sender Score:

<http://www.senderscore.com/>

Sender Score reputation network:

<http://www.senderscore.org>

Windows Live/Hotmail postmaster site:

<http://postmaster.msn.com/>

Windows Live Postmaster SNDS page:

<https://postmaster.live.com/snds/>

Subject line checker:

[http://www.emaillabs.com/tools/from\\_subject\\_line\\_tool\\_popup.html](http://www.emaillabs.com/tools/from_subject_line_tool_popup.html)

Tesco instructions on how to add to safe sender list:

<http://images.tesco.com/images/htdocs/addressbook/tesco/>

Microsoft guide to HTML & CSS rendering in Outlook 2007:

<http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/aa338201.aspx>