Email Marketing

Is Email marketing dead? The quick answer is no. 80% of B2B marketers still rely on email. Find out how to make it work harder for your business.

HOOVERS™
A D&B COMPANY

CONTENTS

Debunking the Top Five Email Marketing Myths

Don't be tricked by common misconceptions surrounding email marketing. Let's debunk the top myths of the popular communication channel

Email marketing is one of the most efficient strategies for B2B marketers. In fact, 56% of businesses said they increased email marketing in 2013, according to The Small and Midsize Business Email Marketing Survey 2013 by iContact. Email marketing is an affordable, simple, and direct way to engage with customers, increase sales, and boost lead generation.

However, there are still a number of misconceptions surrounding this popular marketing strategy. Let's debunk the top five email marketing myths.

1. Consumers are flooded with brand emails.

Contrary to popular belief, people aren't actually flooded with emails from "trusted" companies. In fact, on average, 40% of consumers who receive brand emails are receiving no more than three per day, while 63% receive no more than six, according to figures from the Email Tracking Report by the UK-based Direct Marketing Association. Moreover, consumers prefer communicating with brands via email, as opposed to phone or direct mail.

2. Trigger words put you into to the spam folder.

Back when everyone's email boxes were filled with spam, email marketers were warned not to use trigger words such as "Free," "Cash," and "Save." With today's sophisticated spam filters, however, that rule no longer applies. In fact, marketers are encouraged to use trigger words like "Money," "Revenue," and "Profit" in their subject lines, as these types of words perform the best according to research.

3. Emails should be short and sweet.

While best practices state that your email should include a call to action (above the fold, of course), the buck doesn't stop there. Some people may want to read additional content. To keep readers engaged, try providing some complementary information, like links to customer testimonials or new products.

4. You should never repurpose content.

Yes, it's important to create fresh content, but why not repurpose content that you know will be a hit? Take a look at your best performing emails, blogs, whitepapers, or webinars from four to six months back and rework them to make sure they are relevant and send them out. Not only is this is a great way to reuse successful marketing copy, it's also a great way to complement new copy.

5. Open rates are the "end all, be all" metric.

While open rates are a great indicator of subject line effectiveness, brand recognition, and deliverability, their ability to measure customer behavior stops there. Other metrics, such as click through rates and the number of un-subscribers, are just as important in measuring consumer engagement. These two metrics give marketers insight into consumers' digital behaviors, including what they want. For instance, if your unsubscribe rates are high, it could indicate that it's time to rework your email marketing strategy.

How to Target your Audience

What's the best place to find good leads? We share quick tips on how to target your audience. Simple Marketing Campaign Strategies that Work.

The most earth-moving, game-changing message isn't worth the paper it is written on if the intended recipients use your marketing collateral to line their waste baskets. The fact is, marketing professionals need to be equally thoughtful about building their contact lists as they are about developing their show-stopping marketing concepts.

Jeremiah P. Sullivan, owner of Framework Media Strategies, says that building a winning contacts list goes beyond identifying target companies — or even identifying the target individuals who work at those companies.

"Who's to say you caught them at the right time, in the right frame of mind, in the right place that they'd like to really hear what you have to say?" he says.

So, how do you ensure that you're reaching the right people at the right time? Depending on how you approach the task, building a surefire contacts list requires forethought and a bit of research. In the end, however, your ROI will make the effort worthwhile.

"When it comes to marketing and sales, contact data is a key factor affecting success," says Maribeth Ross, vice president of marketing for NetProspex.

Know Your Buyer

Ross recommends performing a study based on past buyers to determine your ideal buyer profile. Compare these results to your current prospect database to determine if the database is comprised of the right people. If not, you'll need to build up your list with more of these target buyers.

Put a Face on It

Is your message being heard by someone who has the authority and/or the desire to answer your call to action? Business information brokers, such as Hoover's, can provide contact information by division, job title, branch, rank and other qualifiers.

Pick Your Platform

There are so many ways to communicate these days, from social networks and blogs to email and direct mail campaigns. Which of these platforms are most likely to engage your existing and

potential customers? Before you craft your message, determine its method of delivery, as it will influence the way you package it.

Sullivan says that social networks are becoming increasingly effective for raising brand awareness and getting your message out there.

"The conversational element is at an all-time high when using these tools," he says. "If you can broach a conversation that's not focused on selling, but more on the sharing of information and opinions on industry trends, your efforts to gain a new client could become very successful."

In these online social communities, companies can position themselves as thought leaders and trusted advisers in the industry — in other words, companies that people will want to do business with.

Sullivan further suggests putting a real personality in front of a company name if you make social media a part of your marketing campaign strategy. For instance, it's not ABC Technology Solutions commenting on Facebook or blogging, but ABC programmer Don Winters who can offer sound advice and helpful tips.

"Those who are most successful with these tools get that it's personal interaction that ultimately lets people come out a winner," Sullivan says.

Look Beyond the Obvious

Companies should reach beyond obvious professional circles to grow their business-to-business community, says Kalin Kassabov, CEO of ProTexting.

"Your community is composed of everyone you know — your current clients, former clients and vendors, but also your friends, colleagues, rainmakers, networkers and connectors," he says.

Marketing to these outside-the-norm contacts can lead to new business you never anticipated. Make sure to ask for referrals in your call to action. Furthermore, offer incentives to those who bring new business your way to encourage participation.

Enlist the Right Support

If you plan to purchase contacts lists from an information broker, check that your vendor has a dedicated process to maintain data quality. You should be offered some kind of guarantee — for example, replacements for outdated emails that hard bounce. A reputable vendor never should ask you to pay for inaccurate data.

Keep it Fresh

Prospect data decays at a rate of 2 percent per month, Ross says. Ensure you have a way to keep your data clean on an ongoing basis. If this is too difficult to manage on your own, enlist the assistance of a data partner that has demonstrated good data quality.

"By employing some rigor around the data used in your marketing programs, you will see a measurable lift in results," Ross says.

Develop an Effective Marketing Message

Our experts share tips for developing an effective marketing message that will make your customers perceive you as their go-to business partner.

Most business owners are so busy working in the business that they rarely have time to work on the business. Inefficient operations remain inefficient, temporary stop-gap measures become commonplace, and cost-savings are passed up because no one has the time to stop and find a better way.

While this is bad news for them, it's great news for you — as it presents the perfect environment to craft marketing messages that say: "Not only do I understand your challenge, but I'll help you overcome it."

"Today, the most effective way of convincing prospects to do something different is by identifying challenges that they might not have realized they even have and then convincing them that there is an urgent need to change

before these challenges negatively affect their businesses," says Tim Riesterer, chief strategy and marketing officer for Corporate Visions.

Riesterer suggests taking your marketing message even one step further by discussing how those problems, if left untreated, could adversely affect the business. Doing so can create a sense of urgency and prompt would-be and existing customers to listen up and make changes. At the very least, it will get your target audience to start thinking differently and invite the opportunity for conversation.

Learn the Customer's Pain Points

To craft marketing messages that speak to an end user's pain points, you have to know what those pain points are. If you're not working from firsthand experience, this requires some due diligence. One research method is to search online discussion forums for your target industries or trades, says marketing and branding strategist Michael Ehlert, founder of BlipStudios.com.

"You can find these by entering your niche and the word 'forum' in any search engine," he says. "You will likely find an abundance of active forums — including the number of members and activity levels. These forums are booming with questions and solutions to the most common problems."

Through these forums you can determine how your product or service will best serve a particular customer. For instance, if your inventory software can be used in multiple business environments, research the most common inventory-related challenges in the various industries you plan to target. Once those unique challenges are identified, you can write directly to those challenges in your messaging. It may be that you need to play up your software's tracking features for certain types of businesses, while in other marketing efforts, it's your product's inventory management functions that count.

Know the Information They Seek

Another way to find out what your target audience is thinking is to take a closer look at your own website. What keywords are visitors typing into the internal website search engine?

"Looking at keywords that bring people from outside to your website is frequently done, but clearly you already need to be using those words to appear in external search results," says Philippa Gamse, web

strategist and author of 42 Rules for a Web Presence that Wins. "Tracking what visitors look for once they're at your website shows a lot about what they expect from you and how they describe those things — what words and phrases are most popular, and what words or phrases are most surprising."

Gamse says this technique is not only a good indicator of what information is hard to find within your current navigation, but it also reveals what's not immediately obvious in your current messaging. This is an effective way to learn the needs and expectations of existing customers, as well as those of potential buyers who have shown an interest in your services by visiting your site.

Speak Their Language

Once you've identified your customers' pain points and the specialized knowledge they seek, it's time to tailor your marketing messages to your target audiences. How you say it depends on to whom you're speaking, says Shel Horowitz, marketing consultant and author of Guerrilla Marketing Goes Green: Winning Strategies to Improve Your Profits and Your Planet.
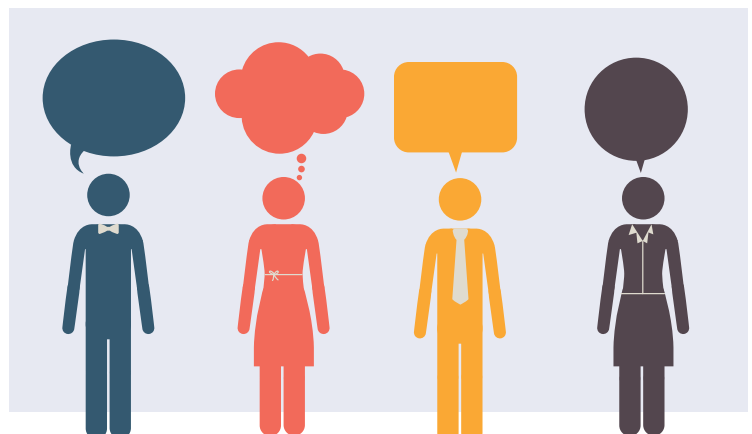
"I work a lot with companies offering green products and services," Horowitz says. "The messaging for a committed green activist will focus on saving the planet, fair labor practices, etc. But the messaging for the same product going in front of a non-green audience would focus on quality, durability, comfort, cost savings and the like."

Again, go back to your end user's challenges and desired outcomes, and speak to those points in your messaging.

Give Them a Reason to Market for You

When crafting your messaging, be sure to add some kind of incentive for people to spread the word about your services. However, don't simply offer any incentive. Do some research to find out what types of incentives would resonate best with your target audience.

Says Kalin Kassabov of ProTexting.com: "Think of exciting ways to provide value for your loyal supporters. When current members of your B2B community refer a new contact, provide a reward, great savings or a giveaway. One CPA firm I know always offers their loyal clients who provide referrals free tickets to shows or trips to day spas in the city. Be creative and clever about your incentive programs. Give them a choice of rewards to choose from."

Adds Riesterer: "The fact is, your prospective customers have so much on their plates that it's easy for them to get sidetracked and postpone making a decision. This is why the greatest obstacle for marketers and salespeople is not their competition, but indecision. The best way to break down the status quo barrier is to craft differentiated marketing messages that convince the prospect that he or she needs to change quickly to avoid pain or loss and move toward gain."

Five Ways to Increase Email Marketing Conversions

Businesses continue investing in this 'old school' tactic to drive conversions. Learn how to get more from your email campaigns.

Thought email marketing was dead? Think again. While some consider email marketing "old school," data suggests that the inbound marketing strategy is alive and well. In fact, businesses are projected to spend $2.5 billion on email marketing by 2016, according to an infographic titled "Intelligent Email Marketing that Drives Conversions" by Monetate. As evidenced by the statistics above, email marketing remains an effective marketing strategy; however the buck doesn't stop after consumers click on a link within an email. Below are five ways to increase email marketing conversions.

1. Segmentation and Targeting

No two consumers on your email list are the same, so avoid the "batch-and blast" approach. Instead, try segmenting your email list based on location, occupation, age, or gender. This way the right content gets delivered to the right consumers at the right time. Segmented email campaigns produce 50% higher click-through rates compared to undifferentiated messages, according to the Monetate infographic.

Segmented email campaigns produce **50**% higher click-through rates
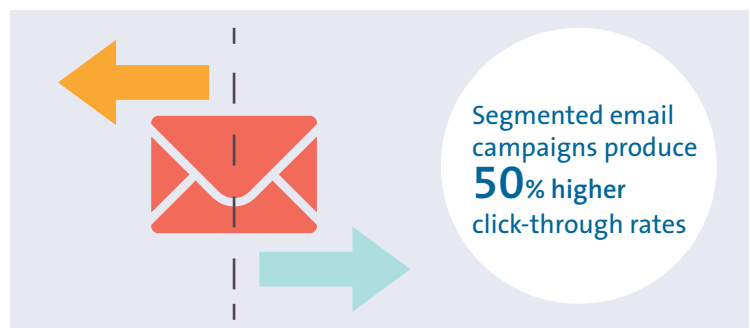
Moreover, segmented campaigns produce 30% more opens than generic emails.

2. Personalize

When you personalize messages, email is less likely to end up in the dreaded spam folder. When creating a more "tailored" email consider the following:

- Personalize the subject line with the recipient's name or topic of interest

- Welcome the recipient by first name and use a call-to-action based on the reader's prior behavior

- Make sure the landing page recaps the message delivered in the email

- Always send a follow-up email thanking the customer and add value by offering up recommendations for next actions

3. Relevance

Too often companies send consumers emails with no real intention, value, or relevance. Before starting a campaign, make sure it helps you achieve your business goals. Otherwise, you'll be wasting the reader's time as well as your own. Ask yourself: What's the goal for this campaign?

4. Mobile Friendly

According to research from Litmus, 38% of all emails are opened on a mobile device, making mobile phones the #1 platform for reading emails. When creating emails for mobile devices, make sure the email will adjust to the appropriate screen size. Also, remember that mobile users use their fingers to click instead of a mouse. Therefore your calls to action should be large enough for the reader to see.

5. Shareable

Consumers love interesting, valuable content that can be easily shared. Give your viewers what they want by embedding social media into your email marketing campaigns. Start by adding Twitter or Facebook links to your newsletters so readers can share the content. Integrating email and social allows you to extend the potential reach of your emails, grow your email list, and connect with your audience.

Taking Your Email Marketing Mobile...What's Next?

With the growth of smartphones and increased attention on mobile marketing, it's time to ask whether your company is ready to dip into the mobile pool.

Do you catch yourself relying on your trusty smartphone more than ever: for example, reading email, relying on GPS instead of your car's navigation system, and using your mobile calendar instead of Outlook to book meetings? You're not alone – a growing number of people are using their beloved smartphones for just about everything.

Here's a look at some of the most compelling statistics revealed in the Smartphone Ownership 2013 report by Pew Research Center:

- 56% of American adults now own a smartphone; 91% of the adult population now owns some kind of cell phone

- 67% of people find themselves checking their phone for messages, alerts, or calls — even when they don't notice their phone ringing or vibrating

- 29% describe their phone as "something they can't imagine living without"

When it comes to mobile use for email marketing, the statistics are just as positive. Specifically, as revealed in Litmus Labs' monthly email market share statistics, mobile open rates have increased from 10% in 2011 to 43% in 2013, representing a 330% increase in just two years. Moreover, desktop clients have seen a 44% decrease while webmail share has dwindled to about 22%. So, if your marketing strategy is ready to be revitalized with a focus on mobile, here are a few things to consider:

Craft a Witty Subject Line:

If you're hoping that consumers will open your email from their mobile devices, then your subject line has to be compelling, since it's competing against real-time SMS messages, applications, and various gaming platforms. Think about what would pique your interest and be wary about being overly wordy and ending up in the dreaded "spam" folder.

Keep the Text Short:

There's nothing worse than having to continually scroll on your smartphone. Moreover, there's something very daunting about opening an email or webpage that is flooded with text. Keep in mind that just because your email marketing message appears short on the big screen does not mean it will look as digestible on the small mobile device. Therefore, before mass blasting, send the message to yourself and a few internal team members to get a feel for how it will be displayed.

Think Multiple Platforms:

Do you have a killer graphic to accompany your latest message? What about a video that automatically plays upon engagement? Have you tested it across both Android and Apple devices? Don't assume that your users prefer one operating system over the other and instead choose to optimize your messages for both. This means making sure that your emails do not yield "error" messages and checking that alignments and graphics work seamlessly no matter the device.

Respect the Tap:

If your target audience opens your message on the desktop, they can click on as many links as are supplied. But in the world of mobile, clicking is replaced with tapping and swiping, meaning messages need to be optimized for touch-screen

capabilities. This means not saturating your messages with an abundance of links, and keeping buttons big enough for easy tapping. (It also means losing phrases like "click here to learn more" as they are most likely tapping).

Be Careful with Visuals:

A picture that looks great on the desktop can often appear scrunched or pixilated across the mobile device. As a result, stick to a single-column layout and optimize your design and graphics for mobile consumption. Keep the photos simple but compelling and always remember that size is incredibly important.

About Hoover's

Hoover's Inc., a subsidiary of The Dun and Bradstreet Corporation (D&B), offers proprietary business information through our online platform and integrated workflow solutions. Whether you are looking for leads, companies, or industries, our data on more than 85 million corporations, 100 million people, and 1,000 industries fuels powerful data cleansing, analysis, list building, and corporate linkage capabilities that accelerate your sales and marketing cycles.

HOOVERS™

A D&B COMPANY

Hoover's Inc.
5800 Airport Blvd.
Austin, TX 78752

www.hoovers.com