# How to boost your email marketing results

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Email inboxes are competitive places — cutthroat arenas in which businesses compete for valuable attention. Over 100 billion business-related emails are sent per day, and that number is only expected to grow. Email's popularity as a marketing tool is holding strong.

Social marketing campaigns that go viral receive a huge amount of attention not only on social media sites but also in the traditional press. When campaigns take off — through a combination of thoughtful implementation and some random luck — these few examples make gaining wide reach through social medial seem easy, when in reality it is not.

Email may not be as trendy and meme-filled as social media, but it is still a more effective tool to convert prospects to new customers. In one study, SocialTwist monitored over 100 referral campaigns, in which people were encouraged to share messages and special offers, for a period of 18 months. Over that time, email was the most popular method for sharing, with 55 percent of influencers choosing to share messages using email. And of those who became new customers, 51 percent converted through email, 27 percent via Twitter and 22 percent were reached by Facebook.

Email also has a larger user base than social media. According to Radicati, there will be 4.9 billion worldwide email accounts by 2017, or three times more email accounts than Twitter and Facebook users combined. Email can be a powerful tool if used wisely. Here are some tips for amping up your emails.

## Test Everything

No matter how many studies are performed on subject lines and send times, the only statistics that truly matter are yours. How does your audience interact with email? Find out through targeted experimentation with the following:

**1. Layouts.** Simplicity is key to email layout due to the wide variety of email clients and devices your messages must reach. However, within this parameter, you have options. For example, what colors work best for call to action buttons? Should the email be predominantly text or picture based? How many articles should each email contain? How long should each article be?

Some firms may find that layouts with large pictures accompanied by short article snippets perform well, while others may do better with layouts that contain longer text and one dominant image. Experiment with different combinations of pictures, articles, excerpt lengths and calls to action to find the recipe that works best for your audience.

**2. Subject Lines.** Research is somewhat mixed on whether shorter or longer email subject lines perform better. There is one general rule, however: subject lines should be less than 60 characters or more than 70. Emails with shorter subject lines tend to get more opens, while emails with longer subject lines tend to receive more click-throughs. And emails with extremely short subject lines perform surprisingly well. According to research by [Adestra](#), emails with subject lines containing less than 10 characters have over a 50 percent open rate.

Mix up your subject lines and track both open and click-through rates for the different lengths. Look for the sweet spot that brings the maximum number of users back to your site.

**3. Frequency.** The social sharing company AddThis is a proponent of weekly email communication. AddThis found that it has been able to [boost open rates to between 35 and 40 percent](#) and grow [blog traffic](#) by increasing email send frequency from once a month to once a week.

One key to choosing an email send frequency is your firm's ability to regularly produce helpful content. If you post articles regularly, sending emails more often may enhance audience engagement. However, you must have something to say that readers connect with. Weekly emails that just say, "Hey look how great our firm is," will not be effective.

**4. Send Time.** You will want to send emails at the time of day your readers are most likely to open them. According to email and list management company [Mailchimp](#), more email is opened in the afternoon on Wednesday and Thursday than at any other time of the week. However, research by [Experian Marketing Services](#) suggests that optimum send time is between 8:00pm and midnight. The same Experian research also suggests it may be best to send email over the weekend.

Sending at less competitive times could increase open rates, depending on the nature of your campaigns and your readers. Sending at busier times can also affect unsubscribe rates, as readers get tired of dealing with email. Test both day of the week and time of the day to discover your audience's preference.

## Know the Must-Haves

Some email marketing practices have been time-tested, including:

**1. [Mobile](#)-friendly design.** Almost half of all emails are opened on a mobile device, and your email must look good on any sized screen. Mobile must-haves include:

- Single-column layout
- Text that is large enough to read without zooming
- Easy to click calls to action

**2. Personalization.** Readers respond well to emails that are tailored to their interests. Personalization does not necessarily just mean putting a first name at the beginning of an email. It means sending users content relevant to their prior interactions with your firm.

Tracking technology is very sophisticated. You can monitor user activity on your site and send targeted emails to different list segments addressing topics in which the users have already expressed interest. Retail marketers are very good at using this tactic. Many will provide links to suggested items within individual emails based on items the user has viewed or had in a shopping cart — and these links work.

Your firm may not be able to provide that level of personalization, but you can tailor messages to fit the different needs of the people who subscribe to your emails.

**3. Free stuff.** People like to get stuff. This may be an occasional free e-book download or a members only [podcast](#). You do not have to send a free offer in every email — this may, in fact, decrease readership. However, if your campaigns offer some additional perks to readers, they will respond positively.

**4. Clean lists.** List clean-up is an important part of email marketing. Every email list contains some invalid email addresses (that always bounce) and others that perform very poorly. Purge bad email addresses occasionally to ensure you are not wasting time and server resources sending to people who will never respond. Sending to a clean list also makes it less likely your emails will be flagged as spam, since you are communicating with people who want to hear from you.

Email is a good way to maintain contact with clients and gain referrals. Test and experiment to be sure you are delivering messages with maximum effectiveness.

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