Top Tips for Email Marketing Success

-   *By Rachel Fields, Client Success Consultant*

Despite the challenges we all sometimes face with the sheer volume, email is still an essential tool for connecting with Clients and prospects. Whether you're updating them on legal developments or inviting them to an event, the goal of email marketing is to help keep the firm and professionals top-of-mind. To enhance your e-mail marketing success, here are 15 Best Practices to help ensure your email marketing is effective and avoids the spam filter.

1. **Email subject lines should be 40 to 60 characters long** (including spaces). This will help ensure that the full text can be read across multiple devices and platforms. Anything longer and the end of your subject line will get cut off.

2. **Make your subject line compelling.** Providing a substantive subject line gives readers an idea of what's inside the email. They're more likely to open an email if they know what it's about.

3. **Don't use exclamation points or all caps to try to get attention**. This may actually have the opposite result, triggering spam filters and turning off readers.

4. **The body of your email marketing message should be no more than 600 pixels wide**. Anything more than this may not display properly on some devices.

5. **Don't put the whole text of an article or alert in the email**. Instead use a few sentences of 'teaser' text with a 'read more' link to your website, where the full content can be viewed. This keeps the email shorter, drives website traffic and lets you track clickthrough rates.

6. **Keep the layout and color schemes simple and elegant**. Using a variety of fonts and colors not only can appear tacky but can also trigger spam filters.

7. **Use 'alt text' for images**. Not everyone wants to – or is able to – download the images. 'Alt text' lets them know what's there.

8. **Don't put the headline or main message of the email in an image**. Even for save-the-date and invitation emails, text should be separated out so it can be read without downloading the image. Also, spam filters can detect and will frequently quarantine emails containing a large image without an appropriate ratio of text. Background images should also be avoided for the same reasons.

9. **Watch your wording**. Be careful of certain words and phrases that can trigger spam filters and reduce email deliverability. The list is always changing, but check out our companion article, "Avoiding the Spam Trap: Spam Filter Trigger Words" which provides some good guidelines.

10. **Proofread and test.** Multiple people should be reading the email before it's sent to catch potential spelling or grammar errors. If your firm has a style guide, make sure the email conforms to those standards. All links should be checked to ensure they're leading where you intend. The same is true for email 'mail to' links. Be sure the email is correctly addressed to the intended recipient.

11. **Pay attention to list quality**. Regularly research and update or remove bad email addresses from your lists. A high number of bounces or undeliverable emails can cause red flags with your email provider or recipients. We've had several Clients who were inadvertently 'blacklisted' as

spammers and had their email service suspended due to poor campaign quality. Don't let this happen to you.

12. **Send from a separate dedicated IP address**. Some of the less expensive eMarketing options have multiple customers sharing an IP, which can hinder your deliverability if other senders aren't as conscientious.

13. **Time your send by audience**. If your target list is made up of primarily decision-makers (e.g., C-levels) then, in general, you have more flexibility and may even get better open and clickthrough rates after standard business hours. On the other hand, if your audience is more on the influencer range, then you will typically get better readership on weekday mornings. Bear in mind that content plays a large role here. Not every topic will demonstrate the same level of interest, so your best bet is to track recipient behavior over multiple sends.

14. **Use A/B testing**. Whether you're trying to figure out what style of subject line inspires the most opens or determine the most effective send times, A/B testing is a great way to spot trends more quickly than just using metrics from entire mailings. Many eMarketing solutions now have built-in functionality to make A/B testing quicker and easier than ever.

15. **Comply with anti-Spam and data privacy rules**. Regulations such as CAN-SPAM for U.S. recipients, CASL for Canadian recipients and GDPR for European recipients have specific requirements around e-mail and data privacy. Fines for non-compliance can be steep, so be sure you're not in violation.

While there is no guaranteed method for avoiding spam filters or ensuring that your email will be opened and read, following a few best practices like these should improve your results. Here is one final best practice that can enhance your e-mail marketing success:

Don't do it alone. If you need help with Email Marketing best practices, contact the team at CLIENTSFirst. We provide eMarketing Success Services including:

- eMarketing system selection and integration
- eMarketing staffing and resource assessments
- eMarketing strategy and planning
- eMarketing processes and procedures
- eMarketing training and communication
- eMarketing template creation
- eMarketing campaign assistance
- Compliance with anti-spam and privacy regulations
- Outsourced eMarketing staffing
- Mailing list management and data quality
  - Updating and enhancing record contact information
  - Researching and updating or removing bounces