The Ultimate Guide to eCommerce Emails
Content

0. Introduction 3
1. Set Up Your Email Marketing Infrastructure 4
2. Grow Your Email List 15
3. Create Engaging Emails 19
4. Create a Content Calendar 55
5. Automate Your Emails 58
6. Segment and Optimize Your Emails 66
7. Calculate Your Email Marketing ROI 72
8. Email Marketing Laws 75
9. How to Choose the Right Email Marketing Agency? 80
10. Glossary 82
Introduction

Is Your Email Program Generating at Least 23% of Your Total eCommerce Revenue?

That’s the average we’ve seen across industries, with certain top-performing brands generating over 50% of their revenue from a robust email marketing program. Email may be an old-school strategy of the digital marketing world, but it continues to perform well for brands year after year. In 2019, email marketing’s return on investment is 42:1 on average, up from 38:1 last year, according to Litmus’ 2019 State of Email Survey.

The inbox, though, has gotten increasingly competitive. You’ll need to devise a strategic email marketing program in order to stand out from the competition.

Luckily, our “Ultimate Guide to eCommerce Emails” is the perfect handbook to guide you through developing a masterful email program. Now, let’s get started!

For your reference, a glossary with terms you may not be familiar with is included at the end of this guide.
Technology

Choose Your Email Service Provider (ESP)

Email service providers, such as Gmail and Outlook, limit both the number of emails you can send per day and the number of recipients per message. This, in return, protects recipients from spam and email abuse.

Therefore, companies need a service provider that will allow them to legally email large groups of recipients. Email Service Providers (ESPs) do just that. They provide a range of services for sending bulk email marketing campaigns to a list of users.

At the very core, ESPs provide email templates, help you send emails, and analyze the results. Some of their advanced features include email automation, optimized deliverability, advanced segmentation, and legal compliance.
What to Look for in an ESP?

What you should look for in an ESP depends on the size and the needs of your company. For example, you may want to hard-code your own emails and therefore not care as much if the ESP offers multiple templates. On the other hand, you may want to link the ESP with your CRM and other data systems, so you’ll be looking for an ESP that offers effective integrations.

A good ESP should provide you with:

- **Order Data Syncing**
  You should look for an ESP that offers tight order data syncing with your webstore in order to get all data passing into the platform to be utilised in segmentation targeting down the road.

- **Stability of Core Integrations**
  High stability of core integration is essential. You can have as much functionality as you want from the ESP, but if it’s unstable, it will affect your email marketing workflow and impact your performance levels.

- **A/B Testing Functionalities**
  Testing is one of the foundations of a successful email marketing program. The more testing functionalities your ESP provides, the better you’ll get to know your audience, allowing you to implement effective segmentation.

- **Reporting**
  You need to look for a thorough yet simple reporting system within the platform, as well as simplicity in how you can access and download the data.

- **Customer Support**
  As with all software, technical issues can arise. Having the necessary support is vital to getting the results you want in a timely manner.
Choose Supporting Apps

Now that you have a solid ESP provider for your email program, you should be looking at which supporting apps will work best for you. Depending on your eCommerce platform, you may have access to different apps. Volusion, for instance, integrates with some of the most popular apps available, such as Mailchimp, Constant Contact, and Justuno. Apps should include the following important features:

- **Product Review Requests**
  Many product review request apps have the functionality to send product review request emails and allow the user to fill out the review directly from the email.

- **Loyalty/Referral Programs**
  Loyalty and referral apps can help you integrate rewards and referral data in your automated, targeted emails.

- **Pop-Ups**
  These apps give you the ability to target with your pop-ups, display pop-up captures, sculpt the different elements of user experience on the site, and send different messages there, all of which drives list growth.
Deliverability

What Is Deliverability?

The next thing you need to ensure is that the deliverability of your email program is strong. Deliverability measures the rate at which your emails are delivered. Of course, your emails should be delivered to the inboxes of your recipients, not their spam folders or not at all.

This description is deceptively simple, however, as the topic of deliverability can get technical quickly. On the whole, like search engine optimization (SEO), arguably more so, email deliverability is somewhat of a black box. There are no “definitive” ranking factors or exact weights given to each factor that goes into determining whether or not you’ll get into the inbox. Whereas SEO is primarily driven by Google’s decree, email deliverability is a more varied landscape. There are many more email clients and third parties at play, each with a different version of their algorithms for determining inbox placement and positioning of your emails.

Why Should You Care

Return Path’s 2018 Deliverability Benchmark report shows that 15% of all emails don’t get delivered. So, if you are sending to a list of one million subscribers, 150,000 people will never receive your message. Not only can this significantly affect email revenue, but it can also impact customer relations by stopping transactional emails, such as order confirmations and shipping notifications, from being delivered.

Furthermore, achieving good deliverability is getting harder and harder by the day, especially with actions taken by Gmail and other ISPs. Namely, they are getting sophisticated with measuring user engagement and behavior to impose more stringent criteria on how much of your mail gets delivered.
Factors That Affect Deliverability

Nobody really knows the exact weight for each deliverability factor, but let’s dive into some of the major ones that impact your sender reputation:

1. Authentication – There are multiple authentication frameworks in place used by ISPs to determine if the email is coming from a legitimate sender. Several key infrastructures used are:

   - SPF (Sender Policy Framework) is a security measure that ensures nobody sends emails to anyone on your behalf. So, it’s very important to set this up on your Domain Name System (DNS) server.

   - DKIM (DomainKeys Identified Mail) does a similar thing as SPF, but it’s preferable to set it up on your DNS server as an additional measure. The idea behind this key is that there are two sets of it – one unique to your domain that encrypts your signature (this happens in the header of your email), and one public key, necessary for decrypting your signature.

   - DMARC (Domain-Based Message Authentication, Reporting, and Conformance) unifies SPF and DKIM to a shared framework. It allows domain owners to declare how they would like email from that domain to be handled if it fails an authorization test. Luckily, your email service provider will likely handle most of these authentication processes for you, or will be able to help you set them up.

   Luckily, your email service provider will likely handle most of these authentication processes for you, or will be able to help you set them up.

   You will need to keep up with new standards that come into play, such as BIMI (Brand Indicators for Message Identification). BIMI safeguards the brand, application providers, and consumers from impersonation attempts.

2. Spam Trigger Content/Spam Filters – The following practices increase your chances of tripping spam filters:

   - Spammy words and notations, such as free, viagra, and ALL CAPS!!!!
• Large file size
• Low text-to-image ratio, i.e. too many images relative to HTML text
• Some better known spam filter providers include Barracuda, McAfee, Postini, Cloudmark, and SpamAssassin.

3. Blacklists – There are also multiple industry blacklists. Some of the major ones include:

• Spamhaus
• SpamCop
• MAPS
• SORBS

You can check if you are on any blacklists by going to one of the resources named in the next section. If you do find yourself on one or more blacklists, you'll need to take the steps they detail to get yourself removed. Many times, your ESP can help you out with the process.

4. Spam Traps – A spam trap is basically a booby trap email address. It is a pristine spam trap created by ISPs or blacklists that is essentially a fake email address that is never subscribed to any email lists and mainly only accessible by bots crawling a page. The intention behind this is to catch anyone sending to an address that never opted in, and is most likely bought or rented...

The impact of “hitting” a spam trap is immense. Basically, your deliverability can tank overnight, which could take a while to recover from. We have seen 95% inboxing drop to 60% immediately after hitting a spam trap, with the consequences carrying on over a few weeks despite follow-up efforts.

5. User Engagement – Open/Click, Whitelisting, Starring
ISPs (Yahoo!, Gmail, Hotmail, etc.) are increasingly giving more weight to “engagement” metrics to determine both inbox placement (whether your email is put into the inbox) and inbox positioning (the position inside the inbox).

Engagement ratios such as open rates and click rates, as well as other positive user actions like whitelisting (adding to address book), starring, or marking as important, all play a role in shaping your engagement profile. The emphasis on engagement is another reason why you need to follow best practices to send relevant, targeted emails to a clean email list of subscribers.

6. Bounce Ratio – A “bounce” occurs when the ISP’s servers reject your incoming mail. There are two major classes of bounces.

A hard bounce is an outright, permanent rejection by the recipient server. This is typically caused by invalid email addresses (non-existent or misspelled domains, for example).

A soft bounce is a delayed rejection by the recipient server. The outgoing mail was initially accepted, but later returned back to the ESP after processing. Typical reasons for a soft bounce is “server temporarily unavailable” or a full inbox by the recipient.

For the purposes of your sender reputation, your hard bounce ratio is the one that will negatively impact your deliverability. Your ESP should automatically clean any hard-bounced email addresses.

Soft bounces don’t tend to count against you, but do drive up your CPM costs, so it’s a good idea to clean consecutive soft bounces (3-5 in a row).

7. Complaint/Spam Ratio – When a user marks one of your emails as spam (also known as a complaint), it sends a major red flag signal to ISPs that your mail is unwanted.

If your email list is large, there’s no real way to prevent spam complaints completely.
Luckily, ISPs don’t look at absolute complaint numbers as much as the complaint ratio, or the total number of spam complaints compared to the volume of mail you send. A good rule of thumb is to keep your complaint ratio below 5 in 1000 (0.5%), though your ESP can be much more restrictive than this before you get warnings.

8. IP Address Reputation – Your sender IP address (or pool of IP addresses) reputation is highly important for determining your deliverability. Historically, ISPs have given a lot of weight to your IP reputation, although recently there’s been increasing emphasis placed on domain-level reputation as well.

The default is that you are a part of a shared “pool” of sender IPs, established by your ISP. This means you are sharing that range of sender IPs with multiple other people. Because the IP pool is used by multiple senders, this means the actions (both good and bad) of a single sender will have an impact on the deliverability of the other senders within the shared pool because deliverability is determined partially by IP reputation.

You can, however, choose to set up a dedicated IP (DIP) address for yourself. This usually carries some upfront cost and takes more guidance to “warm up” your IP address before sending. The major benefit of a dedicated IP is that you exclusively control your sender reputation on it. This means other bad senders cannot jeopardize your reputation. On the other hand, if you don’t follow pristine sending practices, it might actually be worse for you to be on a DIP. Depending on your volume and needs, the dedicated IP route may make sense for you.

9. Sender Domain Reputation – ISPs are increasingly putting more weight towards domain-level reputation in addition to the traditional IP-level reputation. This essentially means that your (authenticated) sender domain reputation (like email.retailer.com) will become “portable,” even if you are moving around ESPs or using different IP addresses.

Domain reputation is not likely to replace IP address reputation, but it is used in conjunction to develop an overall view of your sender reputation. The same best practices apply.
10. **Send Volume Trends** – The consistency of your send volume also plays a part in determining your deliverability. In general, you want to keep your volume fairly consistent, as huge spikes or dips send a negative signal to ISPs. This applies to both automations and individual campaigns. For this reason, it is a good idea to throttle your mailing, which is discussed in the best practices section.

Additionally, certain times of the year (such as holiday seasons) see an overwhelming amount of mail. During these times, even if you are a good sender, ISPs may “defer” your mail due to sheer load on their servers. Thus, it’s important to be aware of when peak sending volume times are, and structure your sends accordingly.

**Deliverability – Best Practices**

1. **Authentication Setup** – Setting up SPF, DKIM, and possibly DMARC should be your first step in ensuring email deliverability.

2. **Seek Permission** – Whether you are capturing emails at checkout, through a site overlay, or some other source, you need to explicitly ask for permission. The more aware your contacts are that they are being opted in to your list, the lower the chances are they will automatically press the spam button or ignore your emails. Laws are being increasingly restrictive in terms of explicit permission – have a look at the email marketing laws section for more information on this. In general, make sure to get some form of permission before sending marketing messages to your contacts.

3. **Maintain a “Clean” List** – This is arguably the most important aspect of ensuring good deliverability. At the end of the day, all of the advanced technical measures are aimed to reduce spam and reward good senders. Keeping a clean list is integral to protecting your reputation in the eyes of the ISPs, which will help maintain strong deliverability for your email program. Essentially, maintaining a clean list means following best practices, such as suppressing inactive contacts, getting deliberate opt-ins, segmenting the frequency of your sends, and sending compelling and relevant content to your list.
4. **Regularly Monitor Your Deliverability** – Deliverability is not a one-off action. Because so many factors are at play, you will inevitably see fluctuations in your deliverability. This is why it’s important to do regular check-ups on your current status to make sure you catch and diagnose problems early on.

5. **Throttle Your Mail** – As mentioned before, throttling your mail on individual sends can help improve your deliverability. Throttling means that instead of sending all of your emails at once to your list, you are sending them over a period of time (4 hours, for example). This way, the ISPs are seeing a more steady trickle of emails coming in, instead of one huge spike.

6. **Make Sure Your Content Is Clean** – Spam trigger words, too many images, and large file sizes can all trip spam filters. In your campaigns, keep an eye out for minimizing these spam triggers. Most ESPs have some form of a built-in tool to help with this.

Quick note: Sometimes we’ve seen more hip & cool companies, such as funny t-shirt companies, using various forms of profanity in their emails. While we find humor in this, the spam robots don’t. It’s better to keep the bad words to a minimum.


8. **Don’t Bury Your Unsubscribe Link** – You don’t have to advertise your unsubscribe link loudly, but you need it to be clear. Not only is an unsubscribe link required by CAN-SPAM law, but it can also help your deliverability. Remember, unsubscribes do not count against you. However, if you make it overly difficult for your contacts to unsubscribe, they may default to the spam button instead, which most definitely hurts your deliverability.

9. **Be Consistent In Your Sending** – Just as consistency in business helps establish your reputation as a business person, consistency in your email sending helps solidify your sender reputation. In general, aim to be consistent in your from name, sender domain, send volume, etc.

10. **Use a Private Sub-Domain** – Using a private sender sub-domain, such as email.mystore.com, can help establish your domain-level reputation.
ESPs will usually provide a default sender domain if you don’t have a private sub-domain, but these won’t be transferable if you ever decide to switch providers.

11. Consider Using a Dedicated IP – If you are sending a good amount of volume and have the guidance to maintain a DIP, you should consider switching over. With a dedicated IP, you’ll have full control of your own sender reputation without worrying about it being tarnished by other senders’ bad practices.
One of the key ways to improve your email marketing is to grow your email list quickly and cleverly.

1. **Checkout Email Capture** – The best way to build a base for your email list is to make sure you are capturing emails from your new customers during the checkout process. You should have an opt-in checkbox so they can subscribe to your marketing emails.

   Keep in mind that the laws for what is acceptable differ from one country to another. Having a pre-checked opt-in box for maximum emails captured is what we recommend (if your country allows it).

2. **Pop-Up Website Overlay Form** – Another fantastic way to grow your email list is to implement a pop-up website overlay form. Yes, they can be annoying and ineffective, but if cleverly used, pop-ups see conversion rates as high as 50.2%.

   To ensure you aren’t overexposing your visitors to the pop-up, we recommend utilizing a set of logic conditions. A sample set of conditions:

   • New Visitors Only AND
   • Time on Page > 45 seconds AND
   • Visited at Least 3 Pages AND
   • Had Exit Intent
3. **Sweepstakes or Virtual Giveaways** – Giving prospects a chance to win a prize has proved to be a great way of increasing the number of signups. Facebook and Instagram are great places to effectively run sweepstakes, such as contests and giveaways. We recommend you partner up with another company with which you can create fascinating prize packages that will truly be worth submitting your email for.

As the campaign ends, it is important to prevent yourself from the post-contest unsubscribes. Do this by showing them the value a continued subscription will provide.

4. **Try Locking Your Content** – It simply means that you’re blocking a part of the content until a user subscribes. In order to do this, first check your Google Analytics to see which are the most visited blog posts, then use the gated content marketing method on the most popular or relevant articles for visitors. This is a useful technique if you’re providing important content which gives value, and users will be obligated to subscribe.

5. **Content Incentive** – Another popular way to garner email signups is by using a piece of content as an incentive to sign up. These could include eBooks, video series, inside information, etc. The key is to make sure the ROI on these prospects is positive, since someone interested in information isn’t necessarily an actual customer of your product.
6. Discount Coupons in Exchange for a Subscription – If your website includes some type of eCommerce, you can offer a discount voucher for their first purchase. A coupon code sent to the email address given for the subscription is how it is usually done. This is a great way to grow your email list, but you have to make sure you’re prepared to retain the gained users afterwards.

7. Live Events – If you run any sort of live events, such as trade shows or pop-up shops, you should consider capturing people’s email addresses when they stop by your booth. Remember to follow up with them shortly after the event, so they don’t forget about signing up.

As you grow your email list, you will be able to take your potential customers through the funnel and turn them from subscribers into sales-ready leads.

8. Grow Your List with Social Media – If your eCommerce shop target audience is on social media, you'd better get those followers on your email list. Otherwise, you risk losing them in the event the social media platform becomes unpopular, your profile gets blocked, or your social media pages start having low engagement rates.
After a few months of compiling data and tracking results of email marketing activities for Essence of Email clients, we created an eBook to help eCommerce shop owners and managers grow their email lists with Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest. Download your free copy now.

[Free eBook]  
31 Ways to Grow Your Email List with Social Media
The ability to create effective copy for your emails is crucial for boosting your business. An original email can speak volumes, especially if you are an online retailer.

**Create the Perfect Subject Line and Preheader Pairings**

Always think about your email’s preheader in conjunction with its subject line, and vice versa. The reason for this is that these two sit side by side in the inbox and are therefore registered in a recipient’s mind in relation to one another. These two components are a team; therefore, they need to work together to pique subscribers’ interest and get that email opened!

Here’s a good example of subject line/preheader collaboration from Swedish brand & Other Stories.

- **Subject line**: Summer dress code.
- **Preheader text**: Take your pick from our bouquet of charming summer styles. Click here to view it online

In this example, the subject line and preheader are cleverly used together to initiate a conversation with the email’s recipient.

- **Subject line**: Do you like it shirty?
- **Preheader**: We bet you do! Here’re 6 summer shirt icons you need to know about
How Long Should Your Preheader/Subject Line Text Be?

How much of your preheader or your subject line a subscriber sees depends heavily on which device and email client they use. Even on desktop, how much preheader/subject line text is visible depends on how wide a subscriber has set their browser window.

According to data from Return Path, 65 characters seem to be the ideal number for email subject lines. However, most email subject lines are between 41 and 50 characters.
Here are a few email subject lines paired with their character length to give you an idea of what 65 characters looks like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email Subject Line</th>
<th>Character Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Can Wait – These Sales are THAT Good</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a Meatless Loaf Even Meat Lovers Will Love</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Monday for Those Procrastinators</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Habits That’ll Make You the Leader Your Colleagues Aspire to Be</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 SEO Trends for 2019</td>
<td>Mobile vs. Desktop Search Win/Loss Analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And how long should your preheader text be? Keeping it around 50-100 characters is a safe bet.

Here’s a perfect example of short yet meaningful subject line and preheader that don’t immediately reveal the content of the message. But here, the length actually works to this brand’s advantage by helping it stand out in the inbox.

**Subject line:** Beach, please.

**Preheader text:** Meet the JT Beach Jogger. Crisp, lightweight, and built for lazy days and epic adventures.
CHAPTER 3: Create Engaging Emails

Types of Subject Line & Preheader Pairings

1. Personalization – Using personalization tokens, like names or locations, in the subject line adds a feeling of rapport — especially when it’s a name. Everyone loves the sound of their own name. Plus, it increases click-through rate; emails that included the first name of the recipient in their subject line had higher click-through rates than emails that did not.

2. Call-to-Action or an Offer – Do something different to catch your reader’s eye and entice them to open your email. Tell a joke that they have to open the email to complete. Use emojis to stand out from rows and rows of text. Many subject line experts will tell you to merely tease whatever deal you’re offering to inspire curiosity, but sometimes, when the deal is this good, why not just state it outright, like in the examples below?

   **Subject line:** Dinner’s on us tonight. Enjoy $7 OFF delivery!
   **Preheader text:** Your neighborhood, your favorite flavors. Grubhub delivers the best local bites, straight to you.

   **Subject line:** Calendar Notification: New Favorites Are Arriving
   **Preheader text:** Searching for something? Change can be a really good thing.

3. Humor – Intrigue and evoke curiosity, make a recipient want to find out more.

   **Subject line:** What do you do on cold winter nights?
   **Preheader text:** Wink, wink, nudge, nudge

4. How-To – By offering helpful and useful content to your subscribers, you provide them with great services and benefits. What’s more, a preheader is a great place to shout about your valuable content.

   **Subject line:** Denim: The new rules
   **Preheader text:** You really need to read our new rules of denim guide ASAP + how to customise your denim.
Consider How Your Preheader Text Will Look in Your Email Campaign

When creating your email marketing campaign, you also need to consider how your preheader text will look in the body of the campaign when combined with all the other elements of your email.
Words to Avoid

In the email marketing world, words like “Free,” “Help,” “Percent off,” and “Reminder” tend to trigger a spam filter. Using these words can land your email in junk mail folders instead of inboxes.

Email spammers rely heavily on certain words to boost their open rates. Because of this, email providers use spam filters to keep out emails using these words.

As an email marketer, you need to know what these words are and avoid them. You need to avoid using words like “Cash,” “Quote,” and “Save”.

That being said, spam filters look at more than just subject lines to determine if they will deliver your email. For example, “Free” is a traditionally spammy subject line word, but you would notice that we included it in our “101 Companies Rocking Social Media” subject line.

Moral of the story here is to be wary of spam trigger words. Don’t avoid them completely, but use them in a way that is non-spammy.

Test, Test, Test

Like everything else in email marketing, your subject lines and preheader lines need to be tested. It’s always good to try an A/B split with different pre-headers, testing which emails get the most opens and conversions.

Calls-To-Action

It is critical to understand calls-to-action in your email design. CTAs can make or break campaigns, depending on how you design them. Here’s an overview of the key elements of a successful CTA:
CHAPTER 3: Create Engaging Emails

**Button CTAs**

Here are the best practices for creating effective button CTAs:

- **Button Text**
  The text of your button is very important for driving the click-through.

  Generally, you want to keep the text short. It should begin with an action verb, such as “Get,” “Start,” or “Search.” This makes the user take notice and follow the instructions to take an action.

  Make it more specific instead of too generic when possible, such as “Shop Dresses” instead of “Shop” or “View Now”.

  Make sure the text and the button are large, visible, and clickable. Remember, many readers are going to be on mobile, so tiny buttons are not great for big thumbs.

- **Button Styling**
  We typically style buttons using HTML in our emails so they are still visible with images off. Make sure to have enough padding around the text on the button so it’s not too crammed.

  Some drop shadows or borders can give the button a bit more of a 3D effect, which helps it stand out more. Here’s a flat vs. more 3D button; both are styled using CSS (though gradients are difficult to do well in email):
Slightly rounding the corners of the button tends to be more visually appealing.

Also, allow some white space around your buttons, so they can breathe and aren’t too crowded.

The key to choosing an effective color for your button CTAs is contrast. CTAs should stand out from the surrounding text and imagery. Orange and green tend to be convenient colors, but make sure there’s contrast.

If there are multiple buttons close to each other, you need to tone down some of the secondary ones, so that the primary button shows up more clearly. Otherwise, the user will get visually confused about which one to click and may not click at all.

An example: notice how visible the gold Join Now is (primary action we want them to take), opposed to the black and white Sign In button (secondary action):

- **Landing Page**
  Now that your buttons are amazing, don’t forget the importance of the landing page link. Generally, we want to drive users towards a landing page more specific and relevant to the promotion or call-to-action. For example, if the email is about the New Spring Dresses collection, we want to drive to that category landing page, not just the homepage.

- **CTA Support**
  While the actual call-to-action link is important, the surrounding supporting elements are also crucial in boosting the effectiveness of your CTAs.
• Supporting Text
The text content that supports your CTAs should clearly communicate the “why” of taking the action you want. You need to tell them what value they’ll receive. Communicating a sense of urgency and/or mystery also helps increase clicks on your CTAs.

• Supporting Imagery
One tactic is to draw attention to the CTA by using arrows to point to it:

Like what you read?
Share with your friends!

[Social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn]
You can also use images of people looking or pointing to CTAs:

- **Text CTAs**
  Although we use a lot of button CTAs, we shouldn’t neglect text link CTAs. They can be useful as secondary CTAs (since they are less visible than buttons), or in text-heavy emails to keep it consistent with the template.

  You want to make sure your text link CTAs are not too short (again, big thumbs on mobile).

  Your anchor text should either support or directly call for the click.

  Typical colors work best for text CTAs (most people are conditioned to recognize that blue, underlined text is a link), but at the very least, it needs contrast or some visual separation so the user understands it’s clickable.
Design Your Email Templates

Key elements to consider for email templates are:

- **Email Architecture**
  Layout elements, header navigation, footer navigation, image placement.

- **Cross-Client Rendering**
  Testing across different browsers and email clients.

- **Mobile Responsiveness**
  Making sure your emails are mobile-responsive

**Email Architecture**

Having the optimal layout for your email templates will drive the most click-throughs and ultimate conversions from the campaigns. While we cannot nail down a strictly optimal template to begin with (incremental A/B testing of the elements will yield improvements), there are some tried and true elements to include in a good eCommerce email template.
CHAPTER 3: Create Engaging Emails

A **preheader** (this is the text that is at the top of your email, and serves as a preview that can be seen in the inbox; this can improve your open rates)

Your **logo**, and perhaps a secondary **CTA** (a call-to-action button for branding and user action)

A **navigation bar** (shopping categories, a link to your blog, etc.)

An eye-catching image that is called a **hero image**. It can contain some text to further motivate the potential buyer

A short **body copy** (nowadays, people don’t have much patience reading, so the shorter the copy, the better, but make sure it’s meaningful)

**Product tiles** (these can be best sellers, or cross-selling items, etc.) with CTAs to buy these products

Some **additional banners** with more CTAs if necessary

**Footer** (it contains information on the company’s physical address, telephone number, as well as the most important thing – the unsubscribe button)
Mobile Responsiveness

Mobile design is basically designing emails for optimized views and clicks on mobile devices (smartphones, tablets).

Why Is Mobile Design Important

Mobile devices have overtaken the world of marketing, and email marketing is no exception. Mobile usage is growing at a staggering rate. For example, 44% of emails are now viewed on mobile, beating both desktop (33%) and web mail (23%) views. Mobile is here to stay, and will only become increasingly more important.

How Are Consumers Using Mobile Devices for Email?

The consumer experience of email on mobile devices is different than on desktop or laptop devices. Several considerations for mobile consumer behavior:

1. **On-the-Go** – Consumers use mobile “on-the-go.” For example, think about your own smartphone usage – you use it during your commute, on the plane, during lunch, in bed (50% read emails in bed), and in the bathroom (75% admit to using their mobile device while in the loo). Mobile is the perfect device for quick, short bursts of browsing. You may fire off a text, send a tweet, or glance at your email.

2. **Alerts** – Many consumers have push notifications and alerts set up on their phones. This typically means a good portion of mobile users are instantaneously notified of incoming mail.

3. **Filter, Read It Later** – Consumers are often utilizing their mobile devices as “filters” for their emails. In other words, they are quickly reviewing incoming mail to be filed as read-it-later or simply deleted. This means your emails need to pass the first test; namely, to not get deleted. Also, because navigating even mobile-friendly sites can be difficult, consumer click-throughs often result in fewer conversions.
CHAPTER 3: Create Engaging Emails

Desktop and larger devices (tablets) are outpacing smaller mobile devices, such as phones, in terms of actual purchases. According to a Monetate study, in Q1 2013, overall conversions for traditional devices is 2.51%, while tablet is 2.60% and smartphone is 0.49%. Often times a contact will first see an email on a smaller mobile, then go back to a bigger device to actually purchase.

4. Social Sharing – A study by Mailchimp on interactions with mobile email found that in terms of social sharing of emails, the Forward to a Friend option was used the most, followed by Twitter, with Facebook lagging (Facebook’s SWYN features are often confusing).

Taking advantage of social sharing is a great way to incorporate your email, mobile, and social media marketing strategies. Since consumers are already using their phones heavily to engage in social media, giving them an easy way to share your email promotional content is great for increasing your marketing reach.

How Do You Optimize Your Emails for Mobile (Design and Coding)?

1. Responsive Design – At its core, responsive design’s goal is to make your content, whether it’s your website or email, look good on all devices and screen sizes. This means that instead of having a static version of your content (which could look bad on certain devices), the content adapts and morphs to best fit the particular screen you are viewing it on.
Notice how some of the elements adjust to fill up the screen, the number of non-critical elements is reduced, the sections are stacked, and the font sizes and buttons are magnified for better usability.

2. Mobile Design Best Practices

- **Create Clear Sections** – It’s important to have clear sections in your emails for mobile. Use dividers and other visual elements to portion out the different parts of your email.

- **Smaller Image Files** – Stick with smaller image files, as there are restrictions for file size on initial load (for example, the Gmail App loads only 102KB by default).

- **Larger Font Sizes** – Utilize larger font sizes; as a rule of thumb, aim for 17-22px (17 for body, 22 for headers).

- **Buttons vs. Text Links** – Buttons are easier to click on than text links, especially if your text links are small.
Make ample use of buttons, in particular bulletproof buttons (HT-ML-styled “buttons”). A good practice is to make buttons at least 44px by 44px, to ensure the button is easy to click for everyone.

- **Make Text Links Clear** – For text links, use text decoration to underline your links. This signals to the user they are clickable.

- **Stack Images** – Images should take up the whole mobile space and be easily visible.

- **Hide Non-Essential Elements** – For example, header navigation.

If your team is on the smaller side and needs some extra help designing compelling emails, Volusion’s in-house marketing and design agency, Studio, can assist! They’ve helped over 5,000 businesses find success through email marketing, SEO, social media, digital advertising, and website design.

**AMP for Email**

Back in 2016, Google introduced AMP (Accelerated Mobile Pages) technology allowing the creation of web pages that load almost instantly on mobile phones. In March 2019, Gmail launched the general availability of AMP for Email:

*Starting today, we’re making emails more useful and interactive in Gmail. Your emails can stay up to date so you’re always seeing the freshest information, like the latest comment threads and recommended jobs. With dynamic email, you can easily take action directly from within the message itself, like RSVP to an event, fill out a questionnaire, browse a catalog or respond to a comment.*

- Aakash Sahney, Product Manager, Gmail, March 2019.
In addition to Gmail, AMP for email has engagement from major email providers, including Yahoo Mail, Outlook.com, and Mail.Ru. As they launch support, senders will scale the reach of their AMP emails to users.

Vamsee Jasti, Product Manager of the AMP Project, recommends that you start sending AMP emails today.

Email senders can start creating AMP emails by using the playground, which allows you to edit markup and see real-time changes to your email. For more information about the supported features and syntax, head over to amp.dev.

If you rely on a third party for your emails, please ensure they have AMP support. The following email products already support AMP or are in the process of launching support soon:

- **SparkPost**, an email delivery and analytics platform
- **Litmus**, an email design and marketing tools suite
- **Twilio SendGrid**, an email platform for transactional and marketing emails used by over 80,000 companies
• **Amazon SES** and **Amazon Pinpoint**, cloud-based email sending and analytics services for transactional and marketing emails

• More are in progress, so contact your email service providers to find out if they support AMP emails.

**Cross-Client Rendering**

You need to ensure your emails are rendering well on multiple different email clients/browser combinations. Certain email clients (such as Outlook) tend to break email rendering.

There are a number of services out there that will help you check this. You can send a test email to the service platform and they will let you view what your email looks like in multiple different clients and browsers.
Images

Images, of course, are a huge part of an engaging email design. In this section, we will cover the critical elements of image selection, modification, and incorporation into email designs.

**Hero Image**

Hero images typically span the entire width of the email template (600~640 pixels usually). The height varies, but often times it’s smaller so users can see the body content above the fold.

Also, hero images should gracefully scale down for mobile viewers. Therefore, the text and buttons on these images should be big and clear, allowing them to be easily viewable on a mobile phone screen.

Alt text is often used for the hero image as well, typically stylized to fit the design of the template. Additionally, adding a background color to the hero image block (for when images are blocked) can be a powerful tool for maintaining the visual styling of the template despite image blocking.
CHAPTER 3: Create Engaging Emails

HAPPY FATHER’S DAY

Celebrate Your Dad’s Special Day with Fashionable Boots
**Product Images**

Product images are images featuring a store’s products. We like to feature these in many of our email campaigns, since they drive users to click through and actually browse and purchase the products.

Product images can be accompanied by the product name, link, pricing (sale and normal), and call-to-action button.

**How Do We Use Product Images?**

Typically, we either introduce product images as the main image (in cases when we are focusing on a singular product or a small set of products) or as product “tiles” that lie beneath the body copy of emails.
Banner Images

A banner image is a narrow (height-wise) image that we use as a secondary call-to-action in our emails. It is commonly placed in the middle or close to the bottom of an email.

Keep in mind, when we say banner “image,” it may not necessarily be an image, but rather a stylized HTML code that looks like a banner.

How Do We Use Banner Images?

We usually use banner images to introduce a secondary call-to-action deviating from the primary CTA of the email, but nevertheless directing the user to a desired valuable action. This can be directing to a category landing page or sale landing page, referring a friend, sharing on social media, etc.
Logos

We want to place logos of our clients at the top of the email, underneath the preheader and above the header navigation. Or, if it’s short, in line with the header navigation.

Logos should be clear but not too big – we don’t want the entirety of the space above the fold taken up by the logo. Logos should be linked to the homepage of the client’s website.

Typically, logos are either centered or left-aligned.

We need to use high resolution images for logos so they aren’t pixelated. Also, the aspect ratio should be consistent so it doesn’t stretch or shrink the logo.

Icons

We typically use social media icons in the footer of emails. You can also use other icons, such as checkmarks, where appropriate. If you want to get royalty-free icons, you can look at free icon sites such as Icon Archive or design custom-made branded icons.

Video and Animations

Did you know that including the word "video" in your subject line can increase email open rates by 200-300%? Here are some of our top tips on the best use of videos in your emails:

- **Static Image with a Play Button**
  Instead of embedding your video directly or with HTML, add a thumbnail image of the video that links to the video on your website. Make sure that the thumbnail image captures the most exciting moment of your video and shows off its best features.
CHAPTER 3: Create Engaging Emails

100 wells for the holidays

This holiday season, we're putting a dent in the water crisis in Ethiopia. Watch the video, and learn how you can help.

WATCH THE VIDEO »
• **GIF Teaser**  
  Alternatively, you can embed a GIF preview depicting the spirit of your video in the email, and then add a link to the full video available on your website.

Note that in older versions of Outlook and on Windows Phone 7, only the first framework of a GIF is shown, so make sure it is a good one.
• **Keep File Size Small**  
  Make sure you keep the images and GIF files small, under 125 KB.

• **Use GIFs in Moderation**  
  GIFs can be fun, but they can also distract the email reader. Make sure you stick to one animated GIF in your email and make sure it drives attention to the email element that matters the most.

• **Know Your Audience**  
  Before you decide whether to use videos in your emails, make sure you know who your audience for that email is. Ask yourself the following questions:
  
  • what would be the best visual format for that audience,
  
  • would they watch a video,
  
  • what is the best video content for your audience,
  
  • and run a few A/B tests to decide what works best to achieve your email goals.

### Personalize Your Emails

As subscribers get fatigued by the increasing volume of emails in their inbox, email personalization becomes the only choice for your marketing emails. Nowadays, customers are expecting relevant, custom tailored, and useful emails. Here are our top 5 email personalization tips to increase customer engagement:

1. **Start by Using Customer’s First Name** – This is the first personalization step. We like it when someone addresses us by our name – it makes us feel valued.

   While the exact syntax varies, most Email Service Providers (ESPs) allow you to automatically show a subscriber’s first name.
You can use the first name field in several places in your emails:

- As a part of the email intro, such as “Hello, FIRSTNAME! We’ve missed you!”
- In the email recipient TO: field, such as “TO: Jess <jess@example.com>”
- Or, you can include the subscriber’s first name in the subject line.

Using the first name and personalized subject line is not enough. While it is a good starting point, it is important to incorporate the following methods as well.

2. Use Dynamic Content for Effective Personalization – Nowadays, subscribers have low tolerance for irrelevant emails in their inboxes. If you keep sending them emails with products they aren’t interested in, you risk losing a perfect lead.

Dynamic content is a type of content that helps companies send different emails based on the interests or past behavior of clients. It also helps companies save time by sending relevant emails to their subscribers all at once.

For example, a global brand could offer a subscriber promoted products from the nearest local shop, based on their location. A brand that offers clothes could have images and text that changes depending on the subscriber’s gender – emails with different content will be sent to men and women.

As your customers learn that your emails are always relevant to them, your click-through rate will improve and your ROI will increase.

3. Recommend Products Your Customers Will Love – It would be great if customers bought anything we recommended to them. But, in reality, they only buy recommended products that are similar to previous purchases or relevant to their preferences.

With the help of ESPs, you can integrate recent purchases or the browsing history of your customers into your email marketing. By increasing the relevance of your emails, you will see your sales upscale.
Here is a good visual example of recommended products:

4. **Personalize Cart Abandonment Emails** – People lose $4 trillion of revenue every year through cart abandonment. The good news is that you can recapture 65% of the customers that left the shopping cart within 24 hours; the emails sent within 60 minutes of cart abandonment have the highest open rate of 40%.

By personalizing your Cart Abandonment Emails, your customers receive the most relevant content and experience. Different issues can cause customers to abandon their shopping carts. Offer a discount on the items in the cart, offer free shipping, or suggest helping them with the process.

*This way, you will optimize the message* to the highest effectiveness and motivate your customers to recover their carts – your lost sales.

5. **Generate Creative, Personalized Re-Engagement Emails** – It is your duty to identify the inactive subscribers and then remind them how great you are in a brief, effective way.
CHAPTER 3: Create Engaging Emails

This is your chance to deliver relevant content accompanied by a personalized offer or incentive to inspire them to re-engage with your brand. Personalized re-engagement emails increase customer retention, outstripping the basic engaging messages. Therefore, pick attractive subject lines and send captivating content with a CTA button to lead your subscribers to an action again.
Personalizing Emails with Dynamic Content Blocks

What Are Dynamic Content Blocks

Dynamic content blocks are pieces of the email template displaying content which changes for different users based on a set of factors. This differs from the typical email templates that are “static,” i.e. not changing, which display the same content to all users.

Types of Dynamic Content Blocks

Personalization Variables

These variables are the values of properties tied to the contact’s profile. A few common examples:

First Name

```
{{first_name|default:'Hey'}},
```

We really appreciate your continued business!

Don’t forget to show us what you’re working on!

We love seeing all the different things our customers build. We love to see photos! You can email us or share them on your favorite social network.

Points Balance

```
Reward credit balance: $12.30
```

REDEEM
Conditional Variable Blocks

Conditional variable blocks are based on custom or default variables associated with the contacts. Some examples:

*Displays Contact's First Name*: Hi %FirstName%

*Displays if Contact is VIP vs. Not VIP*: 
{% if vip="true" %}
You are one of our best customers, here’s a 20% off coupon just for you: VIP20.
{%elseif%}
Here’s a 10% off coupon just for you: 10OFF
{%endif%}

*Displays Local Store Info:*

---

THE REI DIFFERENCE | 100% SATISFACTION GUARANTEED | GEAR & ADVICE YOU CAN TRUST | 10% MEMBER DIVIDEND

VISIT OUR IN-STORE EXPERTS
REI Corte Madera
213 Corte Madera Town Ctr
Corte Madera, CA 94925
415-927-1938

January 16, 2016
This email was sent to trenews2015@yahoo.com.

Subscribe, Unsubscribe or Change Your Email Address and Preferences at any time.
Or, unsubscribe by replying to this message with "unsubscribe" as the subject line.
For information about our privacy practices, see our privacy policy.

Have a question, comment, concern or compliment? We’ll respond quickest if you call (800) 426-4845, email or write to
REI Membership Services at REI, 8760 S. 228th St., Kent, WA 98032.
RSS Blog Article Feed:
Looped Blocks

You can loop through variables in certain ESPs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Product Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Custom-Made Xero Shoes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Review Item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom FeelTrue Outsoles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xero Laces</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Review Item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hole Punch Included</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Product Recommendation Blocks

Product recommendation blocks are very useful in email templates, as they allow you to personalize recommendations and drive conversions. One way to do this is with product feeds in Klaviyo:

Real-Time Content Blocks

Real-time content can be powerful for driving engagement rates up.

Countdown Timer:
CHAPTER 3: Create Engaging Emails

Social Media Feed:

**Live Twitter Feed**
Tweet with #TEDC15 and refresh to see your tweet in the stream!

- **superwebster** @24055700 • Dec 5
  Save the date for #TEDC15 in Boston (Aug 26-28) and London (Sept 28-29)
  https://t.co/hCNa4nD5p @litmusapp

- **Leo** @eseleon • Dec 4
  Holy table cells! This tweet is appearing in a live dynamic twitter feed in email for #TEDC15
  https://t.co/txNPZtwjJn

- **display block** @displayblock • Dec 3
  Check out @omgitsonlyalex's talk on Email production at #TEDC15
  https://t.co/0Vn6aKVsoq https://t.co/0r78vFmTwy

- **Seiligent** @seiligent • Dec 3
  See our recap of the amazing Litmus Email Design Conference 2015 in London
  https://t.co/08TXO0rvcz #TEDC15 https://t.co/DJJTwgCk1W
CHAPTER 3: Create Engaging Emails

Weather Feed:

What’s Behind Your Dog’s Behavior?

You know your dog better than anyone, but do you know what’s really behind his behavior? From the way he wags his tail to what he really thinks when you leave him at home, we’re debunking 5 common myths about dog behavior here.

5 Day Dog Walking Forecast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>WEATHER</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
<th>LOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRIDAY</td>
<td>MOSTLY CLOUDY</td>
<td>61°F</td>
<td>37°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATURDAY</td>
<td>CLEAR</td>
<td>60°F</td>
<td>38°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNDAY</td>
<td>CHANGE OF RAIN</td>
<td>61°F</td>
<td>49°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONDAY</td>
<td>THUNDERSTORM</td>
<td>70°F</td>
<td>53°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUESDAY</td>
<td>CHANGE OF RAIN</td>
<td>56°F</td>
<td>42°F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just Right on Instagram

#justrightpetfood

See More Unique Dogs 😊
Chapter 4: Create a Content Calendar

When making campaigns, you should make a yearly calendar to know exactly what kind of emails you want to send, and when. Your email content calendar should include:

- Holidays: gifting holidays, general holidays, high season
- Events: pop-up shops, contests, news
- Promotions: discounts, shipping offers, flash sales
- Content: blog posts, videos, user-generated content
- Recurring emails: featured products, seasonal category, the product of the month
Here’s an example of the content your campaign calendar might include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deployment Date/Time</th>
<th>Campaign Theme</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Subject Line</th>
<th>Link</th>
<th>Target Subscribers</th>
<th>A/B Test</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 9</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Scheduled</td>
<td>What Are Metal Prints?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency Tier 1</td>
<td>8 a.m. vs. 6 p.m.</td>
<td>1st test of these send times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 a.m. EST</td>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency Tier 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 p.m. EST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 15</td>
<td>15% off Matt</td>
<td>In development</td>
<td>Get 15% Off Matt Boards!</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency Tier 1</td>
<td>Timer vs. no timer</td>
<td>Add a countdown timer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 a.m.</td>
<td>Boards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency Tier 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EXCLUDE Last 30 Days Purchases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 17</td>
<td>15% off Matt</td>
<td>Not started</td>
<td>Last Chance for 15% Off Matt Boards</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency Tier 1</td>
<td>With vs. without emoji</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 a.m.</td>
<td>Boards [Resend]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency Tier 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EXCLUDE Last 30 Days Purchases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How Often Should You Email Your Subscribers?**

If you send too often, you risk alienating your list and generating too high of a contact loss rate, driving your list engagement down. If you send too infrequently, you can leave a lot of money on the table by not capturing the revenue potential of your email list.

A strategic approach to this email sending frequency dilemma is to send at a higher frequency to your most engaged/active subscribers and at a lower frequency to the less active subscribers.

To discover the right frequency, you’ll need to create tests for different segments. You want to see which segments can sustain higher frequencies, and which ones result in lower frequencies. Start by sending 4 to 6 emails per month, plus resends.
The next step will be to segment your list into frequency tiers based on behavior. This includes open rate, click rate, number of emails received, and time since the last order.

If a subscriber becomes disengaged and falls below a tier threshold, they will drop to a lower frequency tier. If a user becomes dormant, they will join a Re-Engagement Series. If that doesn’t work, the subscriber will be moved to a non-engaged group and get suppressed.

**Email Resends**

Email resends can normally generate 50% of the original email’s revenue. In rare instances, they may even outperform the original email’s revenue.

Resends of email campaigns can be a powerful tool to:

a) get additional revenue from a campaign
b) get an extra send from the same amount of initial work of creating the campaign.

At the core, a resend is sending an almost identical campaign to a portion of the original target list.

Usually, resends have the following characteristics:

- Sent a few days after the original campaign
- Sent to those subscribers who did not open (most common), did not click (less common), or did not order (uncommon) from the original campaign. In certain situations, resends may go out to the entire original list
- Have a different subject line and preheader than the original campaign. The subject line and/or preheader may stress a sense of urgency in the case of a sale with an expiration date. For example: Don’t Forget, Ends Soon, Last Chance, etc.
- Same or very similar full content of the email campaign to the original campaign
What Is Email Marketing Automation?

Email Marketing Automation is an ecosystem of tools and mechanisms that help automate ongoing conversations with customers and maintain the delivery of a high degree of personalized content. This allows you to ensure subscribers receive tailored content they will want to read.

Why Should I Use Email Marketing Automations?

According to the Lenskold and Pedowitz Group, the companies that send automated emails are 133% more likely to send relevant messages corresponding to a customer’s purchase cycle. Automated emails significantly affect open and click-through rates, as proven in an Epsilon Email Institute study of 340 million emails across multiple industries. This study shows that triggered emails have a 70.5% higher open rate and a 152% higher click-through rate than generic email newsletters.

There are five primary reasons every business should use email marketing automations:

• Highly segmented email lists that are automatically updated based on user data

• Conversion of potential customers into actual customers

• Easy, continuous engagement with potential and existing customers
• Increase of efficiency by automating repetitive tasks associated with customer relationship management

• Improvement of engagement by delivering more relevant, personalized, and timely messages to subscribers

How Email Marketing Automations Work

Automated emails are premade emails that are triggered to be sent if your subscriber performed or didn’t perform an action. They are “triggered” by certain events – usually a behavior by a contact – such as making a purchase, abandoning a cart, or signing up to a list.
Prospect Sequence

Prospect Welcome

This email welcomes your subscribers to your email list. It is targeted towards non-customers and the focus is to deliver on the incentive you used to entice them to give you their email address.

Top Products

This email is usually a part of the Prospect Series targeted towards non-customers. The goal is to showcase a set of popular products as a direct CTA to purchase.

Social Proof

The Social Proof Email uses customer testimonials and other user-generated content to boost trust. Instead of directly selling, this email is meant to approach the prospect from a different angle, so as to generate enough trust to get the purchase.

Customer Favorites

A similar concept as the Social Proof Email, you can showcase the products with the most favorable reviews to further cement the buying decision.

Top Resources

The Top Resources Email showcases your top pieces of content regarding your products. This is another soft-sell piece that tries to build up a perception of expertise, which in turn can influence the purchase decision.

Incentive Reminder

The Incentive Reminder Email is the last email in the sequence. It reminds your prospects (those who have not purchased) to use the coupon code incentive to purchase.
You can also include an element of urgency in this email to further drive action.

**Browse Abandonment**

**Category Affinity**

The Category Affinity Email is sent to contacts one day after they visit a particular category or subcategory level page on your website. The idea is to target visitors with a follow-up email displaying products within the category they visited on the website, as they are more likely to purchase those. This email requires a URL tracking ability in your email service provider.

**Product Affinity**

The Product Affinity Email is sent to contacts one day after they visit a particular product page on your website. The idea is to target visitors with a follow-up email displaying the product they viewed, as well as related products, as they are more likely to purchase those. This email requires a URL tracking ability in your email service provider.

**Cart Abandonment Sequence**

The Cart Abandonment Sequence is one of the most effective email sequences within your email marketing arsenal. We regularly see high engagement and conversion rates on Shopping Cart Abandonment Emails. It’s not uncommon to see open rates greater than 50% and conversion rates greater than 15% on these emails. The purpose of the Cart Abandonment Email Sequence is to send a timely reminder to people who initiated the checkout process on your site but have not completed it. The goal is to “save” a portion of the people who would have otherwise abandoned the checkout altogether and never converted.
CHAPTER 5: Automate Your Emails

Post-Purchase Sequence

Order Confirmation

The Order Confirmation Email is a transactional type of email that is sent right after a contact completes a purchase. While you need to follow the rules for transactional emails (they cannot contain too much marketing), there are still opportunities to drive click-throughs back to your site and recommend products. We often see additional, immediate repurchases coming from the order confirmation.

Shipping Confirmation

The Shipping Confirmation Email is usually the top-opened email in your arsenal (often opened multiple times by your contacts). Thus, this email is a prime opportunity to drive additional purchases or secondary calls-to-action.

New Customer Welcome

The New Customer Welcome Email is sent out after the first-time purchase by a new customer. This email is sent immediately, up to 1 hour after purchase. The goal of the email is to deliver the post-purchase “thank you” message and drive additional actions, such as taking a survey (to obtain data for future segmentation), sharing with friends, and participating in brand-advocating activities.

Repeat Customer Welcome

The Repeat Customer Welcome Email is similar to the New Customer Welcome Email, except that it’s targeted towards repeat buyers. This means the contact has made at least one purchase from you in the past. Thus, the content of the email is geared heavily towards enticing them to help spread the word about your brand, since it’s likely they have more attachment towards your store if they are purchasing more than once.
Brand Engagement

The Brand Engagement Email is sent a few days after the purchase and is focused on growing your social media subscribers, as well as driving new purchasers to your other content properties, such as your blog, forums, and communities.

Product Review Request

The Product Review Request is sent after the purchase, asking for a product review from your customers. We've found that product reviews not only generate many more product reviews (which indirectly helps your conversions), but they can also generate several purchases.

Reorder/Product Recommendation

The Reorder or Product Recommendation Email is sent out 30 to 60 (or more) days after the purchase, and it focuses on a) the specific product to try and get a reorder of (if consumable), or b) cross and up-sell other related products. The products and recommendations will ideally be dynamic.

General Repurchase Reminder

The General Repurchase Reminder is targeted towards post-purchase customers after a longer delay. The idea is to aim for a repurchase in case the previous reorder/product recommendation email was too specific.

Best Customer Email

The Best Customer Email is sent to a segment of your list we identify as “VIPs.” The criteria used may vary, but should include a combination of total order value, the number of lifetime orders, and engagement rates.
Birthday Email

The Birthday Email is sent either shortly before or on the day of your contact’s birthday. This email uses the relevancy of the event to push some sort of an offer, which entices purchases.

Back-in-Stock Email

The Back-in-Stock Email is an email sent to specific subscribers who opted in to be notified when a particular product is back in stock. These emails tend to have high conversion rates and are important if your store has items that frequently run out of stock.
Segment Your Email List

Email segmentation is at the core of effective email marketing. Segmented messaging has been proven to generate more engagement, increase sales conversions, and reduce subscriber churn.

Segmentation is a hot topic, but marketers are still often confused in terms of where to start. Once they get the basic levels going, they don’t know how to deepen their segmentation and targeting opportunities.

Why Do You Need to Segment Your Subscribers?

To begin with, why would you need to deal with segmentation? Basically, it has been proven that segmented messaging, as opposed to mass messaging, generates more engagement through opens and clicks, as well as increases sales conversions. If you are sending more relevant messages to individual groups within your subscriber base, then you will generate more positive metrics across the board. In this case, fewer people will get annoyed with your message or unsubscribe.

How to Build a Subscriber Profile

Oftentimes, we have incomplete data about our subscribers. We can use a variety of tactics for piecing together a complete profile of each subscriber. For example, if you have an email capture form on your website asking only for an email address, first name, and last name, you’ll only be receiving very basic pieces of information.
CHAPTER 6: Segment and Optimize Your Emails

So, here are a couple of ways to start building a subscriber profile:

- **Reverse Appending** – using external data providers to fill in demographic and personal information based on your file of email addresses
- **Behavioral Cues** – utilizing a subscriber’s behavior, such as which links they click, what pages they view, and what category or type of products they purchased, to build a better understanding of their profile
- **Prediction Engines** – product-based or subscriber-based prediction algorithms that use past history, as well as related characteristics, to show predictive content
- **User-Submitted Info** – info gathered through surveys, feedback forms, preference centers, etc. This is quite reliable, but it is often harder to obtain, as it requires a very engaged contact to take additional action.

**Email Segmentation Tactics**

Now that we have the methods to build our subscriber profile, let’s jump to actual types of segmentation and concrete samples on how to utilize each type of segmentation.

1. **Location Segmentation** – Location segmentation utilizes information about a subscriber’s current or historical physical location for the purposes of targeting your messages.

There are a couple of ways to determine your customers’ location:

- Geo-IP based on metadata during email opens/clicks
- Billing or shipping addresses
- Country-level domains

Here are some sample uses that we usually employ at [Essence of Email](#). It is not a full set of possibilities, but rather ideas on how to utilize this segmentation within your email marketing program:
• Sending campaigns based on the recipient’s time zone
• Sending local event or pop-up store notifications
• Excluding locations from shipping promotions
• Options for faster delivery times
• Localized language or holiday campaigns
• Local compliance activities, such as opt-in requirements

2. **Affinity Segmentation** – Affinity segmentation refers to grouping subscribers based on them gravitating towards a certain product, type of message, values (speed of delivery, customer experience, product quality, price), etc.

Here are some sample ideas of what you can segment across:

• Purchased product A, but not product B – opportunity to cross-sell

• Viewed specific product or category

• Sensitivity to promotion types (shipping offers vs. $ discounts vs. % discounts vs. free gift with purchase, etc.). Measured by opens/clicks and browsing behavior on these promotions.

• Affinity towards content type – new arrivals, blog content, social updates, contests, etc. If clicked on hairstyles video, send additional hair resources email.

• Combining behaviors, i.e. purchased Men’s watch or Men’s cufflinks AND viewed Men’s category AND selected interested in Men’s accessories = Men’s affinity segment

• You are not really restricted to only building segments on one criterion
• You can combine different criteria, like demographics, behavior patterns, or other information you have to construct relevant segments for your messaging.

3. Activity Segmentation – Activity segmentation measures how often a subscriber takes a positive or negative action regarding your store or communication, such as opening emails, making purchases, and visiting the website.

Sample uses:

• Active on site within the last week, but did not make a purchase – retarget them through email and Facebook

• Inactive (no opens/clicks) within the last 6 months – send a Re-Engagement Email with plain text for a higher chance of reactivating them

• Opens emails infrequently – send to them once per month

• Opens emails frequently – send to them once per week

• Purchased twice over lifetime – alert them if they purchase once more, they’ll qualify for VIP group

• Purchased thrice over lifetime – qualifies for VIP group, receives VIP perks (early promotions, new product announcements, double entries into contests, free loyalty points)

• Makes a referral – gets loyalty points to be redeemed for product or coupon

• Collects redeemable amount of points – receives notification for redemption options
4. Technology Segmentation – Everyone has a bunch of different devices, like laptops, desktops, mobiles, tablets, and, of course, different email addresses. Someone might be on Yahoo, Gmail, Outlook, or a different email app for viewing their emails. Technology segmentation helps you understand how subscribers are viewing your emails and how to provide them with the best user experience.

Technology segmentation looks at a subscriber’s email-viewing device (mobile/desktop/tablet), as well as their email address domain and their email client to determine how to display messages and/or tailor content in the best way.

Sample uses:

- Mobile-first templates for mobile users
- Only sending to engaged Gmail subscribers, while being laxer with non-Gmail domains (Gmail weighs heavily on engagement metrics)
- Code optimizations for MS Outlook

5. Acquisition Channel Segmentation – Acquisition channel segmentation looks at dividing subscribers based on how they entered the email list. In short, it is all about the source of the subscriber acquisition and how to utilize this to segment your messaging correctly.

Here are a couple of examples:

- Sweepstakes or contest subscribers receive a much more concentrated sequence of Welcome Emails with a shorter delay
- First-time customers receive a Post-Purchase Flow
- Repeat customers receive more personal messaging, incentives, calls-to-action to promote the brand
- Blog subscribers get more content-focused emails and fewer direct sales-based emails
• Suppressing Amazon.com customers for compliance reasons

Run A/B Tests

Even small changes in your email campaigns can have a big impact on the results. Therefore, A/B testing is very important in creating segments and delivering relevant messages.

Before you start your test, you need to decide what you will test. The list of testing variables is rather long and includes:

• CTAs
• Preheader
• Subject lines
• Design of specific elements in the message
• Images
• Personalization
• Product offer

Most email softwares have native A/B testing features, but you can also split your email list in two and send each list a different version of your email. Make sure you always test one variable at a time in your A/B tests.

Check out our A/B tests, along with an analysis of the results and interpretation of the findings.
According to Litmus’ 2018 State of Email Survey, only 30% of brands can measure the ROI of their email marketing efforts well or very well.

**Chapter 7: Calculate Your Email Marketing ROI**

70% of Brands Can’t Measure Email Marketing ROI Well

![Bar chart](image)

- **Very poorly**: 10.6%
- **Poorly**: 27.6%
- **Adequately**: 31.9%
- **Well**: 17.8%
- **Very Well**: 12.1%

1,506 respondents

How to Calculate Your Email ROI

**ROI Formula 1**

Start by calculating the revenue from your email customers. Most ESPs will allow you to easily see revenue of the called over a certain period.

The next step is to calculate your email cost, i.e. marketing investment. Every cost item you have that helped and supported the content you promote through your email channel should be included in the calculation. This includes the cost of creating the content, marketing, design, CRM systems, license fees, email marketing agency, etc. – all of this goes into the second part calculation.

ROI equals the revenue within a certain period divided by the cost.

\[
\text{ROI} \% = \frac{\text{Revenue}}{\text{Cost}}
\]

**ROI Formula 2**

This is a more complex calculation that gives you the true success of ROI of your email marketing channel by product.

Take the net value of your products for a certain period, deduct the total marketing investment for that specific period, see your profit, and divide it by your total marketing investment. That will give you the following formula:

\[
\text{ROI} \% = \frac{\text{Profit}}{\text{Cost (Marketing Investment)}}
\]
You can do the calculation per campaign, per automated email, per other specific emails, per segment, or other criteria.

Now that you know how to calculate your company's email ROI, compare it to the ROI you get from other marketing channels, as well as to the average ROI for other companies in your industry. Check your email marketing key metrics against industry averages, and if they are lower than what you would prefer, there's a lot you can do to improve them!
Chapter 8: Email Marketing Laws

It’s often easy to neglect the legal aspects of email marketing while striving for higher engagement rates, more attractive creative, and a more stable revenue flow. After all, it’s just a bunch of email addresses – what can go wrong, right?

Well, according to worldwide legislators, plenty! The neverending quest for tighter privacy control, coupled with consumers’ aversion to aggressive marketing, resulted in strict laws against spam messages, unsolicited marketing, and other shady practices.

United States

The American Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act (CAN-SPAM) of 2003 avoids defining spam, with the rationale being that “commercial electronic mail message” and “transactional or relationship message” represents a structure protected by the Act. It is implied that anything going against that structure can be considered spam. This also helped solve an earlier problem, where individual states defined spam by number (“bulk”), content (“commercial”), or using the term “unsolicited”, which left much of the attacks unpunished.

The CAN-SPAM act defines commercial electronic mail messages as “any electronic mail message the primary purpose of which is the commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service (including content on an Internet website operated for a commercial purpose).”
Without going into too many details around the mechanisms behind each of the demands the CAN-SPAM Act puts before email marketers, what follows are the basic principles that need to be upheld to avoid having your emails marked as spam:

- **Don't use false or misleading header information**
  Your “From”, “To”, “Reply-To”, and routing information – including the originating domain name and email address – must be accurate and identify the person or business who initiated the message.

- **Don't use deceptive subject lines**
  The subject line must accurately reflect the content of the message.

- **Identify the message as an ad**
  The law gives you a lot of leeway in how to do this, but you must disclose clearly and conspicuously that your message is an advertisement.

- **Tell recipients where you’re located**
  Your message must include your valid physical postal address. This can be your current street address, a post office box you’ve registered with the U.S. Postal Service, or a private mailbox you’ve registered with a commercial mail receiving agency established under Postal Service regulations.

- **Tell recipients how to opt out of receiving future emails from you**
  Your message must include a clear and conspicuous explanation of how the recipient can opt out of getting emails from you in the future. Craft the notice in a way that’s easy for an ordinary person to recognize, read, and understand. Give a return email address or another easy Internet-based way to allow people to communicate their choice to you.

- **Honor opt-out requests promptly**
  Any opt-out mechanism you offer must be able to process opt-out requests for at least 30 days after you send your message. You must honor a recipient’s opt-out request within 10 business days. Once people have told you they don’t want to receive more messages from you, you can’t sell or transfer their email addresses, even in the form of a mailing list. The only exception is that you may transfer the addresses to a company you’ve hired to help you comply with the CAN-SPAM Act.
• Monitor what others are doing on your behalf
  The law makes clear that even if you hire another company to handle your email marketing, you can’t contract away your legal responsibility to comply with the law. Both the company whose product is promoted in the message and the company that actually sends the message may be held legally responsible

• Penalties
  Each separate email in violation of the CAN-SPAM Act is subject to penalties of up to $42,530, so non-compliance can be costly. Make sure you follow these basic guidelines to avoid problems with US authorities!

Sources:

Federal Trade Commission Website

Definitions and Implementation Under the CAN-SPAM Act

Canada

The Canadian Anti-Spam Law (CASL) defines a Commercial Electronic Message (CEM) as “any electronic message that encourages participation in a commercial activity, such as an email that contains a coupon or tells customers about a promotion or sale.” In terms of applicability, this law is applicable to “all communications sent by Canadian companies, to Canadian companies or messages simply routed through Canadian servers.”

The conditions this law imposes on email marketers are, for the most part, similar to those that exist in the CAN-SPAM Act, so we won’t cover them in great detail here. Having your phone number or email available in a public registry.
• Suffice it to say that, just like the CAN-SPAM Act, this law requires either implicit or explicit consent by the recipient before sending them any commercial emails. Implicit content, however, can be as vague as having your phone number or email available in a public registry.

• Penalties
  The CASL threatens punishment of up to $10 million for companies and officers found guilty of being negligent towards its provisions.

More on Canada’s Anti-Spam Law.

European Union

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) brought in significant changes in the way companies can market to Europeans, and it made email marketers dedicate special attention to the way they’ve been processing personal information belonging to their European subscribers.

Besides making some of the previously mentioned demands more strict, the biggest change GDPR brought to the table concerns consent. Consent is no longer viewed as implied or explicit. Instead, the GDPR defines consent required for legal data processing as “freely given, specific, informed, and unambiguous”, proceeding to define what each of the adjectives would mean in practice.

For email marketing, this means that soft opt-ins and opt-outs are no longer an option for European contacts. This lead to most marketers establishing a strong double opt-in mechanism, where site visitors are first asked if they want to subscribe to receive emails, and then asked again to confirm their decision in more clear terms.
• **Penalties**
  As with other regulations, a big part of the GDPR is dedicated to sanctions, with fines of up to $20 million or 4% of yearly revenue (whichever is greater).

For more information, visit the [EU GDPR website](#).

---

**Australia**

In Australia, email marketing is regulated by the [Spam Act 2003](#) (‘the Spam Act’), and the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is responsible for enforcing it.

The regulations focus on three key areas:

- **The recipient must first consent** to receive commercial electronic messages before a business can send them any email material. When collecting personal data, it is also a good practice to provide a link to your company’s privacy policy, which should explain what you intend to do with the collected information.

- **The recipient needs to be able to contact the email sender**, so make sure your company’s identity and contact information are available.

- **An unsubscribe option must be included in all emails.**

- **Penalties**
  Sanctions include fines of up to $1,800,000.
Choosing the right email marketing agency for your company is never an easy task. Based on our years of experience and many clients, we compiled a list of ten things to consider when you’re on the lookout for the right partner to make your email marketing dreams come true.

Take a look at our list!

1. **Look for Someone Who Can Provide Custom Solutions** – There are no generic problems in email marketing, so there can’t be any generic solutions either.

2. **Value and Transparency** – Stay away from agencies who are eager to get more than they are eager to give.

3. **Their Past Work** – Always ask to see examples or case studies of the previous work the agency has done.

4. **Your Budget vs. Agency Pricing** – Look for an agency that has scalable services and provides quotes based on your business needs.

5. **Keeps Its Work In-House** – While you’re looking to outsource your email marketing efforts, it’s a bad idea to hire an agency that is looking to do the same.

6. **Not Afraid to Push Their Team Front and Center** – A great email marketing agency is made up of a team with diverse talents and expertise.
7. **They Come Highly Recommended** – Research, read case studies and testimonials, and look for reviews about a possible agency.

8. **What Kind of Content Are They Providing for Their Website Visitors?** – If an agency’s content is stale, outdated, or not of high quality, you might want to move away.

9. **Strategy vs. Execution** – While some agencies may entice you with their analytical and strategizing skills, ask for evidence that they are strong on the execution side as well.

10. **How Do You Feel About Them?** – When all is said and done, give yourself a minute and compile all these impressions into a clear vision of how you see your possible partner.

Hopefully, you’ve got a variety of good ideas to work on and you broadened your horizons in terms of how you think about email marketing, and how far you can go with the possibilities here. Just keep in mind that none of these can happen on day one, but as you move your email program forward, either by yourself or with a professional agency, you can continue to grow loyal and repeat email marketing customers.
Chapter 10: Glossary

**AMP** – Accelerated Mobile Pages

**Automations** – Event or user-behavior “triggered” emails that are largely automated

**Campaign** – ESP’s manually-deployed, “one-time” marketing emails
DKIM (DomainKeys + Identified Mail) – Allows the receiver to check that an email claimed to have come from a specific domain was indeed authorized by the owner of that domain.

**DNS** – Domain Name System

**DMARC** (Domain-Based Message Authentication, Reporting, and Conformance) – Helps email receivers determine if the purported message “aligns” with what the receiver knows about the sender.

**ESP** – Email service provider, which is the software platform for sending marketing emails
ISP – Providers of email addresses/inboxes, such as Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo mail, etc.

**SEO** – Search Engine Optimization

**QA** – Quality Assurance

**SPF** (Sender Policy Framework) – Directly maps sending IP address to whether or not on list of allowed senders