

A lesson for better Email Open Rates





The success of your email newsletters and campaigns is hinged upon the open rates achieved –the more emails opened, the higher the potential that people will take the action you expect. Consultants currently regard as highly successful campaigns those that achieve an open rate of about 18 percent and a click-through rate of 4-5 percent. An e-newsletter should aim to a 50 percent open rate. However, the bar is raised as email marketing continues to expand. Understandably, when your open rates stumble and fall, you panic. You'd like to stop this from happening, of course.

We will examine here several key factors to better open rates.

The first impression certainly counts

Two seemingly trivial components of your message, the “Subject” and the “From” lines are, on the contrary, fundamental to your success in enhancing email open rates. The recipients must clearly and easily recognize the name and/or brand in your “From” line, and the “Subject” line should persuade most of these recipients to open your message immediately. So make it a point to be creative with the language you use and to personalize your subject lines in ways that encourage recipients to open the message.

Get close and personal

You want recipients to welcome your newsletters and messages of course --but do you know their interests? Have you checked their purchase history? Are you sure that the product or service you are offering is relevant to that particular recipient? No? Well, it is basic that you are familiar with this information if you want to avoid having the ‘door’ to your recipient’s inbox ‘shut in your face’. You need to create and nurture a relationship with your recipients, just as you would in a regular ‘brick and mortar’ operation. Learn about their interests and check their purchase history. Make your business and brands clearly recognizable in your message. Have an actual member of your executive team lend his/her personality to your newsletter. You want recipients to come to expect your messages, to miss them if they don’t come. You want them to feel compelled to open the message as soon as they see it...

Mind your content...

Did we say it is important that your recipients come to expect your messages? Are you aware of the number of e-newsletters circulating through the ‘net –and the overall number of e-messages an average person has to deal with on a daily basis? Well, you know then that content rules. You must consider content, however, in terms of its value, its relevance to the recipient and the nature of the vehicle delivering it, as well as according to the relationship between your business and the recipient.

When considering the relevance and nature of your messages, you should start by checking the composition of your mailing list. Bundling up stay-at-home moms, home-based workers and home bound adults in the same mailing list might not be in your best interest in terms of open rates if you are sending an e-newsletter that includes an offer for business attire, a column on water-fountain politics, a list of trendy eateries offering affordable executive menus, and a cartoon featuring an angry commuter.

You want to promote high open rates, as well as create and/or build a business relationship with your recipients --not that recipients drag you and your messages to their trash bin ASAP.

Do not do unto others...

Why your recipient receives your messages is also critical to your open rates.

Did he/she give you his/her email address at the time of an occasional purchase and was it automatically added to your house list? Did he/she visit your website and opted-in to receive your messages? Is your site an e-commerce site that provides opt-in/opt-out options for offers, notices and newsletters to customers and this person opted-in?

If the recipient has not proactively subscribed to your mailings or if they find your mailings irrelevant to their needs and interests, you can certainly expect that they will not add much to your open rates.

Ward off spam filter traps

Being a legitimate opt-in email sender, you know that you have to deal with the fact that many of your perfectly legitimate messages are still stopped and bounced back by ISP and corporation filters. But did you know about filters in email client software that don't report when your message is tossed, undelivered, directly into the recipient's Junk, Trash or Deleted folder? This is the case with Microsoft's Outlook. The software's junk filter scans messages for words or symbols in the subject line and body text of the message and dumps it unread in the trash when it finds a questionable one. However, the message is still counted as delivered... To reduce the problem with this particular software, avoid using in your mailings the words listed on <http://office.microsoft.com/Assistance/9798/newfilters.aspx>

Keep your list healthy –it will always take you a long way

Purging names from your mailing list as often as possible, removing the addresses that bounce back and never render an open, click-through or reply to your messages will keep your mailbox clean and healthy. Work on your list often. Browse it. Dissect it.

Consider different target segments –by occupation, by email client, by gender, by date of subscription. Ponder on what they have in common or not. Notice the subscribers that joined some time ago --your interaction with them must reflect that. How many are still active? How can you encourage the rest to join again?

Reflect on the kind and frequency of your mailings to each segment, the time of the day you send your messages, the seasons and holidays.

A clean, healthy list is definitely your greatest asset and resource. It allows you quality interaction with your clients and assists you in developing profitable relationships –and higher open rates.