

## 5 Steps to Better Email Marketing

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Google the exact phrase “email is dead” and over 180,000 results are returned. Long has been the debate over email’s pulse - or lack thereof. The truth is email is alive and well and while it has gone through growing pains, the health of this communication channel should not shy you away from developing a sound email marketing strategy. This post will give you 5 steps to building a better email marketing strategy.

### **Step 1: It begins at the source**

An email marketing program is meant to work in conjunction with all your other communication channels. Start by identifying and documenting all possible lead sources. Some examples of lead sources include your website, the physical store location, social media and paid digital advertising. Once you understand where your leads are coming from, you will be able to control how you collect and communicate

with your leads.

### **Be nice.**

For each lead source, ensure there is a straightforward way a person can request to join your mailing list. Your lead form should collect only the most essential data fields (i.e. name and email address). Depending on the source, set expectations by briefly stating the type of content and frequency subscribers should expect. Use a “Thank You” confirmation message after each form completion. You can also encourage your new contact to add your sender email address to their contacts list to ensure your emails are not be marked as spam. Finally, reassure your audience that their contact information is safe and will not be sold or shared with third-parties.

### **Focus on quality. Not quantity.**

One of the keys to a successful email marketing plan is managing your list of contacts carefully. The sooner you realize you are not going to capture every single contact’s attention, the faster you can focus on creating eye-catching content that will captivate your target audience for each source. When gathering leads, be careful when offering incentives for email sign-ups. Although this can increase your list, you may be capturing leads who will not convert to loyal customers. Offer incentives strategically and sparingly.

### **Step 2: Invest in the right tools**

As a business, if you are communicating with your prospects via email, you must abide to all terms found in the CAN-SPAM Act. The good news is that when you use paid email marketing software, you can easily comply with rules and avoid being blocked by your email service provider. Two common email marketing services are Constant Contact and MailChimp. There are pros and cons to each service and both of them offer email templates, list segmentation, and image editing software, key features to creating branded, engaging, and personalized emails.

### **Step 3: Develop a communication plan**

In this step, you must decide on the 3 Ws: what, when, and who.

#### **What**

This refers to both design and content of each of your communications. Email marketing software will allow you to select a pre-built template or upload your own. Regardless of your method, consider these design guidelines:

- Your Call to Action should be visible within 300px from the top of your email
- Use eye-catching images but avoid image-heavy emails
- Opt for responsive design, whenever possible
- Use web-safe fonts only

Decide and write down your general topics. For example, you can use a welcome email, an eNewsletter, highlight a product/service or sales promotions.

#### **When**

Once you have your topics outlined, determine the frequency of your emails. In most email marketing software, you can also assign nurture plans to specific lists. You can view general trends by industry for best day of the week and time of day where average opens are the highest. This can be a great starting guideline but feel free to adjust to your specific audience. Whatever the case, be consistent.

#### **Who**

Email software will allow you to segment lists so you can assign your leads to specific categories. For example, you can segment by source (website, social media, physical store), specific demographics, or any many other indicators. Note that you will have to collect this type of information on your lead form.

### **Putting it all together.**

Once you have your 3 Ws, put it all together in a simple spreadsheet.

You can also take advantage of calendar features offered by many email marketing software clients.

#### **Step 4: Know your metrics**

Once your plan is in place, it is time to assign some KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). These are ways of assessing your efforts. Your email software will provide many performance metrics. Pay attention to the metrics such as click-through rate and unsubscribes. Look for patterns after a particular email topic.

Google Analytics also allows you to generate customer URLs to include additional campaign parameters tying in email campaigns to other paid or organic methods. This will help you see the full impact of your email campaign in conjunction with other efforts.

#### **Step 5: Optimize and repeat**

This plan is meant to help you build your strategy. Throughout each step, you may need to make adjustments to fit your resources, market, and/or individual results. Analyze what does and does not work and adjust your plan accordingly.

Image Source: RDM-Rio Digital Marketing, 2017.

(<http://riodigitalmarketing.com/paid-search-and-email-marketing/>)

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