

## **Subject: How's your email marketing doing?**

The results of a worldwide email marketing study conducted during the last quarter of 2012 by an email services provider<sup>1</sup> shows some worrying figures. Across all sectors, only 17% of email marketing messages were read and subscribers to newsletters only read 27% of the messages they receive.

Does this mean we should stop sending emails?  
Probably not. At least not just yet. But you can improve your email marketing.

Here are a few tips...

### **Sender: make it personal**

Emails sent from an individual are more likely to be opened. The "from" field of your email should show a first name, or a first name and surname, with the name of your organisation. For example: Mary Turner (Millenium Gallery)

### **Subject line: keep it simple**

Write a subject line that is clear and try to make it catchy. Many spam filters use a list of words when deciding to block a message; avoid the following words in your subject line:

- Free
- Special
- Act now
- Limited time
- Reminder or worse REMINDER

Always focus on the value of what you are providing and ask yourself if the recipients will know what they can do in the email. You will have a better opening rate when using a verb which creates a sense of urgency or raises interest.

Whenever possible, split your email list in 3 segments. Send an email with subject line A to 20% of your list, subject line B to another 20%; compare the opening rate and use the most effective subject line for the remaining list.

### **Email message: write a compelling message**

You should personalise the email but using the first name (or first name and last name) of the recipient. However, it takes more than a dynamic name tag for your email copy to convince readers the contents are relevant to them.

Some organisations have linked their membership system to their email system and can start the email by reminding the sender of their latest activity; for example: "Did you enjoy Adam Chodzko's performance last month? This month...". Writing in the second person means you orient the copy towards the reader, not your organisation.

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<sup>1</sup> Return Path <http://landing.returnpath.com/emailintelligence12q4>

Too often emails explain what is on offer, rarely what the benefits are. What is unique about your museum or your latest exhibition? What experience will the visitor get? And be helpful, what time or day is best to visit? Again if you gather information about your members (e.g. do they have children? Grand-children? ) you can tailor the copy accordingly by mentioning activities during school holidays.

One of the biggest mistakes email copywriters make is trying to put the entire story into an email message. Most people don't read every single word in an email. If your email has hundreds of words of copy, it will be more difficult for recipients to decide whether they want to click through ... because they can't quickly sift through all of the information. Instead, you should summarise what the reader will get, and insert clear links to a page on your website for more information.

Your email should have a call-to-action easy to identify. Don't forget, people scan their emails, your call to action needs to be easily identified. If you're sending an HTML email, you could include a clickable banner or button. It is crucial to optimise your plain text emails for clear calls-to-action. Recent studies have shown that text only emails have the same click-through rates as html emails. In fact a text only email can appear more personal, especially if the name of the sender appears in the "from" field.

### **Format: text vs. html**

Text only or html, make sure your email is displayed correctly on a mobile. In the UK, 62% of mobile owners check their emails several times a day.

It is also predicted that traffic from tablets and mobile will out take traffic from desktop computer in the next 18 months (this has already happened on Facebook which gets over 50% of their traffic from mobile devices).

### **And keep it legal**

The Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 ( . <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2003/2426/regulation/22/made> )

Make sure you have obtained the permission to send an email. Use a professional and accredited email service provider; those systems include a link the send can use to easily unsubscribe from your list, which is another legal requirement.

### **Measuring success: what are the metrics**

By using a professional email service provider you will have access to a range of statistical information such as:

- Bounce rate: Email messages that fail to reach their destination. "Hard" bounces are caused by invalid email addresses, "soft" bounces are due to temporary conditions, such a full inbox or an out-of-office reply. Make sure you clean your list and remove the hard bounced emails.
- Open or Opening rate: the percentage of recipients who opened their email messages.
- Click-through rate: the percentage of recipients who clicked on a particular link within the email message.

If you are using a web analytics tool such as Google Analytics, you can place trackable links in your email. You will be able to identify the traffic to your website coming from your email.

By gathering information about your email activity, you learn more about your audience, what types of email work best, which articles “get more clicks”.

Remember, email marketing is like any marketing activity. It is a continuous test.