



A HUMBLE GUIDE TO EMAIL MARKETING

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WSI eStrategies

Introduction

What do you think about when you hear the term 'email marketing'? You can be candid, there's nobody listening! The first half of the phrase - email - probably conjures nightmarish images of your inbox because let's be honest: everybody gets too much work-related email. Even once you get the crushing weight of your inbox out of your mind, the *marketing* part doesn't help either. Email marketing is just another way to say *spam*, right? *Wrong*.

No, email marketing isn't as dashing as that darling social media. Nor is it as buzzy as the uber-popular content marketing. These days, it's not even in the same conversation with mobile tactics and strategies. To some, email marketing is a dead, boring and ineffective marketing channel. Of course by 'some' we mean marketers and businesses that aren't running any optimized email campaigns. Because make no mistake: in 2014, [email marketing is one of the most effective digital investments you can make](#).

But how can that be, you might puzzle and puzzle, like the Grinch when he failed to stop Christmas from coming. How could email marketing and newsletters, which end up in spam filters or deleted in fits of rage, really be the most valuable digital marketing channel? We beg you to consider that maybe, email marketing isn't such a bore. Maybe email marketing, perhaps, offers just a little bit more.

With Christmas in July out of the way, let's make a serious clarification. It's not just us trumpeting the merits of email marketing because we feel like it - the stats tell the same story. According to [a very recent report](#), email marketing was deemed the most effective - in comparison to other digital tactics - for building awareness, acquisition, retention and conversion. What business doesn't want all of that marketing goodness?

We know it's strange, given the amount of email you get that you consider to be spam. However, if you think about the emails you receive a little more carefully, you may start to realize that you've been converted by one or more email marketing 'campaigns.' The reason that email marketing works (and likely the reason it worked on you) is that when done correctly, you may not even realize it's a campaign. Great email marketing provides subscribers with real, tangible value; what consumer doesn't want that?

You see how that works? Email marketing should be a two-way street, filled with engaging communication from both brand and consumer.

Getting Started Isn't As Hard As You Think

Even if you or your company is completely unfamiliar with email marketing, getting started isn't as daunting as it seems. Yes, despite the fact that you don't even know the first step. That's what we're here for; that's what we do.

We're going to assume that most people reading this aren't email marketing experts, which means you don't want to hear about setting up and configuring email servers. That's a story (or a technical essay) for another day. You're here to learn how easy it is to implement a digital marketing tactic that the [Direct Marketing Association](#) estimates has a 3800% return on investment. No, you don't need glasses (or a stronger prescription). You read correctly: for every \$1 put into email marketing campaigns, the average return is \$39. That's \$17 more than the tactic with the next best ROI (search marketing) and almost three times social media's ROI. We told you email marketing is underrated (and we're certain that it's underused)!

We understand, however, that it isn't as simple as generating a \$39 ROI with your first email marketing campaign. It has to be done right. This is exactly why WSI has established a relationship with Constant Contact, ultimately becoming their first Global Premier Partner. Through this alliance, we're able to offer new, exclusive opportunities to our clients all around the globe.

Chief among these new opportunities is the ability to setup, configure and send emails - all from the same place. This is important because as time goes on you'll want to become more involved with your email campaigns, and having the ability to access campaign data and observe the whole process will help you become much more comfortable with email marketing.

Additionally, you won't have to worry about anything. We'll ensure to enforce strict rules for uploading subscriber lists, which means better deliverability and less chance of emails ending up in spam folders. We'll also help you find or design the perfect email templates for your brand - something else that you don't have to worry about during the setup phase.

Once you're up and running, you'll be sending out monthly newsletters and launching special campaigns like old hat. There are certainly things you can do to track, measure and improve your email marketing efforts (and we'll get into those later). Getting started is the most important aspect of email marketing, so what are you waiting for?

KEY POINT: *because of its extremely high return on investment, email marketing isn't something your business should ignore. At the very least, examine what your brand has to say and determine whether it's interesting enough to package into a tidy newsletter. Reading about ROI is great, but you won't truly understand just how well email marketing works until you try it yourself.*

Begin With The Basics

After setup is complete and you've assumed control of your email marketing campaign, there might be a tendency to look up every advanced strategy article you can find. We understand that launching something new can be extremely exciting, but you have to be careful. Sometimes too much tinkering - especially before you've even established the basics - can be a bad thing. Why not keep things simple for a while? Gain some traction, find out how many people are interested in what your business has to say, and then get really good at tailoring and delivering your messages with impeccable timing.

Here are a few basics principles of email marketing to get you started:

Respect The Subscription Process

There are many ways to grow your list of subscribers. Put some quality content behind a subscription form or even, you know, just ask. If you've got anything remotely interesting to say, we're sure that you'll find ways to grow your list. The most important aspect of growing your list is actually respecting the subscription process (this also most definitely means NOT buying an email list).

It goes without saying that you should make it as easy as possible for people to subscribe to your newsletter or email list. But would you be surprised to learn that it's equally as important to make your unsubscribe button visible and obvious? The key to email marketing is trust, so subscribers should never feel like you are tricking them. You know what we mean; we've all tried to unsubscribe from an email list only to find that it's absolutely impossible to do so. This doesn't even make sense; why would you want to retain a subscriber who doesn't want to hear from you? It's not like they're ever going to convert or even listen to what you have to say. Give your subscribers what they want, even if you perceive it to be a negative. In the long run, you'll earn the trust of more subscribers than you'll lose.

Timing Is Everything

Much like social media, the timing of your messages can make all the difference in the effectiveness of your communications. But for email, there's no best practices or reference guide. You need to mine your own data to determine the best time to contact your subscribers. For example, if you're a business-to-business company, chances are you don't want to send emails on weekends. If your target audience is night-shift workers, you might not want to send emails in the middle of the day. The patterns will be easy enough to see once you've accumulated some data. The most important thing is paying attention to the data and timing your messages accordingly.

It's About Your Subscribers, Not You

A common problem with most businesses' digital marketing is that it's all about them. Their website copy is about how great their products and services are and their blog is filled with more of the same. They chatter on social media about nothing but themselves. It stands to reason that companies like this are also sending out emails proclaiming their awesomeness and cramming features and benefits into as many inboxes as possible. Don't do that. It might not be spam in your eyes, but that's because it's about you. Think about your own inbox - do you ever pay attention to that kind of material? We didn't think so. Unsubscribe, delete, goodbye. That's how it usually goes when you make it about you instead of the subscriber.

People want what they sign-up for, and that's value delivered to their inbox at a predetermined time. If subscribers are promised value once a month but you email them once a week, they aren't going to be happy. They might not even realize they originally gave you permission to contact them because the customer experience you deliver is so far off of what you promised. That's bad form.

Make your emails about (and for) your subscribers. In fact, make sure all of your marketing is about your customers. Sure, it's still going to feature your brand and you can make offers, holiday campaigns and special one-off emails. But whatever you send has to bring subscribers real insight, not just what future value they might get if they buy your product or service.

Optimize For Mobile

Ready for a staggering stat? [49% of emails are opened on a mobile device](#). Now here's a question: have you ever even considered which device your subscribers might be using to read your emails? You're not alone if you answered no, but it's a scary thought. If you forgot to consider mobile devices, what do your emails look like to people who open your messages on their smartphones? It might explain those low open and high unsubscribe rates.

Fortunately, we can work with you to find or design mobile friendly email templates (just another opportunity for our clients made possible by our Global Premier Partnership with Constant Contact).

Follow The Rules

The first rule of email marketing is that you must follow the rules of email marketing. Canada and the USA have [CASL and CAN-SPAM](#), respectively. These are laws that dictate what you can and can't do when it comes to sending emails to subscribers. Make sure you follow the email laws of whatever country you're operating in as the penalties can be severe. Don't worry, it's not difficult, we just need to make sure you're aware. This is the basics, after all!

KEY POINT: *keep it simple, at least until you start to gain some traction and see the fruits of email marketing. Overcomplicating things too quickly can backfire in a big way when you don't get the results you expect. It might end with you thinking that email marketing isn't right for your business. Go slow. You never know, the basics might be all you need!*

Integrate Email With Your Content And Social Efforts

Just because we've talked about how successful email marketing can be - even in comparison to social media - doesn't mean we're telling you to stop using other marketing channels. To the contrary, actually; if you can integrate your content and social media marketing efforts with your email campaigns, you're likely to see a bump in effectiveness for *all three* tactics.

If you've read any of our content, you'll know that we don't teach the use of a singular digital marketing tactic over the others. We teach that what works for you and your business might not work for Bob and his business. Everything in marketing depends on your goals, your niche, the industry and the shifting landscape of the Internet. You can't just blindly invest in a strategy and hope it works, you need to research the strategy and what you hope to accomplish with it. If there's a match, then you run with it; if not, you keep looking.

Anybody who plays Texas Hold'em poker knows that two aces (pocket aces) is the best starting hand you can be dealt. You might assume, then, that the play with pocket aces is to go all-in, every time. It's the best hand, what other play is there? However, if you ask an experienced player what they do with pocket aces, they'll invariably tell you that "it depends." It depends on how many opponents are in the hand, the previous actions of these opponents (both in the current hand and prior hands), the game's situation (cash or tournament) and most importantly, the other cards on the board. As many amateur players eventually realize, pocket aces isn't *always* the best hand.

All of this to say that the success of your email marketing campaigns will largely depend on your ability to integrate them with your existing social media and content strategies. We've talked a lot about Rand Fishkin's [marketing flywheel approach](#), and those same principles apply here. Social media outreach can help grow your subscribers, content will act as the value and insight you deliver to inboxes and as you gain more momentum and the wheel starts to turn, you'll understand that each cog is serving its own distinct purpose and they all work in unison.

KEY POINT: *you can probably guess, but yes, the key point is: it depends. Make that your digital marketing mantra and you'll find success sooner rather than later. Your email campaigns need the help of social media and content marketing to reach their full potential. Instead of substituting one digital tactic for another, find a way to*

Conclusion

In today's fast paced world, we sometimes get too caught up in the latest tools, hacks and trends. But the bottom line is (and always has been) just that: the bottom line. Sales and return on investment are the only metrics that matter, and whether you realize it, email marketing is the key to both. Here's a brief rundown of the numbers:

- As mentioned, the [Direct Marketing Association](#) estimates that email marketing has a 3800% return on investment
- 56% of respondents to [a survey](#) listed email marketing as the most effective digital marketing tactic they use
- During a [recent study](#), email was found to be the number two online activity in the US (just a few minutes per day behind social networking)

When it comes to email marketing and why you should use it, there are only two things you need to know. The first is that the majority of people who use the Internet also use email; *a lot* of people use the Internet, so you can do the math on that one. The second thing is that as the stats indicate, digital marketers are relying heavily on email marketing because it works really, really well. Those are the facts and we're here to help but ultimately, the decision to take email marketing seriously is up to you. Will you embrace the inbox as your newest marketing channel?

About WSI (We Simplify the Internet)

WSI is a digital marketing company with a strong international presence. Our Digital Marketing Consultants use their knowledge and expertise to make a difference for businesses all around the world. Headquartered in Toronto, Canada, we also have offices in over 80 countries. We're a powerful network of marketers who strive to discover, analyze, build and implement digital solutions that win digital marketing awards and help businesses succeed online.

Over the last 20 years, WSI has won multiple digital marketing awards for our solutions by adapting to the constantly shifting landscape of the Internet. We take pride in helping businesses make the most of the dollars they spend on digital marketing.

Ready to move ahead and discuss a project with a local Digital Marketing Consultant? Get in touch with one of our experts now info@wsistrategies.com.