

# eMail Marketing: a quickstart guide to marketing success

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## Why email marketing?

There are more ways to get the word out about your company or product now than ever before. **Social media** is everywhere, **websites** have evolved beyond mere electronic billboards to become fully interactive marketing vehicles, and **videos** are a mainstay of all manner of advertising. But, the 600 pound gorilla of marketing is an old-school technology: **email**. While social media is indirect and diffuse, email is direct and targeted. It requires participation and permission on the part of the recipient, which is really the reason email marketing is so effective. The recipient has bought in, expressed an interest in your company or product. It's not hit or miss, fingers crossed, hoping for a response marketing. You know these people want to hear about you.

The trick is to use email to drive sales and increase your customer base. With email, you do that by being relevant to your target market. Cultivating an interest expressed by current or potential customers into an active relationship requires more than just sending out emails with sales and special offers. Certainly, you can get some traction that way and make sales, but there is a lot more room to maneuver in the email marketing field.

## How I came to email marketing

I have worked in various aspects of marketing for more than thirty years. When I started college, there was no such thing as a personal computer, and the little Apple that

revolutionized the graphic design world was still just an idea in Steve Jobs's garage. By the time I graduated and took my first "real" job (in customer service in a cellular company), desktop computers became commonplace—even though the one on my first desk was only a black-and-green CRT screen, and had only a keyboard, no mouse! I heard rumors that the engineering department at the company had Apples and that Marketing had both Apples and PCs. Amazing! I had to get there!

For some reason, I felt somehow qualified (I was not) to send memos to the director of marketing services, Frank, four floors above me. Inexplicably, he read them. My detailed thoughts on promotions, our competitive dis/advantages, market feedback from real customers, ways to make more sales our market areas struck him as insightful. What made me think I was positioned to do this is a mystery to me now. But, the younger me just dove in headfirst to most things. One day, Frank came down to the cubical farm in which I worked to see who this kid was. He offered me a job the next day, and I moved upstairs. And I got a new Apple computer. Pretty cool!

I was lucky and bold—and maybe a little arrogant—enough to believe I had something to say back then. I've always had a natural talent for marketing strategies and tactics, and my natural curiosity and, unfortunately, obsessive work habits led me to be successful despite my lack of educational background. Frank told me that he would almost never hire a business major for a marketing job. He preferred people who studied liberal arts and could think on their feet AND who knew how to do research.

The logo for CellularOne, with 'CELLULAR' in red and 'ONE' in a larger, bold red font, followed by a registered trademark symbol.

I was fortunate that so early in my career I was able to work for one of the three corporate owners of the Cellular One brand. We developed a lot of what became commonplace in the cellular industry, even through to today. When we launched new programs, we were making it all up, feeling our way along in

the dark down paths that no one had treaded before us. It was exciting, demanding, thankless work. My work week spilled over into evenings (and midnights and 2AMs) and weekends, 80-hour weeks were the norm. I was paid what I thought was the staggering sum of **\$18,000 annually**. Salaried! I know. I was a sucker.

But, I did learn a lot—more than I might have in business school and much more than my college friends did in their telemarketing and sales rep and waiter jobs.

Our biggest marketing secret weapon was a **database of nearly one million names**, some purchased, some culled from various programs and customer initiatives, plus addresses. All this we augmented with lifestyle and demographic information resulting from surveys and extrapolations of our own and other people's research. We



segmented, split A/B tested, measured and tracked everything. My boss always said, “**If it’s worth doing, it’s worth measuring.**” I’ve lived by that ever since.

Those principles of database use and research- and tracking-based marketing formed the core of the marketing methodologies I would develop over the years. I ultimately called what I do “**integrated marketing.**” I was never sure if that term was an actual thing or if I made it up, but it certainly described what I have always done. All aspects of marketing feed each other in a matrix of methods, themes are interrelated and carry from one medium and technique to another, and all the information is tracked and measured for effectiveness. When the World Wide Web became a viable platform for business, I added that to the mix. Emailing lists of clients was something I had started to do well before that, way back when AOL was the big dog on the block.

Years later, the buzz is **Hubspot** and **marketing funnels.** That’s generally what I have been doing for ages, using a variety of tools for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and tracking of program success, client value, and purchasing triggers. Had I been super smart instead of just clever, I would have packaged it up and sold lessons on how to do it!

Using **email as a marketing tool** became just plain obvious. One of my main reasons for using it was that I worked with a lot of start up small businesses that bootstrapped themselves off the ground. Email was cheap. There was no real tracking systems at first, so that had to be done in Excel with whatever little feedback became available.

Eventually, web- and desktop-based software appeared that tracked data from emails in real time. I loved it! And it made me an even more enthusiastic advocate of email marketing.

### **And that brings us to today.**

While I love email marketing, I have **a few caveats** that I will throw out there immediately.

- First, I think it is a terrific tool, but it is **not a standalone.** It has to be integrated (back to that term!) with other really useful tools like websites and social media. We have some great case studies on our website that illustrate how important the right marketing mix is to get your message out. Check [www.backburnermarketing.com](http://www.backburnermarketing.com), our full-service marketing site, and look for the case studies featured on the front page and in the menu bar.

- Second, it is also **not a magic bullet**. It will not solve all of your marketing problems overnight—or at all—if, like a real bullet, it is not aimed properly.
- And third, it is a little like plumbing or electrical work: fun to dabble with but, when it's really important, it's probably better to **hire a professional**. I know that flies in the face of all the MailChimp and Constant Contact ads you will hear on the radio and on YouTube, but it's just true. I also don't think you should make your own website, logo, or brochures. Copywriting is also best left to the writing professionals. What do YOU do for a living? Do that. Let others do what they do. **Amateur work stands out from the crowd in all the wrong ways!**

All that said, **to be an effective marketer, one must know all about how systems work**. Whether it's email marketing or making landing pages for social media promotions, you have to know what the heck you are doing, especially if you are hiring someone to do the work for you. There is nothing more liberating for a design or web professional—or auto mechanic or furniture salesman—than someone who doesn't know the first thing about what he is buying or hiring someone to do! Liberating, that is, money from the client's pocket.

## Email as a marketing tool

Email marketing is a fantastic solution to some of the most common business marketing and promotional problems. If your company is in search of new clients, increased traffic to your website, and improved revenue from repeat and referral customers, the answer could be the medium you use every day.



In fact, email marketing is so effective because it is the medium that *most* of us use every day. Studies show that 89% of Americans check their email at least once a day. Smart phone users most often have their email accounts available at all times. That makes email as easy to use—and as effective—as a telephone call.

Worldwide, email is king. Back a few years, faxes were the way to

do business outside of the United States. Today, it's email. Worldwide, email adoption is at a staggering **3 billion users**. If you want to find a common medium with someone in Hong Kong and Honduras, it's going to be email.

It's also effective because your recipients have to take a step on their own to opt in to receive your messages. That initial buy-in is central to the success of direct email campaigns. SPAM doesn't work, at least not in the long run, but an opted in customer is worth his or her weight in gold.



While anyone can send an email, email marketing isn't quite as simple as just typing up some words and pushing SEND. You already know the basics of how to email, so you could start sending out emails today. However, to be truly effective and efficient, email marketing should be approached like any other high-end marketing program. While cost is typically much less than traditional print advertising and "snail mail," **the returns of a professionally designed and administered email**

**marketing strategy can be far more effective.**

**Let's take a quick look at how email marketing can help a typical business.**

## **Your marketing mix (and why you might want to add to it)**

People who are into marketing on more than a basic level will often talk about their "marketing mix." Some people don't really have a marketing mix...some companies barely have marketing. Recently, I met a restaurant owner who told me his sole marketing method was having his wait staff give a take-home menu to people who stop at the restaurant. I tell this to other marketing people and they laugh, however the restaurant owner laughed at *me* for suggesting that there is a better way to do it!

To be fair, he does have a mix. I don't think he would have called it that, but nevertheless, it's there. Relying on drive-by traffic *is* a marketing technique. He has a Google website (stock and simple to a fault) and a Facebook page, both of which are poorly managed and not particularly compelling. I explained that email marketing has a potential reach and acceptance levels that completely dwarfs Facebook. I explained that our average restaurant client makes an extra \$35,000 the first year. He was unimpressed.



Of course, he had already made up his mind before I even spoke with him that he had no interest in what we do. Why? Because people settle in their ways. And they have preconceptions on how something is done. Both of these reasons can be deadly to a company's growth and long-term success. Maybe he doesn't need an extra \$35,000. Lucky him. Given that he has lots of empty tables, I am thinking he is not seeing the picture the way someone else might.

## **But, my current marketing works**

What if your current marketing is working? First, define "working." Is it bringing you all the business you can handle? Probably not. At best, it's bringing you enough business to make you feel like you are successful. And you may well be successful...

...but you can be *more* successful. Promise.

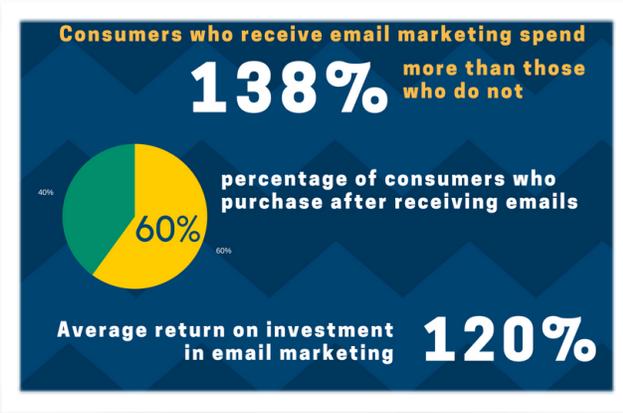
Sometimes, even a successful marketing mix can get stale. Very often, it goes unnoticed. This is, in part, because the metrics used to evaluate "success" is subjective, non-existent, or not comprehensive enough. If revenue is the sole measure of success of marketing, then the details of individual programs and strategies are missed. Underperforming—and potentially expensive—strategies continue despite their low returns. Worse, trends are missed that could make a huge impact on the bottom line.

In any case, be careful of using revenue as the sole measure of marketing success. Revenue may stay roughly the same over time, so business owners are often happy with what seems to be a successful status quo. Too often, though, they don't notice that their marketing is not pulling its weight. After all, who says staying the same over time is actually *good*?

A business may maintain static revenues despite an increase in actual number of sales. That indicates a shift in revenue per sale, and that demands some investigation. Once found, trends like this can be addressed easily through marketing. Promotions that boost revenue-per-transaction and/or increase traffic can be implemented.

## **Why email?**

The huge popularity of email marketing is attributable to three major characteristics of the medium: cost effectiveness, speed of deployment, and ease of measurement. But, scrape away these bullet points, and the real reason for email marketing's popularity is



simple: it works. Once we are past the hype and commissionable motivation, it is effectiveness that always wins in real marketing.

**Cost-effectiveness** - there is virtually no marketing technique, short of passing out handbills in the mall, that costs less than email marketing

**Speed of deployment** - Picking up a phone and calling or texting someone is the only faster method of getting your word out. As far as mass marketing and

communications, email marketing really is the quickest method. Okay, you can argue that making changes to a website and going live instantly is equally quick, but that's not targeted, so email still wins out. Alright, AND you can say that you live-stream on Facebook or Instagram, but that requires people will not only be on hand when it's happening but also willing to sit there and watch.

**Ease of measurement** - Email is electronic. You can see how effectively an email or campaign is working in real time with the click of a mouse.

## Results...In short, it works.

**Results** - And then there are the results. You can Google all manner of statistics on the effectiveness, open and click-through rates, and industry averages of email marketing. It's impressive stuff. Anecdotally, I can tell you that my own clients have seen an average of about 35% open rates, above average click-through rates (this is so wildly varied by industry and type of email, offer, and strategy, that statistics are, for practical and comparative purposes, meaningless), and very low unsubscribe rates. The latter should not be too big a surprise given the ethical manner in which we have them assemble their email lists. The real litmus test is whether their emails produce the kind of results that the client is looking for. And, the answer is yes. Revenues go up. Web visits become more frequent. Sales total per customer goes up. Referrals happen. It's all the stuff we want to happen.

Why? Well, I think the biggest reason is that our emails are written by someone with thirty years of marketing experience and advertising copywriting expertise. I am certain that our own positive results are in part due to the medium itself but, even more than that, result from a lot of experience in speaking persuasively to target audiences



## The rise of email

Years back, direct marketing was done by mail. US Mail. Snail mail. You know, the kind of mail that many of us never use these days, and only slightly more of us even receive it today—well, except for Capitol One credit card advertisements. Vast databases of consumer addresses were bought and sold for equally vast amounts of money, and catalogs and endless envelopes of unwanted offers were sent daily. Bulk mail was popular, as was direct first- and second-class mail. Post cards, catalogs, and all manner of enveloped marketing materials made their way from mail houses to our homes daily. Then, mail costs went up, and it became cost-ineffective to send unsolicited mail.

More importantly, email became not only commonplace but ubiquitous. In the late 1980s, almost no one had an email address. AOL (America On-Line, for those of you under the age of 30) exploded in popularity, followed by Hotmail and Yahoo Mail, until today Gmail is everywhere. Now, even elementary school kids have their own Gmail accounts. Many high schoolers have never received a letter in the mail. High school seniors are amazed at the arrival of recruiting information that shows up at their homes! However, they are more likely to open—and trust—an email.

## Email is king

So, email is king.

In fact, here are some amazing statistics:

- 89% of Americans check their email at least once daily
- There are 249 MILLION active email users in the US and 3 BILLION worldwide

## What about social media?

Depending on the statistic you read, Facebook is used by up to 60% of Americans. That's a lot, to be sure. The downside is that the bulk of Facebook users are adults. Kids, tweens, and teens don't touch it. People in the early twenties use it very little. People in their late twenties do, but its more out of habit than anything else. Facebook was the first social media they used, particularly after MySpace effectively became uncool and vanished.