



V12

A Porch Company

Email Marketing

Best Practices Guide



Introduction

Email marketing has been around for a long time. It's always been a reliable means of communication, but has become an even more effective channel thanks to the advancements in data and technology.

For example, did you know that for every \$1 marketers spend on email marketing, they receive \$36 in return? Additionally, email marketing revenue is estimated to reach nearly 11 billion by the end of 2023. It's no wonder why marketers often say email is king. The numbers speak for themselves!



Following Best Practices Makes Perfect

There's a lot that goes into crafting the perfect email campaign. This guide outlines standard best practices that enhance email communications, including recommendations to ensure your emails stand out in crowded inboxes and generate ROI.

Key Topics

- Setting Campaign Goals
- Core Components to Enhancing Email Communication
- Copy Guidelines
- Design & Technical Guidelines
- Mobile Friendly Email Design Guidelines
- The Importance of Landing Pages

Setting Campaign Goals

Designing successful email marketing campaigns is dependent upon having a clear understanding of marketing goals, whether they are for prospecting or CRM initiatives. This helps to determine “who” to target and with “what” to offer.



Types of Campaign Goals

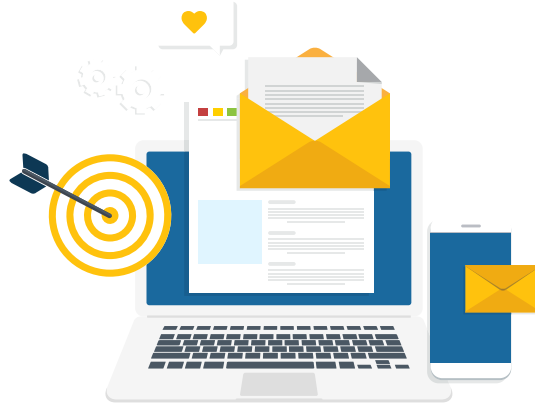
The following are some examples of campaign goal objectives: matched back to the deployment file) provide a much more complete picture of the success of the campaign.

- Acquiring new customers
- Converting prospects to first time buyers
- Growing current customer relationships with additional client offerings
- Retaining loyal customers
- Enhancing customer satisfaction and brand loyalty
- Reactivating lost or lapsed customers

Once your goals are clearly defined, your email marketing campaign can be designed to target a specific audience with personalized relevant messaging. It's important to note that the email design guides for prospecting and acquisition are much more stringent to accommodate for spam filter issues. CRM based emails can be much more flexible with their design and subject line selections.



4 Core Components to Enhancing Email Communication



- 1 Personalization:** Personalization addresses the recipients by name, and can include other personalized information (i.e. demographic) about them, which increases the likelihood of the email being opened.
- 2 Flexible Content Format:** Flexible content format ensures that the message gets to the recipient in the proper format that your client prefers. For example, send text for a simple message or HTML to enhance the content.
- 3 Format Sensing:** Format sensing determines which of your client's customers can receive the more graphically intensive HTML message format and then multi-part messaging is sent with both text and HTML so the recipient can view in whichever format is readable.
- 4 URLs and Hyperlinks:** URLs and hyperlinks used within the email content encourage the recipient to click-through to a website or landing page for more information on the offer. URLs are necessary for click-through tracking reports that allow your clients to evaluate how effectively an email directs the recipient to various URLs within the content.

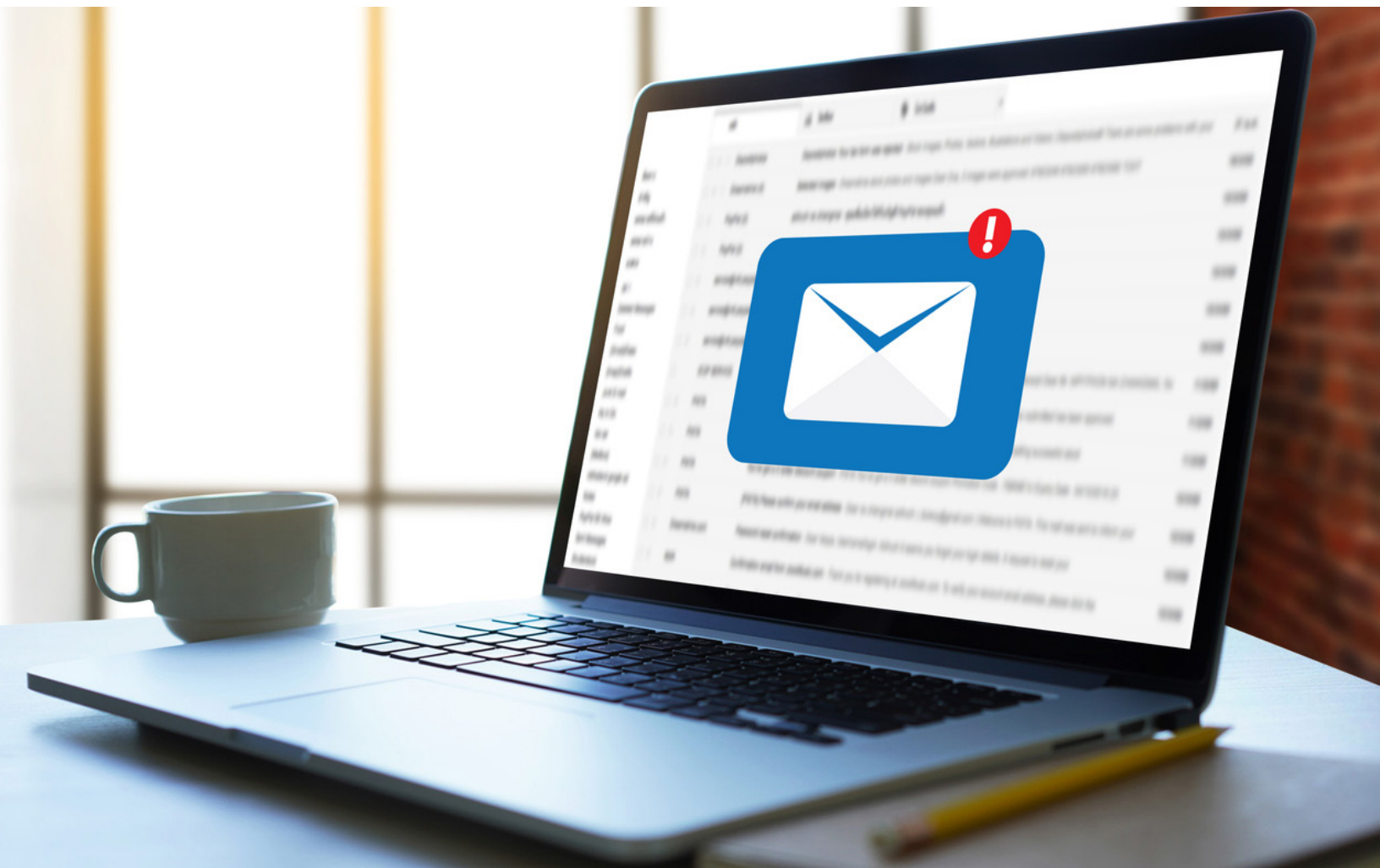
Email Marketing Best Practices Guide

Copy Guidelines

Copy Guidelines

Keep Copy Short and to The Point

- Engage interest with short, easy-to-read, and relevant copy.
- Use pre-header text. Pre-headers are 1-2 lines of HTML text at the very top of the email. They are ideal for hand held devices so repeat or highlight the offer making it the first thing a prospect reads before they even consider enabling images.
- Using bullets is a good way to call attention to important details. But don't use images as bullets in unordered lists (UL)
- Avoid spam filter words and phrases.



Copy Guidelines

Subject Lines

The first point of contact is the subject line, which also creates the initial impression about your business. The goal of the subject line is to reach an audience that is literally bombarded with email advertisements and convince them to open your email.

- **Stand Out:** Be compelling and unique to set yourself apart from the competition.
- **Avoid Triggering Spam Filters:** Refrain from the use of punctuation and other non-text characters since they can affect some spam filters (i.e. !@#\$%^&*()+=).
- **Brief is Better:** Subject lines greater than 50 characters are likely to be cut off, particularly on mobile devices where more and more of email opens take place.

Friendly From Name

This is the name that shows how you want to be identified and is visible in an email client. The Friendly-From Name should clearly identify the brand, as >50% of email engagement comes from a consumer's recognition of the brand. See the example below.

From Name	Friendly From Name
ABC Marketing	ABC Marketing Client Services ABC Marketing Newsletter Partnership Team, ABC Marketing
John Smith	John at ABC Marketing John Smith, ABC Marketing John Smith, Marketing Manager

Copy Guidelines

Headlines

- Headlines should contain a compelling offer (i.e. discount, sale, free, etc.).
- Include brand name and/or logo in the headline to identify the sender and increase brand recognition.
- Avoid large font sizes and spam trigger words and phrases.

Body Copy

- Restate the offer from the headline at the top of the body copy—make sure the offer is relevant to the recipient.
- Include 1-2 short paragraphs with details of the offer and a brief company description, when application.
- Convey benefits and features succinctly. Email messages should be brief and compelling outlining the unique selling points. Longer sell copy should be on the landing page where the actual sale happens.

Call to Action (CTA)

- Include a strong call to action that tells the recipient what you want them to do (i.e. sign up, join, buy, etc.) and place it above the fold (top 250 pixels).
- Call to action should be above the fold—we see a significant drop off if that call to action is not immediately viewable by the recipient.
- Make a call to action stand out by using a graphic icon and/or within a blue underlined URL link.

Copy Guidelines

Address

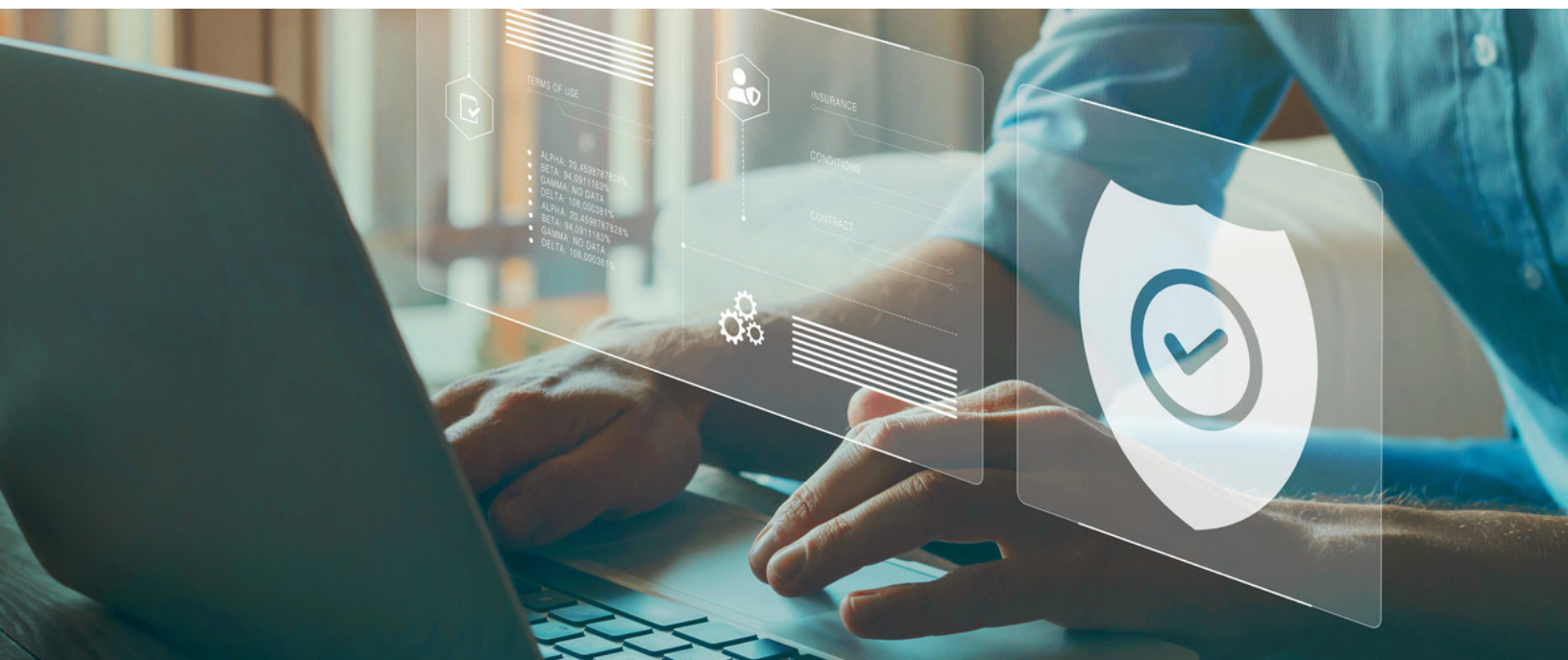
The CAN-SPAM Act requires that the physical mailing address of the advertiser be included in the footer of every message. This helps to clearly identify the sender making it a legitimate advertisement. An unsubscribe link is also required in the footer so that the recipient can opt out of future messages.

Opt Out Link

The opt-out link in your emails is required by law, and allows your recipients to unsubscribe from receiving your emails.

Privacy Policy

The Direct Marketing Association (DMA) and ANA (Association of National Advertisers) Email Best Practices highly recommend including a link in the footer to the client's web page describing their privacy policies.



Email Marketing Best Practices Guide

Design & Technical Guidelines



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Design & Technical Guidelines

Email Design vs. Web Design

Email reader standards are outdated in the sense that (a) they require designers to simplify their modern coding practices and (b) there are no true standards that apply across the various email platforms. The goal is to ensure that emails render consistently no matter what email client is used. On the following pages, you will learn about the best practices for email design to ensure your work displays properly in the inbox.

Design for Quick Viewing

- Use basic HTML coding and keep it simple.
- Create the HTML in an HTML editor in plain HTML. Do not use MS Word, layers, or CSS. If Dreamweaver is used, be sure to use Inline Styles only. Avoid CSS in the header as much as possible.
- Keep offer information above the fold. The top 250 pixels (or area above the fold) are vital since it is prime real estate for the 3-5 seconds a prospect is focused on your email message so it needs to have useful, readable text not embedded within an image. Be mindful to incorporate your branding and benefit-driven offer text above the fold.
- Design as half-page rather than a full-page ad. Do not force the recipient to excessively scroll.
- Be considerate of screen resolutions and window sizes. Email readers often have added sidebars and navigations on both sides of where your email content is displayed, further decreasing the amount of space you have to play with. To be safe, set the width of your email design to be no more than 600 pixels maximum.
- Do not rely on images to communicate your message. Avoid replacing too much text with images and make sure your email design still gets the point across even when images are not displayed. This also applies to use of background images. There is such an inconsistency between which Email Clients will actually display background images that it's best to not rely on them. If they need to be used be sure to use a bulletproof background coding. Bulletproof email background images are HTML/CSS backgrounds that use a combination of a traditional background image combined with some Vector Markup Language (VML) to create backgrounds that display properly regardless of your subscriber's email client.

Design & Technical Guidelines

Use of Graphics

- Avoid the temptation to build your message using only images. Loading up your email design with large images will slow down the download process on the reader's end and may deter them from reading it altogether. Aim for a 60 (text) to 40 (image) ratio on your campaigns. The purpose of this strategy is to engage the reader with promotional text that entices them to enable images and view your entire email.
- Use bold graphics and design. Lifestyle graphics work best. Remember to optimize to smallest possible file size.
- A "Learn More" or "Buy Now" call-to-action coded button or graphic should be placed in a location high up in the email to entice your reader to advance to the next step in the selling process, but use it in conjunction with HTML text that is visible when images are still disabled. It should also appear as a text based link.
- Unlike web design, email design must use absolute paths when referencing images.
- When using images, use ALT tags as component of `<img>` tag. This will ensure copy shows up in place of the image for those recipients who have their image reader turned "off" or if the reader is set "off" as a default.
- Avoid rich media and forms. We do not recommend the use of forms, flash, nested background colors, background images in DIV tags or TABLE cells. Animated GIFs can be used in many email readers today, but some will still prevent them from functioning, so be sure that the static image will still convey the image's message. Background colors work if used properly, they should always be included in the table tags or individual cell tags, they should not be included in the body tags as these will not render in most email readers. DIV tags should not be relied upon for any formatting/layout uses.
- We do not recommend embedded images.



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Design & Technical Guidelines

Optimize Creative

- HTML File Size should be as small as possible to provide fastest load up times as possible and graphics should have a file size of under 1 mb (or as small as possible while maintaining high resolutions).
- Save graphics with large blocks of flat color or plain text as GIFs or JPGs.
- If the layout has one larger graphic, slice it into smaller pieces and spread throughout the email, however, be sure to also include text. Aim for 60 (text) to 40 (image) ratio on your campaigns.
- Use a text-based link to a web version of your design at the top of your creative. (Add a link to a landing page where you are hosting the marketing message so an individual can view the marketing message in its entirety.)



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Design & Technical Guidelines

Design Format Tips

- Do not use JavaScript or HTML editor programs. If CSS is to be used you will need to include inline-styles throughout the entirety of the html otherwise it will not function properly across all Email Clients.
- Be mindful of punctuation and font colors. Excessive use of exclamation points (!) as well as red text may be spam triggers, which should be avoided. Use email safe colors and fonts = *Arial, Book Antiqua/Palatino, Comic Sans, Courier New, *Georgia, *Helvetica, Lucida Console, Tahoma, *Times New Roman, Trebuchet MS, Verdana. (* = Most Popular Fonts Used)
- Use a banner or logo at the top of your creative to attract attention and quickly promote your product.
- Ensure the banner/logo links to a landing page with your offer, not your company home page.
- Use of text-based URLs should be strategically placed throughout the email copy. Commonly, they appear underlined and in blue. We recommend including three opportunities to click through to a landing page that reinforce your offer/messaging.
- Test your design in a preview pane, full screen and with images turned on and off before you send it.
- Ask your recipient to add your "From Address" to their address book at the bottom of the creative.



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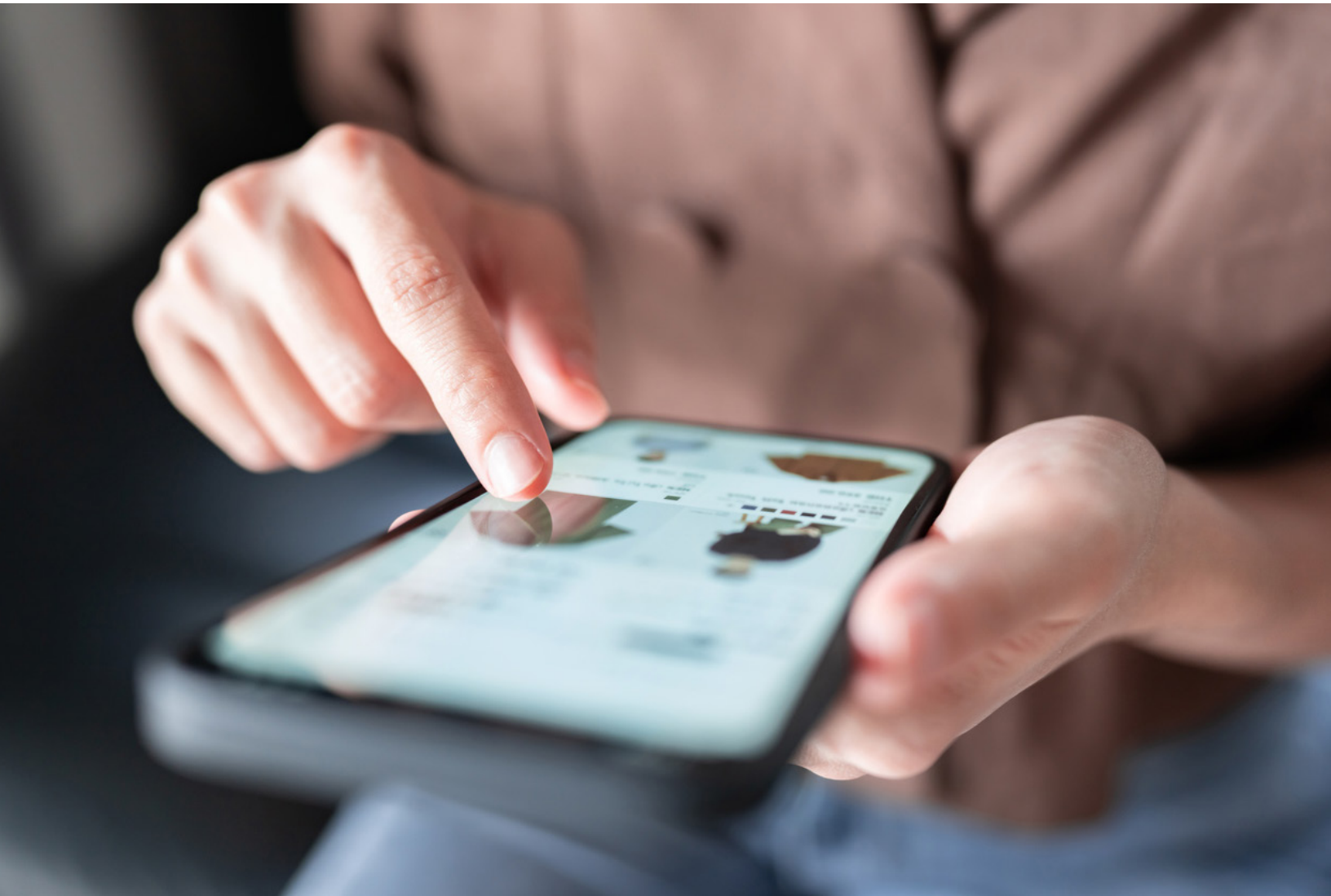
Mobile Friendly Email Design Guidelines

Mobile Friendly Email Design Guidelines

Email Design for Mobile Devices

The share of email opens occurring on a mobile device keeps growing. Savvy marketers know they need to think about how their email marketing is affected by this trend. So not only do we need to be cognizant of overcoming spam filters, we also need to consider how and where an email will be viewed, when it will be relevant, what action will need to be taken, and on what device?

Although there is no common design template that works across all platforms or devices optimally, using best practice techniques satisfies the needs of the large screen user and the mobile user in one design. Our best advice is to create emails that all mobile users can read and act on just as easily as desktop users.



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Mobile Friendly Email Design Guidelines

Here are 8 tips help you produce a better looking email creative that's more accessible and will render for both desktop and mobile email clients:

Tip #1: Pixel Width

For average desktop computers, we recommend conventional emails to be set up with a fixed width between 500-700 pixels. Most marketing emails and newsletters are designed to that specification. However, mobile email readers are smaller. Phones are in the range of 320-420 pixels in portrait view, while Tablets can fall anywhere in between phone and desktop pixel widths. This makes it important to design and code your email as flexible as possible so it looks legible and enticing in all widths.

Tip #2: Effectively Use Subject Lines With Pre-Headers

Ensure that the subject line and pre-header text are working to support each other, and keep the subject line somewhere between 30 to 45 characters for mobile devices.

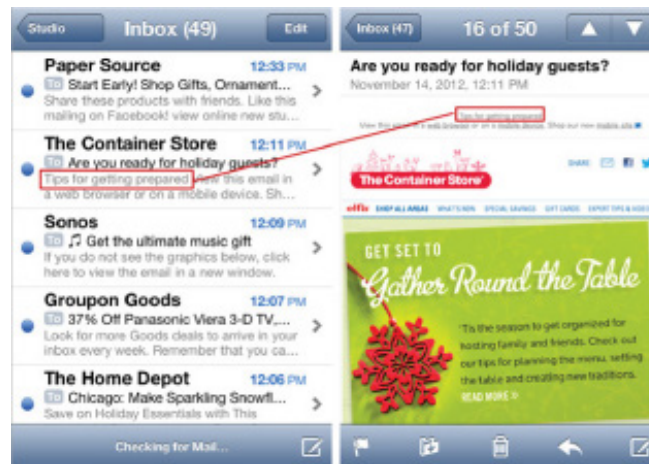
A pre-header is basic text that can either be found at the very top of your email or hidden and just used in the preview area of many email readers. There are two schools of thought regarding pre-headers and mobile devices, both of which should be tested.

The first is that hand-held devices make the use of pre-headers a necessity since it's prime real estate where you want to include key information and offer specific details that entice the consumer to read on. Some marketers use text phrases (i.e. "click here if you cannot see images," or "add us to your safe senders list"); however, since the pre-header is likely the first thing a prospect reads after the subject line it makes sense to highlight your offer or promotion.

The second theory is to use a hidden pre-header that will not be visible in the email itself but will only appear within the preview area of you Email Client.

Mobile Friendly Email Design Guidelines

Our advice is to keep pre-header text to one or two short lines while still highlighting your “best offer copy.”



Tip #3: Use a Single-Column Ladder Design with Mobile Responsive Coding

Sidebar and 2-column designs are the gold standard for desktop creative since you have 2 separate areas to feature your best offer copy so that it appears at the top of the email preview pane where it's more likely to be noticed. This is known as the “above-the-fold” area and commonly where your headline appears. However, a mobile device will likely shift the columns, text, images and create overlapping areas which is clearly a poor presentation. Alternatively, the single column design keeps it simple with no rendering issues to contend with, no columns being pushed into text, and images aligned as you intended.

Using a ladder system allows email to scale down much more neatly. You want to use tables with as much mobile responsive coding as needed while setting image size widths to ensure that the email is ‘elastic’ and adjusts to the size of the mobile screen. You'll also want to group multiple items, links, and images on top of each other (like a ladder). You can then use background colors within the email itself to serve as dividers between the different sections. This stacking system allows for easy organization and alignment with limited rendering snafus. The end goal is to lead your reader down the email through the content.

Mobile Friendly Email Design Guidelines

Tip #4: Using Links

Point and click motions are fluid and precise when done on a computer mouse connected to a desktop or laptop, whereas mobile devices use touchscreen technology and the human finger becomes a factor. Email designers need to anticipate how fingers will navigate the clickable areas of an email on a touch screen.

Avoid crowding URL links too closely together, which makes it difficult for fingers to press on the correct link. This would mean buttons and icons need to get a little larger and the surrounding areas need to be more padded to accommodate for fingertips in motion. Allow for 10 pixels (give or take) around or in-between any clickable area to leave space and make it easy for users to navigate and click to take action.

Be sure to include links to important pages that support the email promotion or content. Always use trusted links since users can't hover on a mobile device to ensure the link is safe. Also, allow for about 20-30 pixels around the border of the email for fingers to hold the tablet device. You don't want key information hidden under the user's thumb.

Tip #5: Font Sizes

Another design tip for clumsy fingers is to use a minimum font size of 14 px for body copy and a maximum headlines size around 24 px. Any larger and you risk your email landing in the junk folder for desktop since some filters flag larger fonts used in email as spam. Keep in mind that the larger font means you'll have to keep your content brief. You'll most likely be able to fit 10-12 lines of text on a screen.

Tip #6: Calls to Action

Always use call to action buttons or icons because they are proven to increase response. Fingers cover about 45 pixels so design your buttons accordingly, then pad by 10 pixels. Place those call to action buttons or icons in the top 250 pixels of the email (area above-the-fold so they are easily seen and noticed by the user.)

Mobile Friendly Email Design Guidelines

Tip #7: Go Back to the Basics

These tips might seem a little basic but the core principles of email marketing will still apply in order for your email to be effective, so they need repeating. No matter what the design, layout or offer, always ensure your from line and subject line quickly communicate two critical points: Branding (who you are) and Offer (the value in your email). The straightforward presence and recognition of both the sender and the email's value drive open rates and responses – regardless of viewing device.

Tip #8: Become Mobile Friendly from A-Z

You can't just stop at the email. You also need an optimized landing page. The most effective campaigns have a supporting landing page that reinforces the offer from your email promotion.

Making it simple to click through a well-designed mobile email that leads to an easy to navigate landing page can help improve ROI. Many of the tips above will apply to the landing page design, but you'll be working from a larger width for a landing page.



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The Importance of Landing Pages

The Importance of Landing Pages

Your email is the 'teaser' promotion that entices the consumer to click through to a landing page where more detailed 'sell' information is presented. The page will usually display content that is a logical extension of the email advertisement or click through link. A landing page is also a great option for smaller clients who want to do email marketing but do not maintain a company website. There are two types of landing pages, reference and transactional:

Reference Landing Page

A reference landing page presents information that is relevant to the email. These can display text, images, various links to company website, etc.

Transactional Landing Page

A transactional landing page persuades a user to complete a transaction (such as filling out an order form), with the end goal of closing or converting a prospect into a customer. If information is to be captured, the page will usually capture some minimal amount of information (i.e. an email address, name and telephone number) – and adds the prospect to a mailing list.

A landing page is a critical link in online communications and can go a long way to improve email campaign results and drive revenue. Some points to consider when developing an effective landing page:

- On average, 50% of responders who click through to a landing page leave the page. Make sure your page grabs attention quickly by restating the offer/call to action from the email.
- Do not direct responders to your home page. This approach does not carry through the offer/call to action from the email – losing credibility.
- Make sure your landing page has the same look and feel of the email HTML creative. This ensures there is no confusion and reinforces the brand.

The Importance of Landing Pages

- If your landing page is a form to be completed, do not ask too many questions. Three to five fields are recommended.
- Keep the copy on the landing page short and to the point, but use as much space as you need to convey your message and land the sale.
- Always test call to action text on landing pages to boost conversion.
- Add social media integration on landing pages to boost customer confidence in your brand.



Get Started with Email Marketing

Email, like every marketing channel, has undergone major transformations over the years. For those companies who are keeping up with the email revolution, email marketing brings in a hefty ROI, but getting through to your customer's email's inbox is only half the battle. Capturing your customer's attention is the true testament to a well-crafted email based on targeted communications and an integrated database.

V12 Email Marketing Solutions

450 Million Email Addresses to Reach Consumers Who Matter the Most

Boost your cross-channel engagement with one of the largest repositories of email addresses in the industry. Our database is a high quality, permission-based national file with over 450 million email addresses.

Email addresses go through strict data hygiene and validation processes to identify records known to be associated with spam traps, invalid emails and domains, known complainers and fraudulent addresses.

- Branded email programs deployed through V12's marketing execution platform and private ESP
- Create customer segments based on purchase behavior, email interaction, demographic and psychographic attributes
- Match back to your customer transactional data for a clear understanding of your campaign's performance
- Enhance your first party CRM data with our email append services to correct and append missing emails as well as add hundreds of demographics and lifestyle enhancements

Request More Info

About V12

V12 is an audience and marketing solutions provider that delivers insight on movers and homeowners, with more context, and greater precision than any provider in the market. Our solutions deliver early access to 80+% of US homebuyers. V12 provides movers, consumer, shopping intent, auto, and property insights to deliver highly personalized, omnichannel, one-to-one marketing campaigns and outcomes across multiple industries.



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