

EMAIL MARKETING NOW

How it works and how to make it work

SENDBLASTER EDITION

edited by Web Target Magazine



www.web-target.com/en

www.sendblaster.com

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PREFACE

Email marketing is a set of practices aimed at exploiting email messages so as to **promote or sell a product or service**.

Every web marketing manual praises the email as an invaluable **economic, practical, measurable and profitable business tool**.

And it's exactly so. Thanks to the email it's now possible to carry out advertising campaigns at a really low cost but still benefiting from a considerably high return on investment. This is also because it is now so wide spread, demographically and geographically, it is very flexible, and is very easy to create and use.

But how many companies are truly aware of these qualities, and exploit them to fullest?

According to ContactLab's [European Email Marketing Consumer Report](#), on average a user from the main European countries receives **about 33 emails a day**. Obviously, in the case of a manager or a person in the communication sector - these numbers increase exponentially.

In the midst of this deluge of information, there are also **direct marketing messages**: the likes of which include newsletters, bulletins, announcement lists, registration forms or confirmation requests etc. The big question is, how much attention are we willing to grant each of them? Our emails are a valuable commodity, and it is up to marketers to make the most of it.

Yet the **literacy of this tool** - meaning the practices of writing, sending, and managing contacts - is still rather low. Various companies - even top level ones - consider email marketing as a tool to use only because "one must", because everyone else does.

The results are, very often, disappointing - DEMs and newsletters full of grammatical mistakes, un-displayable images, disclaimers missing, mass mail-outs without differentiation, databases not kept in order etc.

Taking for granted the email as a marketing tool - but also as a means of **sharing and transmitting information**, in the case it's not to sell anything but only to inform - is a common mistake.

A key point to remember is that via the email we **literally enter people's digital homes** - their inbox. The least we can do is present ourselves in the best possible way, and demonstrate that we are interested in them - whether it's proposing a commercial offer, or to keep contacts informed about our activities.

This ebook serves as a **basic tool** for keeping the latest email marketing best practices in order.

Many topics have not been touched - the details relating to privacy regulations, the spread of spam, the future of email etc. - because we feel it's better to **keep it essential**. We'll look at them in a next work.

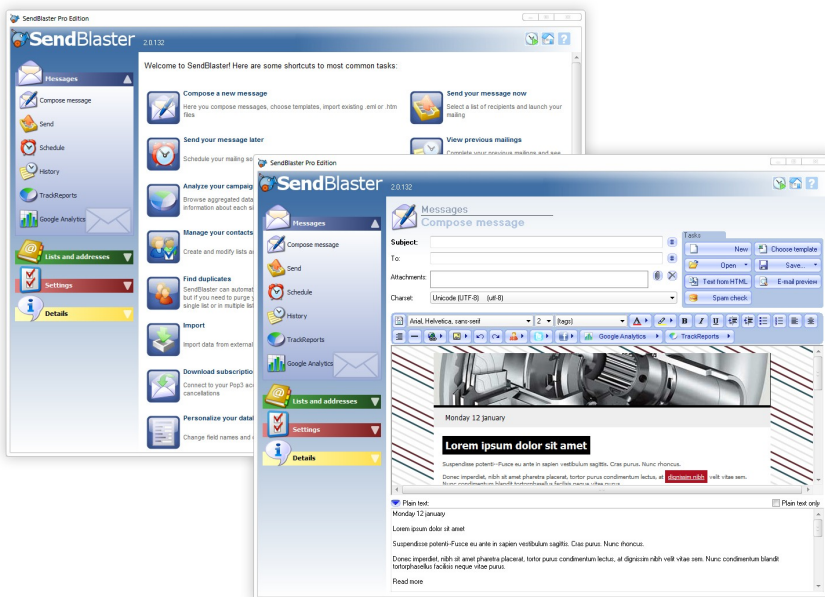
Giorgio Fontana

www.web-target.com/en

www.sendblaster.com



SendBlaster is a multi-award winning **email marketing software**, that allows you to send newsletters, promotional emails and invitations, through a simple and intuitive interface.



Once you have installed it on your computer, SendBlaster can **handle any type of email marketing campaign**, quickly and effectively.

With SendBlaster you can import your contacts, create messages “from scratch” or choose from among dozens of templates, and then send the message to your subscribers.

But there's more. SendBlaster also allows you to check the effectiveness of your campaigns thanks its integrated tracking and analysis tools, like Google Analytics.

It's thus a **complete instrument** that makes email marketing easier for beginners and advanced marketing professionals.

Furthermore, SendBlaster does not charge any monthly or recurring fees (you can get the PRO version by paying a one-off license fee) and technical support is always available free of charge.

At the end of the most important chapters of this ebook, you will find **a dossier like this**. It will help you to discover the main features of SendBlaster and to learn how the concepts and best practices we explain can be used in practice with the software.

And if you want to try SendBlaster with your own hands, we recommend that you download and install the [Free version](#): it does not expire, and you can upgrade to the [Professional version](#) at any time.

1

**PROFESSIONAL
EMAIL MARKETING BASICS**

1. A few seconds to make a good impression.

The attention market

If we had to describe the currency of today's web, it would be without a doubt **attention**: so much that the discipline of the **attention economy** has not only become essential for theorists in the industry, but also for advertising and marketing experts.

Until recently, ads or any piece of info was not supposed to compete too much in order to grab the individual's attention. Above all, it was still possible to carry out a qualitative or in depth analysis in order to decide the importance of the object.

Today things are a lot different. Many studies have shown that the extraordinary **growth of the infosphere** and the increasing number of messages that get exchanged and received - not only emails, but also social tools, sms, news, etc - is **literally changing the human brain**.

The result is that we are less willing to find out about whatever we come across on the web in more detail, and prefer to "nibble" at bits of info here and there, often skimming over the data.

So the **information overload** we are subject to every day makes it particularly difficult to capture peoples' attention - and this directly affects email communication. Data collected by the famous (even if a little bit out-dated) [Nielsen Group survey](#) confirms this. Only **19% of newsletter recipients read it from the beginning to the end**, and the way it is viewed - is of particular importance - follows a sort of **"F shape"**:



As one can see, it isn't read in the traditional sense but rather **skimmed over** in a fragmented and often superficial manner.

But the average defined by Nielsen's study should be reduced even further. Just think how many times we ourselves have quickly glanced over a message's general layout - or every time **we binned a newsletter without even opening it.**

In light of all this, it is clear that **commercial or editorial emails must be straight to the point, creative, simple and have instant appeal.** From the first line, and even better from the subject.

There is no room for second place, in the world of email marketing - you've got to **get straight to the point.**

2. Having a long-term strategy

In this scene, we are dealing with structuring messages so that they strike readers and get them interested as much as possible. But even before you figure out how to do it, you need to understand a little **underlying philosophy** about proper email marketing.

One of the most common pitfalls is the idea of considering email marketing as a “push” method able to produce only immediate results.

On the contrary, although using email marketing it is possible to achieve returns in a very short period, the more sensible strategy is a **long-term one** whose main purpose is not so much to get the most out of a single campaign, but rather to **foster a loyal relationship with users**.

Any expert will tell you the same thing, but unfortunately there are still many companies that haven't truly taken on board this concept. The concept of **forward-thinking** email marketing has yet to take root.

In his *Constant Contact Guide to Email Marketing*, Eric Groves offers us some important advice: "Don't treat email addresses as email addresses; treat them like relationships."

That's exactly right. What lies behind your contacts are people and **peoples' lives revolve around relationships.**

How can that be put into practice? Don't start thinking you can get out of it so easily just because you send a well-crafted newsletter every week, or a fantastic discount campaign every now and then. The only true way to add any real value to this method of marketing is to **establish a line of continuity between actions and reactions**, creating a **positive feedback loop.**

In other words:

- **Always reply to one's emails** and don't be afraid to **establish a genuine dialogue.** This is definitely one of the most important points of any email contact strategies, and one of the factors which determines the difference between other forms of advertising - completely one sided. Newsletter senders using

a no-reply@domain address, give the fatal impression that any form of conversation has been severed right from the beginning - a rather unpleasant feeling. Make sure that recipients are able to reply to every email you send, and get back to them as quickly as possible.

- **Create customized strategies.** One of the most extraordinary advantages of email marketing - yet highly underrated - is the ability to mail-out a raft of different messages depending on the target, the tastes and needs of users. Unlike traditional forms of advertising that bombards everybody with the same content such as TV ads, email marketing enables a **true customization** of one's message. Not only does this heighten your chances of selling more or satisfying specific customer's tastes, but also helps rebuild a trusting relationship that was lost in the era of the global market. A bit like the **old local shopkeepers** who used to put aside our favourite products. For us and only for us.

- **Keep the relevance of the messages high,** according to users' previously stated preferences and interests. Always show a high standard of **quality** and avoid any content that is not useful.
- **Avoid flooding your contacts with too many emails,** especially in peak periods such as summer, holidays, Christmas. It's much better to continue building a customized path.
- **Hold on to acquired information.** User feedback and all the information customers are willing to give you in the registration form, i.e. age or tastes, are immensely valuable. With the right scenario analysis, they'll help you improve content or offers quality.
- **Look ahead.** As much as emails may seem a fairly static tool, the email marketing world is constantly moving, and there are always new ways to integrate and improve them. Strive to come up with new tips and different strategies, and never give up experimenting.

Finally, to leave you with a tiny pearl of wisdom from Middleton Hughes and Sweetser, authors of *Successful email Marketing Strategies. From Hunting to Farming*:

Email marketing is just one frantic campaign after another, and sales are down. Solution? Send more emails. People are unsubscribing. Solution? Frenetically try to get more subscribers and send more emails to those are still there. How can we measure the success of email programs conducted at this breakneck pace? There are two basic ways to look at email marketing: as hunters and as farmers. All email marketers measure email campaign performance. Only advanced email marketers also measure subscriber performance.

3. Putting oneself in the user's shoes

One of the greatest risks when working in the email marketing industry, is to overlook the fact that **we have an inbox too**. And we also receive dozens of messages, often unwanted.

Putting oneself in the receivers' shoes is crucial if we want to come up with truly relevant communications: do not think like marketers or professionals, but **try thinking like a recipient**.

Eric Groves, in his *Constant Contact Guide to Email Marketing*, doesn't beat around the bush when he bluntly states:

Quite simply, if they think your email is spam, then it's spam. [...]

Your definition of spam doesn't matter, and neither does mine, unless we define it in exactly the same way as our recipients define it. The ultimate judge and jury when it comes to spam is the recipient of the message, not the sender.

Consumers consider spam as anything they don't want or can't verify.

It may seem a bit too harsh - there are definitely some good indicators to give us advanced warning as to what is or isn't spam - but Groves isn't too far off the point.

Spam is not restricted to emails with "SEX VIAGRA \$\$ \$" in the subject, but includes **any unsolicited communication** - or even uninteresting ones.

And so, this principally means three things:

- **Ask yourself some questions.** Better still, many questions. Is the content of your email really relevant? Try subscribing to some of your competitors' newsletters, and spend a few days simply sifting through your inbox, waiting for new ones to arrive. How many of the commercial emails that you receive are of any real interest? Carefully analyze the appearance and the substance of what you receive. Do you feel the **urge to unsubscribe from any of the mailing lists**? If the answer is yes, take a note of what factors triggered such a reaction. Now you've got a nice **list of pit falls to avoid**.

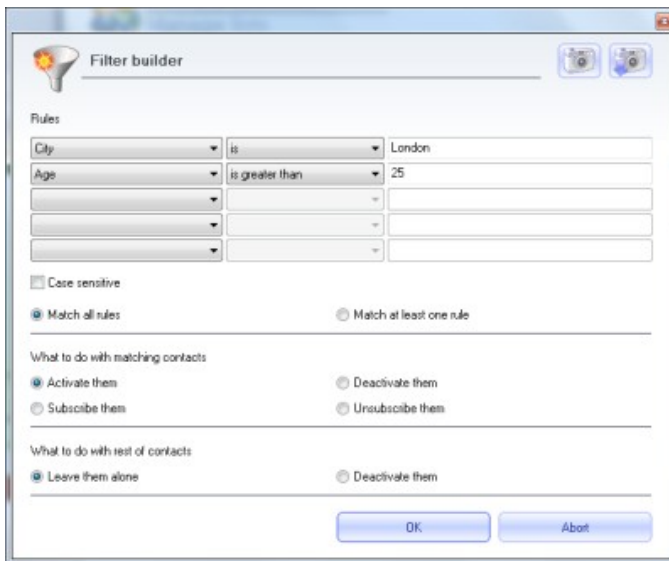
- **Evaluate the results** with your whole team. What seems obvious to you mightn't be so for someone else. Listening to others' opinions - especially in a field where there are no incontrovertible truths - is a great way to reach a balanced well-working solution.
- **Pay particular attention to first impressions:** like the subject, sender, and information architecture. But do not stop there: as we've already said, the **entire contents** of the email must be relevant and well crafted.

And finally: If it's too much hard work putting yourself in the recipient's shoes, why not find someone who'll do it for you? For example, **your own users**. Don't be afraid to accept their advice, and of course criticisms, or directly asking them for their opinions - perhaps placing it in the footer of your newsletter.



Behind every email address there is a person who differs from others in terms of interests, habits, behaviors. That's why it's essential to send customized messages to your target audience.

With **SendBlaster** you can manage this important aspect of email marketing through a tool called **Filter Builder**.



The screenshot shows the 'Filter builder' dialog box in SendBlaster. It features a 'Rules' section with a table for defining filter criteria. The first rule is 'City is London' and the second is 'Age is greater than 25'. Below the rules, there are options for 'Case sensitive' (unchecked), 'Match all rules' (selected), and 'Match at least one rule' (unchecked). The 'What to do with matching contacts' section has 'Activate them' (selected), 'Deactivate them' (unchecked), 'Subscribe them' (unchecked), and 'Unsubscribe them' (unchecked). The 'What to do with rest of contacts' section has 'Leave them alone' (selected) and 'Deactivate them' (unchecked). At the bottom are 'OK' and 'Abort' buttons.

Field	Operator	Value
City	is	London
Age	is greater than	25

☐ Case sensitive

☒ Match all rules ☐ Match at least one rule

What to do with matching contacts

☒ Activate them ☐ Deactivate them

☐ Subscribe them ☐ Unsubscribe them

What to do with rest of contacts

☒ Leave them alone ☐ Deactivate them

OK Abort

This is a very powerful feature that can filter your contacts' data according to one or more rules, up to a maximum of five. In the example above, we set two rules to create a subset of contacts who live in London and who are 25 years or older.

2

ELEMENTS OF A COMMERCIAL EMAIL

1. How a commercial email should be

Technically, it is no different from any other type of email: they both have the same working rules, the general settings and a few other details.

Unlike private messages, commercial emails have **some additional features**.

Take one of our Web Target newsletters, for example: for convenience we have divided it into three parts, as it should appear in any standard mail client - in our case, Windows Live Mail.

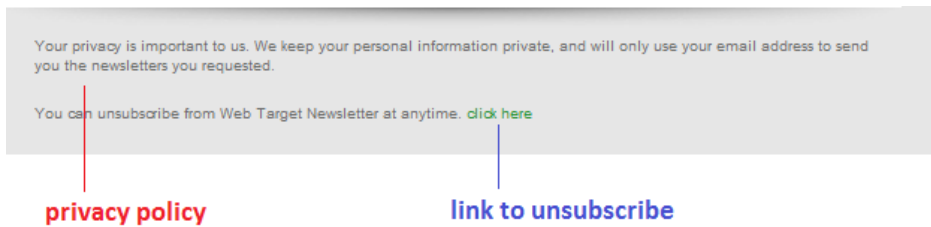
A) SENDER-RECEIVER-SUBJECT



B) MESSAGE



C) FOOTER



Each of these three parts will be carefully analyzed in later chapters. Here's just a quick overview to get started:

A) The **recipient** is clearly the recipient's email; the **sender** is the person who sends the email (and will either be a name or email address); the **subject** is the title that describes the message itself.

B) The **header** can contain the name of the brand, a well-recognized image, or even just a general title about the message.

But it's the **body** the place where the content is structured and the **call to action** should be placed.

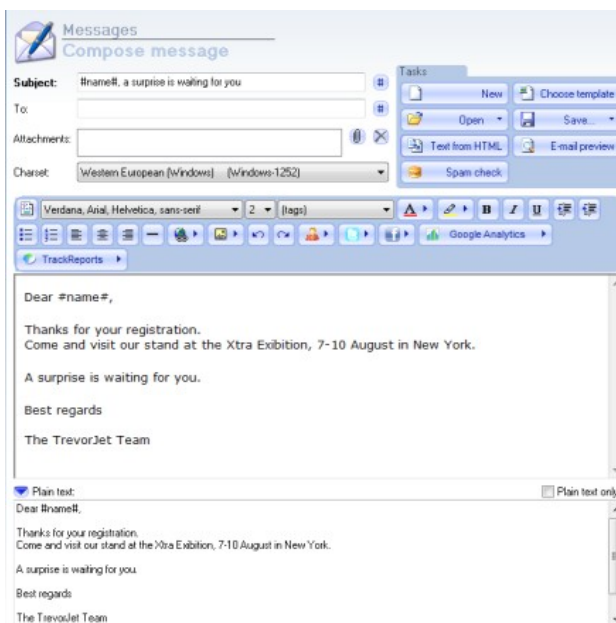
This plays a fundamental role, because it's the part of the email urging users to act - in general, a click to be led to a web page.

C) The **footer** is the final part of an email. It must include an **opt-out link** and the **privacy policy** - both are necessary to ensure that your message is legally compliant.



With SendBlaster it's possible to prepare **commercial emails** with all the features we have highlighted in this chapter using the panel **Compose Message**.

With a few clicks you can choose a **Template**, and add the **Subject** along with the message in **HTML** or **plain text**.



If you want to customize your messages, i.e. by showing the recipient's name in the body or subject of the email, you can use the so-called **tags**. To select them, just click on the **# symbol** next to the “to” and “subject” fields.

2. Web-oriented writing: a question of style

Before analyzing the different parts of an email, just a few general hints.

Web-oriented writing follows very different stylistic canons compared to writing for paper-based sources. Whilst, newsletter syntax needs to be looked at separately.

The first point to touch on, common amongst every type of web writing, is the need to be **synthetic** and **sober**. As it has been mentioned previously, the average user looks over a newsletter in a pretty superficial way and tends to scan over the content - unless the content is particularly interesting (which is what we all wish).

Secondly, it is essential that the email is **consistent with the original website**. Adopting a snappy and flirtatious tone in the direct communication channel, when instead your portal deals with very serious topics, can be completely counterproductive.

Here are some general rules that should be adhered to:

- **Text should be divided into blocks.** There is nothing worse than an email with a single continuous block of text that lacks any paragraphs or has no reference points.
- Highlight any **important elements in bold** and avoid using italics or underlining.
- Organize the content structure of the email according to a **clear hierarchy**. A bit like if it was a page out of newspaper: organize the flow of information from the most important element you want to get across to the ancillary ones.
- From a stylistic point of view, **don't use expressions that have more than one meaning** or are **difficult to immediately decipher**. Remember that you have a very limited amount of time and it's impossible to know in advance the mood of the person who's going to read your email: you don't have to try to make it "funny" or intriguing at all costs.

- Use **simple syntax sentences** that are direct and clear, without being involute.
- Focus the key points within the first few lines of the message. When **reading from smartphones** it's likely that, among other things, these are the only lines that users will skim over.
- **Create internal links within the text:** Do not include the full URL, but directly link the words instead. So, rather than www.web-target.com only put [Web-Target](#). This is a key step in encouraging the call to action and leads users to the reference site. However, **do not overdo it**. Too many links in the body of the text - especially if you have chosen to highlight them with underscores - adversely affect the readability and just confuse readers' attention.
- **Rigorous editorial standards**, making sure there are **no double spaces** between words, **leaving a space after each punctuation mark**, and of course, impeccable **grammar** are all must do's.

Finally, a handy little trick: don't copy the message directly from a complex word processor program, like Word. **Always transfer the text into Notepad first**, so that it is "clean" of any additional formatting. Then with the aid of email editor, you can add italics, links etc.

In terms of defining what the **maximum length of the content** should be, it is a question that doesn't have one answer. The newsletter of a newspaper, for example, synthetically recaps the website's morning "front page". A DEM informing users of a special offer lasting only a few days should hopefully only have a couple of lines of text and an attention grabbing image, in order to immediately attract potential clients.

As a good rule of thumb, if you haven't got any high value editorial content to offer, try to be **as concise as possible**. The purpose of a newsletter isn't so much to keep readers trapped inside their mailboxes, but to **encourage them to check out what you're offering**.

So: always remember putting a few lines together to make the mouth water is much better!

3. How to write a compelling subject line

Let's now analyze the different parts of the email and the best way to prepare them: starting off from the most elusive part, that is the **subject line**.

"... And what shall I put as a subject?"

A question that everybody asks: from adolescents writing to their yet undeclared love, to marketing managers launching a DEM to three hundred thousand odd contacts.

It doesn't matter whether it's sales or sentiments: **a good subject line remains a crucial element**. This is the starting point of your credibility, and how you present yourself when appearing in recipients' inboxes.

For this best practice there is no one universal ready-made solution that is suitable for everyone. But there are some **basic guidelines** to follow.

Let's check them one by one.

A) Synthesis.

It may seem trivial, but after receiving far too many emails whose subject lines **exceeded** the providers' limits - annoyingly going head all the same - it's necessary to point out the importance of utilizing an **appropriate subject length**.

Clearly setting a maximum size that is suitable for every situation is unrealistic. Let's say any good subject line should be **between 25 and 50 characters**. And of course, any email whose subject line is left blank is bound to be a wasted one.

B) Clarity and precision.

A subject line should be concise but informative. The real skill lies in being able to capture the essence of the relevant information that is expressed in the email, within a very short space. In fact, in many ways the art of good subject line writing is very similar to **creating an eye catching headline**.

Here are some practical tips:

- Try **using pipes (|)** to separate the information: it is a clear way to punctuate info and isn't very invasive. It doesn't add any real advantage, but in some cases is quite useful, such as with promotions. For example: "Free shipping until Tuesday | -20% on jazz records".

- Don't aim to describe the content, but rather **evoke the concept**. Think about the keywords you used in the text or the offer you want to propose, and then build up mini-phrases around them, without getting caught up in overly complex structures. Remember: a subject line has to **entice users to open your email**, not to substitute it.
- Avoid **unnecessary details**, such as "Weekly Newsletter", "We offer..." or "We have a collection of articles..." Get straight to the point and always keep in mind the limited amount of space.
- Avoid **using any caps**, as it tends to give a poor impression and the desire to "stand out" in an overly vulgar way. The same thing applies to question marks and exclamation points.
- Make sure the email content is **always consistent**. If it's a regularly sent newsletter, without any specific sales objectives, don't use aggressive terms. If on the other hand you're offering a unique opportunity for a limited time, the tone can be a little more daring.

C) Prominence.

Your message should be immediately recognizable in the midst of the dozens and dozens of emails. This means that the subject line must enable the corporate brand and the message you want to get across to be **clearly visible** and **prominent**.

A good practical tip when trying to come up with the right subject line is to **think in terms of the email address you plan on sending the email from**. A line very convincing in itself may have exactly the opposite effect when combined with a sender who's got a particular name. So send yourselves a test newsletter to **assess its impact**. Better still, try sending it when your mailboxes are clogged up!

D) Test.

It is pretty difficult to think up the perfect subject line on the first try. So the best thing to do is a bit of **experimenting**, firstly on your team, and then start testing the effectiveness of the chosen subject line and tweak it according to the results (in particular, evaluating the **open rate**).

For all information about testing practices, you can check out [part 5](#).

E) Creativity.

Don't repeat the same subject line over and over, or constantly use the same keywords, like "offer", "launch", "promotion", "novelty" etc. Even in the case of regularly sent newsletters, especially if addressing a new audience, there's nothing more **trivial and boring** than a subject line such as "Newsletter 4". It doesn't matter in the slightest what number you reach: the user couldn't care less.

And finally, even though these are hot tips and well-recognized best practices there is nothing to stop you from **being more creative and daring**. When it comes to the web, creativity really pays-off, provided that it's something truly inspiring. A subject line can even be mysterious and intriguing, or even unsettling - it's up to you to entice your readers.



A good practice for increasing the number of emails opened is to **customize the subject**, for example, by showing the recipient's name.

To customize the subject line with **SendBlaster**, simply insert the tag **#name#** in the **Subject** field, followed by the standard for all recipients.



Messages

Compose message

Subject:

#name#, a surprise is waiting for you



In this case, the recipient Mark receives the message with the subject: *Mark, a surprise is waiting for you.*

Avoid personalizing the subject with the name of your recipient if you realize that the field "name" of your list is empty or filled with fancy names or nonsense words.

4. Text or HTML?

Another important issue to resolve. **Newsletters in plain text** have greater chances of getting to their destination and being correctly displayed: moreover, their **lightness** makes them well accepted by all email clients. But a commercial email that **doesn't have any images** or special formatting is a pretty rare thing these days. It gives one the impression that very little effort has been paid to the quality of the email, and is certainly not pleasant to behold.

For this reason, **HTML** and the use of **visual elements** are invaluable tools that help make a message more attractive and readable. But it isn't just a question of aesthetics: by implementing some graphic aids it makes it easier to **direct user's attention** to relevant content. In addition, HTML enables emails to be fully tracked after being sent.

On the other hand, there is always the risk of getting carried away and sacrificing the quality of the content for the look, jamming far **too many images** into an email. The consequence being, one ends up with an over-sized newsletter and runs a big risk adversely affecting the open rate.

And not only that: if you send to areas that still **don't have access to ADSL**, emails with too many images run the risk of not even being able to be loaded by clients. And to top it off, some types of graphics aren't so well supported by **mobile devices** such as BlackBerry and iPhone.

Therefore it's necessary to carefully evaluate the number and placement of visual features within your emails.

In particular, it should be avoided at all costs that the **entire content gets incorporated exclusively within an image**. The ideal solution is to make sure that the most important part of the message is in text format, in particular the **call to action feature**.

In any case, even if you're orientating towards a text based newsletter, it's good practice to integrate **formatting elements in HTML** - at least bolding and links in shortcut version.

An email whose content is a simple copy-paste from Notepad is far too simple for the tastes of the modern day web, and also visually it leaves much to be desired.

All that said the big question remains open. Can we limit ourselves to just formatted text or is it better to include images?

The answer is naturally linked to the **type of information we want to pass on**. If our email boils down to little more than an alert, then perhaps plain text is the better solution.

Whilst on the other hand a **commercial DEM**, like in the case of Amazon.com, is another story. A few well-selected images, and the offer standing out makes a big difference:

Please [click here](#) if the e-mail below is not displayed correctly.

amazon.com E-mail or print for immediate delivery [Amazon.com Gift Cards](#)

[Your Amazon.com](#) [Today's Deals](#) [See All Departments](#)

Dear Amazon.com Customer,

In this installment of Amazon Literature & Fiction Delivers, we feature some of the season's most appealing new fiction, including the surprise winner of the National Book Award, Jaimy Gordon's "Lord of Misrule."

See more new literature and fiction below.

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1		Lord of Misrule by Jaimy Gordon Read more
2		Great House by Nicole Krauss Read more
3		Full Dark, No Stars by Stephen King Read more
4		Sunset Park by Paul Auster Read more

Best Books of 2010



See our Top 10 Editors' Picks for the Best Literature & Fiction of 2010.

The New York Times(R) Bestsellers



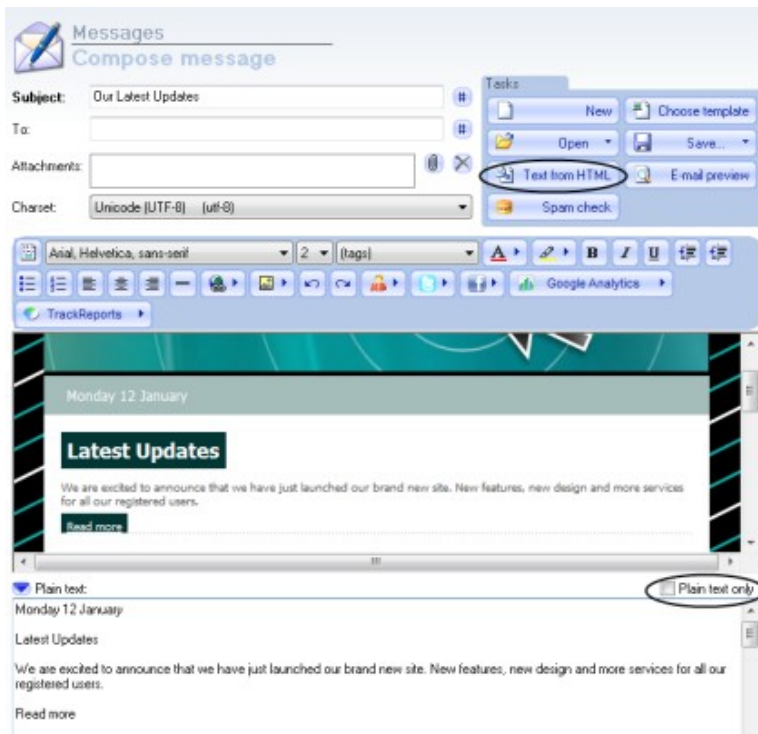
Discover this week's

And one last tip: in the registration form, you could give users the **option to choose which format** they prefer. This will mean having to prepare two different types of newsletters - text only and graphics - but it's most probably time well spent.

Once this basic question has been resolved, you can move on to the most delicate phase in terms of graphics: **structuring the layout**.



Not sure about choosing the format? With **SendBlaster** you can send your message either in **HTML format** or as plain text. Simply click on the "Text from HTML" button. The formatted text that you added in the HTML message will be "converted" automatically to plain text.



By selecting "only plain text", no graphics will appear in the body of your email. But **hyperlinks** will be fully functional.

5. Layout Architecture

Designing the **layout** is a key moment for any email marketing campaign. In this phase one chooses the settings and the form, which will inevitably **influence the very content** of the newsletter both in terms of impact, readability and clarity.

First thing to remember is the cardinal rule. You might have the most sophisticated and professional design, truly eye-catching graphics, but with nothing to communicate it, it won't get you far. The **content** remains the most important aspect.

The aim is then to structure your layout so that it's able to **fully enhance** the information architecture, thereby **guiding users' attention** in the best possible way.

A basic tip that should be observed: **avoid using distracting graphics or images that are too complex** and take a long time to download. A lightweight, functional layout is always the best choice. In the following pages we show two very good examples of well-designed templates.

chop, dice, slice the price.

3 big ways to save on select quality Wüsthof® and Shun cutlery



Shun Nakiri 50% off

April 24 – May 11, 2009

5.5" Nakiri Knife
reg. \$119.95 sale **\$59.95**

This amazing razor-sharp knife is created in Seki City, Japan's 700-year-old center for samurai swords. Its "ripple" Damascus rust-free finish is achieved by forging 16 layers of steel. Perfect for peeling, chopping and slicing. A Crate and Barrel exclusive.



Wüsthof Classic Panini 10% off

Knife of the Month Special
May 1 – May 31, 2009

8" Panini Knife
reg. \$99.95 sale **\$89.95**

High-carbon, no-stain serrated edge is tempered and hardened razor-sharp with a unique offset blade that slices completely through thick, crusty panini and sandwiches in one clean cut, fillings and all.



Wüsthof Classic up to 15% off select knives

Now...lower prices on our most popular open stock knives.

5" Tomato Knife	reg. \$69.95 now \$59.95
8" Bread Knife	reg. \$89.95 now \$69.95
6" Chef's Knife	reg. \$99.95 now \$89.95
7" Chef's Knife	reg. \$109.95 now \$94.95
8" Chef's Knife	reg. \$119.95 now \$99.95

(source Dzineblog.com)

LANDS' END

Swim Outerwear Women Men Girls Boys Shoes Home & Travel Overstocks Business Outfitters Store Locator

NEW! **4 ways to save, 4 days only!**

Hurry – Ends Monday.



*Markdowns apply to select styles only.

(source Dzineblog.com)

With regard to the size of the email, the top experts recommend sticking with a **pixel width** between 550 and 600.

The **height** obviously depends on the size of the content but always remember that **the key information should be placed at the beginning**, say in the first 300 pixels. (This is valuable also in case of a reading by mobile phone, which obviously tends to sacrifice a bit the rest of the message).

The best **background color** is of course white - classic and it doesn't cause any problems with rendering. Of course, there is a slight risk of looking a little banal. If you haven't got a particular graphic project with a specific background color in mind, then it's possible to play around with specific tones and decorations.

Moreover, it's a good idea to maintain a certain **graphical consistency** between the newsletter and the originating website, whilst keeping the elements that ensure instant recognition.

In particular, one's **brand should be clearly visible** within the header of the email: perhaps someone won't click directly on your call to action, but will remember the logo...

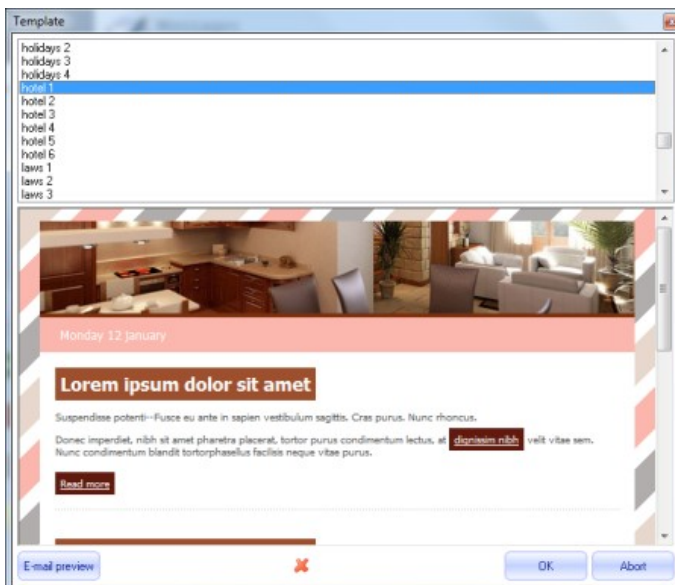
Finally, it's important to remember that **the rendering of the layout** changes very often - and sometimes in unsettling ways - depending on browsers, clients and the screen being used.

In fact, there isn't any universal standard when it comes to display emails. Therefore it's fundamental that your templates are structured in good HTML language, and clean and validated CSS. Above all, a wide variety of **tests** should be carried out in order to remedy any problems of diversity of the rendering.

It's well worth creating several different email accounts so that you can send yourselves a number of test newsletters in order to immediately evaluate the way in which they arrive. Ideally, you could combine these manual tests with a **visual display simulator** such as [PreviewMyEmail](#) or [Email On Acid](#).



SendBlaster can be very useful if you are looking for new templates to use in your next email campaign. Matter of fact, it provides dozens of pre-loaded **templates** that are compatible with most mail clients. These templates are easily editable and customizable even by users without technical skills.



The list of templates can be accessed through the **Compose message** panel. There are many categories available, including those related to holidays, sport, motor, health and vacations.

6. The right font for your newsletter

It may seem a trivial matter, but **choosing the right font for your emails** greatly influences their readability. Whether dealing with plain text newsletters - or also large quantities of images - a sentence written in unclear characters is a blatant sign of not paying enough attention.

Putting this into practice, the choice of fonts is endless. A fundamental difference that should be kept in mind is between **serif fonts** (adorned with frills and small embellishments) and **san serif fonts** (plain and simple):



(source CybernetNews.com)

It is generally believed that the latter are **more suitable for websites**. In fact, the vast majority of newsletters and emails are written in **Arial** or **Verdana** fonts - and in fact with these it's pretty difficult to go wrong. (However, this doesn't rule out the possibility of using serif fonts in the world of email marketing).

In any case, the golden rule to remember is to **avoid any unnecessary or presumed "refinements"**. Using very elaborate or excessively italic fonts (such as Segoe Print or MV Boli) will only adversely affect the readability of your email.

Of course, one's choice also depends on the **type of message being sent**. You're better off choosing very simple stick letters when writing text rich emails. If the amount of text is limited to a few lines - and involves slightly larger font size than usual - you can be a bit more daring.

As for the final visual aspect, there is still much to do in order to **achieve standard renderings** on the web for all types of browsers and screens - not to mention the various email clients. Therefore, the best way to verify the right choice of font is again to **carry out testing**.



The **HTML editor** included in **SendBlaster** lets you create and edit messages like using a normal word processor, without the need to use directly the HTML code.



It has all of the common functions of a standard HTML editor as well as others that are typical of email marketing software. These include the ability to insert an unsubscribe link in the message and the ability to analyze the results of email campaigns through integration with Google Analytics and TrackReports.

For power users, it is possible to use - after installing a free plugin - an **Advanced HTML editor** that's able to give full support to other languages, CSS and DOM elements.

7. A question of graphics: properly using your images

If you've decided to include graphics within your email, then it's necessary to manage the use of them inside the newsletter in the best possible way. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Always use easily **recognized formats**, such as JPEG, GIF and even PNG - which can be read by almost every type of browser.
- **Each image must have an alternative text** – specified with <alt> and <title> tags in HTML format. In this way if the images get blocked, at least a brief description partly fills-up the empty space. However, it's important to keep in mind that not all Clients display the alternative text!
- It's best to avoid **GIF animation**. They are definitely kitsch.
- Avoid using **images as backgrounds**, since they almost always tend to get cut by email clients.

- Remember that the **call to action** button might not be displayed. For this reason, the link to the call to action should also always be available in text format.

- A fundamental issue is the need to calculate the **appropriate size of images**. It is necessary that images are not too large to download so as to avoid any deliverability problems (i.e. enabling messages to get correctly to the inbox). However, there are some tricks that can be employed in order to maintain a high standard of quality:

- a. **Dithering**, which creates the illusion of color depth in images with a limited color palette. Software such as Adobe PhotoShop applies this technique.

- b. Utilizing **<width>** and **<height>** tags to define the size of images, and ensure that the rest of the page is downloaded without having to wait for each item to be displayed.

- c. Deleting the **blank spaces within the code** linked to the images.

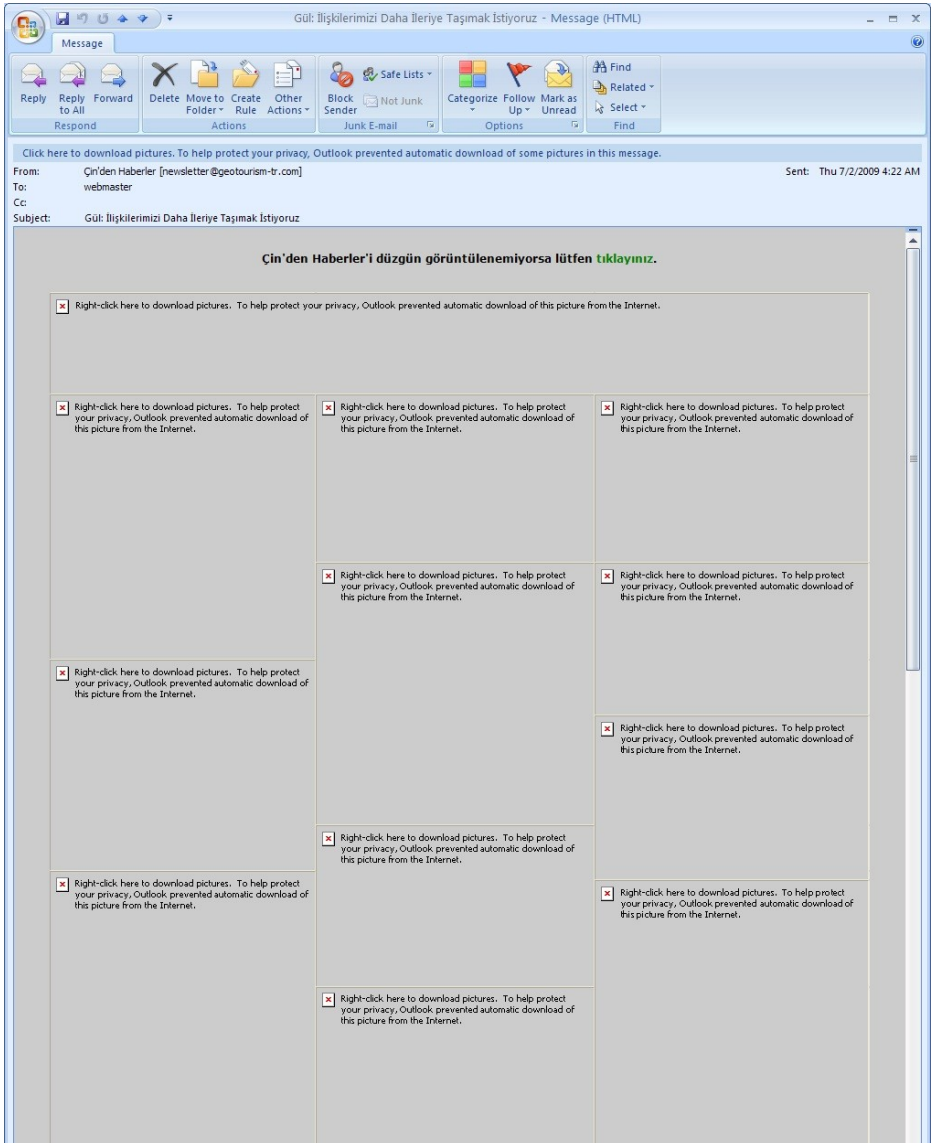
- d. Use **compression software** such as Adobe FireWorks to reduce the size without adversely affecting the rendering.

- If it's necessary to use **CSS**, remember: never employ separate style sheets, and insert it into HTML code with the `<td style="...">` attribute.
- Too many images - or a newsletter made up by only images - run the risk of being **flagged as spam**. A message containing only a huge amount of graphic content has a much greater chance of being rejected. So, always include some text.
- Always try to estimate the overall dimension: the **total size of the message** – HTML and images included - **shouldn't exceed 80-90Kb**. There isn't a specific and standard limit, but of course the lighter an email is, the easier it is to be delivered.

As for **rendering**, keep in mind that the main email clients **block images by default**.

This is one of the most annoying inconveniences that may happen to email marketers: your beautiful layout turns out to be completely useless...

Matter of fact, if your email is completely graphics based, the outcome could be very unpleasant. Like this:



Of course, one may think that “it only takes one click” to see the entire screen properly. But - in the continuous flow of information that forms part of our everyday lives – “one click” may already be too much to ask.

On Emailmarketingreports.com, Mark Brownlow ironically summed it up:

If you want a higher open rate, for example, send a people a \$1000 coupon via email, and put the coupon number in an image.

Open rate will rise as everyone disables image blocking to get their free money. But the ROI on that campaign won't win any prizes.

The **deliverability and rendering of an email containing images** are the key factors when evaluating the success of your work. Obviously it's not possible to be certain, but **testing the layout** on different email clients is definitely a wise move.

And one last tip: pictures are very important for the impact of an email, but what's more important is the **content**. So, carefully assess the relationship between text and graphics and do it in such a way that the email always remains functional and informative even if there is a total ban on images.

8. Don't forget the footer

The **footer** is an element not to be overlooked: although they play marginal roles, if properly used they can make the difference between an amateur message and a truly professional one.

Graphically, footers are located at the bottom of the email. Although it isn't relevant for a call to action, **it's not "dead space"**. Some users scroll to the end of the newsletter, expecting to find something of value.

So, avoid filling the footer up with useless text i.e. copying out half of the privacy regulations - which can be summarized in a single link, or describing how viable your business is. It's better to have concise information, such as:

- The **company's contact details**.
- A **disclaimer** and the link to **opt-out** from the email database
- A possible link leading **users' profiles to the origin website**.
- An ad **banner**.
- Links to your **corporate social networks**, like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn etc.

An excellent example to use in your footer comes from Yoox.com's newsletter:

YOOX.COM IS ALSO ON:



YOOX.COM ESTABLISHED IN 2000 

YOOX.COM MOBILE APPLICATIONS: [iPHONE](#) | [iPAD](#) | [ANDROID](#)

MYOOX | PREMIÈRE | DREAMBOX

 TELL A FRIEND ABOUT YOOXNEWS

[Customer Care](#) / [Privacy](#) / [Unsubscribe](#)

In order to make sure you keep receiving yoox.com's e-mails,
add myoox@yoox.com to your Address Book.

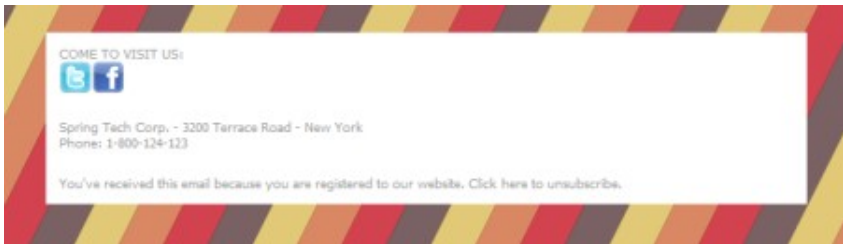
This message is sent to you as a subscriber to the periodical yoox.com
information service, with the address giorgio.fontana@web-target.com

YOOX S.p.A., VAT ID 02050461207, Via Morimondo 17, 20143 Milan, Italy.

The content is perfect: icons linked to social network features, an iPhone app, three quick customer service links, privacy policy statement, a way to opt-out, and a disclaimer. The only slight criticism is the readability of the font, because the gray used to distinguish the footer from the content is too light.



With **SendBlaster**, adding **links to social profiles** is extremely easy. You can add them in any position within a message – but as stated before, we recommend to put them in the footer, along with a disclaimer and the unsubscribe link.



In the HTML editor included in SendBlaster, you can find a "shortcut" to add, with a single click, the icon and link to your **Facebook page** and your **Twitter account**.

9. Disclaimer: clear, discrete but fundamental

Let's face it, mass mails that don't include a **disclaimer for unsubscribing** must be considered as spam. The process of opting out should be made as simple as possible.

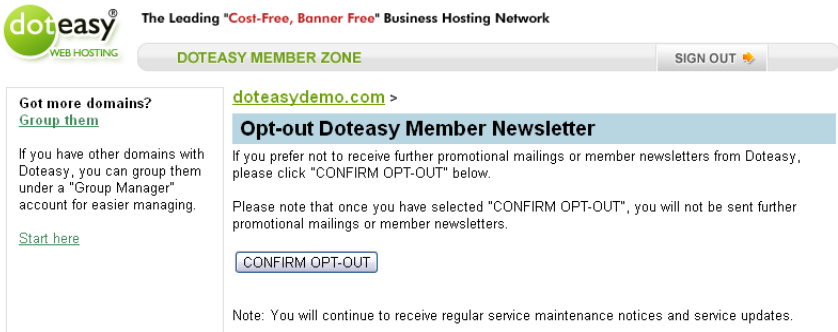
So, avoid such methods as "**reply to this email with the word REMOVE**". Not only is it annoying, it can't be tracked through web analytics tools. It means having to collect all these types of emails. Hard work!

Or **worse still**, asking recipients to "modify the consensus status" inside their personal settings without offering any clear guidance.

The best way is to place a **link embedded in the footer**, stating: "If you do not want to receive this newsletter, [click here](#)", or something similar. Don't use images. A simple text link is best.

The **landing page**, where users are redirected, must be also kept as simple as possible. Having to re-enter personal data is unnecessary and just a waste of time. This is only likely to irritate users.

The best solution is to ask for a **simple opt-out confirmation**, as in the case of DotEasy:



The screenshot shows the Doteasy website interface. At the top, the Doteasy logo is on the left, followed by the tagline "The Leading 'Cost-Free, Banner Free' Business Hosting Network". Below this is a navigation bar with "DOTEASY MEMBER ZONE" and a "SIGN OUT" button. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a section titled "Got more domains? Group them" with a link "Start here". The right column features a link to "doteasydemo.com >" and a blue header for "Opt-out Doteasy Member Newsletter". Below this header, there is text explaining the opt-out process and a "CONFIRM OPT-OUT" button. A note at the bottom states: "Note: You will continue to receive regular service maintenance notices and service updates."

Don't be fooled into thinking that **by making the opt-out process easier** you'll end up losing more customers. Just the opposite, respecting clients' freedom of choice, helps strengthen your brand and lowers the risk to be labelled as **spammers**. In fact, if the customer cannot easily unsubscribe, could simply put the DEM in the junk folder. Which is no good for you.

According to the Smith-Harmon 2010 [Retail Email Unsubscribe Benchmark Study](#) (published on Respon-sys.com in 2010), 39% of major online retailers require three or more clicks to opt-out, up from 7% in 2008. Not only that; 30% of companies continue to send one or more emails after customers asked to be removed from the database. Up 26%, again a sharp increase compared to 2008.

These negative trends are quite astonishing given the fact that the **opt-out best practice** clearly isn't something new.

But being honest doesn't make it necessary to highlight this option, nor should it prevent you from making **one last attempt** at holding on to the user. On the opt-out landing page it's always possible to offer an incentive, a discount, or remind users how useful your information is.

Facebook pushes users to the emotive limits by displaying photos of "friends" who will sadly miss them, emotionally manipulating users into staying on...

But there is no need to go emotionally over board. It only takes two polite and friendly lines.

Middleton Hughes and Sweetser, authors of *Successful email Marketing Strategies*, suggested **differentiating the latest offer** with a multiple shelter:

[...] the landing page asks her why she wants to unsubscribe with a simple two- or three- button choice, such as: prices too high, emails not relevant, emails too frequent.

If she clicks the third button, give her a choice to continue as a subscriber with emails less frequently, whether once a week, once every two weeks, or once a month. Better to keep her occasionally than lose her forever.

An advantage of this method is it enables **accurate tracking** of the reasons why users opt-out, based on the second and final landing page containing the specific offer associated with the complaint.

However, if you have nothing to offer and prefer to let your ex-user walk free via a single click, **do not forget to say thank you and farewell.**

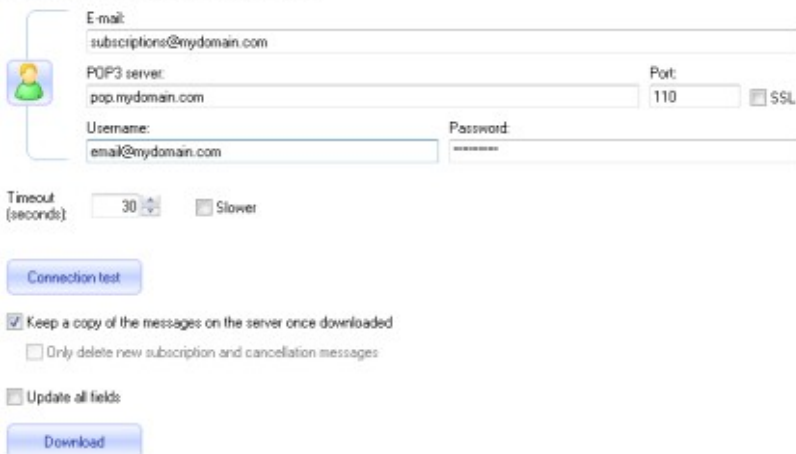
In the aforementioned Smith-Harmon's report, only 16% of companies do this. Yet it doesn't take much to end on a **positive note**. Perhaps a good reason to return in the future to check you out.



With **SendBlaster**, the whole process of registration and unsubscription can be managed automatically.

To do this, simply associate an email address for every distribution list you've created. SendBlaster will use the **POP3 account** to download all the requests for cancellation and delete the respective email addresses.

Subscription/Unsubscription POP3 account:



The form is titled "Subscription/Unsubscription POP3 account:" and features a small user icon on the left. It contains the following fields and controls:

- E-mail:** A text input field containing "subscriptions@mydomain.com".
- POP3 server:** A text input field containing "pop.mydomain.com".
- Port:** A text input field containing "110".
- SSL:** A checkbox that is currently unchecked.
- Username:** A text input field containing "email@mydomain.com".
- Password:** A text input field with a masked password "XXXXXXXXXX".
- Timeout (seconds):** A spinner control set to "30".
- Slower:** A checkbox that is currently unchecked.
- Connection test:** A blue button.
- ☒ **Keep a copy of the messages on the server once downloaded**
- ☐ **Only delete new subscription and cancellation messages**
- ☐ **Update all fields**
- Download:** A blue button.

Similarly, SendBlaster can be used to manage **subscriptions**. In this case submissions (with the subject Subscribe) will be downloaded and the senders will be automatically registered to your list.

10. Landing page

Why do short and concise emails produce a high number of conversions? Because they are only the **tip of the iceberg** of the actual content: the rest is found on the reference website and on the **landing pages** where the links contained in the message direct users.

Understanding the importance of landing pages is crucial to any email marketing campaign. Here users perform what in jargon it's called **conversions**: actions that determine an outcome: registering, making purchases, downloading files etc. Your newsletter can be as convincing as you want, but **the click you earn is only half the job** - and in a sense, not even the greater half.

Relying solely on the content of a message is a common and fatal error: mass emails are always **interactive tools** and they must be linked (except in some exceptional cases) to "another place" where users can move to and act.

And in the world of rapid communications, we all need to be directed to the right place at the right time.

Landing pages are typically divided into two main areas: **reference pages** (for simple consultation), and **transactional pages** (carrying out particular types of activities, such as confirmation pages, **checking-out** after making a purchase, **promotional** offers etc.)

The latter ones are the most important, and require some basic precautions:

- **Consistency.** The landing page is for all intents and purposes a direct extension of the link and the email from where it started: thus it must be consistent with its source, both from a graphical point of view and in terms of content. Nobody wants to click to get a promotion and wind up on a page talking about something completely different...
- **Simplicity.** Landing pages are where you pin all your email marketing efforts. Making it too complex, even with a high **open rate**, will be a waste of time because the conversions will remain a mere dream. All the actions to be performed must therefore **stand out as clearly as possible**, driving the user to do exactly what he wants (and what you want him) to do.

- **Visibility.** Choose graphics that respect your site's settings, but focus everything on the **relevance of the message**. It's best to use images and medium sized boxes, with colors and graphics that stand out from the background. If you are trying to sell a product, it's worth having a high resolution photo in order to entice users.
- **Clarity.** Landing pages often have forms that need to be filled out - and therefore require users to insert various types of information. It must be collected in the **easiest possible way**. This also applies to other types of required actions.
- **Functionality.** Make sure that the links within your emails direct users to the right page and then always double-check it. Above all, **avoid linking only the homepage**. In general, it is necessary that all the landing page features are flawless. Users may overlook the odd mistake within the newsletter - because you were in a hurry, or you had a number of different mail outs to deal with – but **there won't be any excuses when it comes to convert**.

- **Flexibility.** Performing some **tests** is also vital for every type of landing page: if you notice the conversion rate dropping, there is something wrong with the page set up. Make a thorough examination by placing yourself in the shoes of your users and try playing around with alternative solutions.

And finally, a good landing page by Campl.us, which puts in practice all the suggestions we made:



The landing page for the Camera+ app features a dark background. At the top left is the Camera+ logo, which includes a camera lens icon and the text "Camera+ the ultimate photo app". The main headline reads "It's all about one thing... great photos!". Below this, on the left, is a video player showing a woman taking a photo, with the caption "Video: Intro to Camera+". To the right of the video player is a text block: "Whether you're a seasoned photographer or someone who's barely touched a camera, Camera+ will make you love taking photos." Below this text is another paragraph: "Everybody has a creative side... Camera+ will help bring that creativity out in you, all with a fun, innovative, and beautiful design." A "Buy Now" button is displayed with a red price tag of "\$1.99" and the text "introductory price" underneath. On the right side of the page is a large image of an iPhone displaying the Camera+ app interface, which shows a photo of a building and palm trees. At the bottom of the page is a decorative filmstrip showing various scenic and artistic photos.

Camera+
the ultimate photo app

It's all about one thing...
great photos!


Video: Intro to Camera+

Whether you're a seasoned photographer or someone who's barely touched a camera, **Camera+** will make you love taking photos.

Everybody has a creative side... Camera+ will help bring that creativity out in you, all with a fun, innovative, and beautiful design.

Buy Now **\$1.99**
introductory price

3

MAILING-OUT AND FREQUENCY

1. What is the right email frequency?

Good question. The million dollar one, everyone asks. The most obvious answer is **there isn't a simple and unambiguous answer**. Email frequency depends a lot on the **type of message**, the industry sector, the number and types of users' profiles, and of course your communication strategies.

So, don't go holding your breath looking for that super-marketer magical recipe. Conducting a **serious analysis of your business** is the only way to determine that magical number.

Generally speaking, there are two major concerns: **sending too many emails, or too few**. It's well accepted that an authentic relationship can't be founded only on occasional or one-way communications. You can't just send a greeting or promotion at Easter and Christmas. Nobody's going to remember you.

On the other hand, being inundated by them is even worse. According to the data collected by [The Social Break-Up 2011 study](#) by ExactTarget, 54% of the interviewed users say they don't open or read marketing emails because they came **too frequently**.

Surely everyone has complained about this, at some point in time. Alienating users due to an email overdose is strategic suicide, especially in an environment where overloading has become the norm and people's attentions have become a matter of economics.

And that's not all. Excessive email volumes force users to opt-out or generate **spam complaints**. As a result it **adversely impacts on deliverability** and creates a bad reputation.

So, the frequency always depends on **what you've got to say and the type of service you're proposing**. Do not go overboard sending newsletters with irrelevant content matter just "for the sake of sending something."

The only **truly practical rule**, after years of experience, is **at least once a month and never more than once every 48 hours**.

(Of course there are always exceptions. People in the communication sector can send **daily newsletters**, like for example newspapers - sending **breaking news** is an excellent idea that anyone could adopt).

That said, here's a bit of advice to adapt to your own situations:

- **Think about the strategy as a whole.** A spreadsheet with all the email info sent and to be sent should always be made available to everyone working on the project. Except in exceptional cases, there should be no surprises to the scheduled mailing frequency. In this way, it is much easier to track the results. Of course, the organization of the mailing frequency must be based on the **actual content** you have or think you may have. If you have a weekly promotion planned out, don't think about sending three newsletters to everyone in the database. There's simply no point.
- **Focus on analytics.** Open rates and click-through rates, as well as **opt-out rates** will give you invaluable insights in determining if you are sending too many messages or too few. Comparisons between time periods are also very useful indicators. Compare the conversion rate increases or losses for the different quarters (or halves) and evaluate **counter-measures**.

- **Increase the value.** In [one of his most brilliant articles](#), Mark Brownlow debunks the theory that increasing email frequency leads to better results. He **recommends improving the content value** instead - thereby capitalizing on the loyalty of your database. He points out that: “the optimal amount of email for one recipient isn’t optimal for the next”. Which brings us to the fourth point...

- **Offer a choice.** If you have something worthy to say and enough time to say it, **let recipients choose what is the best frequency for themselves** - whether it be weekly, biweekly, monthly, and so on. If you haven’t got sufficient material to diversify the content for the different frequencies, remember the next tip...

- **Listen to your users.** Mail frequency depends only partially on you - which may sound strange. Primitive strategies, such as batch & blast, sent indiscriminate mass mailings, daily or several times a day - with the sole purpose of making up numbers. Today, such actions would fall on deaf ears. So what we are trying to say is: **read the responses and feedback you get** -

each one deserves your full attention. Of course, like everything, it should be taken with a pinch of salt. Remember what Brownlow said: not all users are the same. However, the one thing they all have in common is they subscribed to your mailing list, and therefore **they're interested in receiving information from you**. So, do it in the best possible way.

- **Conduct testing** on a small portion of users if you change the frequency and type of mail out. This won't give you flawless results, but it's better than taking a stab in the dark. This is a good starting point for making those desired changes.

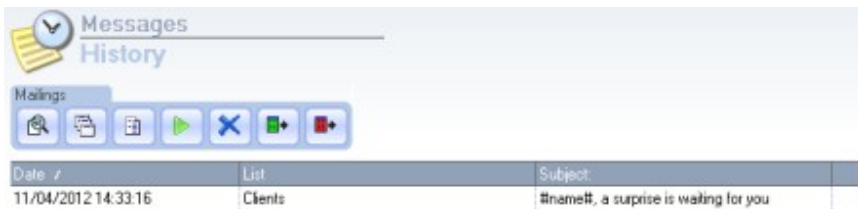
Now, back to our original question: **What is the right email frequency?** After this brief best practice review, let's leave the last word to Loren McDonald at SilverPop – who put it [like this](#):

is one question I hear all the time from email marketers. Problem is that it's the wrong question. Instead, ask this: "How can I create an email program that uses demographics, preferences and behaviours to maximize my customers' lifetime value?"



Sending email with **SendBlaster** is an action that can be stopped and re-booted several times.

This feature is useful, for example, when your **SMTP server** doesn't allow you to send more than a certain number of messages in a given time interval (e.g. max 100 messages per hour).



To access this function, simply go to the **History** panel, where you can find other tools for items management (such as the log of emails sent) and tools to **export addresses**, very helpful for cleaning up lists from addresses that are no longer working.

2. The best day and time to send an email

One of the most popular urban legends of email marketing is to know for certain which is **the best day and time to send newsletters**.

Some people recommend Monday morning, others Wednesday afternoon, someone else says differently. If you try Googling “best time to send email” or similar keywords, you’ll get about a billion results... Not exactly a great help.

Even if there isn’t a golden rule for every occasion and every type of email, there are still **certain times and days better than others**... Depending of course on the kind of email sent.

Beyond the basic rules of common sense i.e. sending a newsletter at midnight on Saturday won’t be very effective, a good practice would be to send **commercial DEMs** mid-morning (at 10 or 11) mid-week. The same applies to **B2B emails**.

Obviously, in the case of **promotions that are only for a limited period** i.e. lasting two days, you can’t simply follow such guidelines. Emails must be sent according to the promotional period.

As for **informative newsletters**, like a daily newspaper, the best time is in the morning. But in the case of weekly updates, it makes more sense to send it in the afternoon.

As a rule of thumb, everybody tends to **avoid Mondays and Fridays as well as evenings**, for the obvious reasons: "on Monday there is too much stuff to do and on Friday definitely no one reads it, like in the evenings." So, the days typically recommended are Tuesdays or Thursdays.

Yeah, sure.

But by comparing some of the main reports on open rates (like the ones available online on such websites as [MailerMailer](#) or [eRoi](#)), you'll see that **the best day is continuously changing every year**, analysis by analysis and research by research.

In fact, the expert Jenn Abecassis on [60secondmarketer.com](#) put together a list of pros and cons of several days, reaching the grand conclusion that there really aren't such big differences – **it just depends**.

Yes, it depends. Simms Jenkins, in his book *Email Marketing*, cutting the Gordian knot noted:

Studies on what are the best days or time vary according to the industry sector and are often of little use, so why not conduct a small study in order to determine what day and time gets the highest response rate for your campaigns?

So, the moral is, **testing** remains the best option. It will be up to you to determine the right time to click "Send", for each specific target audience. The bad news is it takes time and effort. This is because it isn't so easy to identify the **parameters for time segmentation**.

Here are some elements to consider:

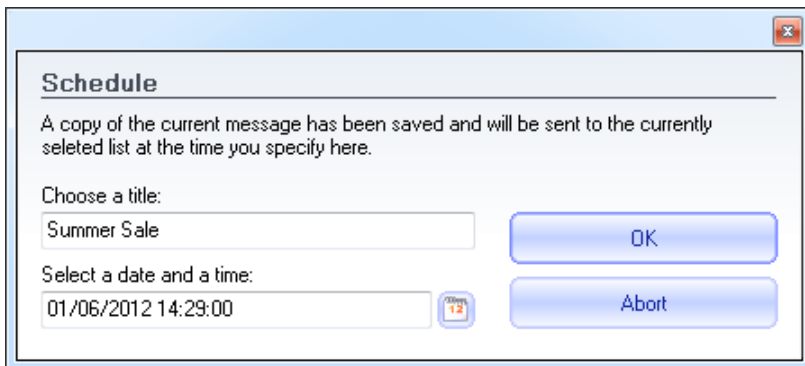
- **Demographics of interest.** A newsletter for moms i.e. with products for infants should be sent around 9 o'clock or just before lunch, so as to reach its audience. Sending a promotional newsletter about books to users aged 16-25, makes more sense in the late afternoon. If it's an email to 9-to-5 workers, the morning is most probably best.

- **Geographical location.** Again [Mark Brownlow](#) correctly points out that if you have to send an **international newsletter**, it is always good to keep an eye on the local time in each different time zone. Sending an email from Rome to someone in New York at 9am means it'll arrive at 3am..
- **Payday.** A good tip is to send promotional emails on the day in which people usually get paid. Maybe it's just the lure to get customers to take the bait. Or so it seems to Morgan Stewart on the [ExactTarget blog](#).
- **Open rate results.** This is another cute idea by [Brownlow](#), the shrewd email marketing fox. Take a look at the web analytics and define the segments in response to the opening times of the previously sent email. **The previously sent email will determine when to send the next one.** This method is a little empirical (open rate times may be random and should be monitored carefully), but if you don't have time to work seriously on the segmentation it is still worthwhile.



Once you find the best day and time for sending out your newsletter, you can schedule it.

SendBlaster allows you to easily **schedule messages** to go out automatically at a chosen time. This function is activated from the **Schedule** panel.



In this way you can be sure your email is sent at the best time even when you're not at your computer.

3. One last look before sending the email

Great, the email is ready to go, you're happy with the template, the content looks great and the database is loaded. **What's missing?**

Before hitting "Send" and mailing out your message, here's a bit of **last minute advice**:

- **Use a validator to clean up and check HTML code.** Undoubtedly, the best one is the [World Wide Web Consortium's](#).
- **Check every link** as well as the **landing pages they point to**. There's nothing worse than clicking on a link that directs one to a non-existent page.
- **Make sure there aren't any typos or grammatical errors.** An excellent proofreader trick is to get someone who wasn't involved in the creation to read the newsletter over. An external checker has a much better chance of picking out any errors. For rather long-winded emails with a large quantity of text, it's better to print it off. Proofreading on paper assures greater accuracy.

- **Focus on the most important aspects of the email:** is the **brand** visible? Is the call to action clear? Does every **image** have an alternative text? Is the **subject** line understandable, concise and above all has no errors? Etc.
- It's time to use a **spam test**, if your provider has got one. This will determine whether or not the content is likely to be blocked by receivers' filters.
- **Send the mail to yourselves** then look at the renderings using the principal email clients.
- Make certain the **email addresses' lists** you are mailing-out to are the right ones. This is one of the most common and embarrassing mistakes. So, pay extra attention!

And last but not least, a small gem from [Seth Godin's checklist](#). **Are you angry?**

Because if you are, it's better to wait an hour or two until it's passed over before rechecking everything is ok. Otherwise the style and quality of your emails may be adversely affected!



With **SendBlaster** you can perform additional monitoring functions.

You can see how the message will appear to your recipients through the preview function, in the **Compose message** panel.

When everything is ready and you have checked the links and verified that there are no typos, errors, etc., click on **E-mail Preview**.

The message you created will be displayed automatically using your default email client. You can thus doublecheck the content and layout of the message, along with the FORM field and the subject now filled with real data.

If you have any doubts about compatibility with other mail clients, you may create a **Test List** using the **Manage Lists** panel. Add other emails you have registered with different providers (such as @gmail.com, @yahoo.com, @aol.com, @hotmail.com), and send your message. You will discover in a few seconds if it has got rendering issues without involving any of your recipients.

4. What to do just after

Every email marketing handbook stops just before the message goes out, and then skips to the analysis of the results - which only happens at least a few hours later.

But we would like to also give you some advice on what to do immediately after the mail-out:

- **Keep colleagues informed.** It may also be useful to send the newsletter to everyone involved or whoever is working in other departments, in order to keep them updated about the marketing campaign activities.
- **Keep an eye on the bounces.** Make sure they're limited i.e. a low percentage of the total number of emails sent out each time. Of course, it's better if there aren't any at all.
- **Delivery Statistics.** If you've got a monitoring service, it might be useful to monitor the status and delivery speed of the emails sent out. Some services might even let you know in real time if the email has been opened.

- **Take a break!** Probably the last five minutes have been pretty nerve racking and understandably you're concerned about having made any mistakes. Well, it's time to rest you're eyes and brain. Take a break and get yourself a well-deserved coffee.

5. What if you make a mistake?

Everyone makes them. And they're much easier to make when **sending bulk emails**. Some of the most common are:

- **Sending an email promotion**, aimed at a specific contact group, to another one.
- Putting together a **template with errors** or using the same material previously utilized.
- Sending a message with the **wrong subject** or worse still not including one at all.
- Inserting in the text **links that don't work** or images that are not displayable.

None of these mistakes are irreparable. However, it's better to have an emergency strategy all planned out before panicking and make things worse.

A general rule we consider fundamental when sorting out mistakes is to **act professionally and be transparent**.

Regardless of the mistake's magnitude, every customer should be treated with respect and dealt with professionally when signalling a mistake.

Customer service should be trained in **managing the crisis** in a calm and effective manner. Denying the facts won't solve anything. Customers appreciate a straightforward and honest approach.

If they're **harmless mistakes** like a typo, an image inserted by mistake or too small, leave things as they are. It's probably better. When customers directly reply to DEM messages - remember to use an active address as the sender! - it will be the customer service's responsibility to apologize and explain what went wrong.

If it is something **a lot more serious**, like a mistake with a promotion i.e. 20% off instead of 10%, missing links, referring to a landing page that doesn't exist or a mail-out to the wrong segment etc., it's best to **send a follow-up email** with the corrections and a reference to the problem clearly highlighted in the subject line.

It's also important, like the other cases, to act quickly and precisely. The longer it takes, the easier it is to generate complaints or create false expectations, making it even harder to resolve matters.

Of course it is a slippery slope, and every marketer has a preferred strategy to handle the situation. But a general suggestion would be to always show that the situation is fully under control. Mailing out four emails in a row, in an attempt to correct previous errors, will only underline a lacking in professionalism, and is a solution worse than the disease.

4

**DATABASE MANAGEMENT
AND DELIVERABILITY**

1. Database management: Authorization

Let's make it crystal clear: only send emails to those who've **consented to it**. Anything else must be considered **spam**, even if the recipient doesn't report it as such or ends up being interested in what you've got to say. (But this is pretty rare!).

White list is the technical term for all the accounts obtained by authorization - a "tidy" list of email addresses that are usable for email marketing.

Allowing oneself to be lured into purchasing contact lists can be appealing - especially since one can obtain huge numbers of addresses in a single shot. But in the long term you'll just end up causing more harm than good - and not just from a legal point of view.

According to certain statistics gathered by [Lyris](#), the use of rented lists hasn't demonstrated **any real and lasting benefits**. Only 15% of marketers consider them worthwhile, in terms of routine results.

So how does one obtain the necessary mailing-out permission?

Undoubtedly, the simplest way is by **subscribing directly on one's website**. Subscribers fill-out a form, inserting some data - at least their name and email address - and indicate their willingness to receive information. The process should always use a double opt-in procedure - which means a second confirmation via an automatic email. We'll take a closer look at all this in the next few lines.

Be aware that the act of subscribing to a database list is much more than a simple legal and effective guarantee for mailing-out emails. It is a clear way to show **subscribers' interest in receiving your content**.

This basically implies, on your part, a sort of unwritten agreement. This interest **must be constantly stimulated**, and never taken for granted. Remember that true email marketing is like an interpersonal relationship, and as such must be treated with the utmost care.

There are also some forms of authorization that fall **half way**. For example, you might consider sending newsletters to people you know or with whom you've exchanged business cards at a meeting.

This practice of taking for granted people's authorization **isn't advisable**. However, it's much better than indiscriminately firing-off emails to unknown addresses.

Another example. An email lands in your lap containing the addresses of hundreds of important managers mistakenly copied in cc instead of bcc. **Whipping them into your own database is spam** - even if you were put in copy, it doesn't mean that you have obtained any authorization from them. But on the other hand, it'd be a shame to let this contact list go to waste.

You could consider **sending a personalized subscription offer** to get them to subscribe - perhaps directly from your personal email, in order to firstly establish a simple dialogue. Then, if any of the recipients express a real interest you can add them to your contacts' list.



Did you save your database in an Excel file or in the Address book of your mail client? To manage your email marketing campaigns, first import your database into **SendBlaster**.

		E-mail ▲
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	test1@testsite.com
	<input type="checkbox"/>	test2@testsite.com
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	test3@testsite.com
	<input type="checkbox"/>	test4@testsite.com

It's not a problem if you need to handle multiple directories, even complex ones. SendBlaster makes it possible to manage multiple distribution lists. For each address you can choose among as many as **15 customizable fields**, including Company, City, Zip Code, Phone and Fax.

And before mailing out, you can also choose to exclude some of the addresses or turn them off temporarily.

2. Opt-in or double opt-in?

The **double opt-in** procedure means subscribers are sent a transactional email immediately after registering on a website. Within the email is a link - by clicking on it subscribers give a second and final confirmation of their registration.

In this way, the presence of one's email address within the database is "doubly secure", unlike the simple opt-in procedure - which validates the registration at the moment of subscribing, without requiring any additional forms of confirmation.

The main advantage of the double opt-in procedure is that **only confirmed addresses get added** to the list. This prevents bogus registrations and thus greatly reduces the risks of getting spam complaints.

For this reason it seems to be a best practice well recognized, and in fact many expert marketers recommend it without hesitation. (And in some countries it's also **legally required** by the local privacy policy, as the only allowed procedure: remember to check this detail thoroughly!).

Of course, it's still necessary to pay attention to some **technical details**. There might be some problems when viewing the confirmation email. Or subscribers may simply ignore or delete the second message due to forgetfulness.

When structuring the subscription process with the double opt-in method, carry out rendering tests on the confirmation email, and make sure it's sent **a few seconds** after registering on the website.

3. How to create a subscription form

You managed to get the user to check out your website and convince him it's worth receiving another email. So, you're half way there, but be careful! Don't let all that hard work go to waste.

For this reason, your **application form** page must be crafted to absolute perfection.

Here are a few ad hoc tricks:

- **Ask for the basics, but get it right.**

The first question to resolve is the amount and type of information to ask for. A good rule of thumb is to **request the bare minimum**, deferring any additional information - necessary for segmentation and enhancing your list - for a later date.

In practical terms - name, email and contact address are generally more than sufficient. In any case, it's best not to ask the user for **more than five different pieces of data**.

If necessary, additional **optional questions** can be added to the form. Compulsory questions are usually marked with a red asterisk along the side of the form.

Sites like Amazon.com, on the other hand, has a minimalist approach to its enrolment process - an email address and password, is all it takes. Additional information, such as interests, age, gender, preferences is collected later on. You may be asking, how? There are several methods; via a transactional email, for example, containing a specific question. Interactive games or by **give-a-way offers** in exchange for filling out a simple form.

- **Clarity, simplicity and linearity.**

Users should never feel disorientated during the enrolment process. Whether it's a single form, or two or three steps are required, the process should be made as clear and rapid as possible - or you run the risk of losing precious contacts. In case you record **high dropout rates** during the enrolment phase - the landing page that contains the form doesn't lead to the desired conversion - this means it's time to make some changes. Look for mistakes, by asking: Is the process linear? Is there any possibility of misunderstandings? Try logging in as a user and test each section.

- **Options and customization.**

A good practice is to give users the opportunity to customize the type of emails they receive: for example **choosing between HTML or plain text, frequency**, and the **type of message** - if you can.

- **Clearly visible privacy statement.**

It must **always be indicated**, especially for legal purposes. Do not state it in full, as it's too long, but make sure it can be read easily - and approved by a simple click of a box.

- **Contact information.**

If for any reason users have problems during the enrolment process, they may need to contact you by email or telephone. A **clearly visible contact list** is a must have for any type of registration form. Finally, give users the chance to **browse through a few of the newsletters sent out previously** in order to get a better idea of what they're likely to receive.



SendBlaster offers a **free set of registration forms** that can be placed on your site by following some simple instructions. There are several types, including PHP, ASP, single opt-in, and double opt-in. For sites with Wordpress, a plugin is available too, and it can be set up with no particular technical skills. Here's an example:

E-mail: *

Name:

Surname: *

Company:

City:

Address: Zip:

Country: State:

Telephone:

Website:

Message Text:

☒ I've read the [Privacy Policy](#)

a confirmation email will be sent to your address

Each script will collect the information of your subscribers and transmit it directly to SendBlaster. Your database will be then updated automatically, including all new registrations.

All modules can be **customized** in style and format. You can also choose which fields your members will have to fill out, to match the ones which are already in your database.

The scripts can be downloaded [here](#).

4. How to get quality contacts

As we have highlighted before, the only truly useful - and legal - database of contact addresses is an **authorized one**. So, how to go about **getting valid contacts**? This question is a bit like the email marketer's Holy Grail.

The fundamental concept is that in order to attract new contacts you **need to appear interesting** in their eyes. Make sure your website's architecture is always at the top.

Remember - the email marketing goal is to build a **quality list of email accounts**. Being **transparent and relevant** right from the start is your best business card.

As for the main sources for finding addresses, here they are:

- **Website**. This is of course the base of operations and the core of any email marketing campaign. A user who checks out your website, is interested in what you're offering - be that info or products - and **subscribes to your newsletter**. Make sure that the registration process or

login is always **clearly indicated on the homepage**. It may seem trivial, but many portals have a bad habit of hiding them in rather remote places. And if there's enough space, don't just put "Subscribe to the newsletter" in the upper right hand corner: **create a small ad hoc box** that catches users' attention.

- **Digital advertising.** Banners, AdWords, SEM, seeding, affiliations: the multi-faceted world of **digital marketing** is obviously the best place to advertise your business online. You can also create a banner dedicated to explaining the advantages of joining your mailing list.

- **Transactional emails.** Purchase confirmation messages, or automated customer request responses. In many ways, this is one of the best places to cast your net - perhaps with a **small incentive**.

- **Social networking.** Statements like, **social networks will be the demise of the email**, have been splashed across every virtual and printed page. The reality is that the email culture continues to be alive and kicking, and isn't neces-

sarily in conflict with other forms of messaging. On the contrary, social platforms are very useful sources of direct contacts, mainly due to their **informality**. After the first friendly exchanges, don't miss out on reminding visitors who check out your bulletin board or leave comments on your posts, the advantages of **subscribing to your newsletter**.

- **Traditional advertising.** The web isn't everything, and email marketing can always benefit from a well-structured **offline campaign**. Obviously, carrying out a newspaper or TV advertising strategy with the sole aim of obtaining new contacts isn't a worthy investment - but always keep in mind the benefits of having your email address or at least your web-address clearly visible.

- **Networking.** Whether you've got a small shop or a large chain, or even a space open to the public, **inviting customers to subscribe to your mailing list** is always a good practice. Above all, make sure that everyone in your business - even the new salesman - knows what to say when proposing this option.

- **Events and exhibitions.** Whatever your activity is, good or bad, there will always be some related events to attend. This is one of the best times to collect quality contacts. Of course this doesn't just mean **shaking hands and collecting business cards**. You must clearly explain your mail-out policy and get their explicit consent. A good old-fashioned technique is to keep a **form** by your stand. But **if you've got a tablet** you can make it more fun and interactive by **directly showing whoever is checking out your stand a sample newsletter**, the type of information and benefits they will receive by registering, and perhaps you'll have a better chance of getting them to register on the spot.

- **Viral marketing.** In recent years, the concept of viral has almost become the buzzword that represents everything cool, powerful, over-shared etc. But in terms of **acquiring new email addresses**, this form of marketing doesn't have a significant impact. However, you can always use the **viral power of the email** itself: for example, include a "Forward to a friend" button in your newsletter.



It's quite common for a database of contacts to come from multiple sources.

SendBlaster helps you creating order. Through a wizard, you can import into SendBlaster all the data stored from **external sources**. For example, you can import data from a formatted text file (.csv, .txt), data from an online database, or all the accounts in your address book on Microsoft Outlook Express, Outlook or Microsoft Access.

It's easy to **export lists** too. SendBlaster lets you export the entire database or only a part in the interchange format .csv.

[Here](#) you can find a complete guide about how to import data.

5. Database Management: List Hygiene

Of course it isn't enough to collect and accumulate addresses: one must also make sure that they are always active and valid.

In the management of one's own database, a regular **clean out of marketing lists** is one of the most undervalued practices by marketers. Yet, it is both simple and a profitable technique.

In general, cleaning lists involves all the types of activities associated with **maintaining a database with valid addresses, updated and running efficiently**.

Every time you send a newsletter, keep an eye out for those **automatic responses that indicate a bounce** - emails that were rejected by recipients - if there's something wrong with the email account, it's time to take action quickly.

When it comes to **soft bounce** messages i.e. "Mailbox Full" because the recipient's email account has exceeded its storage limit, just wait.

But as for **hard bounces**, however, these are the ones to watch out for i.e. "Spam detected" or "Known spammer" - notifying delivery failure of the email, as it's considered spam - or "Recipient unknown" when the recipient's address is wrong.

Here are some basic steps to get the best out of your lists:

- **Eliminate any incorrect addresses.** In every database, there's always the chance that users have incorrectly entered their email address. The most common mistakes are the missing "@" symbol or typos about the user's service provider (e.g. [username@otmail.com](#), or [username@www.gmail.com](#)). They produce an immediate hard bounce and therefore are easily identifiable - these accounts must be removed immediately.
- **Eliminate any duplicated addresses.** Any good email management software should be able to automatically remove addresses that have been inserted by mistake twice, thereby avoiding sending unnecessary emails.

- **Remove any inactive addresses.** Every reported bounce should be carefully read. When one receives an automatic reply stating the termination of an email address, it must be deleted immediately.
- **Reactivate users.** As trivial as it may seem, the practice of changing an inactive email address with a new one, either being directly notified by the user or by an auto-reply message, isn't as common as one might think. Yet it's simple. If you haven't got the new address and your message keeps getting rejected, try contacting the user by phone - if you asked for it on the form. It only takes a second to figure out why your email wasn't delivered.
- **Permanently delete users' addresses that have opted-out.** It's possible that the unsubscribing process doesn't work for some technical reason. If an ex user lets you know that he's still receiving your newsletter after having opted-out, immediately remove the address manually.

As one can see, these are extremely easy techniques that can be implemented in any weekly routine.

The advantages of adopting proper list cleaning procedures are reflected in **reduced costs and faster delivery times** - because at the end of the day why bother sending out an email that won't arrive? - and by **improving deliverability**, a crucial concept that we are going to analyse in the following chapter.



Cleaning your email lists is particularly simple if you are using **SendBlaster**.

Soft and hard bounces can be managed automatically through the **Manage bounce-backs** panel.

POP3 account of the address used for sending:



E-mail:
subscriptions@mydomain.com

POP3 server:
pop.mydomain.com

Port:
110 ☐ SSL

Username:
mail@mydomain.com

Password:
XXXXXXXXXX

Timeout
(seconds): 30

Connection test

☒ Keep a copy of the messages on the server once downloaded

☐ Only delete new bounce-back messages

☐ Delete bounced addresses

☒ Process hard bounces

☒ Process soft bounces

Download

To perform this test, set the **parameters POP3** email address used to send the messages.

This important function will be useful for running **List Hygiene** operations, since the program is able to unsubscribe or (if desired) permanently delete the corresponding address in the selected list.

If you need to stop sending messages to one or more email addresses in your lists, you can use the **Blacklist** feature of SendBlaster. The filter even allows you to extend the block to entire domains. If a domain is put into your blacklist, SendBlaster will not send messages to any email address belonging to that domain.

We recommend to use the blacklist only in emergency cases. Newsletter cancellations should be handled through the standard procedure (see the **Manage subscriptions** panel).



The screenshot shows the 'Blacklist' section of the 'Lists and addresses' panel in SendBlaster. It features a red minus icon and the title 'Blacklist'. On the right, there are 'Take snapshot' and 'Load snapshot' buttons. Below, there are two main sections: 'Addresses (i.e. xxx@yyy.com)' and 'Domains (i.e. yyy.com)'. The 'Addresses' section contains a list with 'address1@domain.com' and 'address2@site.biz'. The 'Domains' section contains a list with 'domain.com' and 'site.biz'. Each list has a small blue icon with a plus sign next to its title.

Addresses (i.e. xxx@yyy.com)	Domains (i.e. yyy.com)
address1@domain.com	domain.com
address2@site.biz	site.biz

6. Deliverability

Deliverability is the ability of an email to arrive at its destination i.e. in the recipient's inbox. Optimizing this parameter is a fundamental task of any marketer.

Unfortunately, **ending up as spam happens to everyone**. No matter how good your intentions and best practices are, sooner or later one of your emails won't get delivered.

These are called **false positives** - messages that are not spam but are categorized as such and therefore, get rejected or wind up in recipient's junk mail folder.

According to [recent data](#), only 85% of emails reach their proper destination. Of the remaining slice, 3.6% is labelled as spam, and the other 11% **doesn't even get delivered**.

All this depends on the recipient's email **filtering** settings, and of course how you structured the sent message.

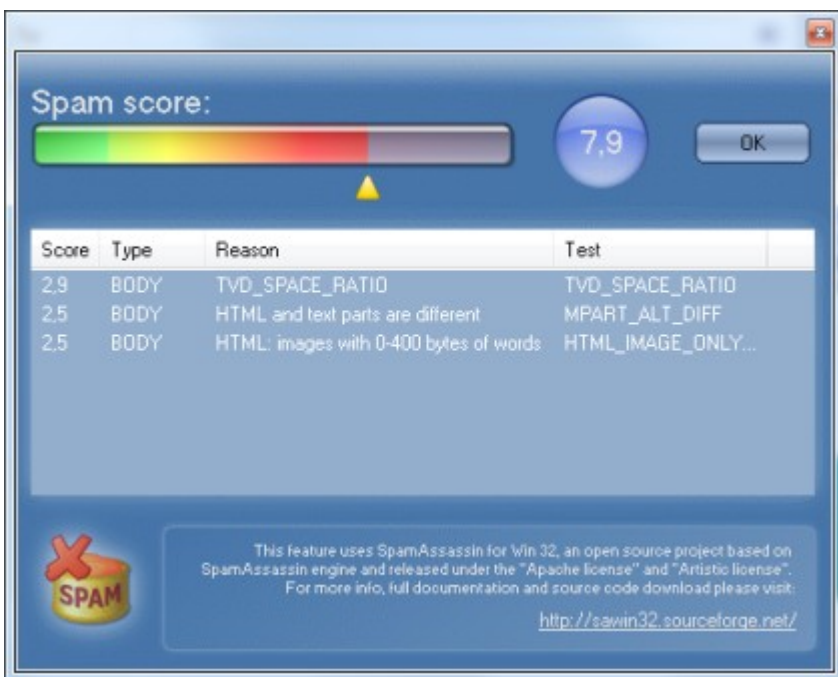
The percentage and type of undelivered emails – and **hard bounces** in particular i.e. messages that get refused by the inbox, but not including "suspended"

ones - will give you a realistic picture of your deliverability. Once assured that your **provider** is truly reliable, focus on the weaknesses that you can work on by implementing appropriate best practices.

In regards to this, the danger of ending up as spam - from the point of view of the sender - is mainly **text related**. Here is some practical advice on how to improve deliverability:

- When it comes to the **subject line**, pay extra attention not to write it in capital letters and **avoid using symbols** like "\$" or "€". Do not use **double exclamation points** or question marks. Avoid **problematic words** such as "free", "hello", "friend", "credit", "amazed", "click here", "investment", "rate", "cash", "money", "mortgage" (and of course "viagra" and "sex"!).
- Regarding email **content**, the same advice as above applies, with the following additional recommendation - make sure that sentences are always flowing, avoiding strange formatting and don't use spaced text (like t h i s).


- Write your **HTML code** in a proper way, closing all tags present and keeping it as streamlined as possible.
- It's important to pay **particular attention to grammar**. Errors and typos are typical of "random content" associated with spam. Re-read emails carefully before sending them. In the case of newsletters with rather bulky texts, they can be printed off and checked before mailing them out, as errors on paper tend to stand out more easily.
- Consider the possibility of a **spam scan** before the mail-out. Many email providers provide such a service, which calculates your chances of ending up as spam - and accordingly suggests corrective actions.
- Follow the rules proposed by [Spamassassin](#), an open-source spam filter widely used - which can also be used as a scanner, as mentioned above.



Is the content of your message safe? With the **Spam check**, you can discover before sending a message if there are mistakes that could cause you to be labeled a "spammer".

You can make this type of control directly within **SendBlaster**, using the **Compose message** panel. The higher the score, the greater the likelihood that your email will be considered spam and will never reach your recipient's inbox.

With SendBlaster you can also balance the **speed of sending** messages as well as other options, such as the pause between messages, pause between attempts and the number of simultaneous connections.

Advanced settings: 

Timing	Extra	Additional Headers
Pause between messages (seconds):	<input type="text" value="2"/>	Suggested settings <div>Prudent</div>
Pause between blocks (seconds):	<input type="text" value="10"/>	
Messages per block:	<input type="text" value="20"/>	
Timeout (seconds):	<input type="text" value="60"/>	
Connections:	<input type="text" value="2"/>	
Further attempts in case of error:	<input type="text" value="1"/>	
Pause between attempts (seconds):	<input type="text" value="10"/>	

These settings are very useful as they allow you to send your messages via [SMTP servers](#) that use special anti-spam protection. It's important to make the first sendings using prudent configurations, and then speed up performance if there are no problems.

5

TEST AND ANALYTICS

1. Password: Test!

Testing your own emails is a best practice that not only increases the general ROI (as pointed out by many marketers), but above all enables you to evaluate the impact of a strategy in real terms.

Email testing, in fact, is based on a **small but significant sample size** from your own database. It usually involves 10% of subscribers, so as to produce concrete results regarding the choice of one or more elements of your email.

Of these, the most important to be tested are:

- **The subject.**

Without a doubt it's the part of the email most delicate, relevant and sensitive to testing.

Writing a good subject is a fine art, and verifying its impact is always good practice. By the way, a common trick to determine the best subject is by entering the keywords into the Google AdWords search engine. The group of keywords that is most popular is likely to be also the most efficient.

- **The template.**

The graphic layout of the email is a very difficult subject to evaluate, but is essential if you want to revamp the entire content architecture. The last thing you want is to end up with a falling click-through rate due to an overly daring design, without being able to go back easily... The message text. If well written, generally does not require special testing. However, if you're undecided, sending two or three different options can be a good idea to choose the right one.

- **The call to action.**

Is the "action button" clearly in sight? Would you like to move it somewhere else? Again, a review will give you the immediate answers you're looking for.

- **Emailing frequency and timing.**

Both are matters of lengthy debate and are well suited to testing - mainly because they depend on the type of user to whom the message is sent.

So, how many accounts are needed for each element tested in order to get realistic results?

Typically it's recommended to work on **samples of 1000 members**, but you can also work on segment sizes (a little) smaller, say at least 500. Keeping in line with the above rule, 10% of the address book is a good approximation - unless you have a very small database.

Once the test has been run, the results can be collected. Regarding the **subject**, simply wait a few hours to receive feedback. Check the open rate of the various access attempts on your analytics program (more on that on the next chapters), and you'll get some good clues as to the best one. In order to better understand the **content** and **graphics** results, you might have to wait a bit longer. In this case, focus on the click-through rate.

In general, a good rule to always follow is to **test each element one at a time** and ensure that it's a viable alternative. In addition, you should always consider a margin of **statistical error** and never blindly trust the test results. If the difference in the results is minimal or lower than a certain percentage, ignore it.

2. A/B split test and multivariate test

Let's now turn to the practicalities of the two main testing forms. The simplest, and the one in which you can get started straight away is, the **A/B split testing**. Here's the procedure:

1. **Choose a random sample** of addresses from your database - about 10% of the total.
2. **Divide it into two equal groups.**
3. **Mail-out a different message** to each group, taking care to differentiate one item at a time i.e. the subject line, or call to action, the landing page, etc. Generally speaking, the first thing to always test is the subject.
4. **Control the results through analytics** and evaluate which of the two messages got the best response. (Again, in the next chapter we will provide all the elements that should be checked).

Topics that tend to find themselves being treated by this system are campaigns designed to retain visitors passing through or clicked on our site but have never returned; a product launch; a fantastic offer, etc.

Beware, however: **false positives** are always lurking around the corner and getting falsified tests for unclear reasons is always possible. Therefore it's recommended that you **eliminate the extremely positive and negative data** and develop considerations about delta between the pages and clicks that are distributed on the page.

An advanced version of the A/B split is the definition of **non-random segments**: instead of picking out any fragment from your database, you can differentiate on the basis of specific criteria such as buyers versus those who haven't bought anything yet, or demographic factors like age, origin etc.

Multivariate testing is a bit more complex. It involves simultaneous testing of different combinations of elements i.e. subject, text, call to action etc: in a certain sense it is like carrying out A/B tests many times over on the same page.

At first glance it seems an unreliable mode - after all, if you test more items together, which ones have improved or worsened a campaign?

But one needn't fret: in fact, unlike the A/B split, this method of testing requires a lot **more time** and **multiple trials** - even with the same configurations. There are many variables involved and the procedure requires some sniffing around to determine, attempt after attempt, the best set.

One mistake to avoid with multivariate testing is using **too many elements at once**: it is easy to get carried away looking for the best combination - it'll only result in an overwhelming number of alternatives.

3. Analytics: summing up the work carried out

Once your strategy has been put in place - once composed and your email sent off - all that remains is to carefully measure its success or failure.

Analytics is one of the most delicate phases of the entire email marketing, and web marketing process in general: meaning the collection and analysis of numerical data obtained through one or more campaigns.

There are also some free tools that can help beginners, such as Google Analytics: just entering a minimum of code in the email and landing page you'll have a large amount of data ready and well prepared in the control panel.

A foreword: the million dollar question, "When can the results of an email campaign be considered **good, average or not relevant?**" lacks a comprehensive response. Several factors can be considered, but there are no true comparative indexes available.

The world of email marketing remains quite closed and its players are reluctant to share their results with each other.

Each email campaign has marked differences as well - even when dealing with similar arguments - both in terms of content and objectives. And as a consequence it makes it quite difficult to compare results.

In addition to this we must add one thing: **there is a lot of data available**, and a novice user can easily feel overwhelmed.

Nevertheless, it is possible to single out a number of basic elements to look out for in order to understand the course of your campaign.

They include:

- **Open rate.** The opening rate of the emails. Although very important - if not opened, they're not read! - it is an element that shouldn't be overestimated. An average open rate - although only indicative - is about 25-30%, even if it can also be much higher. If it is lower, then something is wrong with the subject line, the deliverability or the database loyalty.

- **Clickthrough rate.** A much more important rate: it is the number of clicks on the links that are included in an email. Generally, a good direct marketing message only has one: the call to action that leads to the landing page. As above, there are no fixed numbers - let's say that a good clickthrough rate varies between 2 and 10% depending on the campaign.

- **Deliverability rate.** The number of emails properly delivered - in other words the total number of messages mailed-out minus the bounce rate and the lost ones.

Achieving a 100% delivery is pretty rare; usually the average value is 85%.

- **Unsubscribe rate.** It's the number of people whom, after a mail-out, ask to stop receiving any further emails.

This rate normally and constantly changes: for every x number of new members there will always be y number of people wanting to leave.

Of course, what's really important is to keep an eye on the value, because a sudden vertical increase either means there are too many emails or they're not efficient enough.


- **Forward rate.** The email viral rate i.e. how many times the receiver has forwarded it on to others. This is one of the best figures in order to understand how successful your work is.
- **Conversion rate.** This is a fundamental value, as it demonstrates the success or failure of a campaign. The rate of users who convert - users who perform an action you want them to do i.e. the purchase of a product - generally floats around 2-3%.

Another important question is, when is it best to check this type of data. The results of an email marketing campaign can be seen even after a few hours - like the open rate - but for a more reliable overview it's best to **wait about 48 hours**. At that point you're able to get a more comprehensive picture.



All mailings sent out with **SendBlaster** can be monitored and analyzed in real time with **TrackReports**.

Insert TrackReports code

 **TrackReports**

Enter the new mailing title, which will help you in identifying the mailer later:

Spring Promotion

You can only use letters, numbers and spaces.

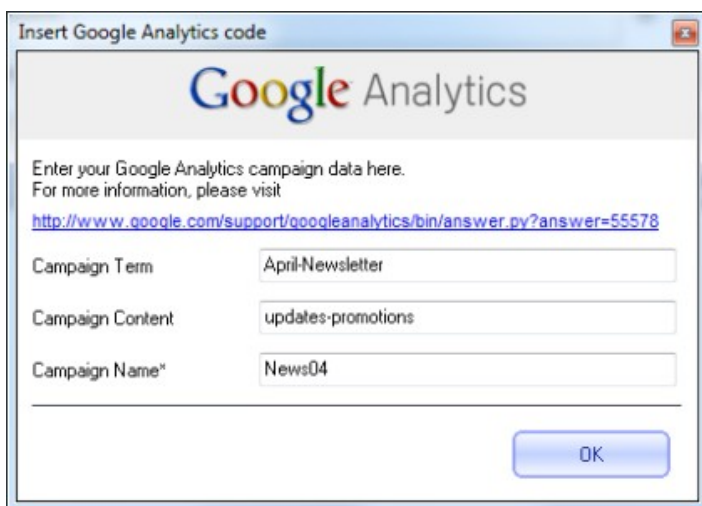
OK

This is a free online tool integrated into SendBlaster. It provides information about the number of read emails, the click-throughs, the number of unique and repetitive clicks etc. It also recognizes which of your contacts opened and/or clicked on your links.

This will help you determine the success of your mailings, as we have seen in the chapter.

But SendBlaster also provides an integration with **Google Analytics**.

To activate it, simply press the **Google Analytics** button in the **Compose message** panel and follow the onscreen instructions.



The image shows a Windows-style dialog box titled "Insert Google Analytics code". Inside the dialog, the Google Analytics logo is displayed at the top. Below the logo, the text reads: "Enter your Google Analytics campaign data here. For more information, please visit <http://www.google.com/support/googleanalytics/bin/answer.py?answer=55578>". There are three input fields: "Campaign Term" with the value "April-Newsletter", "Campaign Content" with the value "updates-promotions", and "Campaign Name*" with the value "News04". At the bottom right of the dialog is an "OK" button.

Field	Value
Campaign Term	April-Newsletter
Campaign Content	updates-promotions
Campaign Name*	News04

4. SMTP: email sending technology

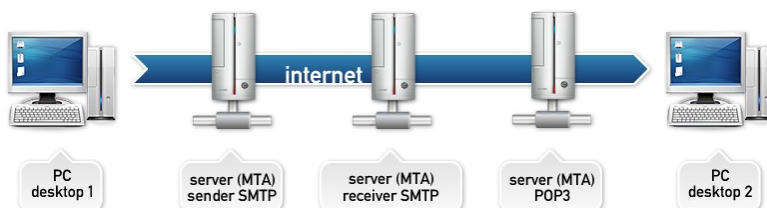
One last question: **what is the technology that supports the process of sending messages?**

This question shouldn't be taken for granted. Sending an email is a bit like driving a car - for most people driving becomes second nature: what's important is that when we turn the key it goes. Client mail or email marketing software is more or less the same thing. One starts the program, types the message and then pushes send. Easy!

The problems begin (like with cars) when something is not working correctly. And one of the most frequent email marketing problems is the **mail-out** itself: the unaware user, at this point, starts to hear about **SMTP**.

SMTP is a **protocol that acts like a postman**. Picking emails up from our software and delivering them to the server so they can be sorted.

Summed up here:



The message is forwarded from server to server until it arrives at the recipient's mail server.

More precisely, the message is sent to the mail servers involved in the transport - called **MTA**, Mail Transport Agent - until the recipient's MTA.

On the internet, MTAs communicate with each other through the SMTP protocol and are logically called **SMTP servers** (other times outgoing mail servers).

The recipient's MTA server then delivers the email to the incoming mail server - called **MDA**, Mail Delivery Agent - that stores the message waiting for the user to pick it up.

Having a unique SMTP becomes essential, but above all it's worth having a professional and reliable SMTP that ensures maximum deliverability.

Alternatively, we recommend **pay providers**, that with a small expense, allows you to get rid of any mail-out problems: a bit like a car warrant of fitness, once you've got it you can travel safely and with peace of mind.



In all versions of **SendBlaster** you can enjoy a **free account of [turboSMTP](#)**, a professional service for sending email that offers a high rate of deliverability at discounted prices.

This account allows you to send up to **100 messages** without charge, and no registration/configuration is required. To get this, simply activate it through the **turboSMTP Wizard** inside the **Send message** panel.

**turboSMTP**www.serversmtp.com - SMTP Service Provider

turboSMTP works with all major email clients, web applications and email marketing software. It offers multiple benefits, including a real-time system to monitor the emails delivered and any bounce backs.

CONCLUSION

From traditional marketing to digital marketing

Carrying out marketing means the same as having a strategy: achieving specific business objectives by meeting the needs of customers as cost effectively as possible and at the same time gaining a certain competitive advantage over one's competitors.

Unlike the era of traditional marketing where mass media was used, such as TV and newspapers, to randomly hit the public slowly waiting for a ROI - today **digital marketing makes it possible to converse with every single user or customer directly** i.e. communicating with them, gauging their needs and listening to their opinions in real time.

Correcting one's errors should in theory be much easier given the advantage of having an immediate feedback, but in reality the errors are much more complicated.

Now **users are much more knowledgeable, clever and demanding**. Most of all, they are increasingly less anonymous and more “real”.

Listening carefully to them and taking a dive in the stream of never-ending conversations, is one of the most challenging tasks of contemporary marketing. Maybe the most important ever.

But listening and strategy must always be based on a **thorough knowledge of the means and the tools** used in the field. For this reason we considered it wise to give some basic guidelines helping users face email marketing: once you are able to utilize this invaluable tool, you'll be able to sell products, acquire new subscribers, strengthen relationships between your company and its customers and look for new users.

APPENDIX

A simple glossary of terms for quick referencing

A/B Testing: the most common form of testing for newsletters and mass emails. It involves selecting a section of your database contact list, dividing it into group A and B and sending two different email versions to each one. This makes it possible to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of each message. It's also known as Split Testing.

Best practice: generally speaking, is the practice or technique designed to produce the best results in a specific area.

Email marketing best practices are oriented towards user transparency, paying special attention to the form and content of emails, the succinctness of the subject etc.

Black list: is a list of email addresses or IPs that are considered spam senders.

Bounce: the action of quickly leaving a web page - or an email - without performing any activity.

Bounce rate: is the percentage of bounces made.

Bounce email: are emails that get returned to the sender because it can't be delivered. A distinction is generally made between a soft bounce - temporary inability to deliver i.e. due to technical problems, recipients exceeding their space limit or out-of-office - and a hard bounce - emails are permanently lost, i.e. due to the incorrect spelling of an email address.

Call to action: is the invitation in an email or a web page to perform a particular action - which in turn is supposed to lead to a conversion. Call-to-actions are usually supported by some type of eye-catching graphics, so as to encourage users to take action i.e. a clickable button or banner with contrasting colors.

Click-through: users who click on a link that is contained within the sent email. The click-through rate is the percentage of click-throughs out of the total number of received emails.

Client: is a software which enables users to read their emails, such as Microsoft Outlook.

Conversion: is a technical term that describes the completion of a process by recipients according to senders' specific objectives. There are different types of conversions, such as the purchase of a product, signing up to a newsletter, or even a visit to the website exceeding a certain amount of time.

DEM: Direct Email Marketing, represents the mailing-out of emails for advertising or commercial purposes - as well as the emails themselves.

Deliverability: is a fundamental email marketing concept. It refers to the sender's ability to successfully deliver sent emails, without getting blocked by client filters or ending up as spam.

False positive: are emails that are mistakenly tagged as spam.

Funnel: indicates the necessary path and the steps that lead a simple visit to a conversion.

Impression: The display of any type of web page, as well as emails, by users.

IP: stands for Internet Protocol. It is a fixed number that identifies a device connected to the Internet.

ISP: Internet Service Providers - An operator that supplies Internet to users.

KPI: is the acronym for Key Performance Indicators that represent the parameters used to evaluate the performance of a campaign or a business process.

Landing Page: the page on your website where the clicks on a DEM are redirected - and where the user should finally convert.

Lead: a potential customer to be "activated" via a targeted marketing approach.

Open rate: the percentage of emails opened out of the total number of emails delivered. Although it is a very important indicator, it's wise not overestimate its importance: in itself, the mere opening of an email doesn't automatically trigger an action or conversion.

Opt-in: actions users perform in order to subscribe to a newsletter - providing their email address and thus giving the sender their consent to use it for a specific scope. Double opt-in requires users to give their consent twice - usually by a transactional email with a link to click - in order to complete the subscription process. For many marketers, double opt-in is considered a best practice.

Phishing: is a particular form of email spam, with the aim to steal receivers' private information stored on their computer, such as credit card numbers, passwords, identification codes, etc.

Privacy Policy: is a specific text which explains how data supplied by customers, when registering to a site or a newsletter, will be treated. Must be made in accordance with local privacy laws.

Registration form: a web page enabling users to subscribe to a newsletter. They must contain information about privacy and offer possibly several different options for the type of message you want to receive.

Rendering: the way messages are displayed. Specifically, it also includes senders' techniques aiming at best matching users' visual display to the original format.

ROI: Return On Investment, is the relationship between turnover and investment: measuring the economic profitability of an operation.

SMTP: stands for Simple Mail Transfer Protocol, and it is - namely - the protocol that acts like a postman, conveying technically your messages.

Spam: is in its narrowest sense, any type of non-requested commercial email or unsolicited advertising mailed-out to recipients. Spam emails are also known as junk mail or unsolicited bulk email (UBE).

Subject line: very simply, is the field where the subject of the email is written.

Transactional email: is a service email designed to confirm various types of functional actions or send data with a non-commercial scope or simply for information purposes.

Unsubscribe: is the process of cancelling one's subscription from a newsletter - also known as opting-out. The subscriber's email address is removed from the sender's database.

White list: a database containing email addresses whose owners have consented to receive senders' emails.

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