Marketing Plan & Budget — Marketing Campaigns — Websites — Email Marketing

Additional Tools
- Vendor Selection
- Return on Investment
- Copywriting & Graphic Design

Email Marketing

Email marketing has been a staple for consumer marketers since the mid-90s. A few years later, B2B marketers discovered its value, and email campaigns have become an important tool for businesses in all stages and industries.

Email marketing enables you to cost-effectively communicate with your market in a way that's immediate and relevant. With email, you can:

- Nurture leads
- Build brand awareness
- Obtain prospects
- Build customer loyalty
- Generate sales

You can usually launch a campaign and measure your results fairly quickly, making email a great option for time-sensitive programs. It's easy and inexpensive to test different aspects of your campaign on a segment of your list, so you can hone your creative and your offer to generate the best possible results.

Here are three sample email campaigns:

GENERATE NEW LEADS	DIRECT SALES	BUILD BRAND AWARENESS
Buy or rent a list and send a short, compelling message to generate interest in your product. Drive prospects to a special page on your website to download a white paper, a demo or other offer. Capture basic information and follow up via phone several days later.	Buy or rent a subscriber list or send the campaign to your current prospects and customers; compel them to click to your website to learn and buy.	Use email to keep in touch with prospects and customers. Deliver timely, valuable information that makes them want to read your messages. Add news about your company, special offers, etc., but focus on content and information rather than pure sales.

Email is more editorial than advertising, and it's powerful because it can support and even drive a sales process. Yet like any medium, it has its challenges. Businesspeople get hundreds of emails (or more) each day, so you'll need to get your message past spam filters and give them a reason to read. You'll also need a strong offer, valuable editorial content, appropriate design and a good fulfillment and measurement process.

You can reach a wide audience with email, but that doesn't mean you should. It's most effective when you really target so you can speak to specific needs. Think of it as a one-to-one communication – personalized, relevant, timely – not a blast.

If you've used email in the past, do you see your company in one of these scenarios?

BEST CASE	NEUTRAL CASE	WORST CASE
You have a strong email program with very specific goals. You use technology to deliver your messages effectively. Your campaigns offer strong content and messages; you create custom landing pages to convert clicks to prospects. You continually test your designs, copy, list and offer to improve your response. As a result, you usually meet your ROI and business goals.	You do some email marketing and are generally satisfied with the results. You send announcements about products and offers; you occasionally use email to generate leads or keep your name in front of existing ones. You occasionally test a campaign before launch, but it isn't a major priority. You know your campaigns could be stronger, but you haven't had time to learn more.	You use email as a quick-fix – when you're low on leads, you do a blast message; if you haven't reached out to customers, you create a quick newsletter. You generally don't target your prospects – you blast one message to your entire list. You don't test your campaigns , and you don't know how many of your messages are actually delivered.

Key concepts & steps

Before you begin

Use email to meet the goals you set in your annual marketing plan; you can also use them as part of a broader marketing campaign. You'll also need to make sure your website is strong enough to support your campaign.

Develop your campaign around specific goals

Take the time to strategize and plan your campaign:

- ▶ Develop a tangible objective – for example, to generate a specific number of leads, demo requests, meetings, or purchases.
- ▶ Profile and target your audience. You can reach a large audience through email, but that doesn't mean you should – narrow targeting means you can speak more directly to their needs.
- ▶ Create a good offer and compelling call-to-action, and present it early in your message – readers skim.
- ▶ Plan a series of emails to create an ongoing campaign – it takes multiple touches to generate response.
- ▶ Don't forget fulfillment – if your prospects expect a phone call or email, deliver it quickly or you could lose their interest.

Invest in good content

Few people want to read emails that look and feel like ads. Instead, offer information that's relevant to your recipients. It's an investment to develop that content, but it's the content that gets people to open your messages and continue to read them over time.

Choose the right technology

If you've never launched an email campaign, you'll probably need to use an email service provider (ESP), typically a web-based service. Choose a reputable ESP to help you stay compliant with spam legislation and get your messages to your prospects' inboxes – a major issue in email marketing. A good ESP can raise your delivery rate, manage your opt-in and opt-out process, keep your email list clean and provide reports that can help you improve your results.

Be respectful and follow industry practices

Make sure you're following accepted industry practices – you'll improve your probability of success.

- ▶ Mail to your house list regularly – even corporate emails change rapidly. The more time between campaigns, the higher your rate of bad addresses – and those "bounces" could trigger spam alerts.
- ▶ Make sure your recipients can easily opt-out of future communications.
- ▶ If you're buying or renting a list, make sure it's an "opt-in" list.

Continually test, refine and improve

It's always wise to test before launching a campaign. If you're working with a new ESP or list, evaluate your delivery and response rate before you roll out. Keep testing and improving your subject lines, headlines and copy, design, offer, landing pages, even the delivery timing. You'll improve all your campaigns in the process.

What's next?

As email becomes more important in your overall strategy, keep learning about the subject and improving your campaigns.