# Month 3: Adding Bells and Whistles

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For the past two months, you have focused on setting up budget requests, technology, creative, and messaging strategies. You have pored over reports and test campaigns. Now it's time to have some fun! This final month enables you to reap the benefits of all your hard work and effort and add some bells and whistles to your program. This is the month where you get to explore ways in which you can make your campaign sizzle by employing some of the latest trends and tactics.
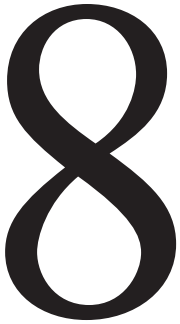
Chapter Contents

Week 1: Using Email as a Feedback Tool

So far, you have been focusing on creating the most strategic and effective email campaigns. The design of your message template, deliverability testing, and reporting and analytics have been your main concerns. But now that your first few email messages are behind you, it is time to have some fun.

In addition to eliciting responses and purchases, email also works very well in a myriad of other areas. For example, you can use it to garner feedback about your company's services or products. In this coming week, you'll learn about five great ways you can use your email campaigns to help solicit active feedback and content:

Monday: Leveraging email surveys

Tuesday: Designing an email survey

Wednesday: Polls in emails

Thursday: Email focus groups

Friday: Email-driven testimonials

Monday: Leveraging Email Surveys

How would you rate this book so far? This is a question you can assume you will be asked at some point in time. In fact, our professional lives are full of surveys of different types. You are asked to rate your performance and the performance of those who work for you annually; you are asked your thoughts on products and services you buy and use; you are asked about your opinions on the economy; and you are even asked how well you think your insurance company has handled your recent claim. Yes, surveys are one of those critical elements businesses use to determine how well a product is being perceived.

Write This Down: A Google search indicates that more than 167 million surveys were conducted in 2007.

Surveys can be expensive, though. Acquiring enough data to make your survey efforts statistically significant is key. Not only does your survey data have to reflect your target or user audience appropriately, but it also needs to reflect data from an adequate number of members from each of your various target segments. Because of the high number of survey programs in effect, adequate response rates for these programs can be challenging to garner. In fact, a good rule of thumb is that for every four hours after a transaction has happened, the chance of getting someone to complete a survey is reduced by 40 percent.

The two main barriers to generating large volumes of survey feedback—time and money—can be drastically reduced or even eliminated by leveraging email as a means to solicit feedback. A survey can be sent through email in real time, possibly in response to some triggering event or action.

The process of creating a survey to be offered through an email is fairly similar to that of creating any survey, whether it is presented on a website or through any other venue. Some companies choose to embed their entire surveys within the email. This works well with email clients that allow forms to be completed within the client (see Chapter 6 for a list of these clients). Other companies simply refer readers to a link to complete the survey. The choice you make should be based on the responsiveness of your current email database. In either situation, you should keep in mind a number of best practices when designing an email survey, covered in the next section.

Tuesday: Designing an Email Survey

For today's hour, we'll describe the strategy for designing an email survey as a series of steps:

1. Determine the end objective of the survey, and don't go data crazy. Many people think about all the questions they would love to have answers to. They forget that the person filling out the survey is going to expect to hear how your company will change or respond to concerns in reference to any question that is asked. If you do not have the time or resources to change the way in which you do business, do not ask your customer or prospect for feedback. It's as simple as that.

2. Target your survey audience. You can select a demographic segment of your database (for example, men 25 to 40) or select actions or lack of (for example, purchased a product or canceled a reservation). Choosing whom you are targeting will be important. Answers to survey questions may change dramatically based on the audience you target. You can't afford to have results that lead to larger company misperceptions.

3. Create your questions. VerticalResponse, an email marketing and survey company, created a series of survey best practices for creating surveys. Its best practices for the type of questions you should create are summarized in the "Survey Best Practices" sidebar.

4. Determine whether you need an offer to drive higher response to your survey. In some cases, offers like those illustrated in Figures 8.1 and 8.2 can increase response rates.
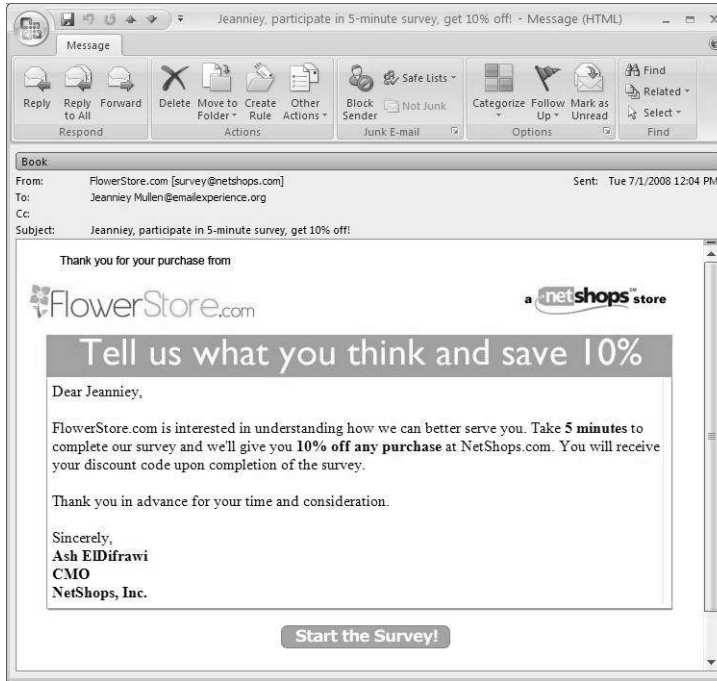
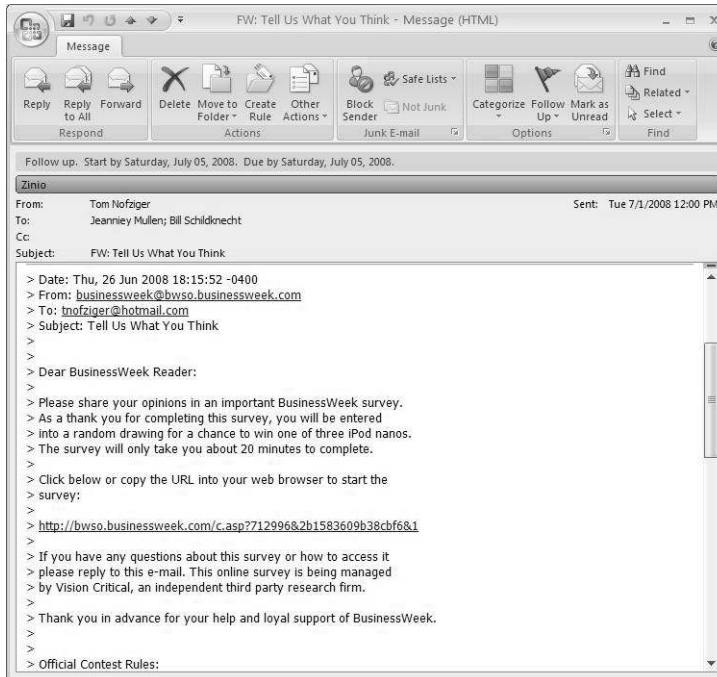**Figure 8.1** FlowerStore.com used this offer to boost the response to its survey.

Figure 8.2 BusinessWeek used this offer to boost the response to its survey.

Survey Best Practices (Source: VerticalResponse)

The clarity and conciseness of your questions, the questionnaire length, the number of items per page, and the way you group your questions can all contribute to a better experience for the respondent. This will lead to a higher completion rate and increase the likelihood that people will choose to take your future surveys.

- **Make sure each question is clear and concise.** Keep your questions as short as possible without making them so short that they're hard to understand. If each question on a page begins with the same phrase, consider using that phrase as the beginning text on the page so that it doesn't have to be repeated as part of each question. Introductory text that asks, "How likely is it that…" can be followed by questions like, "Would you use our service again?" or "Would you recommend us to a friend?"

  There should be no ambiguity about what a question means. If a question is complex in some way, you should provide a brief explanation or provide some clarifying examples within the question itself (in parentheses). Be sure to use terms that will be familiar to your respondent, and avoid technical jargon.

- **Be careful with acronyms.** Don't use acronyms without an explanation of what the acronym means. If you use an acronym several times, spell it out the first time and place the acronym in parentheses. If we were creating a survey that asked respondents several questions about their ISPs, we'd want to write the first question as "Which Internet service provider (ISP) do you currently use?" We could then follow up with questions like, "Are you happy with your ISP?"

- **Avoid stating questions in the negative.** It can be confusing if a phrase is negative and the respondent has to say "yes" in order to confirm that negative statement.

- **Make sure your questions and answers are mutually exclusive.** If you have different categories of content, make sure they are distinct from one another. This can also refer to answers that use numerical ranges. For example, a question that asks the age of your respondent should not have overlapping answers like 18–24, 24–30, 30–38, and 38–45. The 24-, 40-, and 38-year-olds wouldn't know which group to choose. The answers should instead be written as 18–24, 25–30, 31–38, 39–45, and so on.

- **Be sure not to ask leading questions that suggest a certain answer to your respondents.** An example of this would be to state a conclusion in the question and then ask for feedback ("We just redesigned our website to become a leading destination…"). If you present a list of options that allows the respondent to select one or more, be sure the most common or important items do not appear at the top of that list. A possible way to group such options without bias would be to list them alphabetically.

It's important you feel confident the respondents will understand your questions and be able to give you their honest answers. If you are not sure that all respondents will be able to answer each question, be sure to include "N/A" or "Don't Know" as options. If you ask sensitive questions like age or income range, offer "Prefer Not to State" as an option.

5. Guide your respondents through the survey. Some of the best surveys convey a sense of brevity. By showing people that they are on page "3 of 5" or have "3 more questions left," your respondents will feel like they are making progress and will be more apt to complete your entire survey. Some of the best emailers even choose to start the survey inside the email and then give readers a button to click to continue to the remainder of the survey on a landing page or website.

6. Always send an email immediately after someone completes a survey, thanking them for their involvement and letting them know what the next steps, if any, will be. Even if your survey is captured on the website or is completed on a website, don't rely on the "thank you" page to make your participant feel satisfied with their experience. They just took time out of their day to share their thoughts with you. The least you can do is send them an email to thank them for their support.

Wednesday: Polls in Emails

In some cases, you want to solicit feedback from your client or prospect base, but you don't have enough time, don't have enough resources, or don't have a large enough database to justify an email survey. In this situation, you may want to simply take a poll in an email. Polls are also a really good way to increase click-throughs, readership, and general interaction.

Email polls do not need to be longer than one question. For example, "Did you find this article helpful?" Companies have seen up to a 36 percent increase in long-term readership when poll questions were introduced one week, with the answer to that poll included in the next week's email. The ongoing sharing of information provides a compelling reason for people to keep reading your emails.

You can use a few different tactics to create your email polls.

Using a mailto Link for Active Polling

Although many ESPs include polling tools, some do not, so we're covering mailto for anyone who needs to use it. Using mailto links is the most basic tactic to create a poll. It is very manual and should not be used when a large number of responses is expected.

You can implement the mailto link in two ways. You can use a pre-filled subject line for each choice of the answer, or you can use a different mailto email address for each different response. In both situations, you ask the reader to click the link that best corresponds with their answer. For example: "Have you ever tried this type of poll before?"

In the pre-filled subject line example, the link response would look like this:

```
Yes, I have tried this type of poll before: mailto: email@marketing.
com?subject=Yes%20Poll
No, I have not tried this type of poll before: mailto: email@marketing.
com?subject=No%20Poll
```

For the responses to different emails, the links would look like this:

```
Yes, I have tried this type of poll before: mailto: yesemail@marketing.com
No, I have not tried this type of poll before: mailto: noemail@marketing.com
```
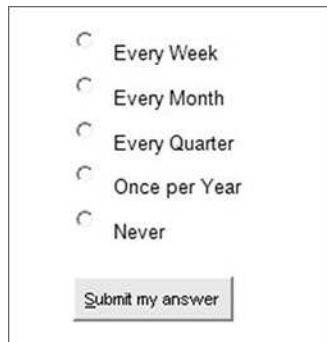
Using an HTML Link in the Email

Many companies will find some use for the first tactic but quickly run out of the resources to manage this type of effort. If you are using HTML in your email campaigns and want to move to the next level of sophistication without employing a special survey tool or service, you can simply create links and track the clicks for each of the link answers.

The only downside of this effort is that there is one additional requirement. With the mailto option, the participant clicks a link that launches their email browser. There is nothing you need to do regarding the poll. With a link, however, people will need a place to land after they click. If you are going to employ this method to implement your polls, you will need to create a simple landing page that says "thank you" or refers people to your email.

Voting Using a Form

This is the type of poll that most large email marketers employ. Many ESPs include basic polling tools inside their email software. In Chapter 6, you'll find a table showing which email clients will render forms and which will make them operable.

This is an example of a form question: "How often do you poll your readers?" The options for answering might look like the following:

Whichever tactic you choose to employ, including polls can help improve the lifetime value of a customer as well as short-term results.

Thursday: Email Focus Groups

Once you master basic polls and surveys for email, you are ready to maximize responsiveness and impact by reaching out to a broader segment of your audience by creating an email focus group.

Email-based focus groups typically run outside your current email program and reach out to a representative sample of your customer set. In most cases, email focus groups are used to keep a pulse on your customer base's feelings about a variety of elements including the economy, your company's products or services, and even future product performance potential.

There are many different designs of an effective email focus group. This book does not explore which type of focus group is the most effective for your company to use. That is up to you. Instead, we will outline two of the most popular options you can take advantage of.

Net Promoter Score

There is a good bit of buzz around a metric called the *net promoter score*. This score relies on answering one simple question: "Would you recommend us to a friend or colleague?" This question allows companies to track promoters and detractors and produces a clear measure of an organization's performance through its customers' eyes.

With a net promoter score approach, this first question is asked via email and then a series of questions are asked, enabling the respondent to provide additional insights as to why they answered the way they did.

Email Discussion Group

Another type of email focus group that is very popular enables participants to discuss general topics of interest in an email-driven discussion forum. In this scenario, a question is posed to a group of participants, and an open dialogue ensues. In Chapter 4, we included an example of how some members of these types of groups have become very clever in the way they use subject lines to ensure that emails are read with various levels of urgency.

Friday: Email-Driven Testimonials

In addition to surveys, another way to garner ongoing feedback and communication is to include a request for email-driven testimonials. In this scenario, a product or service is displayed in the email, and instructions on how to leave a comment or testimonial about the product are included.

Amazon does this very well (and frequently) in the email presented in Figure 8.3.

In this example, you can see that once a purchase is made, feedback is requested. One of the biggest benefits of placing this type of request in an email is that the recipient can file away the email in a folder until they are ready to actually place the review of the product. In certain circumstances, some companies will even send testimonial reminders to ensure that maximum feedback is received.

Figure 8.3 Amazon uses this email to drive testimonials.

The key to making these types of emails successful is to include the request in the subject line. A subject line like "Thank you for your purchase; please provide us a review" ensures that the recipient knows this is not just a "thank you" email and that an action is required.

One reason this type of email is so frequently used by marketers is that it establishes a database of user-generated feedback. This feedback is also very highly regarded in the eyes of your consumer. Two recent Jupiter Research statistics demonstrate this impact:

- Twenty percent of online buyers post on average nine product reviews a year.
- Seventy-seven percent of the online population finds reviews more useful than email.

Yes, feedback is very good to solicit. And, if done right, it can even be turned into a large database of customer-generated content that can grow from feedback and ratings into its own email program.

Customer-Driven Content

Now it's time to really turn up the fun. You've done a poll, you've included a survey, and you have even pulled together an email focus group along with reviews and

testimonials. Now what? Now, it's time to take all the highly trusted research and feedback you have and make it do the hard work for you.

It is fairly simple to leverage customer content in a way that enables the automated creation of a stand-alone email program or campaign. The very best example we have of this comes from a recent search we did for information on a travel destination in Spain. We were asked to visit Spain on business and were told we would have a day or so free. The local employees of the company we were visiting suggested going to the Canary Islands. Not knowing anything about these islands, we decided to do a Google search on the area.

The Google search took us to the TripAdvisor website (`www.tripadvisor.com`). We landed on a page about the Canary Islands (not the home page). This page was a perfect picture of best practices. As you can see in Figure 8.4, the page asked us to opt into email information about these locations. We did. In addition to the email opt-in pop-up page, we also noticed the ability to add photos, videos, and even testimonials or content about the locations that were listed within the Canary Islands. We knew that this was going to be a very informational visit from an email marketing standpoint.
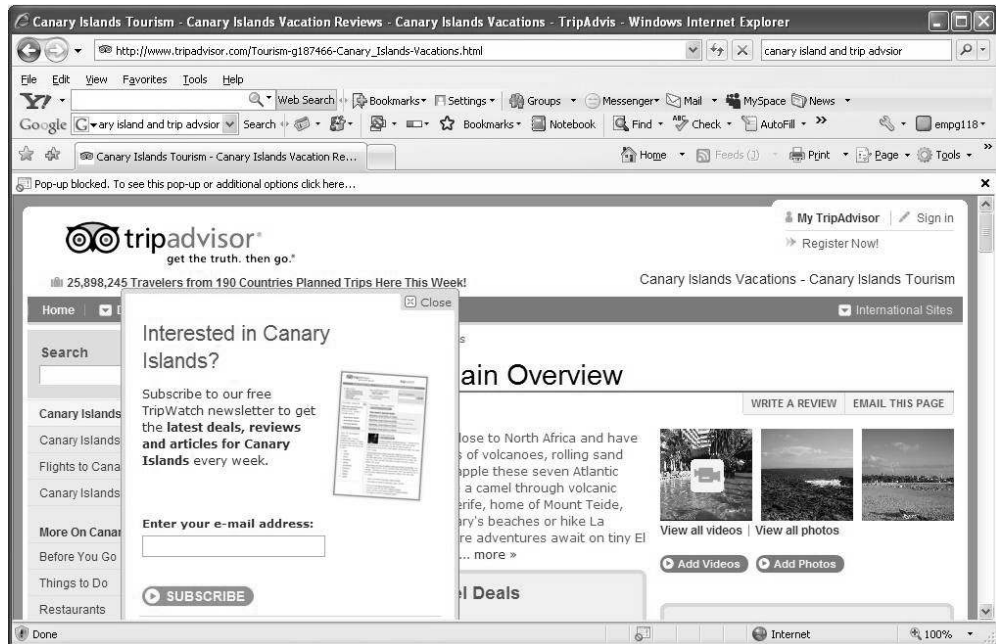
Figure 8.4 TripAdvisor opt-in

We received the standard "thank you" email, which we liked quite a bit. But better than that, two days later we received an email about the Canary Islands that was completely consumer-generated. You can see that email in Figure 8.5.

Figure 8.5 TripAdvisor email

This email was simple and included one link to download the content. The impressive part comes with the eight-page consumer-generated content document (done on demand) that had feedback about every aspect of this trip in which we could be interested.

We were so impressed that we are posting the full eight pages at www.sybex.com for you to review; Figure 8.6 shows the first page. If your email marketing program can act this seamlessly, you will know you have made it to the level of email marketing expert. Take a look at this document, and your mind will end the week thinking all about ways you can creatively include customer-generated feedback to your program.
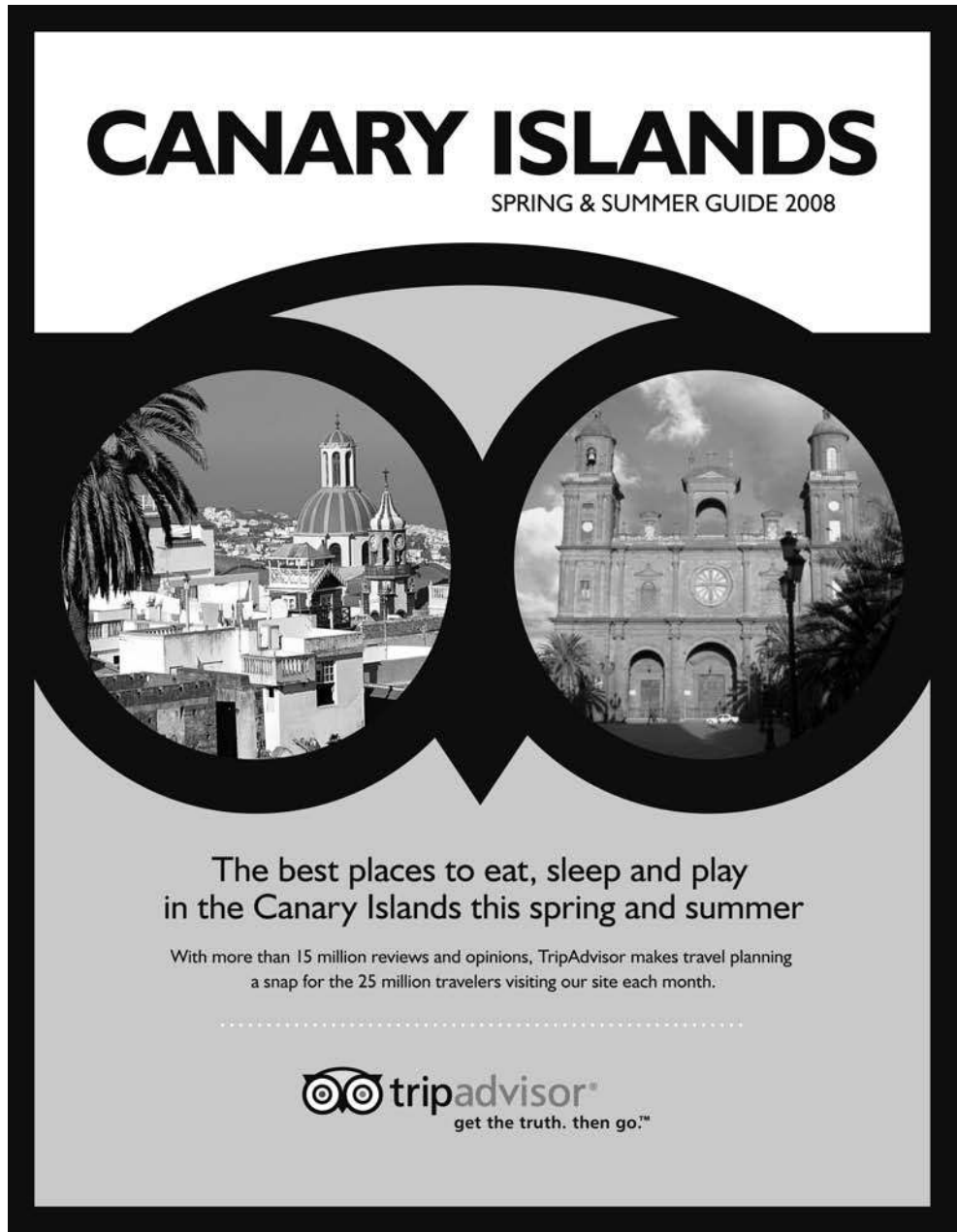
Figure 8.6 First page of the Canary Islands Guide generated in response to our interests

Week 2: Creating Video- and Audio-Enabled Emails

Surveys and polls help engage your email recipients in a type of dialogue that will help boost lifetime value and provide insights. That said, continuously returning to the same

person time and time again to solicit feedback can begin to feel very one-sided. Be sure to consider the frequency with which you are sending surveys and polls. This is not to suggest that the frequency in which you ask for feedback needs to be reduced. Instead, you may want to consider timing your requests for feedback and information with emails that carry what is often called *unanticipated rewards*.

Unanticipated rewards outside the world of email marketing can be defined as any special offer or gift that a person who does business with your company receives. Sometimes these rewards are coupons, sometimes they're small gifts or free trials, and sometimes they can be even better. In the world of email, though, it is quite challenging to deliver unanticipated rewards that are seen as having tangible results. These rewards must live inside the emails themselves.

Creative email marketers, however, have found ways to increase the level of surprise and delight they include in their emails by enabling the use of audio and video inside their messages. Creating and sending this type of content via email can surprise, delight, and entertain your customer or prospect in many ways.

Travel companies tend to use video or audio well inside large campaigns. In their case, they use the videos to educate people about what to expect on their trip. Retailers use video to demonstrate a product line or offering. Even pharmaceutical companies have started using video and audio emails as part of a larger campaign to drive home a consistent brand message and impact throughout every touch point.

If your company is large enough to build multifaceted campaigns, then video or audio email could be the one element you need to bond all the other elements together.

This week we will explore when and how to successfully use video and audio inside your emails. We must start this week with a word of caution. Audio and video emails are either highly successful or highly annoying. If you are not 100 percent sure that using one of these tactics is appropriate for your audience, you could be tempting the email gods. So, as you read this section, consider each element you read carefully, and apply it with caution. Follow the rules and do it the right way, and you can increase results by more than 700 percent. Ready to explore the pros and cons of video and audio usage inside your emails? Here we go.

Monday: Deciding whether using audio or video is right for your emails
Tuesday: Building the five layered emails
Wednesday: Making your video email viral
Thursday: Making your video email an integrated part of a larger campaign
Friday: Allowing your reader to create their own video email

Monday: Deciding Whether Using Audio or Video Is Right for Your Emails

The first step in successfully implementing audio and video in your emails is deciding whether it is right for your audience. Knowing when to use video and audio is almost as important as knowing how to build the message.

To help you make your decision with ease, we have included this questionnaire to use as a reference.

Should I use audio or video in my emails?

Question	Yes or No
1) Can you communicate your key message points in 20 seconds or less?	
2) Will audio or video help explain your offering better than photos with text?	
3) Does your product/service thrive from referrals (from colleagues/businesses)?	
4) Will the recipients of your emails be connected with broadband?	
5) Will the recipients of your emails have sound cards on their computers?	
6) Will the recipients of your emails have access to the Internet?	
7) Do you have access to preshot content?	

If you answer "yes" to at least five of these questions, then you have a pretty good reason to explore using audio or video in your emails. Whatever you do, don't use these emails as a gimmick to make an impulse sale or to attempt to drive a significant volume of referrals. Instead, use them to inform, educate, introduce, or even train readers on new talking points and content.

Whether you are using email for B2C or B2B messages, the justification for active content is the same. If it will significantly increase the levels of response to your messages, it should be done.

Tuesday: Building the Five Layered Emails

Once you have decided to move forward with audio or video in your emails, you can get ready to create those elements. To ensure that your message will be received and viewed in the best manner possible, you (and your HTML developer) will need to create five layers of interactive content within your email message:

- A flat HTML version
- A version with animated GIFs but no sound
- A version with animated GIFs and sound
- A Flash or video version without sound
- A Flash or video version with sound

Today, the entire focus is on how to create those five layers.

Layer 1: The Flat HTML Version

The assumption with this layer is that no matter how good you are at designing a rich-media email, someone somewhere on some email client will not be able to see it. For those viewers, it is important to have a basic email design that will still get across all the essential points of your message.

Layer 2: The Animated GIF Version (with No Sound)

The simplest form of visual animation is a timed series of GIF images, often "thumb-nail" size, that create the appearance of, say, a person dancing or a globe revolving. (We're sure you can think of other examples you've seen, because the effect can be really eye-catching.)

Many businesses provide employees with PCs or laptops without sound cards. If you work in a cubicle environment, you might already know that it is difficult to concentrate when your cubicle neighbor is blasting music next door. Imagine how annoying it would be if this happened when someone simply opened an email. For this reason, you should anticipate that some viewers will see your animated email move but never hear the sound; for these viewers, you need to make sure that no essential infor-mation is found only in the audio. To determine whether a computer has a sound card at all, you can include some basic code in the HTML for the email. This version will play if there is no alternative.

Layer 3: The Animated GIF Version with Sound

For PCs with sound, you can create a version of your animated email that adds a voice to your message. A little-known fact about Hotmail users is that they can accept sound while most other animation and noise is filtered out. If you have a high number of Hotmail users on your email list, sound emails may be something you want to test.

Layer 4: The Flash or Video Email (with No Sound)

Designing an email that truly enables an animated feel often requires the use of Flash and/or video. In these cases, some email clients allow the animation through but block the audio code. As with the emails designed with no sound, it is always best to design a Flash version that supports frames, with text taking the place of audio so that the reader can get the full experience.

Layer 5: The Flash or Video Email with Sound

If you are lucky, your recipient's email client will support both Flash or video anima-tion and audio. This means you are ready to roll! As you design your email for the most optimal experience, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Always allow your reader to start the animation. If not, your reader may miss the first ten seconds of your email message and not understand the point.

- Never send an email video or flash that is longer than 30 seconds. People don't have that much time to watch videos. Keep it short and simple.

- Make sure you have an ending frame. All too many times we have seen the best videos end on a black screen. No URL, no call to action—just black. Don't let your emails fall into the black hole; make sure you end with a clear action message.

Following all these design guidelines will help you make sure you have a technically effective email. Testing these five layers across the email deliverability and rendering platforms is key. Once you have a solid design and message, you are ready to move on to the next effort, making your emails viral.

Wednesday: Making Your Video Email Viral

If you like YouTube, you will love video emails. Unlike YouTube content, video emails are typically advertisements that are built in a way that will drive business for a company. Many times these videos are educational. Sometimes they are funny. Rarely do they encourage someone to forward the email along to a co-worker or friend. Internet content that is compelling enough to get forwarded along is described as spreading "virally."

Those of us who have been in email marketing for a long time can tell you that video email made a hugely successful debut in early 2000. Broadband penetration was not high enough to enable massive consumer adoption, but the novelty and interest levels were there. These first video-enabled emails often got high pass-along rates. They were new and exciting to us all. But as time went on, the interest in video email started to wane because of the delivery challenges we've outlined. In fact, in a recent conversation with Keith McCracken, chairman of video email company Vismail America, he reflected on the way video email first died and is now coming back to life with a vengeance:

> "Some advertisers have all but written off email as a video delivery mechanism because mass streaming in the past has caused more problems than opportunities. And yet, because email is so ubiquitous and so popular in our society, it really should be the greatest of advertising tools on the Web.

> "Combine this thought with the 'elephant in the room,' with the elephant being the precipitous decline of TV audiences…. Advertisers must simply go elsewhere to deliver their [video] ads to consumers, and right now, all they can buy are pre-rolls, mid-rolls, and post-rolls on video sites presupposing that consumers will be any more disposed towards such interruptions on the Web than they are now on their TV sets.

> "The answer is a version of ads on demand via email. Consumers do enjoy some ads, but they need to be relevant, amusing, and useful. Email opt-in lists of consumers who've already said to advertisers, "Send me information about your brand," will not only watch the video ads but welcome video ads sent by email."

But how do you take this newfound interest and make it viral? Here are some suggestions for making sure you can help your email live longer:

- **Test funny.** We know this sounds crazy, but it just could work. In fact, Centrum did this a while back when it created a video commercial and posted it on YouTube. You can watch it at `www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjPfJ8LHOB4`; Figure 8.7 shows one of the milder frames.

Figure 8.7 Centrum Silver video

This video is pretty "off brand" for standard Centrum ads, but it was well received by the video email crowd. People who received this email were so surprised with the content that it was forwarded like crazy.

- **Ask your viewers to forward the video.** Earlier we spoke about including instructions on the final frame for the video. This space can also be used to include a request to send it to a friend. In some cases, these requests can even include a special offer or incentive.

- **Try a serial set of videos.** There is nothing better for forwarding email than seeing a set of video emails that tells a story over time. In Figure 8.8, Unilever's I Can't Believe It's Not Butter brand created a series of videos outlining a murder mystery in the refrigerator (see the whole series at `www.free-spraychel.com/freespraychel/default.asp`). The company later made it into a sweepstakes. Emails were sent with a video box showing one of the frames in it and driving you to the landing site. Videos like this typically become very viral.

Figure 8.8 A webisode viral video

Creating a video that will become viral is a challenge. Many factors will play into its success (or lack of success), some of which you simply don't have control over. Viral videos require a good bit of testing and learning to see what resonates with your brand best.

Thursday: Making Your Video Email an Integrated Part of a Larger Campaign

Whether or not you are able to design a video email that goes viral, sticking to the best practices covered earlier will be key. Your email message, including its enclosed video, Flash, and/or audio, must be flawless, especially if it is going to be included as part of a larger initiative.

IBM conducted a fantastic campaign that leveraged video email, online search tools, its own website, and the websites of many other properties when it launched a program called Scavenger Hunt.

In the Scavenger Hunt campaign, targeted viewers were shown a video email clip, supposedly recorded by IBM's two spokespeople at the time, Ned and Gil. Ned and Gil were making the video email from their cell phone as they were stuck in a server room and wanted you, the viewer, to go to the website, get the clues, and help them escape.

This integrated campaign included all the best practices for video and audio email you could think of. It offered the five layers of messaging, there were three video

emails sent to keep interest, and the landing destinations encouraged people to share the videos with others.

This campaign was a best practices success. IBM even saw an unexpected number of people blogging about how to solve the mystery and generating additional social buzz.

Friday: Allowing Your Reader to Create Their Own Video Email

If you are thinking about using video or audio email, just as with general email content, testimonials work very well. They increase the quality of the message and boost the "forwardability" of the message as well. Building a platform and process to capture user-generated video email can be one way to achieve lifelike testimonials.

You can access user-generated video content in a few ways. You can ask someone to post it on YouTube, or you can store or send it via other social networks. Some companies even build unique applications to drive and store user-generated content.

The volume of user-generated video content is growing like crazy. AccuStream iMedia Research released a report in January 2008 about online video usage for 2007 and its predictions for 2008. The market grew by an estimated 70 percent in 2007, up from a total 13.2 billion views generated in 2006. **It predicts an increase of about 50 percent in 2008 to a total number of video views of 34 billion.**

This prediction is startlingly large. And although it does not identify how much of the video content is being recommended using email, or being shared using email as the main channel for communication, one thing is certain: User-generated video content can drive revenue and results.

According to a recent McKinsey & Company study, more than 90 percent of consumers regard word of mouth as the best source of information about products and services. Everyday brand evangelism works. Happy customers constitute a powerful army of word-of-mouth advocates. And the opt-in friends of those satisfied customers are, in the David Mamet vernacular, "the Glengarry leads."

So, how do you get there? How do you make online word-of-mouth programs happen and figure out whether they're a viable part of your marketing mix? If you are looking to capture, leverage, or help design user-generated content, there are a few key techniques that our friends at Mass Transit use to assist their clients when developing successful viral campaigns that leverage user-generated content:

- **Get behind a good product or offer.** Give potential brand advocates something to talk about. A great product gets attention; so does a super-cool prize. This doesn't mean you will always have a choice what you market, but it doesn't mean you should strongly recommend against a viral email if the product or offer is not strong.

- **Make it easy.** The most powerful part of a successful email campaign is the four-word link at the top and/or bottom of the page: Forward to a Friend. Every email should have one. The form should be simple, intuitive, and honest, and the time required to fill it out should be miniscule compared to the reward to you and your friend.

- **Be transparent.** Marketers need to be clear about benefits, prizes, and privacy. Brand advocates need to be transparent about their relationship to the marketer—who they are, and why they think people they send this message to should sign up, enter the contest, or buy the gizmo. As a marketer, you should consider helping define these benefits on landing pages and in emails.

- **Plan your next move.** Have a strategy for sending a welcome email to new opt-ins, running contiguous promotions, eliciting feedback from new demographics, and executing future word-of-mouth initiatives.

- **Measure.** Although you cannot send emails to a recipient who receives a tell-a-friend message from your site, you can count how many of such messages were sent. You can also ask those recipients to opt into future emails so you can determine the growth of your opt-in database. You can then benchmark and compare this number to, say, your SEM universe or direct marketing campaign. One ROI equation might look like this:

    Cost of email design and transmission + cost of incentive/number of new opt-ins = cost per buzz-generated subscriber (CPB, if our acronym sticks)

Week 3: Creating Mobile Email

Bells and whistles in email can generate a tremendous amount of fun. They allow you to be creative and think outside the box. This week, we challenge you to think way outside the box. In fact, think outside the inbox of emails. Recent research and trending reports indicate that an increasingly high number of emails are being read in a mobile environment. Whether someone is reading the emails on a BlackBerry, iPhone, Treo, or other type of device, the message is not being seen with the same level of integrity or design that was originally intended. This week's focus is on leveraging your email campaign for those readers who are seeing your message on a mobile device. Whether it is because of travel or simply life, this week should enable you to refocus.

Monday: Why your email needs to be mobile
Tuesday: The mobile email creative
Wednesday: How many readers in your database are reading "on the run"?
Thursday: Defining your mobile email preference center
Friday: Making Your Current Email Strategy Work in a Mobile World

Monday: Why Your Email Needs to be Mobile

In 2007, ExactTarget released a white paper that spoke to many of the latest demographic trends and statistics in mobile email marketing.

Young adults, they found, are the primary users of mobile devices. Of the 4,202 mobile phone users ExactTarget surveyed, 7 percent identified themselves as mobile email users, and another 6 percent said they planned to purchase a new mobile device with email capabilities within the next six months.

The survey also found that "mobile users tend to be 18–44, employed full-time or self-employed, affluent, and highly educated." They also tend to read mobile email with divided attention. Remember, these people are on the go. Of mobile email users identified in the survey, the following is true:

- Seventy-five percent were ages 18–44.
- Sixty-two percent were working professionals (either employed or self-employed).
- Eighty percent access their mobile email at home.
- Forty-six percent check mobile email at dinner.
- Thirty-nine percent admit to checking email while driving their cars.

Users are also a wealthier demographic—19 percent of mobile phone users with an annual household income of more than $100,000 regularly use their mobile devices to access email. For households earning $200,000-plus, that number doubles to 38 percent.

We know these numbers are changing fast. ExactTarget's research was conducted prior to the release of the first-generation iPhone, which accelerated the adoption of mobile email. According to Gartner, worldwide smartphone sales increased 29 percent in the first quarter of 2008 over the first quarter of 2007. In North America, the increase was 106 percent. As mobile devices grow simultaneously more sophisticated and less expensive, adoption will continue to grow.

Another key point is that people use mobile email differently. Primarily, it's to stay on top of matters that users deem urgent. According to Morgan Stewart, director of research and strategy for ExactTarget, the key advantage of mobile email is simple—it's mobile. It frees people up from their desks, and it allows them to feel productive during downtime. Poor rendering, small screen resolution, hard-to-use keyboards, and limitations when working with attachments all make mobile less desirable than desktops or laptops for accessing email. The majority of people access the same email accounts from both their mobile devices and through a computer at home or work, but some do maintain a "mobile-only" email address provided through their mobile carrier for personal communication.

To date, fierce competition between mobile phone manufacturers in North America has stymied the development of mobile email standards. Apple, BlackBerry,

Microsoft Windows Mobile, and Palm offer different mobile email experiences and show few signs of standardizing. Outside North America, Symbian is the dominant operating system followed by Linux. "This market is a moving target because everyone is trying to beat everyone else in terms of putting out the next cool device," Stewart says. "Email is a key selling point for many of these phones, especially in North America. We are seeing the mobile email experience look more and more like the PC experience, so, in time, many of the rendering issues will resolve themselves. Until then, I recommend marketers incorporate text alternatives as the lowest common denominator."

Tuesday: The Mobile Email Creative

Creating email for a mobile device is a challenge. Without standard viewing-window sizes or a consistent way to determine which device your message is being rendered on at the time it is read, you need to be very careful about each creative decision you make, from the subject line down to the HTML code.

To ensure that your messages are as readable as possible, we recommend considering these four points:

- **Always design two versions of your email, and send messages as multipart/ MIME.** This lets the email client determine which version to show. Ideally, the PC client will display the HTML version in its intended beautiful layout, and mobile clients with limited functionality will display the text version. But remember, this is not always the case. Design your HTML version with links at the top that provide both HTML and text alternatives. (See the Sam's Club example in Figure 8.9, in the next section.) This way, if the email does not render appropriately, the user has options to improve their experience. For more specific creative hints, refer to Chapter 5.

- **Use SMS length (160 characters or less) for urgent messages.** When sending time-sensitive messages or alerts, consider using short message formats to allow recipients to react to the message quickly. In today's world, where Twitter is becoming more popular, messages that the user can read in the window of a BlackBerry without needing to scroll down are key. Preliminary studies conducted by the authors indicate that 72 percent of those who read emails do not scroll down if they think the message is completed when the content is above the fold. This means you need to keep your message to 100 total characters, or 20–25 words.

- **Type URLs; do not try to code them as hyperlinks.** Symbian or BlackBerry devices do not support coding that makes your links appear "friendly." Instead of a simple "click here," you need to type the entire link, as in "`http://www.abc.com`."

- **Use action copy.** If your reader opens their email on a mobile device, it will show as opened or read on their desktop email system. Using action-oriented copy in your text can help ensure they do not skip over the message when back at the desktop.

Five Common Mobile Email Scenarios

The various mobile platforms all display email differently. Here's how ExactTarget and Pivotal Veracity summarized the differences.

Apple iPhone

The iPhone has the richest email experience and displays the HTML part of MIME messages. Images are on by default, and links are enabled.

BlackBerry

Some versions show text only, while others show text contained in the HTML part of MIME messages. No images are displayed. The BlackBerry displays links and image URLs.
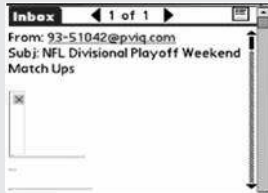
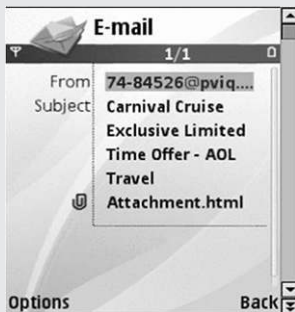## Five Common Mobile Email Scenarios *(Continued)*

Palm/VersaMail

These devices display the HTML part of MIME messages but do not support images.

Symbian

These devices display text contained in the HTML part of MIME messages. Only full links are click-able (for example, "`http://www.abc.com`").

Windows Mobile 6/Outlook

HTML, links, and images are supported. The default is for images to be turned off.

Source: ExactTarget and Pivotal Veracity, 2008

Wednesday: How Many Readers in Your Database Are Reading "on the Run"?

Whenever we speak about mobile marketing to email marketers, we always get weird looks at first. Many marketers think about their database and company product/service offering and assume their readers are not reading anywhere other than on their home or work computer. The use of mobile devices to read email has increased 400 percent within the last year, and there is no end in sight. This means that even if you are selling a product or service that is typically going to be seen by someone who is homebound, you can't be sure.

For this reason, when considering mobile marketing techniques, we recommend you conduct this simple test:

1. Add a line on the top of your email instructing readers to "click" to see a mobile version or a web version of the email, as shown in Figure 8.9.

Figure 8.9 Sam's Club and mobile email

Before moving on to step 2, make sure you actually have an email creative designed for readability on a handheld device. The two common screen sizes for BlackBerry models are 320×240 pixels for the newer versions (8700/8800 series and 8300/the Curve) and 240×260 pixels for 8100 (also called the Pearl) and 7100 series. Mobile phone screens tend to be even smaller. You can use a BlackBerry simulator to check your design. Two of the more popular simulators are available here: `http://na.blackberry.com/eng/developers/downloads/simultors.jsp`

2. Check your reports. You will want to look for two different types of clicks in your email reports.

The first thing to look for is the number of people who clicked the top link. This will enable you to identify the percentage of your recipients who are viewing your email on a handheld device. This will provide you with the benchmark you need to know how seriously you should consider designing a separate strategy for this group.

The second thing to look for is the number of clicks on links that reside on the mobile version of your message. This number will be fairly small but will enable you to get an idea whether your emails are simply being read in a mobile environment or whether they are also being acted on there.

Once you have these two data elements, you are ready to take your email strategy and results to the next level through the design of a mobile preference center.

Thursday: Defining Your Mobile Email Preference Center

You can consider adjusting your current customer preference center in a number of ways to allow for high-frequency mobile email reading.

The first way is to ask subscribers whether they want to begin reading your emails on a mobile device, with an input field for their mobile phone number or an indicator of their mobile reading device. Although this technique is probably the simplest to employ on the front end, it requires a tremendous amount of work and commitment on the back end. We do not recommend you start with this strategy unless your company is already fairly seasoned in mobile messaging strategies in general and has a few programs already set up. Reading an email on a mobile device and opting in to receive mobile marketing messages are two different decisions. Each has a different strategy, different goals, and different mannerisms used to drive response.

The second way is also fairly sophisticated but can really drive results to boost your bottom line. In this method, you set up a triggered email message to be sent once someone clicks the "view this email on a mobile device" link three times in a row. The three times is a good indicator that your reader is constantly on the go or at least reading your messages consistently in this manner. The automated email that is sent asks the reader whether they want to change their preferences to receive only the mobile versions of the message in the future (this would change your database from an HTML option to a text option). If the person says yes, they receive the mobile-enabled content from the start.

Many people who test this strategy take the time to include a link at the bottom of the text email that says, "Want the HTML version of this email back again? No problem; just click the link http://XXX.com, and your next email will be sent in HTML." In some cases, these companies also set up a second automated query that sends a stand-alone email asking the same thing if no links in the mobile version are clicked after three emails are sent.

Mobile-driven preference questions outside the standard "HTML or text?" are still very new to the world of email marketing, so there are no good examples to show you. However, this is a growing trend that will continue to make a huge dent in your ability to drive results. You will need to think about the creative- and preference-based aspects of this issue, and you may need to change your email marketing strategies to account for viewers reading emails while on the go.

If you are still not convinced, consider this. A recent study conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project indicated that more than 62 percent of people read their email on a mobile device. These people do not fall into one specific category of users. They are a racially and economically diverse segment of people whose main commonalities lie more within their love of the Internet than anything else. This means that regardless of the business you are in, or your target segment, you may need to revisit all aspects of your email program to ensure it is primed for mobile reading.

Friday: Making Your Current Email Strategy Work in a Mobile World

On Monday of this week we said, "If your reader opens their email on a mobile device, it may show as opened or read on their desktop email system." You may have skimmed right past this statement, but whether you decide to design your emails for mobile reading or not, it impacts the effectiveness of your basic email strategies. So, let's explore its implications further.

Think about your own email inbox and how simple it is to gloss over an email that appears to have already been read in lieu of those bolded and high importance flags. Your email could be at risk if it was read on a handheld device and your reader assumed they would get to it later. Unfortunately, if they were mobile, they were probably doing something else at the same time; therefore, the chances of them remembering to act on your email at a later time is less than 10 percent.

This phenomenon is not the end of the world for your campaign. It is a gift of insight that you should be excited to have. Now, you can take advantage of the new realities used in communication to test the following elements of your campaign strategy:

- **A/B test of subject lines.** Putting an action-oriented word first to allow handheld readers to understand the urgency (for example, "Click now for 20% off.")

- **A/B test of short copy versus long copy.** If you have ever wondered whether teasers linking to long content are more appealing than long copy that paints a full picture, now is the time to test it. Mobile reader research is weak in this area. We are unsure whether people appreciate short tidbits or have the time to scroll for the whole story so they can act now and don't need to save for later. You can determine this for your own readers fairly easily.

- **Mobile-supported landing pages.** Once you get out of the world of email and into the world of the mobile browser, detection capabilities are vastly improved,

and the user's experience can be significantly more positive. A number of detection systems exist that will be able to present your reader with an optimized landing experience. The challenge here is to make sure you have created the key elements to support the dynamic presentation of each of those landing pages.

- **Increased reminder emails.** Once, while one of us was at a meeting, a client was gushing over how proud they were to have increased their open rate to 40 percent. But that meant 60 percent of this audience was not engaged. Although engagement strategies are covered in other chapters of this book, the impact that mobile reading can have on engagement is big. Reading emails on the run generates email ADD. People read them and think they will remember to respond later, but they then get preoccupied with other facets of the day. Now is a good time to test sending stand-alone reminder emails that will enable you to engage your readers at various times or stages of purchase.

Now that you understand why awareness of the level of readers using mobile or handheld devices to read emails is important and you have access to a few key tips and strategies to make sure your design is on target, you are ready to roll. To wrap up the week, we wanted to prepare a consolidated checklist that you can employ with your future email efforts.

Your Mobile Email Success Checklist

Making sure your email campaigns will be successful regardless of where they are read or how they are read is contingent on the following elements. Please make sure you've done all of the following to organize your efforts:

- Determine how your emails currently look on BlackBerry devices and other handheld devices by using one of the rendering tools.
- Get a benchmark of how many people (or what percentage of your database) are actually reading your emails using a handheld device in one of two ways:
  - By adding a link asking people to click it to see a mobile-readable version
  - By tracking the links in the text version to see who is clicking where
- Assess your current subject line strategy, and make sure it is optimized for mobile reading (short and to the point).
- Review your messaging strategy and test reminder emails for nonresponsive readers (to battle the "opened" status emails appearing in the inbox).

Now that you are ready to tackle the world of email being read on the run, it is time for the weekend, as well as a quick break. Next week's focus opens the doors to an even more exciting and trendy topic: social email.

Resources for Mobile Email Viewing

We asked frequent email blogger and expert Mark Brownlow for some tips on mobile email design. He referred us to a post he wrote in 2007 (`www.email-marketing-reports.com/iland/2007/07/mobile-email-whos-right.html`) listing a number of YouTube links that can help you with a realistic picture of how your email looks. You may find these both interesting and helpful:

Nokia 770
`www.youtube.com/watch?v=tb8LaRgLzNE`

Another Nokia 770
`www.youtube.com/watch?v=4P9tvl_DLmo`

Mobile Gmail on a cell phone
`www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTZE3yPA2AE`

iPhone (at Apple)
`www.apple.com/iphone/features/`

Samsung D600E
`www.youtube.com/watch?v=Do6SCnONjJE`

Motorola Q
`www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoE0YVcvJ8Q`

LG enV
`www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxRoD5T2PW8`

Misc cell phone
`www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKSLaScpvfA`

BlackBerry Pearl
`www.youtube.com/watch?v=WM2YFwoJrog`

BlackBerry 8700g
`www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1n7c1hSzGM`

Week 4: Creating Social Email

The world of social networking is very supportive of email marketing. This last week, we will explore the way in which the worlds of new media collide, yet how email remains the backbone of all digital communications. Social email offers us the ability

to drive a better and expansive response to our email programs by being able to enact some of the elements of viral email just discussed, without even trying.

> Monday: When email is used on social networks
> Tuesday: Response guidelines for social email
> Wednesday: Reviewing results for social email
> Thursday: Social messaging: thinking inside the box
> Friday: Keeping the use of social email in "check"

Monday: When Email Is Used on Social Networks

When social networks first came into play, they took the buzz away from blogs and RSS feeds and quickly became the next "great" new invention intended to doom email to its death. People could send messages and posts to their friends and families without even opening the email inbox.

If you are not familiar with social networks, you should take a few minutes and check out at least some of the more popular networks: Facebook (`www.facebook.com`; you can even add us as your friends to get started); Gather (`www.gather.com`); and LinkedIn (`www.linkedin.com`).

For a while, the email industry was scared when social networks grew in popularity. This new convenient method of messaging, such as using SMS, was faster, easier, and reached more than one person. You didn't need to worry about delivery, open rates, click-throughs, or eyeballs. Social networks like LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace, and even Friendster offered a new, fun, and trendy way to communicate, and it was adopted very quickly by the younger generation.

JupiterResearch provided this research on the usage trends for social networks in late 2007:

- Eighteen percent of the online population has used social sites (MySpace, Facebook, and so on) for personal communications instead of email.
- There's a massive skew in usage by age. Half of 18–24-year-olds use social networks instead of email. Thirty-two percent of 25–34-year-olds use social networks instead of email.

Yet, even with the growing adoption of social networks, email didn't die. Instead, it became more widely used. The reason social networks have been able to increase the success of email is fairly simple. Emails received from your social networking site are trusted emails. You as a subscriber have signed up for notifications when someone in your social network sends you an email. You receive emails on your social

network only from your friends, so they are messages you want. When you receive these emails, often they get priority to be opened and read. And, in many cases, the email notification triggers you to go into your social network and respond, which generates more emails.

This means that if you can expand your concept of email marketing to include not just those messages you have sent to your opt-in house list but to your social network fans as well, you could drive even higher results for your email campaign.

If you still need a concrete example of how social networks can impact response and increase the use of email, you will enjoy the next case study.

Case Study: The Email Marketing Industry Uses Social Networks

There is a pretty large list of 100 email marketers who frequently talk on social networks. One of the big benefits of social networks is that they notify you when someone on your list is having a birthday coming up. For example, recently, it was one of our "friend's" birthdays one day, and a simple email was generated from the social networking group to the list saying, "Happy Birthday, XXX." This email generated over 62 emails in direct response to the original message, and over 20 more of new conversation. A few of these strings actually turned into business discussions, which generated new business for the group members.

Simply put, one note on someone's social networking profile generated a highly read and responded-to-conversation. This is an example of email at its best—trusted, responded to, and shared with others. And thanks to social networking, it was able to happen.

So now that you know the impact and potential benefits of social networks, you can learn how to take advantage of them for email campaigns. Tomorrow, you'll see how to design creative that will work for social networks yet do a good job in promoting your brand.

Tuesday: Response Guidelines for Social Email

Once your company has a social networking site, like the one in Figure 8.10, you can begin inviting members (this is done through an email) and then sending updates to them (again, through email) to keep them coming back to your site and getting engaged.
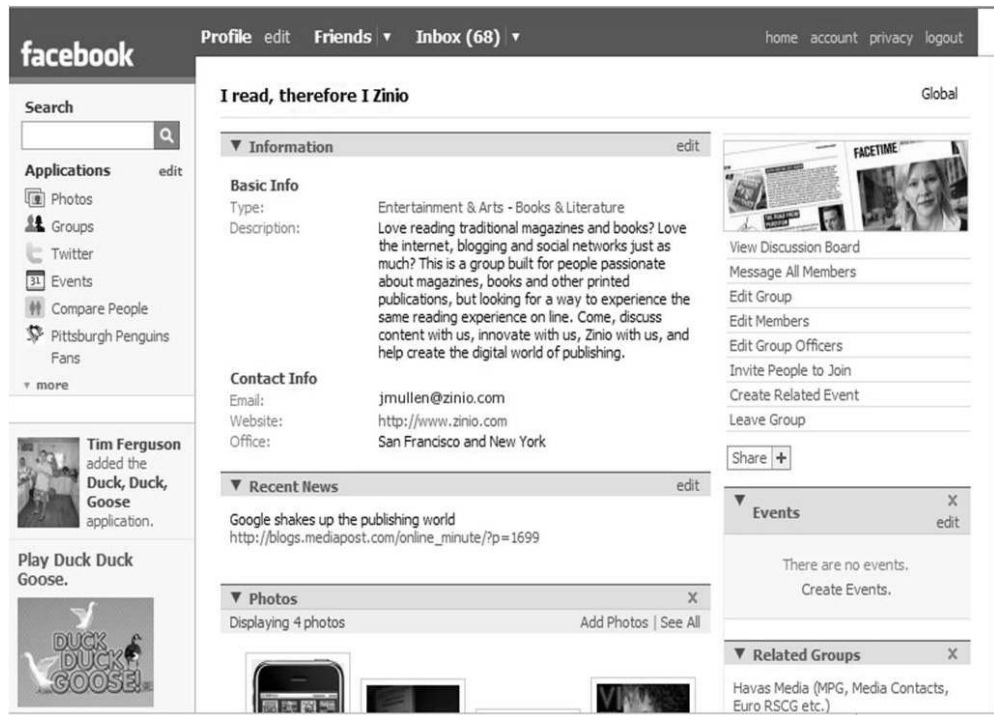
Figure 8.10 Sample Facebook group

There are a tremendous number of best practices and tips for building an effective social network. That subject deserves its own book and will not be covered here. What we will focus on are the top five ways you can make sure your social marketing email elicits the biggest response:

- **Do not design a message in HTML.** Most social network messages are sent from one person to another, so your email needs to look and feel just like a personal email. Designing a message in text is your most successful route.

- **Write your message in the first person.** Again, social networks originated so that people could connect with other *people* who have similar interests. People who are members of social networks wants to be informed and not marketed to. Your emails should contain a very personal feel and tone. Figure 8.11 shows an example.

  This email is a marketing email. It is driving registrations for an event. Yet, it is written in a very personable manner. The tone is light. The message is informational, not pushy, but it does get a message across. And, since these people opted to join a group that holds events, this email gets a high read rate. Aaron Kahlow, founder of the Online Marketing Summit, often speaks about the positive impacts his social networking emails derive.
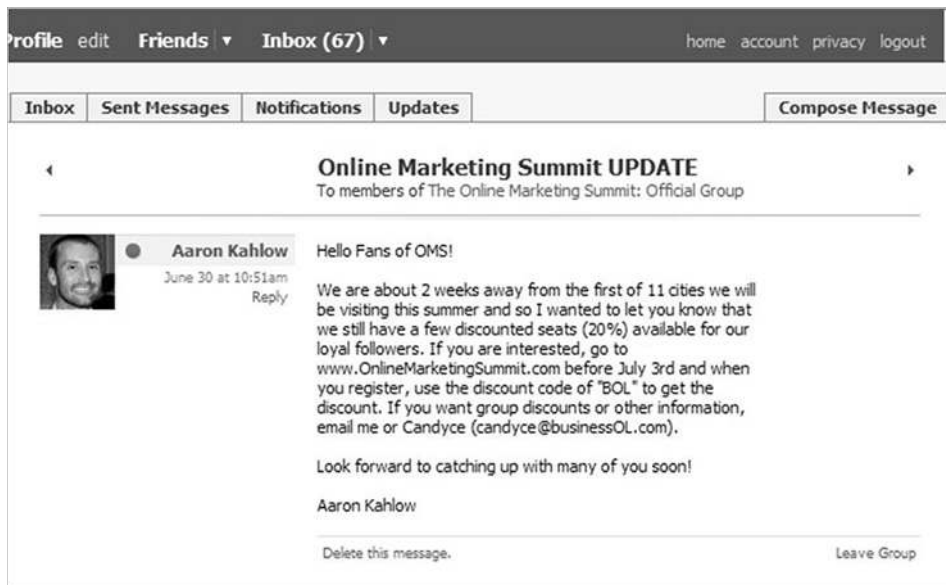
Figure 8.11 Sample social network email

- **Send people to the social networking site to get more information, not to your website.** One of the things you will find about your social network emails is that people will either want to reply to you directly or want to go to the network for more information. In most cases, they do not want to receive an email that sends them to a marketing landing page.

- **Be ready and available to respond to replies your social emails receive.** Once you send an email to your social networking list, you will receive personal replies. You or someone on your team will need to respond to these replies within 24 hours or lose credibility of your messaging.

- **Make sure you send an email to your social networking group every six weeks or so to maintain an ongoing dialogue.** Sending messages to your social networking group only when you have a promotion to talk about will turn your readers off. Sending emails that include informative tips and news on occasion (but not too frequently) will be seen as very helpful and will often initiate that viral effect that we spoke about earlier in this chapter.

Now that you have the basics of creating emails from social networks that can drive response, it is time to look at ways to evaluate whether your social messaging efforts are effective.

Wednesday: Reviewing Results for Social Email

When your social email goes out, there is no tracking. No delivery notices, no opens, no clicks. It's kind of like putting an ad on TV: either it works or it doesn't. For email

marketers, this is a huge change in behavior. Email marketers can measure elements of success down to the impact of the number of characters in a subject line.

So, with social email, you need to rely on alternative forms of measurement. The great news is that with social email, there are so many different but interesting ways to measure responsiveness to your social email campaigns. Table 8.1 will help get you thinking in the right direction.

▶ **Table 8.1** Social Email Response Measurements

Email Measurements	Social Email Equivalent
Delivery rate	Group size
Click rate	Number of people who reply or post
Viral rate	Number of new people who join group within three days of your message being sent

Although the elements of this chart are not comprehensive ways to evaluate and measure the success of your social email, they should help get your mind thinking in new directions. After all, social email has a strong viral and branding impact that has a focus on results. For example, when someone gets an email from a person in their social network, one of the first things they do is check out that person's profile. Once they look at the profile, other networks they belong to suddenly become trusted recommendations of actions to take. This by itself can sometimes generate ancillary results.

"The good news is that deliverability for social networking messages is 100 percent," explains Gather CEO Tom Gerace. "On a closed messaging network, we can eliminate spam, which improves the user experience. They know that almost every message in their inbox was meant for them." Open rates for social network messaging can be as high as twice industry averages for the same reason.

The challenge for marketers is that members do not expect purely promotional messages in their inboxes on social networking sites. Therefore, highly designed, image-laden messages are out. Simple notes related to brand experiences on Gather with a handful of text links to shopping opportunities at the bottom are in. Consider Figure 8.12, an example from the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Measurement systems are still evolving. "Candidly, we have yet to develop measurement tools for testing variations and quantifying success rates that are on par with email systems," Gerace explains. "Marketers will know how many messages were delivered (100%) and will be able to measure their click rates, but we do not yet allow easy rotation of messages, open rates, or link-by-link reporting. That will come in the future, but we just aren't there yet."

Figure 8.12 A paralyzed Veterans of America social email

As social network messaging grows, companies like Gather are working with email marketers to create more robust solutions for messaging. A/B testing and detailed analytics will be forthcoming. The good news is that because social sites know a lot about their members, this reporting will automatically be broken down by demographic and psychographic classifications. That will make social networks a great place to test and learn.

Thursday: Social Messaging: Thinking Inside the Box

Messaging systems on social networks are increasingly being used as a substitute for email. On social networking sites, users do not need to know friends' email addresses to contact them. Friends find friends through friends. Mailboxes are more easily kept free of spam and other unwanted mail. And messages are connected to profiles and photos that friends have shared, creating a more robust connection between people.

As people divide their attention between email and social messaging, marketers must reach customers in both locations. There are two challenges:

- Most social networks prohibit bulk mail from being sent on messaging systems.
- List building requires engagement.

"To reach gain access to these mailboxes, marketers must create experiences on social networks," explains Gerace. "Social networks like Gather allow the creation of groups or company pages by marketers (with the approval of the social network). The challenge for marketers is to create an experience that engages and involves members. Then their experience grows virally."

On Gather, for example, Amtrak has created a group (`http://allaboard.gather .com`) where train travelers can share experiences from the small towns and sights they encounter when riding the rails. Amtrak used a train photo and essay contest to engage the community and encourage the first few hundred members to join. About 4,600 people have now shared train experiences in the Amtrak group. Each time they do, their friends are notified, bringing them into the Amtrak experience. Some marketer-created Gather groups exceed 50,000 members and continue to grow, creating hundreds of thousands of notifications of group activity each week. Figure 8.13 shows an example.
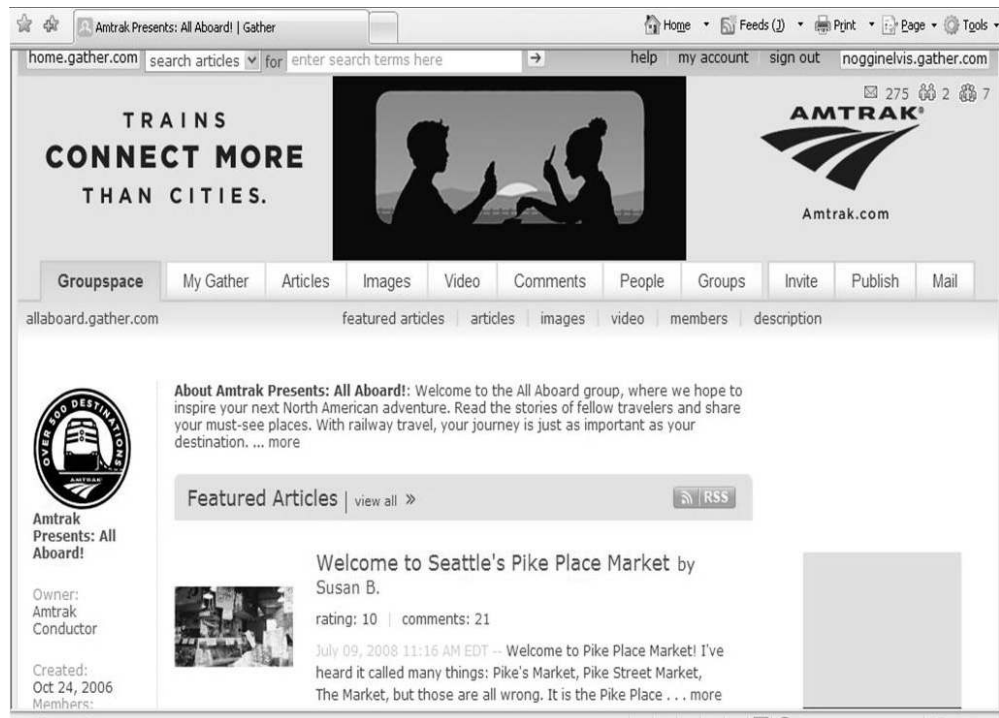
Figure 8.13 Amtrak social network

To build an initial list, marketers must do the following:

- Create an experience that people want to join and explore together (product reviews, contests, recipe sharing, parenting tips, and health maintenance, for example).

- Make it cascade by integrating it into the social platform where you are building.

- Invite your email lists to it. Your customers are your best advocates, and when they join, they will invite their friends.

- Use onsite messaging systems to announce new group experiences to people who have joined, bringing them back to the experience and encouraging them to do things that cascade.

Once your group has been created, you have the ability to send messages to that group using the social network's messaging platform. You can use messaging to announce new experiences, alert members to special shopping opportunities, or call out some of the great things that members are doing in the group. These messages, while basic in format, can have embedded links to your site encouraging shopping or exploration.

Friday: Keeping the Use of Social Email in "Check"

As you can see, social networking is changing the way we communicate about things and with each other. And it has a growing impact on the way email is being used as a communication device. Recently, JupiterResearch did a number of studies that show the growing usage of social networking that could be useful to keep in mind when you are creating your marketing strategies.

One of the most interesting statistics showed that when asked which media they had used for personal communications instead of email within the past year, more than half of 18–24-year-olds chose social networks. You can see the details in Figure 8.14.
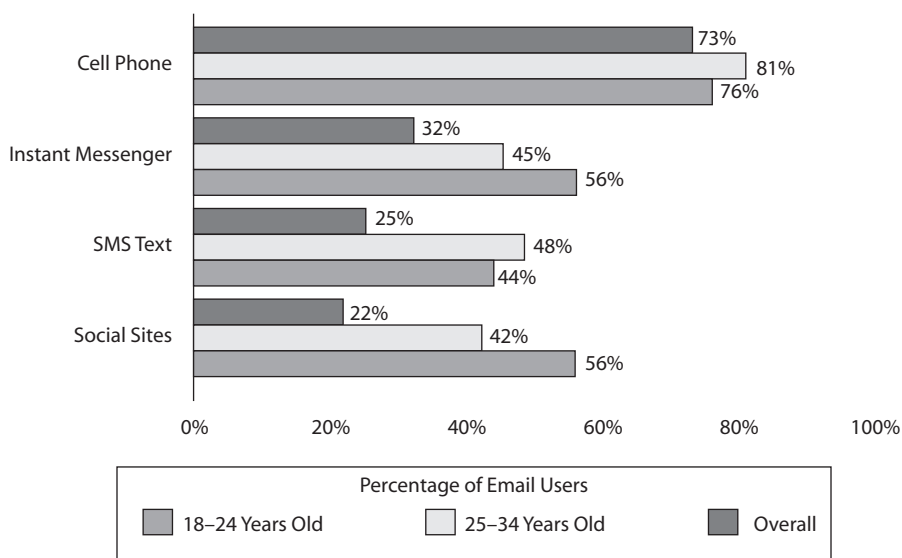

SOURCE: JUPITERRESEARCH/NPD CONSUMER SURVEY (4/08)

Figure 8.14 Changes in communication patterns compared to email

Does this mean that as these 18–24-year-olds grow up their use of email will die? Not really. Remember that these 18–24-year-olds have not entered the workforce yet, where email remains the predominant communication channel. However, these statistics do offer us a clear indicator that communication preferences vary, by age, by interest, and by access. And it is up to us as intelligent email marketers to determine whether our audience is more inclined to respond to service emails, newsletters, direct marketing, video-enabled emails, surveys, or even social emails.

Understanding the motivators for your audience will enable you to make an intelligent choice for moving forward, especially as you move into year 1 of your email efforts and begin to reforecast the impact and needs for year 2, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Test Your Knowledge

This chapter contained a ton of information that is important for you to know. A score of 5 out of 5 will ensure you are on your way to email marketing success.

- Name two bells and whistles you can try with your email.
- Does an email client need to accept forms in order to send a survey to them?
- What percentage of people are reading their email on a mobile device?
- How many layers of a video email do you need to produce?
- Should email and social networking be thought of separately?