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Improve email open rates

What's a Good Open Rate?

There isn't a "one size fits all" standard for judging email open rates. They vary by industry. Here is a sample of open rates for the dental industry. (*Source: Constant Contact*)

Industry / Category	Open Rate	Bounce Rate	Click Through Rate
Manufacturing & Distribution	18.6%	10.8%	12.6%
Dental Services	18.0%	9.8%	12.8%
Products & Services	15.8%	10.2%	12.6%
Consultant	14.9%	12.2%	10.6%
Education & Services	19.0%	9.4%	13.5%

Get More Opens

Email open rates aren't magic. Setting up an email to get more opens is as simple as trying these suggestions.

To get more people to open your email:

Write a Great Subject Line - Will your subject line stand out and spark interest (without looking like spam)?

1. The "From Name" is the name that appears for your email in the "From" column of your contact's inbox.
2. To remain in compliance with CAN-SPAM your "From Name" should clearly identify the organization sending the email.
3. It should almost always appear as your company name, possibly in combination with a department name, such as Customer Support.
4. Some older email clients may only show the "From Email Address" without the "From Name".
5. You can edit the "From Name" for each email or individual survey invitation emails.

Make It Recognizable - Would you open an email from a sender you don't know? Probably not. That's why you should:

1. Use the same easily recognizable Form Name with every email you send.



2. Add a Permission Reminder to inspire contacts with preview panes to open your email.

Stay Relevant - To send more targeted emails, break your list up into categories. Why Segment Contacts?

Segmenting your General Interest list into smaller, more targeted lists makes it easier to:

1. Send More Relevant Content - You can customize your emails based on each sub-list's preferences. That may sound like lots of work, but you won't necessarily have to create unique emails for every list all of the time.
2. Get More Opens - The more relevant your messages are to contacts' personal interests, the more likely they'll be to open your emails regularly.

Sample Segments

Examples of list categories you might use include gender, membership type, geographic location, preferences, purchasing history, etc..

Ways to Segment

You can break up your contact list using contacts' survey responses, interactions with your email, and contacts' personal information.

1. Contact Details - Group people with similar contact details (such as zip code, state, etc.) into the same contact list.
2. Survey Responses - Save contacts who select the same answer to a survey question, or who responded during the same month, into new lists.
3. Email Reports - Save contacts into lists based on how they interacted with your email (such as contacts who clicked a specific link or opened your email).

Sub-List Maintenance

As more contacts join your mailing list, you'll need to make sure you keep contact lists segmented as they grow.

Track Frequency - Set contacts' expectations Set Contacts expectations about how often they'll hear from you. Then, keep your promise.

One of the more critical pieces of successful email marketing is setting your contacts' expectations appropriately. Setting appropriate expectations will help with your



customer's engagement (opens rates, click-throughs) with your newsletters and will help avoid having your customer's mark your communication as spam. There are several aspects to expectation setting:

Content

It is important that you set your contacts' expectations as to the type of content that you plan to send. For example, at the point of address collection, clearly state to the contact that you will be sending newsletters, promotional marketing, discount coupons, etc. It is important that you send only that material to them. For example, if you communicate to your contacts that you will be sending newsletters, you shouldn't surprise them by sending coupons or sales promotions, etc., as this may result in increased "spam" reports.

Frequency

Make sure you are setting appropriate expectations as to the frequency of your mailings. For example, don't tell people they are signing up to receive a monthly newsletter and then send them weekly mail. People will feel that you aren't sticking to the agreement that you made. Likewise, if you set their expectation to receive a weekly newsletter, be sure to send it weekly.

Consistency

You should make every effort to keep the look and feel of your emails similar to the look and feel of your website and any other customer-facing communications. Your goal should be to create a unified look throughout all your communications, so that you are presenting one face to the customer. For example, if your website has soft, muted tones and colors, you don't want to send out emails that are bright and flashy. They send conflicting messages to your customers about your business.

Note: If, at some point, you decide to change the look and feel of an aspect of your business, it is nice to give customers advanced warning. For example, if you communicate to your contacts that you will be sending newsletters, you shouldn't surprise them by sending coupons or sales promotions, etc., as you may lose your customers' trust which could result in increased "spam" reports. This will allow people to prepare for the change.



Clean Old Lists - If your list is a little old, it's probably time for clean-up.

Cleaning your contact list not only helps you to avoid list reviews, it also helps improve your email's deliverability, spam, and open rates. A "clean" contact list only contains people who still want to (and can) receive your emails.

Clean Your Contact List

To clean a list collected outside of Constant Contact, follow the list of things to do before you add contacts. Otherwise, try these tips to clean up a list that has been in your Constant Contact account for a while:

1. **Rescue or Remove Contacts Who Can't Get Your Emails** - Manage bounces (abandoned, invalid, or unreachable email addresses) to improve your email open and deliverability rates.
2. **Age Your List by Sign-up Dates** - If some of your contacts joined your list long ago, and your emails are starting to get spam complaints or bounces, consider aging your list.
3. **Remove Role Addresses** - Get rid of role and group addresses. E-mail campaign companies like Constant Contact won't send to most role addresses as they are typically directed to multiple users who may not have given permission.
4. **Use the Permission Reminder** - Adding the Permission Reminder to each email you send helps stop spam complaints.
5. **Ask Contacts to Update Their Profiles** - Add an Update Profile link in your emails, so contacts can easily give you their current personal information and mailing list preferences.

Land in the Inbox - To help your email land in contacts' inboxes, instead of junk mail folders, use authentication and the Spam Checker.

E-mail campaign providers Authentication service let's you to align with the industry best practice of email authentication with a minimum of effort. Over time, assuming you have good sending practices, it will likely help improve your email delivery rate with the ISPs and corporate domains that use email authentication to filter out their spam. It can also increase your contacts' confidence in your email.

With Authentication, you become an authorized sender of the mailing domain, and get both a unique sender header address and a unique set of cryptographic keys.

Authentication records for Sender ID, Domain Keys, and Domain Keys Identifies Mail (DKIM) are then published in your unique authentication domain.

When you later mail to the ISPs and corporate domains that use email authentication, your sender header address appears in the email message header. This allows them to



look up your published authentication records and check that you are a legitimate sender for your authentication domain. There is no charge for Constant Contact Authentication.

Time It Right - Experiment to see what time to send to get the best open rate from your unique contact list.

To help improve your open rate, send your email just before the time when most of your contacts check their email. The best time to send varies with the demographics of the recipients and the email's purpose.

General Trends for the Best Time to Send Email

Although there is no one best time to send, here are some very general trends. Be sure to consider testing the best time to send to your unique audience.

1. Days of the Week - Previously, Tuesday through Thursday were considered to be the best performing days. Recent surveys indicate Monday may be the new favorite.
2. Time of Day - Because the volume of email sent is highest between 10 am and 2 pm, your emails may have a greater chance of being seen from 8 am - 10 am or 4 pm - 6 pm.
3. Frequency - While most companies will not want to send more than one email a day to a list, the average pattern of sending is two emails a month. Always set your customers' expectations for how often you will be sending and tell them if your sending patterns will be changing ahead of time.

Ways to Find Your Best Time to Send Email

Use the following methods to find out when most of your contacts are most likely to see and read your email.

1. Trends from Past Emails - To look for trends in when contacts have opened your emails in the past, review your past emails' Unique Open Reports.
2. Consider Purpose - Why and when would your contacts be most interested in engaging with your email content?
3. Example: When a career counselor realized her audience reads her emails after work hours, she tried sending at 6 pm instead of 11 am. Her open rates tripled because her emails appeared at the top of her contacts' inboxes when they got home.
4. Test to See What Works - A popular way to test the best time to send is to try "AB Testing". Here is an overview of how AB testing works:
 - a. Create two new test contact lists in your E-mail campaign manager program.
 - b. Copy (not move) or import one half of your contact list into each test list.



- c. Create two copies of your next email: "Copy A" and "Copy B".
- d. Send Copy A to one-half of your contact list at a time of day or week that you believe will be popular.
- e. Send Copy B to the other half of your list at a different time of day or the week.
- f. Compare the open rates for each email about 48 hours after each one is sent.
- g. Repeat steps 1-5 a few times to determine which days of the week and times of day result in the best open rates.

Keep practicing these tips with every new email you create. Then, watch your open rate go up!

Take It to the Next Level

Busy schedule? Sign up today for the ***Results Email*** package from Azar and Associates, and we'll deliver your email reports to you. Call us today at (661) 810-2446 or visit us on-line at www.azarandassociates.com