

# EMAIL MARKETING

*The Complete Guide*



*Benchmark*  
EMAIL

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# HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

## Welcome to Your Email Marketing Guidebook!

*“If email was a country, its 1.4 billion users would make it the largest in the world. Bigger than China, bigger than the populations of the USA and European Union combined.”*  
– *Email Marketing Reports (2009)*

## Use Us to Plan Your Success

Hello and welcome to Benchmark Email’s Complete Guide to Email Marketing. We have designed this guide to be an easy-to-understand, thorough handbook on the entire email marketing process. And although we sincerely hope that you choose our service, this guide is designed for everyone and anyone as a primer for the overall art of modern professional email marketing.

## We’ve Designed a Neutral Handbook

This isn’t an 83-page sales pitch for our service, but a thorough guidebook on fundamental rules, practices and techniques that every business should know before starting out their first campaigns. Email marketing these days is super simple, but it isn’t without laws and regulations. Taking the time to familiarize yourself with these concepts will not only help you to be better at it, but it will also minimize your exposure to the very real consequences that your company can suffer when it doesn’t play by the rules.

## About Links, Blue Information Boxes and Green Discussion Boxes

As this manual is a downloadable resource on our own website,

we want to support our customers with a link when it helps out. Some links are general FAQs to a deeper discussion of the topic at hand and some are specific how-to's for the Benchmark Email site. You'll have a good indication of where you're going before you click, if you feel the need to click a link at all. To keep the neutral stance of our manual, you'll find specific Benchmark features safely and discernibly set aside in green boxes.

We'll regulate specific discussions of Benchmark Email software to these green boxes.

If you see a box like this, you can expect to see an explanation or how-to on a specific Benchmark Email feature. There are only a few scattered throughout.

When you see a blue box ...

Sometimes the conversation needs a little more information or background story. You might also benefit from a few more details if you haven't heard a term before. We'll interject these blue boxes to help you out every once in a while. If you have the concept down, jump right ahead to the next point.

# WHY USE EMAIL MARKETING AT ALL

## Why Use a Professional Email Marketing Service?

You wouldn't be reading this if you thought email marketing was as basic as sending emails to your friends and family. Yes, you could write a personal message to each of your clients - you could even send the exact same message to all

your clients - but what separates the look of your professional organization from the email messages they get from their friends?

## Email Marketing Looks Professional and is Easy-To-Use

When you use an email marketing service, your clients get rich-content emails that are bursting with graphics, logos, videos and they almost always look great. The best part is that the industry has come a long way. It's super simple to pick a template, drop in your content and get out your message while looking like a marketing pro.

But can't I just drop pictures in Gmail, AOL or Hotmail?

Maybe your residential email client has fancy colors and fonts. Maybe you know how to drop pictures in your email. Better, yes, but you should know that your email might look different to different recipients. Some pictures may work and some may not. Unless you are a wizard at coding HTML, the variety of browsers, web-based email clients and software email programs will wreck havoc on your nice looking, colorful email because images are not embedded within email messages. They must be hosted on a server and downloaded as emails are opened. A professional email marketing service takes care of this coding for you so you don't have to. Otherwise, your recipients may just get plain text or a broken email that has no semblance of what you've sent.

## Email Marketing Is Measurable

Modern email marketing software lets you measure the performance of any of your emails or all of them at once. You know who opened your emails, how many people respond to your communications, and you can make adjustments when you're not getting the results you want.

## Good Email Marketing Services Help Separate You From Spammers

Finally, there are good laws in place to prevent **spam**. How can you make sure you are complying with these laws? A good company will guide good marketers like you through the process while rejecting those who aren't playing by the rules. In the following pages, you'll see how this actually helps your **deliverability rates**.

## Email Marketing is a Refined, Proven and Powerful Methodology

As early as 1980, the first incarnations of the email marketing process were being developed. But its roots can be traced to the methodologies of direct marketers, who use mail to advertise the wares of small and large businesses alike. Both technology and customer's online behaviors have progressed over the years and the models for what constitute a successful ROI (return on investment) have matured. If you're entering email marketing in the 2010s, you have the benefit of coming into a well-developed, sophisticated and efficient infrastructure that is built to deliver your business message with a high rate of success.

## Online Software Makes it Easy

The good news is that many Email Service Providers (ESPs) provide inexpensive, web-based software that can help you achieve your marketing goals. The ESPs work hard on the infrastructure and provide you with an easy-to-use, instantly accessible portal to the system. We're partial to **Benchmark Email** because we've designed it be easy, affordable and powerful. Look for a **free email marketing** trial so that you know what you're getting before you spend any money at all.

# THE EMAIL MARKETING FLOWCHART

This simple chart and the explanations of these steps on the next page show you how easy email marketing is from your point-of-view:



## An Explanation of the Steps in the Flowchart

Yes, there is a big difference between sending normal emails to your clients and using professional email marketing software. So let's get some terms down that every email marketer should know:

1. *Get Subscribers* – Customers, clients or prospects give you permission to email them because they want to get information from you. Let's call them subscribers.
2. *Organize Your Lists* – You organize email lists of these

subscribers based on location, spending patterns or any other category that makes sense to you.

3. *Create Your Content* – You create or write content to send these clients. This can include text, e-coupons, links, pictures and even video. Let's call these newsletters.
4. *Schedule Delivery* – You schedule the email delivery to some or all of the members of your lists. You may choose to have different newsletters go out at predetermined times.
5. *Subscribers Respond (Open & Click-thru)* – Customers receive your content in their email inboxes. When they read your newsletters, we call these opens. They respond to your marketing campaign by coming to your store, performing a click-thru to your links, etc. Emails that are undeliverable are called bounces.
6. *Track Your Success Online* – You monitor the success of your campaigns with online reports and make adjustments accordingly. The measuring of all those opens, click-thru activity and bounces is called tracking.
7. *Refine Your Segments & Refine Your Message* – Smart marketers use the visual graphs on opens, bounces and click-thru success to focus on what works and take the time to change what isn't as effective. Each time you create and send an email newsletter, you are sending out a new campaign to your lists.

When you compare professional email marketing to regular old emails, it's similar to the difference between hand written letters about furniture specials and receiving the IKEA catalog in the mail. And that might lead you to your next question ...

## **WHY SHOULD I CHOOSE EMAIL MARKETING OVER**

# DIRECT MAIL?

*Postage* – Oh, this is an easy one. If you have to send 1,000 customers a five page printed newsletter that costs 83¢ to mail, and you can send that same newsletter in email form for nothing.

*Printing Costs* – Okay, same thing here. Your modest catalog costs \$2 each to print, and you need 1,000. You also want to send a catalog once per month. That's expensive! You can get an email marketing plan for less than \$10 a month and assemble great catalogs quickly and at no additional costs. And you can't put a video clip in your print catalogs.

*Eco-friendly* – Email marketing doesn't require the use of paper and ink (unless someone wants to print up a coupon with their printer).

*Measurability* – How do you know who opens up your direct mail? Sure you can pay for delivery confirmation, but email marketing gives this to you at no additional cost. It can tell you if the email was actually opened and **if people clicked on your links**. Usually this information is easily viewable with visual graphs and can be downloaded to your favorite office program.

*ROI or Return on Investment* – This is the biggest one. DMA reports that email marketing returns about \$43 for every dollar spent on it. Of all marketers surveyed, **more reported using email marketing than direct mail** (79.1% vs. 75.4%). Not only is it cost-effective, but it is also widely accepted.

*Speed* – What is the lead-time in designing a mail piece, sending it to the printer, preparing it for mail delivery and waiting for the post office to deliver it? With a web-based email marketing software that features **newsletter templates**, you can design and deliver in literally fifteen minutes.

# WHY ADVERTISE AT ALL?

Is it too simple to say it just works? Perhaps, but the world is full of sub-par products that have outsold better made items that didn't have the benefit of advertising. Maybe you're curious to find out about the mechanics behind how both major corporation advertising and even annoying infomercials seem to be effective.

## Advertising Basics

Let's get down some important terminology so that we can hold our own in a conversation with advertising creatives and account executives.

## Reach

If you were Nabisco or Coca-Cola and looking to hire a Madison Avenue advertising firm, one of the first terms you might hear would be this. Simply put, reach is the percentage of a given target population that is exposed to your advertising at least once. These questions illustrate reach: How can you expect a customer to buy your product if they don't know it exists? How can a store or restaurant expect business if the members of the community don't know it is open?

## Frequency

This is the next cornerstone of advertising, and it is always mentioned at the same time as reach. Frequency is the number of times any one person of the target population is exposed to your advertising message. Entrepreneur reports that it takes three or more exposures to an advertising message before consumers take action.

## Target Marketing

Sure, you could advertise to the whole world blindly if you had enough money, but would that be effective? Maybe it's better to spend your time (and money) going after those who are most likely to purchase your product. Smart companies can tell you who uses their product in terms of:

*Demographics* – These are the measurable statistics of a group of people. What are the age ranges of our customers? Where do they live? How much do they earn on average? How many credit cards do they hold? Are they male or female? Of course, not every customer is the same, but a beer company might know they are most popular in Alabama & Florida with males that are 20 to 35 in age. They could also find out they are most popular in Alaska with males over 50. A laundry soap brand might know they are popular in rural areas with women over 40 and in city areas with younger males and females equally.

*Psychographics* – These are the intangible characteristics of a population of consumers. The traits might not be measurable in quantity, but they can be categorized in psychological terms. A clothing store might know its customers are “conservative” or “trendy.” A bank might cater some savings products toward the “frugal and thrifty” while the in-house investment department might identify its customers as “mild risk takers”. Apple might direct ads for one product at “early adopting consumers” and others towards the “tech-savvy.” Maybe they can reposition their ads at a later time to attract cautious people who are intimidated by technology.

If a company can identify the target market for its product, reach those potential consumers and effectively advertise to them frequently enough, then they should experience success in the marketplace.

# IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN

# EMAIL MARKETING AND ADVERTISING?

All of this time, we have been referring to email marketing and NOT email advertising. There's a difference. Though the terms are very similar, advertising is actually part of the overall marketing strategy. Where marketing is the overall mix of business activity meant to bring consumer and company together for the purposes of transaction, advertising is the paid for sponsorship and delivery of a message in a public forum. Marketing includes advertising, public relations, market research, product pricing & distribution, and even community involvement.

## Your Customer Might Not See The Difference

It might be worth noting that advertising can take place in email messages, and sticklers are right to point out that email advertising is actually those annoying text prompts that come up on the sides of your web-based email host (like Gmail, for instance). But if you can accept that a radio or TV commercial is an Ad because it interrupts your regular entertainment program with a pause for a commercial message, then you can see how an email marketing message that interrupts your subscribers' personal email reading process is doing the same sort of thing. It contains equal space in the subject line as any other emails they may receive that day.

## But You Have Permission To Be There

The beauty of email marketing is that you aren't putting up ads in public spaces, ads on the side of Google or any other place that a potential customer might be looking for something else other than your ad. You have the permission of your subscriber to send them asked-for information within a personal, non-public space: their inbox. If you take advantage of this trust by sending noisy, ad-riddled content, you'll soon lose this permission and get unsubscribed to.

## How Your Customers Perceive You is Up to You

It's up to you to email market effectively so that you aren't perceived as blindly advertising to your subscribers. If you are selling things, of course you want to let people know about it. But the last thing you want to come across as is a used car salesman. Um, unless you are a used car salesman. But mindlessly cluttering your subscribers inboxes with bright ads that always sell the same thing is downright offensive.

Words That Successful Email Marketers Never Forget		
Permission	Professional	Courteous
Moderation	Responsible	Measuring
Timeliness	Pertinent	Manners

## THE PROMOTIONAL MIX WITHIN THE MARKETING MIX

The fourth P in the marketing mix stands for promotion (after product, place, and price). Yes, your customer might expect ads for products at a great price and a reliable way for you to get the product or service to them (and email marketing gives you all this in one fell swoop). But you also have solid, varied promotional opportunities with email marketing, and they're not all just advertising. Consider your options:

- You can help the PR side of things by providing links to good reviews of your product or providing interactive feedback tools in their mailboxes.
- You can provide customer support with videos on how best

to use products and create an online community around your service.

- You can demonstrate real community involvement by including neighborhood news or word of events in your town. You'll gain the respect of your subscribers by showing you care about where they live.
- You can establish yourself or your company as an industry expert by featuring commentary or education on the topics of interest in your particular field.

A realtor might feature an article on upgrading countertops or other items of interest to homeowners. They'll read the information now because it is interesting. They might sell or buy a home a few months down the road and remember the name of the realtor that has all those great home tips.

A manufacturer of boutique aftermarket auto parts might find email marketing to be the perfect delivery method for both a virtual showroom and a clickable link to buy those parts.

# PREPARATION

## About Preparing

As with anything that you're investing time and money in, preparation is key. Sure, professional email marketing is both fast and **extremely inexpensive**, but what about all the time and money you spent building your business? Get it right first so that you can reap the rewards of a well-laid plan. There's more to lose than just time and money.

## Expectations

Email marketing works. But you should not expect to send out 1,000 emails and have all 900 people show up for business the next day. An average of 30% of email addresses change each year. It's possible that many of the addresses on any current subscriber list are no longer valid. Also, many people suffer

from email fatigue and are just not interested in subscribing to yet another newsletter. This can affect your list size.

Here are some current stats to help you temper your expectations:

Average Email Open Rate: 22.0%

Average Email Delivery Rate: 93.9%

Average Click-Through Rate: 5.9%

Source: Epsilon Q4 2009 Email Trends and Benchmark (Jan 2010) via [www.emailstatscenter.com](http://www.emailstatscenter.com)

## Patience

You need a plan. You need to stick with the plan and tweak it. And you need to give your plan time to work. Don't forget our lessons on frequency.

## Choose the Right Software

There are many competitors that are ready to provide you with an email marketing solution. You are an expert in your field and you need a program that doesn't take your valuable time away. You have competition too. Unless you're a glutton for punishment, you'll probably want to get great-looking, reliable email marketing in an easy-to-use, non-time consuming package. Look for these features in your email service provider (ESP):

*Templates* – Templates save you time because they are already formatted with a variety of looks and options. A good service should have at least a few hundred so that you can find the look that suits your company along with a theme that fits the purpose of your newsletter. It will be quicker to send out that special offer or e-coupon if you can just enter your text in a box and go.

*A Drag-n-Drop Editor* – Templates are a great place to start, but you might want to customize your newsletter with additional content or rearrange what's there. It should be easy to drop in your logo, pictures or even video so that you can concentrate on what you want to say.

*Web-Based Software* – As opposed to requiring that software be installed on one solitary computer, most services are cloud-based. Another term for this is Software As A Service (SAAS), which means the software is deployed over the Internet. You can access your lists, build your email newsletters and even view reports all from within a browser. Your campaigns live on the provider's servers and can be accessed from anywhere via internet connection. Your data is protected by password.

*Tracking and Visual Graphs* – Imagine how efficient you can be when you know who opened your email newsletters and whether they've clicked through to your links. You can accurately measure your campaign's effectiveness and interpret the data with visual graphs.

*Social Media Integration* – Your customers are on Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. Your email marketing should seamlessly integrate with these services. Recent studies have shown that social network users are 10% more likely to respond to email marketing than those who don't use them. The right service will let you market not only to the inboxes to your subscribers, but to the home pages of their social networks simultaneously, viewable and shareable with their friends in an easy click.

*List Management* – We dedicated a section to target marketing because it's important to segment your customer base and to market to those segments uniquely. Choose a service that lets you separate your lists easily and by whatever parameters you see fit.

*Online Surveys* – A successful company not only offers great products and services, it listens to its customer feedback so that it knows what the market wants. It's helpful if you can include attractive, attention-getting surveys in your newsletters and view the results instantly. Combine these answers with list segmentation and you have one powerful tool.

*Online Sign Up Box* – We'll explore list building next. But it's not hard to imagine that being able to put up a newsletter subscription signup box on your website, Facebook page, blog or anywhere provides a great and easy way to build your email lists.

## PERMISSION AND SPAM

### You Should Only Send Bulk Emails to People Who Are Expecting It from You and Specifically You.

It's really that simple. There are stiff legal penalties for breaking the law when you cross certain lines. But it's also possible to experience severe consequences when you comply with the law, but don't use best practices. Reputable email marketing companies will hold you to these best practices so that they can ensure delivery of your email newsletters and those of all their other clients.

### Terms You Must Know – No Exceptions

Having permission to send any recipient bulk emails is more than a key to success, it's required. It's helpful here if we examine some terms:

*Spam* – The sending of unsolicited email in identical or near identical form to a list or group of people.

*Opt-In* – This means that a person has explicitly consented or given permission to be sent bulk email from the sender.

*Double Opt-In (or Confirmed Opt-In)* – In this preferred method of obtaining permission, the person signs up for email contact via form, check box, sign up box, etc. A second step is added

in where the person responds to a verification email before any email marketing is sent.

*Opt-Out (or Unsubscribe)* – The action a person takes when they no longer want to receive email from a company. It requires a web-based mechanism by which people can ask to be removed reliably from an email list. This request must be honored within ten days. Your email service provider should provide this for you automatically.

## SPAM VIOLATES FEDERAL LAW

The **CAN-SPAM** act is very clear in that you are not to harvest email addresses and send bulk emails to people who don't want them. It goes further in regulating the types of commercial messages you can send so as to not be deceptive or misleading. Buying email lists, borrowing email lists, and making lists from people with whom you don't have a relationship puts your company at tremendous risk. Beyond that, it is just plain rude and the reason the CAN-SPAM act was written.

If you're going to start email marketing, you should really visit the **government's site** and have a read yourself. There are rules for the types of things you can and can't put in headlines along with other important information. We'll offer you some informal help here ...

## GUIDELINES FOR CAN-SPAM COMPLIANCE AND OUR BEST PRACTICES

We're not attorneys, so don't take this as your legal advice. We can just tell you some situations that are red flags for us:

## Don't use purchased email lists

It doesn't matter what it cost you. If your company didn't get permission directly from the people on this list and you send out bulk emails to them, you're spamming. You have no way of verifying that these addresses are truly opt-in. Think about it: why on Earth would anyone want to sign up to be on a for-sale email list with no control of who can fill up their email inboxes?

## Don't use third party email lists

You belong to an organization or you have a relationship with another company that has passed on their email list to you. Oh, it's tempting, but don't do it. We don't allow it on Benchmark and any respectable email marketing provider won't either. You might think it is appropriate because you and the third party are similar, so their members would probably like to hear about your offer. Sorry. If you send out mass messages to them as a list, it is either legally spam or someone will view it as such and report it. Our reputation section below will clearly illustrate why this is bad for you.

## Don't formulate an email list from people's business cards

Just because they tried to win a free lunch or innocently gave you their business cards one day, it doesn't mean they want to subscribe to your newsletter. Could you email them individually with a personal message? Sure. You might also consider sending them an email asking for permission to put them on your bulk mailing lists. But automatically putting them on list without permission is a quick trip to Spamville.

## Don't trick people into being on your list

If someone does a transaction on your site and physically

checks a box that says, “Click here to receive email offers,” that’s acceptable. If you pre-check this box so that they might miss it, or if you make the box say, “Click here if you DON’T want email offers,” then you’re being a bit aggressive. People could possibly get irritated and report you for abuse, which is not good for your reputation.

So if you have to ask “what if?”, then you probably shouldn’t do it. Remember that the spam tag isn’t decided by you. It’s the perception of the recipient and the server administrators that counts.

Again, it’s so simple that we’ll repeat it: Don’t send email marketing to people who haven’t asked for it specifically from you. Common sense might tell you not to bombard the people who have given you permission. Crafty people might see some loopholes in the law, but there’s more to consider than just the law.

## What If My List Isn’t Legally Spam, Just Questionable?

Even if what you’re doing isn’t legally spam, it still might be perceived as spam. It only takes one person to hit the “report spam” button and your email could start the ISP abuse investigation process. What happens then?

# YOU DON’T HAVE TO BREAK THE LAW TO SUFFER LETHAL CONSEQUENCES

The Internet isn’t regulated by the federal government. Internet Service Providers are private companies who will act swiftly and severely to deal a death blow to anyone who is merely perceived as spamming. There are a host of horrible

consequences that can happen to anyone who doesn't honor email marketing best practices:

## Getting Blacklisted

This is the thing you absolutely don't want. Server administrators hate spam and track the domain names and IP addresses of the servers who send spam (even legal communication that appears spammy can get you blacklisted). If you end up on one of these lists, it's very hard to get off, and you'll not be able to send out any emails because blacklists are shared and distributed across the Internet. All your subscriber lists should be opt-in only (better still is **double opt-in**) and you should have proof that they are just in case.

## Your Email Newsletters Go Undelivered

Many email software packages have bayesian filters installed. These monitor what users classify as junk or spam. Over time, the filter learns what users define as spammy by assigning a score to certain terms or design cues. Further filtering can happen if a domain name is identified as having a higher propensity for sending items that end up in the spam folder.

## Your Brand's Image is Tarnished

This might be the most important of all. Email marketing is meant to increase your brand's presence and establish your company's quality. If you follow spammy practices, your company and its products are devalued in the eyes of the recipient.

# HOW TO BUILD A PERMISSION

# BASED LIST

It's not hard to build permission-based lists. It only takes common sense and a minor dedication to your methods. The good news is that technology can automate the process. Paper and pen work, too. And when the two worlds meet, you have even more power!

## Use Those Sign Up Boxes!

A good email marketing company can provide you with one of these - basically HTML code that you copy and paste into your website, social network page or anywhere else you're on the net. People see a box that they can easily use to sign up for your newsletters. Because a verification email is sent, your list is double opt-in and considered to be the best kind of list.

## Place Buttons Or Links to Your Sign Up Box

If you often visit forums, participate in social networking or are active in places where you can't place the code for your box, put a link to it whenever you can.

## Don't Let Your List Go Stale

A good rule of thumb is six months. Even if you built your list the correct way, a person might forget that they have subscribed to your newsletter. They might hit that spam button. A person that may have been gung-ho on receiving any and all of your marketing in January might have forgotten all about you if you wait until September to make your first contact, even changing opinion and regarding your delayed newsletter as completely unsolicited. At this point, the term "permission" gives way to "expectation." If they didn't wake up expecting your email, you might be intruding into their perceived personal space.

## Hold a Subscription Drive

Hold a subscription drive for your clients at your brick & mortar or online store. Use a form with a check box that they can fill in showing that they agree to become a subscriber. Keep copies of all your opt-in forms just in case you get hit with a spam complaint later. If you want to sign up lots of people in one shot, offer some sort of incentive like a discount or giveaway.

## Promote Your Newsletter in Other Newsletters

Many industry related email newsletters feature some advertising space for other publications. For instance, if you run a camping equipment store, you might want to promote your email newsletter in any email focusing on the great outdoors.

## Frequent Trade Shows

You can find lots of people who have similar interests all in one place. Shake hands, say hello, and kindly ask for permission to send your new contact a newsletter. If you didn't get written permission to add them to your list, make sure that you use the confirmed opt-in method when you manually add them to your lists. Every new contact added this way gets an email with a link in it that they must click on to activate their subscription. A good rule of thumb is that if you get a business card at a trade show, immediately email them and ask them to confirm that they want to be on your bulk email list.

# HOW TO TURN A QUESTIONABLE LIST INTO A PERMISSION LIST

Imagine inheriting a contact list from a colleague who says it's permission based. You could take their word for it and start sending away, but that's a pretty big risk. What if it's a list made automatically when people purchased a product, or even a list that was permission-based at some time, but hasn't been used in quite a while.

If you come across scenarios in which you have even a shred of doubt that your list is permission-based, you'll need the following to settle the question:

- A simple, text format email – skip the graphics and images
- A link in that email that recipients can click on to re-confirm their subscription
- An unsubscribe link that works, is easy to locate and use
- A link to your website so people can familiarize themselves with your product or service
- An email address similar to the one you use to send your email or newsletter from, but never the one you actually use

You can find a more detailed method of converting those lists [here](#).

## Privacy

Suffice it to say that keeping your clients' email addresses and personal information private and secure should be at the top of your priorities. They are trusting you with private information and can hold you responsible if that is misused or sold without their consent. The email marketing company you choose should be able to assure you that your company's contact assets are safe and secure on their servers.

## Linking Other Business Contact Software with Your Email Service

When you sign up for an email marketing service, you'll most likely have an easy-to-use dashboard that helps you manage all aspects of your email marketing activities. This is great if all your business contact activity takes place only here. But some

power users have made use of integration features that link to their Customer Relationship Management Software. This can be terrific, but you need to be extra careful here. Sometimes, the dashboards of either service will be accessible from one or the other. If you are importing that contact information to your email dashboard, do you have permission to send those new contacts bulk email? Is that permission current? Again, it might be best email them first and ask those contacts to opt-in to your email marketing.

## Be Careful with Your Assumptions of Customer Email Permissions

Let's offer a final warning about permission: Just because you've acquired a customer's contact information through normal business activity, it doesn't mean that they've opted into your email marketing efforts. There is probably an implied permission for your customers who have provided you their email addresses, and automatically sending them e-marketing does not necessarily break the law.

Considering best practices is always good for your reputation. Consider sending an email to ask if you can add them to your email marketing lists. Skipping this step could again result in people hitting the report spam button. We can't stress enough how this hurts all of your marketing efforts. Besides just upsetting the one customer, you've tarnished your reputation and thus increased the likelihood that all your email marketing ends up undelivered. Let's put it this way: Just because you subscribe to a trash collection service, does that mean you want a weekly email newsletter from the waste disposal company?

## LIST SEGMENTS

Now that you know the best ways to build a list, are you ready to send out your email marketing? Well, yes, in the same sense that if you have a refrigerator full of food, then you're ready to cook. It helps if you have a plan, no? And it helps if you

don't serve everything to everybody all at once. Think of this refrigerator full of food in a kitchen that serves food to animals in a zoo and you might start to know what we mean. Some animals might have different diets, some babies might be new to food, some older animals might like to eat more often, and some might get angry if their food doesn't come a certain way. Those zookeepers should probably divide those animals into segments so that they prepare the right food for the right animals.

Now the folks on your list surely aren't animals (unless you're a veterinarian), but you'll market more effectively if you can **segment** them into unique groups of people with unique needs. Good email marketing software will let you easily do this.

## No Brainer Segments

Here's a short list of segments that new email marketers should consider when organizing their customers:

*Location* – This is probably the most obvious. If you ask your customers where they live as they sign up or subscribe, you can cater specials, news and community outreach to particular neighborhoods. Mentioning landmarks and points of interest that only someone in that community would care about is a great way to endear yourself to these customers.

*Birthday* – If you know your customer's birthday, why not welcome them back to your store or restaurant with a small giveaway? They'll be happy you thought of them and they'll probably bring friends.

*Purchasing Behavior* – If you're manually building your list (with permission, of course), then you might also be able to input the customer's consumer behavior as an entry. Maybe you have a list segment for your big spenders and one for infrequent customers. You might decide to send specials to reward those who buy often, or you might go the other way and try to entice those peripheral purchasers.

*Target Market Segments* – Our discussion on target marketing might remind you of the many categories that any client can be segmented by. If you set up these different fields before you build your list, you can identify unique needs to capitalize on.

## Advanced Tracking Segments

Getting the hang of the segmenting idea? Great! Try these out and really focus your marketing in a way that makes sense.

*Responders* – When you track who opened your email and clicked back to your website for a purchase or visit, you can segment this population of your list and target specific marketing to this fertile, valuable part of your list.

*New Subscribers* – Those that are new to your list might need to hear about information that would quite frankly bore your longtime subscribers. Segment them and give them the attention that they deserve.

*Openers* – It's also possible to analyze who opened your email marketing, but then did nothing else. You might want to try a different approach to get action out of this half interested portion of your list.

*Non-Openers* – If you have people that never even open your emails (but delivery tracking tells you they've received them), then you might try some different methods to get their attention. You might eventually decide that these addresses are a waste of your time and resources.

# CAMPAIGNS

Now that you've built a list and divided it into segments that make sense, it's time to start your campaign. Uh, oh, what's a campaign?

## Don't Worry, It's Just a Plan

There are major events in our lives and minor events that take a major effort. Mostly all of them take some kind of thought and at least a few reminders to do them. Running away from a bear when you see one? Maybe you only think about that once and do it. Changing phone service to a better plan or trying a new restaurant might take a few mentions.

A campaign is just one in a series of email marketing messages that you send to a list of clients.

## It Takes More Than One Email to Build a Relationship

It would be great if you just sent one email to a client and they come in and buy everything you have to offer, but it's going to take more work than that... or at least being clever and gently persistent. You can make this process simple, or you can take an all-encompassing approach. No two industries or even businesses within those industries are alike, so we'll take on a couple of case examples.

## A Sample Campaign for a Retail Store

*Introductory Email* — You could start off by introducing your newly acquired contacts to your store's philosophy with an introductory email. Information about hours, employees and their areas of expertise and maybe a welcome coupon is all great content for your first email newsletter. You might also let them know what they might expect in future newsletters from you.

*Promotional Email* — Your next email newsletter might be full of the weekly specials. Maybe nothing but prices and information about the products you're selling would be enough.

*Holiday Newsletter* — A seasonal newsletter is always a winner. Many email marketing companies provide you with **holiday templates**, and that's your cue to share in the festivities as you connect with your customer base with a themed newsletter.

*Segmented Promotions* — Segmenting might be your next choice. A hardware store might identify certain zip codes as having more pools. They can target a newsletter with news of specific products for pool owners and send it to subscribers who live in those neighborhoods. You may have asked your customers if they have kids when you were creating your list. Now you'll know exactly who would be interested in back-to-school specials!

*Neighborhood Expert Newsletter* — Perhaps the store is interested in the long-term strategy. Periodic email newsletters about community events might be very welcome as they build stature in the neighborhood. A home improvement store might offer newsletters with solely do-it-yourself project ideas and know-how. Even without mentioning any products at all, the store might come to be seen as the beacon of home-improvement knowledge and thusly trusted by the locals.

*Special Event Invite* — Maybe the store is holding an in-store product demo. Many people miss many events that they'd have liked to attend simply because they didn't know about them. A store owner can invite everyone on his/her list or use list segments to invite the specific people who have expressed an interest in that type of thing.

*Survey or Poll* — This can be sent on its own or included in any newsletter. The store can get vital customer response by sending out good looking, easy-to-use customer polls. The customers feel like they have a voice as the store fine-tunes its operations based on the feedback it gets. The best part? The polls let you ask any question you want and you can create more list segments based on these answers.

## SCHEDULING

Some people like to create their email marketing when they feel inspired and send it all out within a few minutes of finishing. There's nothing wrong with that if that's how you work, but you should at least know that you can schedule your emails and that there is a knowledge base of scheduling best practices.

## How Scheduling Works

As you create your email, you can choose what day and time you'd like to send it. You can also save it as a draft so that you can put off deciding when to send it until later on. If you've taken advantage of list segmentation, you can duplicate your email and send it to one list at a specific time and another part of your list later on.

## Scheduling Best Practices

There are some things that are just plain common sense. You don't want to send email newsletters to business contacts on the weekends if you only have their office email address. But there are some tidbits of experience that can help even those who are the brightest:

*Weekday Emails* – Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are the best weekdays to deliver your campaigns. Monday is too busy as it starts the week, and Friday sometimes is not the most productive day because it starts the weekend.

*Sunday Instead of Saturday* – Saturday is just too deep in the weekend to be a prime emailing day. But recent studies have shown that not only is Sunday the best weekend day, it's actually one of the best days of the whole week on which to send out newsletters. More and more, people are using Sunday to check on email and shop online.

*Send Often* – We mentioned this before, but it is very applicable here. If you wait too long to send your first email or let too much time lapse between your newsletters, your previously eager list may just change their minds about your communications or might be not as responsive as they once were. They might totally forget that they subscribed to you and regard your out-of-the-blue email as spam. Don't forget that they signed up for newsletter because they want information. This is why permission is so important: You only have people on your list who are anticipating information from you.

*But Don't Send Too Often* – The last thing you want to do is

burn your list out. There's also the question of ROI – Return On Investment. Although email marketing is very inexpensive, there is some cost. If you send out too many emails and your response stagnates, you could be wasting money and time. Worse yet, you could be perceived as spamming, even though you have permission to send the person email.

*And This Means What?* – We think the average subscriber would enjoy a topical newsletter about once a week, definitely not more than three per week, probably more than once a month. Only you and your type of business can best determine this. But use common sense. A car buyer can only purchase so many cars in a month while a fast food restaurant's list might be responsive to daily specials. This is why campaigns matter: If you vary up your themes, topics and always provide fresh content, you'll never look like you're just sending out the same email week after week.

## AUTORESPONDERS – TIME RELEASED EMAIL MARKETING

If your email marketing company has a **great autoresponder feature**, you'll have the benefit of a “set it and forget it” approach for your email campaigns.

Whereas scheduling means you manually choose dates to send out your individual newsletters, an autoresponder works by setting up your newsletters to go out so many days after a subscriber performs an action (like signing up, taking a survey, etc.)

Here's an example:

You set up four different email marketing newsletters to go out to people who use your sign up box. The first day, a welcome email goes out. On day five, they receive a discount coupon.

Day ten sees them getting a detailed newsletter that functions as a service or product catalog. On day fifteen, a customer survey is automatically sent out. You only have to set this up once and the campaign automatically is in play for as long as you like.

## You Can Have Multiple Autoresponders

You can have different autoresponders for different list segments. The most effective marketers segment their lists and plan campaigns that are best suited to their unique attributes.

# CONTENT

## What You Probably Don't Care About

Can we talk about the old days? Just for second, maybe? You don't care about it if it doesn't matter now? Good. Let's just sum it up like this: A few years back, you had to know a bit of HTML code to be effective at email marketing. Not anymore. You are paying for an email marketing service and that includes all that stuff on the back-end that you never wanted to learn in the first place. You didn't come to this experience because you wanted to bury your head in thick books about how to build properly formatted HTML newsletters that work across all email clients and servers. For most, just reading that sentence hurt.

## Choosing the Right Service Frees You Up to Think

Although a good service will let you implement your own code (if you have it or write it yourself), most people are happier to **select from some good templates**; drag-n-drop in sections, logos, pictures or video; choose a font; and then hit send. It's easier to choose from designs rather than build it from code yourself. This lets you focus on what your customer really wants from you: pertinent content.

## Your Content Creation, Step by Step

Now that we're past the design phase, let's take on your content decisions one by one, in the order you're likely to encounter them. The following pages are a mini-book on how to write great content that gets your newsletter past the spam filters, jumps them out of your customers' inboxes, and motivates people to do more business more often with your company.

# THE SUBJECT LINE

We can't stress how important this is. This is the line that your customer reads in his or her inbox and they'll base their decision to open the email based on it. First impressions count. They're why people dress up to go outside, why some birds have elaborate feathers and why the front door of a public building is usually more impressive than the back door.

## Be Interesting

If you remember only one thing, let it be this. Times, trends, rules and people all change. So what works one year might be spam the next. But if you write your headlines so that they are interesting in context with what else your client receives, you're halfway home. You want your headline to be the one that stands out and demands to be opened.

## Know Your Limits – 55 Characters or Less

You could write a longer subject line, but some email clients, like Yahoo, cut off your subject line after 55 letters or spaces. If you go over this limit, you risk an incomplete thought. Imagine the confusion you'd have if you wanted to send out a Father's Day themed newsletter and your subject line gets truncated as in "The Third Sunday in June is a Day When We Honor Those Who Are Fat..."

## Ask a Question

People love to ask and answer questions. It's how we learn about the world. Just don't be insulting, boring or cliché – ask something that most people think about:

- Looking for halloween ideas? Here's a new twist.
- What's the best pizza in town?
- Need new shoes? We've got new styles.

## Name Drop Some Brands

People love brands because they've proven their worth to them as consumers. They'll open your emails because they use the product:

- Tide On Sale Now!
- Starbuck's Gift Card Giveaway
- New Styles from Guess Jeans

If you **segment your list** by past purchases or brand preference polls, you can even target those customers that expressed interest in those brands while creating different subject lines for your other segments.

- We have plenty of Pepsi in stock
- Coca-Cola lovers rejoice

## Name Drop Celebrities or Anything

Enquiring minds want to know. If you can piggy-back your promotion on something or someone famous, you might just get more opens. You must be truthful, though, being careful not to claim a false endorsement. Don't claim Brad Pitt is at your store or using your product when he isn't. But if you can tie in a mention of a hot TV series in a casual way, you might have something:

- What We'd Wear If We Were on American Idol...
- You Won't See These Homes on Flip That House!

## Use Top Lists

People like lists. They're quick access to information and not a wall of text. Cater to their short attention spans and need-to-know curiosity:

- Top 10 Sellers for June
- Five ways to save money in Hawaii
- The A to Z of Financial Management

## Avoid Spammy Headlines

You know what they are because you get email yourself. Do you open any message that says "Buy Now" or "Don't Miss Out"? Instead, use words that mean something to your audience without coming across as pushy. People are savvy and tired of being hustled and hassled. Respect that and just give them the facts they care about.

## So Put the Pertinent Information Up Front

Remember that the people on your list are already expecting great things from you because they signed up with you. Dispense with the pleasantries and give them a reason to open up your email marketing – a deal or announcement on what they care about:

- Four homes on Oak St. for under \$300,000
- 20% off all major brands pet food this weekend
- An interview with Polynesian coffee makers
- Twelve new health plans for the self employed

## And Get Emotional

It's okay to be a little personal. It helps people to connect with the product and to your business.

*"We love these new Clark & Henley scented candles ..."*

Again, consider your audience – "We love the new RAM chips"

for a computer store might not fly as well. But don't forget that trust is emotional, too – “Finally, RAM we can depend on” works.

## What's the Benefit?

If you can illustrate to a potential reader that they have something to gain by opening the email, you've already halfway sold them. Here are some good words to use:

- Upgrade
- Discover
- Accomplish
- Relax
- Find

## Don't Use Trigger Words

Spam filters are ruthless because they have to be. There is so much junk email, and they're charged with eliminating it before it ever gets to the reader. Certain words are denoted by these filters as likely to contain junk email. While there are many **spam filter trigger words**, here are a few to avoid:

- Afford
- Opportunity
- Save
- Free (especially in combination with certain words)
- Earn Money
- Eliminate Debt

Using these won't automatically put your message in the trash, but there is a scoring system in play. If you have a good reputation, you're in better graces, but don't forget that the readers themselves have probably developed a natural aversion to those types of words. If you're still not sure, your email marketing service should have an easy to use **Spam Checker** right in your email creation dashboard.

## Use a Thesaurus

If you have a Mac, you have one on your dashboard. You can also visit [Thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com) or use a good old-fashioned book version. The point is that there are many ways to say the same thing. Here are synonyms for free:

- Complimentary
- On the House
- Gratis
- No Charge

## Finally, Don't Use ALL CAPS

Because that's a quick ticket to the Spam box.

# CHOOSING AND FORMATTING YOUR TEMPLATE

So here we are at the heart of what you're going to send your subscribers. Before you write anything, you've got to decide on the design of the email. Email marketing has come a long way since it began, and a good web-based software package should walk you through the process.

## Choose a Template Type First

Here's an analogy for you: You're building a new home from the ground up. Does it make sense to buy the furniture before you buy the house? Before you can write a thing, you'll have choices on [what type of email marketing message you'd like to send](#). Templates are your friend. Not only can they help you choose the right look for your company, they are categorized by communication type. We mentioned a few of these in the

campaign section, but let's take a closer look at what they are right here:

*Newsletter* – A newsletter is probably the most-used and least threatening type of marketing you can send your customer. It really is a generally-toned, multiple-sectioned communications piece that reads like a mini-newspaper. You'll have information sections that brand your store, service or products. You might have promotional sections, a place for a survey and maybe an e-coupon. The focus here is content of varying types that all have one purpose in mind: the general promotion of your company.

*Promotions* – A promotional email has only one purpose: hyping a product or service. This focused communication will stick to one topic and is much shorter than a newsletter. Give the customer the facts: what it is, how much it is, and why they need it.

*Event Invitations* – If you know the difference between a proper wedding invitation versus an announcement in a newspaper, then you'll see the benefit of having a special template section dedicated to promoting your company's special event. An email event invite has to do two things: generate interest and convince the recipient that they've got something to leave the house for.

*Holiday Templates* – After you've sent your customer newsletters and special promotions, you might be looking for another excuse to send them marketing. This is the beauty of the **holiday template**. While it might be easy for a subscriber to decide they're not in the mood for your newsletter, they may open your newsletter because it has a holiday theme. Why? Holidays make people happy. It's a day to celebrate, take time off or even share something in common.

While you could just put specials on a Thanksgiving template, you can also be a bit more subtle about it. If you sent out a Thanksgiving themed newsletter with nothing but facts about the holiday, a little history and maybe reasons people in your community are thankful, you'll accomplish a longer term goal: your subscribers will recognize your newsletter as entertaining

and thought provoking and will be likely to open more of them in the future. You'll be in their minds, too, and you never had to try to sell a thing.

*Press Release* – If you have important company news that needs to go to newspapers, magazines, bloggers, etc, they'll expect the communication in a certain format in a way that informs, but doesn't necessarily have a direct sales tone. Picking the template is a good start, but there are **rules that you simply must follow** if you want don't want the editors and reporters hitting the delete button.

## Can I Use My Own HTML Code?

Sure. It should be as easy as hitting a button to **insert your own HTML code** or to tweak existing code. Most people don't, but that should never mean that you can't if you have that skill set.

# CUSTOMIZE YOUR TEMPLATE'S SECTIONS

Just like a house, templates come fully functional with a design that works. But that doesn't mean that it works for you each and every time. Lucky for you, adding new sections and deleting unwanted sections is easier than hiring a construction crew.

## Make Your Rich-Content Decisions Now

You can write all you want in the next section, but here's the place to think about what you want to put in your newsletter. Some templates have places to put in images, some don't, but don't worry: You can add any type of section to any template. It's also at this point that you'll insert them, too. What kind of content can you put in?

## Links

You probably want to keep your customer inside your newsletter as long as possible. But you also might need them to go to your website for a purchase or to direct them to a place they need to visit. It's good practice to include at least five to ten links in each newsletter.

## Pictures

The old saying is true, no matter how cliché it sounds: a picture really is worth a thousand words. Remember that pictures are copyrighted. That doesn't mean you have to own every graphic you use. Sites like Corbis, Getty Images and Photospin.com offer the license or use of images for a fee. There are many places that offer images for free to use under a [creative commons license](#).

Upload your pictures as you go. But you'll really save time when you build an online [image gallery](#) and can quickly grab from those pictures when building new emails.

## Video

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a video must be worth a million! We'll stop with the benefits explanation and assume that you just want to do it. The way it's integrated is key here.

If you filmed your own video, put it on your desktop, then tried to embed that giant file in your email, you'd have emails that are too large to send around and angry subscribers that suffer from clogged email inboxes. There's also the issue of codecs – the algorithms used to make large videos small enough for web delivery. There are hundreds of them and if you've encoded your video with a codec that your subscriber doesn't have on their machine, they won't be able to play your video because their machine simply isn't speaking that language.

Sites like [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#) let you upload your video while encoding it in a variety of sizes to a format that almost any web

visitor can see. You'll most likely be putting your videos up on these sites anyway (to take advantage of **viral marketing**), because it means you don't have to send the video around to everyone individually, just a link to it. And although you could put a link to the video in your newsletter, sites like YouTube and Vimeo offer you embed codes. All you have to do is copy those codes and paste them in the editor. Like magic, your video is hosted in your newsletter, only without all the file size. What's really happening is a thumbnail image of your video is embedded in the email itself. When your subscriber clicks it to play it, your entire newsletter is opened in a browser and your video is automatically playing from within. Genius, we think.

## Surveys & Polls

Although you could dedicate an entire email message to these tools, you can also embed them right in your newsletter. Maybe at the end of an article, you can offer up a quick survey. Why would you do this? First, people love to respond to these things. It makes your email communication truly interactive as they feel they are a part of a live event and can instantly view how their answers stack up against the rest of the population. More importantly, all these answers are tools for you. You can use the answers from **online surveys and polls** to better your service or segment your list for future targeted email campaigns.

## Anchors

When you insert an anchor point, you have basically inserted a bookmark inside your newsletter that you can link to from anywhere within your newsletter. Why would you want to do that? Maybe you have a longer newsletter and want to list a table of contents with clickable links that go right to the sections that people are interested in. You also might want to reference an earlier promotion or section with a clickable text link in a later section.

## Contact Details

Of course, your emails will only go to those that you've chosen on your list. But maybe you don't want to start out the newsletter with a generic salutation like "Dear Subscriber" or "Dear Friends." Wouldn't it be nicer if every person that received your newsletter actually saw their name after the word "Dear"? Now you wouldn't want to individually type that in each of your email and hit send, would you? Instead, insert a **contact detail** here. You can choose from any field so long as that that information is in your list database. It's not just limited to first and last names. Examples:

- Dear *firstname*,
- We have deals in *City*
- We have deals this week on *Custom Product*

## Drag-n-Drop Section Editing Helps

Though the above features might sound too powerful to be easy, the **drag-n-drop editor** makes them easy to implement. You can add and subtract exactly what you need. Maybe you don't need three article sections, but you want more places for pictures and logos. Perhaps you need a video inserted or you want to vary up the order of the sections.

## Start Simply

All these features are powerful, but trying to throw them all in might not be important to your customer. Remember to stick with what you need to inform, entertain or entice the subscriber without overwhelming them. You wouldn't walk into your house and turn on the heater, fireplace, television, radio, microwave and computer all at the same time, would you?

## Now You're Ready to Write

It seems like we took a long time to get here, but here's another analogy for you. Imagine going to a play or concert. How much effort and time went into the preparation of the event so that

you could enjoy a flawless performance? The practice of the performers. The building or preparing of the arena. The design of the costumes. The planning of the showtimes.

Taking the time on the mechanics ahead of time helps you deliver your content flawlessly. But again, the software you choose really matters. If it's designed right, you should be able to click and choose through all these things in a matter of minutes.

## THE COPY

Put simply, the copy of your newsletter is all the words that make up your communication. Your sentences, word selection, subject matter, tone and style make all the difference between a compelling read and a newsletter to avoid at all costs.

### Spell Correctly or Know Where Your Spell Check Is

Some of you out there were great at spelling and have degrees in English. But many successful businesses were built by those who were too busy learning to be great at what they do than to worry about how to spell “congratulations.” There are also many small business owners for whom English is a second language. Good work, you should be very proud. But you know, you have decided to do professional email marketing, so don't blow all these great features and stellar designs on spelling mistakes. Some people won't know, but some will. They will put your company in a category that you don't want to be in, especially when it has nothing to do with your product. Your email editor should have a **spell check** built in. If it doesn't, write the draft in MS Word or Pages and use their spell checker.

### Get a Second Opinion

If you're prone to grammar mistakes like the difference between “your” and “you're,” you might want to write your

content first in a program like Microsoft word and look for the green underlining that denotes a possible grammar issue. Grammar rules aren't absolute, and they can vary regionally. But most of us are guilty of common mistakes that others can catch pretty easily. You know what helps tremendously? A human proofreader you can trust. Even if they're not an English teacher, they are another set of eyes that can see what you repeatedly didn't.

## Providing Fresh Content

If you're the only company that sells a goldfish training kit, chances are that what you're sending will be interesting because nobody has heard of such a thing (neither did we until such a company became a Benchmark customer). But if that company always sent the same story or slight variations on it, all but the die-hard enthusiast would eventually stop reading.

If you're a realtor or consultant, there's lots of competition. You have to find the new stories, topics and angles if you want to get and keep your newsletter read. So how do you put the NEW in newsletter?

*Be Current* – True, houses have always sold. But the smart realtor knows that trends change. How did this house sell? Why did it sell now?

*Sell the Story* – If you're a grocer selling eggs, you could just put the price down and hope that you're selling them for the cheapest price in town. But maybe there's a story in those crates. Are your eggs organic? Did they come from chickens that are known for quality? Were they genetically altered? Actually, please skip that story.

*Be Personal* – Let's get back to the realtor for a second. Those homes just keep selling (hopefully, at least), but the people who buy and sell those homes are all unique. A profile on the family who bought or sold the house and how their lives have changed does more than say that you can sell homes – it says that you can change lives.

*And Don't Be Stale* – It isn't enough to say, "Don't be the opposite of fresh." Stale doesn't just mean that you're repeating old news. It could be also be the way that you talk about new topics and specials. If your idea of news is using the same copy as before and just changing the names and addresses of the new protagonists, you're being lazy and your repeat readers will tire of your newsletters.

*Don't Be Desperate* – Being friendly is one thing, but disclosing a sob story about how bad your business is doing might only work in the most altruistic of communities. People need to believe that your business is successful enough to offer expertise and support should they need it.

*But Be Direct* – Don't be vague about what you expect your customer to do. If you want them to come talk to you about an appointment, come out and say it.

*But Watch Your Tone* – Even if you are a salesman, one of the worst things you can do is to come across as one. The people on your list have encountered all the tricks in the book in their lives as consumers. Talk to them in a friendly way without coming across as shady. You might have a limited supply of Siberian chocolate this month, but saying "you snooze, you lose" is off-putting. Saying this is your "last chance" when it obviously isn't true is even worse.

*Or At Least Target Your Tone* – We've gone over target markets, demographics and psychographics in our list segmentation section, so you know that you can cater your message to a variety of factors like age, city and consumer behavior. So let's just say that you wouldn't write a newsletter for retired auto workers in Detroit in the same way that you'd position one for the eyes of college kids in California.

*Be Truthful* – You or your company is responsible for every word you put in your communications. You can't make outlandish claims or make up the facts. This is a litigious time in society, where someone could take you to court if you don't live up to what you've promised.

*Don't Libel Anyone* – Libel is a written or broadcast statement

that is presented as truth and casts someone or some entity in a negative light. Again, we're not your attorneys so maybe its best to avoid saying anything negative about anybody in any way.

*Don't Copy Your Copy* – Plagiarism is representing someone else's work, thoughts or writings as your own. Don't do it. Does that mean you can't talk about what someone else said or wrote about? Of course not, but give credit where credit is due.

*And Be Wary of Copyrighted Content* – Doesn't it sound like fun to motivate your clients by including a link to download "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey? Does it also sound like fun to sit in court to defend yourself from the RIAA? Music, videos, and even photographs are not free to use just because you saw it for free on the web. Especially because your business is at stake, be mindful to use only works of art for which you have permission.

*Link to What You Don't Have Room To Include* – You don't have to support every bit of information you include with more information that interrupts the flow of your article. If the info is on the web, **provide a link to it.**

*Embed Lengthy Documents* – If you want to include that company report, but don't want to send out a thirty page newsletter, you can upload the doc in the editor and just provide a link to it. Your readers can glance over the article, and when they're ready to read the doc, they can click the link and read it in a new page on their web browser.

*Offer Consistency* – You want to keep your content fresh, but give your communications a steady professional tone that your subscribers can count on. That doesn't mean that you can't have different writers for different articles or newsletters, but if you're email marketing is working for you, keep the tone and voice of it similar to your previous newsletters.

*Lean on Statistics* – There's no proof like good ol' proof. If you're selling alarm systems, a stat about the amount of break-ins in a particular city is more motivating than a just saying, "The neighborhood is not safe."

# DELIVERY

In a perfect world, you would just send out your email newsletters to everyone on your list, they would all be delivered to their inboxes, and everyone opens them up and enjoys your fine marketing efforts. It makes sense that this would happen, doesn't it?

20% of legitimate emails never reach the inbox  
— *Return Path*

And now the bad news: the world isn't perfect. Since we've already addressed what you have to do to make someone open your email once it's in their inbox (by that, we mean using a good subject line), what remains is an issue that you can't see because it largely isn't controlled by you: thousands of emails are sent each day that never get to the addressees' inboxes in the first place. Your email messages must navigate a myriad of gatekeepers on the way to their final destinations. Basically, they have to jump the hurdles that are set up to catch spam.

## ISP - Internet Service Provider

The company that sits between the Internet and the person who wants to use the Internet. Often, these are cable companies and phone companies (Time Warner, AT&T) or are vendors who must work on the infrastructure of a utility company (like AOL).

## IP (Internet Protocol) Address

Made up of numbers separated by three dots, this is the code that identifies each computer that connects to the Internet. The code is assigned by the ISP and can either be static (the code never changes) or dynamic (the code changes).

## Domain

The written location that locates an entity on the Internet as in [www.yourcompany.com](http://www.yourcompany.com) — In this case, “yourcompany” is actually called the secondary domain. As a domain name is typed by someone in a browser, its proper IP address is retrieved and the browser is directed to the correct machine that hosts the site. Many smaller websites share IP addresses and traffic is directed to the correct site at the hosting server level. It’s important to note that when you send email marketing, you rely on the email marketing provider’s IP addresses, not your website’s.

## But Didn’t We Talk About Spam Already?

Yes, in the permissions section. But some marketers who always play by the rules of permission can still find themselves having delivery issues because of something called ...

# REPUTATION

What’s at stake is more than just validity of the content. It’s the integrity of the sender and the courier that brings it.

77% of undelivered emails were due to sender reputation  
— *Return Path*

## Whose Reputation Counts?

Good question. Everyone’s. That means that your domain name matters as well as the IP address of the server your email was sent from.

## A Helpful Metaphor

Imagine for a second that the content of your email message

is like the passengers in a car. They are traveling from New York to Los Angeles, and there are checkpoints along the way that are judging whether or not they should be allowed to visit their final destination. Whether they are allowed in doesn't just depend on the character of the individuals in the car, but also the roads they take, the car they drive in, the gas they put in the car and - even more shocking - the other cars on the road with them. This is the kind of journey your emails face en route to their destinations!

## Your Reputation is a Score

Your email reputation is like a credit score that ISPs and email security vendors use to block spam, which makes up for over 80% of all email. Individually, your return address references your domain and that domain will be assigned a score based on:

*Spam Complaints* – If real people report your email as spam, your reputation could be taking a hit. Many email hosts have “report spam” buttons that are easily clickable by its users.

*Spam Traps* – Internet Service Providers will reactivate old email addresses that are no longer used for the sole purpose of catching spam. Since the email address is old, no mail should be sent to it and anything it receives is most likely unsolicited. Spam traps are usually being sent to because of people purchasing email lists (with old addresses) or worse, legitimate marketers using stale contacts.

*Hard Bounces* – The number or percentage of email sent to unknown or non-existent addresses.

*Volume of Email Messages* – Differences or spikes in sending volume. Both spammers and legitimate email marketers send out volumes of email, so consistency counts as does the other factors if this one is high.

*Authentication* – You can think of this as your secret handshake. As the email moves along its path to the eventual inbox, an authentication process is in play to verify that the

email is really coming from who it says it's from. There are three main protocols: **SPF Records, DKIM and Sender ID**.

### Why Authentication Matters

If you've ever received spam in your inbox that appears like it came from one of your friends, then you'll know why this is so important. Unscrupulous characters on the web have devised schemes that pull contacts from a person's inbox and send spam to his contacts while making it appear as the person sent the spam himself. This is one form of the cybercrime called phishing.

### So Authentication is Foolproof, Right?

Not exactly. Different web-based email hosts handle non-authenticated emails differently. MSN might differ from AOL and Gmail may differ from Yahoo.

The good news is the major ESPs use authentication as a standard practice. And since they are major ESPs used by the vast majority of all email users, there's a great chance authentication will improve your deliverability.

## Use Your Email Marketing Service's Tools to Improve Your Reputation

The factors above are aspects that you can control. You can choose to **checkmark email authentication** as you send out your campaigns. You can minimize hard bounces by **cleaning your lists**. You can be consistent in your email marketing by scheduling your campaigns at an even keel. If you're a particularly large company or do high volume, you can elect to have your own **dedicated server** and IP address to ensure that your reputation is 100% yours and yours alone.

## Does My Choice of Email Service Providers (ESP) Help My Reputation?

Yes, yes, and yes. The top email marketing service providers are constantly working behind the scenes so that your email campaigns have the highest delivery rates because it's in their best interest.

## WHAT YOUR ESP SHOULD DO FOR YOUR REPUTATION

You wouldn't be using a company for very long if they can't get your marketing to your customers. The company depends on your subscription to survive. Because of this, they have employed several methodologies:

### Email Certification

Benchmark works with Return Path, a company that monitors the activities of the company as a whole to verify to ISPs that email marketing that comes from Benchmark is not spam and complies with Return Path's high standards. As your email marketing comes through Benchmark's "white-listed" IP addresses, it enjoys better delivery as it is from a trusted source.

### Tracking Open Rates and Complaints

Benchmark monitors its own customers to make sure that its more reputable customers are deserving of these certifications, and that individuals that are not using best practices are not sullyng the reputations of its customer base as a whole. As much as your individual activities help or harm your domain's score, the sum total of all the activities of the companies who send email through an email marketing provider's servers affect its reputation. The integrity of the road is judged by all cars on the road. Good clients get the best roads on their trips towards the inboxes and bad clients are kicked off of the road.

## Providing the Best Mechanisms for Unsubscribes

You might think that you'd want your ESP to provide you a system so that those who want to unsubscribe to your newsletter go through some retention activities. The exact opposite is true. You want those people off your lists as soon as possible. For one, it's the law. But more importantly, it's the ethical thing to do. Providing a quick and easy unsubscribe process minimizes spam complaints and improves reputation.

## Working for Higher Email Marketing Standards

Spamming isn't just the enemy of the people whose inboxes are clogged with useless or offensive email, it hampers the legitimate marketing activities of reputable companies and the businesses who provide them the means to do so (like Benchmark). Coalitions like the ESPC work together to make sure its members adhere to much higher standards than state and federal law calls for. Again, better delivery rates are the end goal.

## Maintaining Great Relationships with ISPs

Your ESP should work hand in hand with all the major ISPs so that your reputation is enhanced merely by association. If someone hits the Report Spam button on one of your communications, they'll go to bat for you and make your case on your behalf.

# TRACKING AND REPORTS

## The Importance of Tracking

Only a madman works without any kind of way to grade his or her performance. Students get grades in school, movies get reviewed and athletes get points or scores to tell them how well they've performed. To put it another way, it would be lunacy to send out email marketing messages without gauging how effective they are.

Of course, a good indication is a general uptick in business activity and that might tell you if the email marketing is working generally, but what of the performance of the individual messages that you send out? In order to refine your message so that you are sending out marketing messages in the most optimized fashion, you need an effective way to measure:

- How many of your emails made it to the inboxes of the individual recipients
- Which email addresses are no longer valid
- What percentage of your list opened up your emails
- Who individually opened up your emails
- Who clicks on the links that you provide within your emails
- Who forwards your email campaigns to their friends
- Who unsubscribes from your list
- The performance of one campaign versus another

## You Need Real Time Reports

Email works at mind-boggling speed. As such, some delivery information is available almost instantly. Open rates work a little longer - at the speed of the individuals that are checking and opening your emails. Even from this, you'll be able to glean the behavior of your subscribers and how fast they get to your marketing. You can monitor results both instantly and over time.

## Am I Violating My Subscribers' Privacy By Tracking Open Rates?

No. Benchmark doesn't have an Orwellian monitoring tool that watches your subscribers as they open your email. It's actually

a bit simpler than that. A unique, small and invisible graphic is embedded in your newsletters. As each newsletter is opened, the graphic must be downloaded (as would all visible graphics you include in your emails). We can tell you if that graphic was used and thus are able to confirm to you that your email was indeed opened. It's worth noting that many email clients like gmail don't display graphics automatically (a link asks the reader if they would like to see the graphics), so your open rates are probably higher than what is being reported.

## But I'm Not A Numbers Person

Of course you're not. That's why reports are clearly illustrated in easy to use graphs (at least at Benchmark Email they are).

## I Need To Share This Info With My Company

If you're not a lone ranger in this email marketing effort, you may need to share information with a team. In this case, you'll be glad to know that all this precious feedback can be downloaded to your favorite office program. From there, you can include it in an internal company report, utilize the data in your own custom spreadsheet or make a PowerPoint presentation with it.

## How Do I Use This Information to Optimize My Marketing Efforts?

If it is enough to say, "My campaigns work because people are opening my newsletters," then good for you. Business is good and you have enough of it. But really, you have so much more power than that.

## Tracking Hard Bounces

If your email list contains addresses that are undeliverable because the mailbox is unknown, does not exist or is no longer active, they'll be flagged as hard bounces. We recommend

cleaning these up as soon as possible so that your reputation is not harmed. Addresses that bounce twice for these reasons are **Confirmed Bounces** and automatically excluded from your active account. Undeliverable email is returned with a bounce code that denotes the reason for the delivery failure. Any that have a code that starts with a five (as in 5.x.x) are permanent failures. For that reason, the address is removed immediately from your list.

## Tracking Soft Bounces

Soft bounces are addresses that are temporarily unavailable for a variety of reasons that include reasons like quota exceeded, too much sessions in a connection, temporary local problem, and out of office auto-reply. Especially because your message is temporarily undeliverable, you'll want to earmark these people for a second chance at your campaign so that they don't miss what you want to send them.

## Tracking Open Rates

This is very important, as it tells if you're writing good subject lines or if your list is responsive towards marketing coming from your domain. Remember, your reputation is your own. ISPs will monitor if lots of unopened mail comes from your end. Too much of this and your future campaigns might be thought of as spammy.

## Tracking Unsubscribes

If your list is a legitimate, fresh, permission-based list, there should be no reason for high unsubscribe numbers. If you are experiencing this, there is something wrong with the content of your marketing efforts and you'll want to re-tool and fast. Trying out a few types of newsletters with differing content and measuring them side-by-side is a great way to choose your most effective approach.

## Tracking by Location

If you can tell that a certain region is more responsive to your subject line, that tells you that either you're communicating well with this region, your not communicating well with other regions, or that there may be delivery issues with the ISP in the other regions. Rather than ignoring this important information or just making assumptions that suit inaction, follow up immediately. Find out if there are bounces happening en masse in those other regions. If not, poll your responding subscribers to find out what is motivating there great response.

## Tracking Click-thru Rates

In your newsletters, you'll most likely be directing people to your website with links. But you may have multiple pages on your site that you are providing links for. You also might be directing a click to the same place in different sections of that newsletter. You'll want to know what made that person click. Was it because it was close to the top of the newsletter? Was it a clickable image? Was it surrounded by thrilling copy or just set off on its own? Anyway you look at it, this is valuable consumer behavior feedback and you'll want to do more of what works and less of what doesn't.

# SOCIAL NETWORK REVOLUTION

## The World Wide Web Sure Looks Different Now

If you're getting into email marketing now, it might just be because it's far easier today than it was ten years ago. The same features you might love in Benchmark Email are the reasons there are more people who use the Internet now for a larger part of their day: Users spend very little time thinking about code and focus exclusively on content. On the sites

that are used most, people expect to receive or disseminate information, perhaps connect to a network of people who are all there for a similar reason, all the while having room for personalization in a controlled & standardized environment.

## It Used to Be That Consumers Mostly Visited Places

Let's expand on that. Do you remember the days when having your own webpage for whatever reason meant that you had to know HTML code or hire someone who did? That developed later on to flashier sites that were made with, appropriately enough, a program called Flash. And although there's plenty of that, and your company may well have those types of sites up at this moment, the old model of people interacting with companies by visiting their websites (either through a search or typing in their web address) is evolving to something new.

## Now Most Consumers Have Their Own Places and Networks

So what's the difference? People now have their own places on the web. Not just one place, but sometimes many more. They also have a variety of places where they just hang out. Social networks like Facebook and MySpace let people create their own homepages by just adding pictures and information. YouTube is a popular entertainment destination, where people can see just about anything they want to see. Twitter gives those with quick attention spans a quick way to interact with many, many people. Newspapers and magazines have made their way online, but they have to compete with bloggers for readership. The point is this: Everything is maturing just fine in the Internet world, and that's great news for the small business person.

## So Now Places Can Visit Consumers

Since we've long ago established the power of email marketing, we'll explore the rest of the web and find out how

the right ESP gives you the tools to not only bring your email marketing to social media, but to use it as the spearhead that brings all your branding methods into laser-sharp focus. Your job on the new world wide web now is to find the people where they hang out and either bring them your message. You may also have to inject your product (subtly, please) into online conversations so that they know who you are, respect who you are, and go to where you are to complete an eventual transaction.

## The Concept of Sharing

Sharing is what makes this new Internet, some call it Web 2.0, so exciting. But it really is a misnomer. Sharing brings to mind telling someone about something (which does happen) and that there is a finite amount of this something that must be divided up equally until it's gone. Nonsense! What happens now is that what is "shared" is really cloned, copied and presented fully and infinitely in its original form. It is often added to, and evolves an atmosphere around it in the form of commentary and recommendation.

## Sharing Works If Your Email Marketing Has a Home on the Web

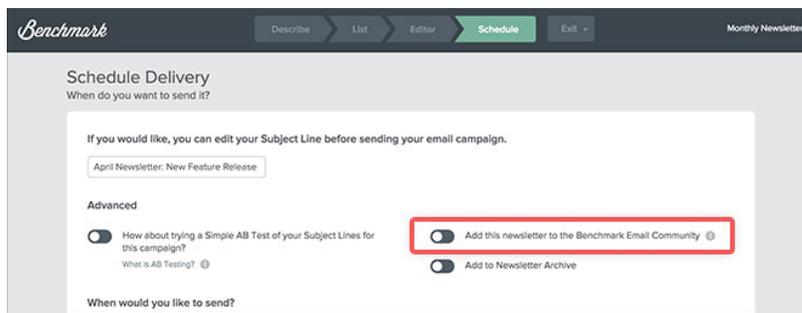
As you create a newsletter, it needs its own home on the web with a unique address. Yes, a webpage that is nothing but your email newsletter in all its glory that anyone can visit at anytime independent of an email inbox. It should be there already, as this practice started so that people who couldn't get all the formatting and graphics that you included in your newsletter in their inboxes could just click the [View As Webpage](#) option and see your newsletter live and online, completely as you intended.

## So Make Sure Those Newsletters Are Archived and Easy to Find

You want your current newsletter live on the web and also your

past campaigns. Without an easy to find, permanent home, the sharing process becomes useless. Make sure your service lets you choose this address so that each subsequent campaign is added to the same folder on the Internet.

### Benchmark Email Insider Tip:



### Archiving Your Benchmark Newsletters Makes Them Shareable

The last step in the Benchmark Email creation editor is called Scheduled Delivery. In this step, you'll see the Benchmark Email Community box. Click "add this newsletter to the community." This makes it easy for them to share your newsletters on social networks they belong to!

## LET THE SHARING BEGIN

Because a web version of your newsletter already exists, wouldn't it be great if you could broadcast the news about it to everyone?

### Share it on Facebook

Facebook is a social network that has over 400 million active users. People join, set up homepages and share pictures,

videos or news that shows up on the homepages of the “friends” in their networks. If people like what they see on their homepages, they can click share, and what they saw shows up on all their friends’ homepages. A small thing can turn into a sensation that thousands of people know about in a matter of minutes. Really.

## You Should Be Able To Share Your Campaigns On Your Facebook Page

Choose an email marketing service that lets you share your newsletters on your personal or company’s facebook page easily. In Benchmark’s case, we have a Share on Social Media Sites button that lets you do this at the same time that your email marketing is going out by its normal channels. A link and a thumbnail of your newsletter will appear on your Facebook homepage. What’s great is that it also appears in the news section your friends’ homepages, and they can now share it with their friends. Now their friends see the link, and any of their friends can repeat the process. This can go on indefinitely. We think you get the picture.

## And Your Subscribers Should Be Able to Share Your Campaigns On Facebook Right From Their Inboxes

Not every subscriber on your email list is a friend on your facebook page (and rightly so). Most will be reading your newsletters right where you’ve intended: at their inbox. Make it easy for these people to be excited enough to share your marketing without having to leave it. You should always include social media share tags at the bottom of your newsletters.

## Archiving Is Not Just For Sharing - It Makes Your Marketing Live Longer

Let's say you've meticulously planned out your email marketing in a series of weekly newsletters that go out to your subscribers. You've worked hard to make sure that your newsletters include branding messages that create trust in your product or services while providing a weekly column on topics of interest in your particular industry. Now you've established yourself as an industry expert. Great ... at least great for all the people who have been a subscriber from your first newsletter on. But what about all the new subscribers you add each week from your sign-up box, your trade show activities and your store transactions. Wouldn't they benefit from all the past newsletters they've missed?

When you archive your email marketing, each newsletter gets its own home on the web with its own address. They each become a new webpage and can be visited forever by old and new customers alike.

## Share it on Twitter

Twitter is a social network that's built for speed and brevity. Users of Twitter "tweet" their news in short messages that are no longer than 140 characters. Because of this, things travel fast and in large volumes. Friends are called followers on Twitter. Again, as soon as you have finished your newsletter, you can announce its webpage location when you tweet it to your account after clicking the Share on Social Media Sites button and then clicking on Twitter. Followers see it. They can re-tweet your message too. Better yet, Twitter is fully searchable. Any tweet can be seen by anyone if they look for it. You can gain followers by searching a term relevant to your business and adding or following the people who are tweeting about that term.

### You Can Quickly Share Your Email Marketing To Your Networks On Benchmark Email

After you send or schedule your email for delivery, just hit the Share On Social Sites button. Next, click the Delicious, Digg, Stumble Upon, Facebook or MySpace button. Your log on screen will come up and doing so will instantly add your newsletter as news, an update, tweet or bookmarks where it will be visible to your personal network and searchable by the entire network. Tagging it with pertinent terms helps the discovery process.

Better yet, there's a twitter template that pulls info from your twitter account to your newsletter.

## Twitter Goes Where Your Email Can't

Many twitterers get their updates through SMS text messages on their phones. Your tweet might come to them at a business lunch, as they're killing time while waiting for an appointment, or even on a trip. The point is, it may arrive at a time when they're more open to your message. Many smart phones will let them visit the link instantly, or they may be motivated to get to a computer to look at the newsletter. Make that subject line count!

## BLOG ALL ABOUT IT

Blog is a contraction between "web" & "log." Now that we have that uncomfortable fact about an unfortunately named idea out of the way, let's get to what matters: Blogging is awesome! Bloggers write about whatever they want, and beyond their language skills, the look is professional because most blogging sites work on templates too. Most bloggers just choose a look, make some tweaks, and start uploading content and visuals immediately.

## There Are Probably Many Popular Blogs In Your Industry

And if you can get their attention, they just might post a link to your newsletter's webpage in their blog. Their readers don't have to opt-in to your list (though they might) and sit by their inboxes waiting for your campaign. They can visit right away from their computers.

## But You Have to Get Their Attention with Good Content

If your newsletter is just discounts and hard-sell, good luck. But if you have thoughtful articles that would be of general interest to everyone in that industry, the other sections of selling in your newsletter aren't off-putting to the blogger. Case in point: you're a plumber and there's a well-read blogger who writes about home improvement projects in your city. Why not send him a link to your newsletter (in a personal email, not the campaign if he hasn't opted in to your list!) in which you have an article about preventative measures people can take so that they don't have to call the plumber. If published, you will look honest and knowledgeable and people will call you as those inevitable other types of plumbing issues arise because you're now an expert.

## Consider Hosting Your Own Blog If You Have the Time

It's easy to set one up with Blogger, WordPress, Windows Live and other services. You may even be savvy enough to have it hosted on your own site. Having a blog increases your brand identity and gives your subscribers one more way to interact with you. What do you put on your blog? You can put your newsletter sections in it, information that comes up too frequently for a campaign, or anything deemed not pertinent to your newsletter campaigns.

## Digg.com & Delicious.com are for Social Bookmarking

When you like a website, you might bookmark it in your browser so that you can visit it later on without having to remember the address. A social bookmark is similar, except that in this case, users have signed up with a certain network in the interest of sharing bookmarks they're excited about for the good of the online community. Users can import their browser's bookmarks to Delicious or Digg. In some cases, a plug in resides at the top of their browsers that they can hit the minute they like something they see on the web. In other cases, a share tag is visible at the bottom of a page or article so that a reader can instantly "digg" something or find it "delicious." The upshot of this is:

*People Can See Other People's Bookmarks* – If they are in your personal network, your bookmarks are visible. This makes finding sites on the Internet a collaborative effort. You want your newsletters to be a part of this shared bookmarking process.

*Popular Bookmarks Are Identified Across These Networks* – There is both a search box and a top trending bookmarks report on users' homepages. Consider this like a newspaper for bookmarking activity worldwide. People can see what's hot and add to what's becoming hot.

*Enable Your Newsletter Subscribers to Bookmark Your Email Marketing Campaigns* – Are you just happy going to people's inboxes? Good. But many people have found the power that these share tags bring. When you enable share tags in your email marketing campaigns, you give your subscribers the power to click a button right from their inboxes and add it right to the searchable, visible and trending lexicon that makes up these social bookmarking sites.

## StumbleUpon is a Social Search Engine

StumbleUpon is similar to the other social bookmarking websites (there are personal pages and favorite lists), but there

is a difference. Stumble Upon learns a user's likes and dislikes as they interact with it. As users hit a share tag to recommend a site, that site is vouched for and gains a likelihood to be recommended to other StumbleUpon members.

## Why You Want a StumbleUpon Tag for Your Email Marketing

StumbleUpon users can hit the StumbleUpon button on their homepages or at the tops of their internet browsers. Doing so takes them to a pseudo-random page based on their likes. Some of your email marketing subscribers may be Stumblers. When your newsletter contains great pertinent industry information, they may vouch for it by submitting it with the share tag. People that aren't on your list can stumble upon on your site if they have similar interests.

# MORE TRAFFIC MEANS SEARCH ENGINES NOTICE YOUR PAGE

There's an important side benefit to all this sharing. Search engines like Google and Yahoo will notice if there's big buzz on the link that points to your newsletter's home on the web. As more traffic gets to it and more people link to it, it gains a momentum all of its own and rises higher in search rank. It takes a lot to get on the front page of Google, but you never know: A well-distributed, super-specific newsletter just might show up when someone searches for a term or combination of terms. Will your home loan newsletter rank top three when someone searches "home loans"? Nope. But you might have a chance if someone searches for "home loans" & "Spokane" if your newsletter catches fire in the sharing circles (and you live in Spokane!)

## A Social Network Face Person

Some companies have found the Web 2.0 world to be so lucrative that they've hired a "Social Network Face Person." Sometimes this is a full-time position or sometimes a person in charge of branding, advertising or marketing does this. Very often, the small business owner does this alone as a part of their every day routine.

The job description is this: Someone should be ever vigilant to the online reputation and promotion of your product. This means they run the Twitter account and they update the Facebook page. But just as important, they visit sites and forums where their product, service or industry is discussed and they interject themselves in the online conversation.

Honestly, honesty is key. If you build guitars and your face person masquerades in guitarist website forums as Joe Blow guitar enthusiast, constantly deriding the competition while extolling the virtues of your product, he'll soon be snuffed out and exposed. The whole of any community is almost always smarter than any individual. You'll do your company more damage than benefit if you're caught tampering with the unbiased conversation in these places. Better that your face person clearly identifies his or her company affiliation while offering truthful tips while countering possibly bad information that is deemed harmful AND untrue.

## In Conclusion

So that's it. We hope that this free email marketing manual makes you better, safer and more effective in your email marketing. No doubt the industry will evolve because it has been since we've started in this business. The great news is that it's getting better and easier for you.

And though it may sound cliché, this certainly rings true: All this technology is greatest when used responsibly. Because it's so easy to send out millions of emails, make sure you do it right so that we all can continue the privilege of email marketing

to those customers who enjoy this highly-interactive, super effective means of business communication.

## ABOUT BENCHMARK EMAIL

Take powerful features by the dozen, sophisticated list management, hundreds of email templates, ultra-precise reports and dazzling email and video email. Now, package all that together for an extremely affordable price. Sound appealing? That's us.

There's a reason – or 100 – that more than 73,000 users trust us with their email marketing campaigns. With a second-to none feature set, headache-free tools that make every campaign a snap and extremely reasonable price plans, we're the email marketing service for businesses of all shapes and sizes.

At Benchmark, we're more than email marketing experts, we're innovators. Our main aim is to perfect our email marketing service, but we also follow social networking, search engine optimization (SEO) and Web 2.0 just so our 100% Web-based software is completely compatible with the ever-changing Internet world.

No other service gives you this robust, standard range of features ... for FREE! With our Free List Plan 2,000 you can have up to 2,000 contacts and send up to 14,000 emails per month. Start today at [www.benchmarkemail.com/register](http://www.benchmarkemail.com/register).

# CONTACT US

We welcome your feedback and would love to talk with you about your email marketing needs. Please contact us at the addresses below.

**Website:** <http://www.benchmarkemail.com/>

**Call:** 800.430.4095 (USA) or 562.252.3789 (INT)

**Email:** [sales@benchmarkemail.com](mailto:sales@benchmarkemail.com)