



... How To Get Better

User Feedback

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HOW TO GET BETTER USER FEEDBACK

► Take the Initiative

As an email marketer, or any business person for that matter, the level of success one enjoys is largely dependent on the actions of the user base. The power of the relationship continues to shift to the consumer, meaning the people reading the messages, browsing the websites, and making the purchases are calling more of the shots. With the landscape evolving, taking the initiative to find out what your audience wants is more important than ever.

Obtaining feedback from your customers and prospects can help you stay both sharp and a step ahead of the competition. Actually getting it can be like pulling teeth from a particularly ornery hippopotamus, but it is not an impossible feat.

In this guide, you will learn how to gather the feedback and responses necessary to have lasting success with your [email marketing](#).

► Getting Your Message through the Door

So you have identified your target audience, assembled a list of contacts, and invested in an affordable [email marketing solution](#) to make it all happen. What's next? Actually getting your message to the subscriber and convincing them to open it. You might not picture this as too tough a task considering that you're marketing to people who willingly joined your list, but seeing that open rates are far from 100%, (it's actually less than 20% according to eMarketer), it is safe to assume that opens are something several email marketers struggle with.

Obtaining feedback starts with getting your delivered messages opened, a rate that can be improved by:

- **Making Sure They Recognize You** – Very few recipients will open your message if they cannot quickly and easily identify who is sending it. The “From” name of your email should clearly show that the message is either coming from your company or you personally.
- **Creating Compelling Subject Lines** – A subject line can cause a recipient to want to know more and open a message or click the delete button and send it to the trash. Needless to say, being able to craft yours with precision is huge. A good subject line will not only provide a summary of what your message is all about but also help it stand out in a crowded inbox.

- **Maximizing the Preview Pane** – The preview pane is a valuable piece of real estate that gives the recipient a sneak peek at your message. However, if the peek you provide does not grab them right away, the chances of them opening and reading your message are slim. Use your preview pane text as a call to action that compels the recipient to open your email.
- **Sending at the Right Time** – If you are noticing that your open rates are lower than the current industry average, it could be a sign that your email is arriving at the wrong time. Most statistics you run across declare the middle of the week works best, but for you it all depends on your audience.
- **Following Up in Timely Fashion** – You can boost your open rates by simply making sure you follow up in a timely manner. This applies to the confirmation you send after someone signs up, the email that welcomes the new subscriber to your mailing list, and the message that lets the customer know when to expect their order.

Never underestimate the importance of the research required to find the ideal delivery date. It takes time, patience, and planning. Without this action, there is no reading, no clicking, no page browsing – nothing.

► Crafting Content that Converts

Now that we have covered a few ways to encourage opens and boost your rates, let's take a look at how you can create content that results in the constructive feedback you want. From the copy that piques the reader's interest to the offer that closes the deal, content rules all and should be a trigger that gets your users to respond.

There are a variety of ways to create more effective content, but for now we will focus on these three:

1. **Be as Relevant as Possible** – As it relates to email and [online marketing](#) in general, the importance of relevant content can't be stressed enough. More than ever, consumers are scanning their inbox for content that benefits them specifically. They want to be targeted as individuals, not as just another one of the masses. More on how you can do this coming up.
2. **Keep Fresh Content on Hand** – Delivering quality content all the time is one of the most challenging aspects of email marketing. It can be a tough nut to crack, but it comes with the territory so you must be able to get a handle on it. Since consistently churning out completely new content is even harder, you may need to up the ante on creativity in order to keep your audience satisfied. For example, if you don't have time to come up with something new, you could introduce readers to aspects of your products, services, or business that they may not be familiar with. As long as it's relevant and useful, it can serve as suitable fodder for your [email campaigns](#).
3. **Encourage Sharing** – Users may respond to your content in a variety of ways, and sharing is among the most beneficial today. In fact, sharing has been instrumental in the overwhelming success of Facebook and the entire social web. A single post published on Twitter or an article streamed through a content discovery site like Digg can easily reach thousands of people. For an email marketer, implementing [social sharing buttons](#) and asking subscribers to share can be encouraging, but providing valuable content they want to share is even more convincing.

A big part of email marketing is providing content that prompts interaction and builds relationships. These are great objectives to strive for as the results for your business could be increased engagement, loyalty, and sales. In short, deliver great content and users will be more willing to perform the actions you want them to take.

► Prompting Response through Engagement

When combing the web to school yourself on the fine aspects of email marketing, you will find much regarding how to attract new subscribers and build your list but not nearly enough on how to keep those users interested and engaged once you get them. These are goals your polls and surveys can strive to achieve.

The game of engagement is ongoing, but here are some things you can do to keep users in tune with your content:

Deploy Timely Promotions - Email marketing is suited to support promotions of all sorts. However, whether it is holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, or other occasions that hold special meaning, the timeliness of your promotions is crucial. You can use predefined triggers and scheduled [autoresponders](#) to keep your campaigns flowing in a timely manner.

Send Out Invitations – Email invitations are great for engaging subscribers and getting them to take specific actions. What type of events can your company organize to generate relevant traffic? If the answer is none, leveraging this concept to invite your audience to a huge sale promising irresistible savings can be just as effective.

Get Your Networking On – Engaging in mutually beneficial partnerships can help you make an impact beyond the inbox. Would partners be willing to advertise your products? Are you doing all you can to promote services for your affiliate partners? Harness the power of networking and use it to grow stronger together.

► Getting to Know Your Users through Polls and Surveys

Most business owners know exactly how their customers feel regarding the products, services, and the brand itself. Or so they believe. If you are not sure what your audience thinks about what you're doing, it's about time to take the necessary steps to find out. User feedback is invaluable, and without a reliable way to capture it, you could be missing out on opportunities to increase retention and take your business to the next level.

Even though email is a tool that makes it easy for subscribers to reach out whenever they have something to say, not all take advantage of this luxury, and many only use it to give praise. It is similar to how we are quick and eager to compliment a company for providing a great service but often don't even bother to respond when they fail to live up to expectations. Don't assume that everything is fine and dandy just because your customers aren't complaining. You want the good and the bad, and polls and surveys are viable methods for obtaining it.

There are many types of polls and surveys an email marketer can use to gather feedback. You have your basic methods that are used to learn more about aspects such as customer satisfaction, and more advanced tactics that help you measure awareness and identify advocates. Regardless of which approach you take, keep in mind that a good poll or survey should consist of the following:

A Well Defined Objective – You should clearly define exactly what you want to know before making an attempt to gather feedback from your users. Outline your objective and use it as the basis for designing your questionnaire.

Sensible Questions – This is your opportunity to gain valuable information. Don't waste it by asking your audience questions you already know the answers to. Ask questions that will enable you to gain new insights and make users more likely to participate.

A Comprehensive Format – What survey format will you use to obtain feedback? Is it open ended questions, closed-ended, or a multiple choice format? It is entirely up to you. The right choice will be the one that gets you the best possible feedback, so experiment.

A Solid Structure – Similar to a novel or movie, a good survey has a beginning, middle and end. How can you use this information? Start off with the easiest questions to encourage participation, get more specific in the middle, and close with questions that make your audience have to think.

Clarity – Do you want to know how your customers feel about a new product, or their thoughts on how the marketplace is changing? It could be both, but the last thing you want to do is ask questions that confuse the respondent. Keep your polls and surveys crystal clear and focused on the topic at hand.

Relevance – Is your entire list equipped to answer your survey questions? Do those questions hold the same meaning for everyone? If you are not sure, it may be best to create questionnaires for different segments of your list.

The value of user feedback is immeasurable, yet the amount of feedback, the who, what, when, where and how, is simply a matter of consulting your [email metrics](#). It is these responses that can help you determine which products to include in the next launch or even take your business in new directions. Consumers love to know that their opinions matter and if you make the process convenient they will be delighted to give it. When gathering feedback from your audience, make sure you are prepared to listen and act on the responses.

► Tests, Measurements and Psychographic Segments

It doesn't matter if you sell accessories for portable media players or a collection of eBooks you wrote yourself, the best way to build any business is around what its audience wants. This on-demand world we live in has been designed to allow the consumer to get what they want when they want it. If you are not willing to provide it, you better believe that the competitor beside you is ready to step in and deliver. [Email polls and surveys](#) are great for getting feedback, but nothing reveals what your users want like actual results. You can get those results by testing every campaign.

Testing is something you should have a separate plan for, one that not only examines how your message looks in different browsers and mail clients, but how different aspects of your campaigns are likely to be received. This is insight you can gain through basic A/B testing. Also known as split testing, these experiments should be run to get a feel for how your audience will respond to your subject lines, content, frequency, and other campaign elements. A/B testing is one of the most reliable ways to ensure that your campaigns are precisely focused before sending them out to your entire list.

Another way to get access to results is by having a look at the metrics in your analytics reports. This information is just as important as test results because it indicates how you are performing, providing insight into your successes and failures. While the standard metrics are definitely important, a good measuring strategy goes beyond analyzing opens, clicks, and conversions. It also involves factoring in the unsubscribes, forwarded emails, and ROI - one of the most important metrics of all. You have to take a look at the whole picture in order to get an accurate view of your results.

Testing and measuring are both good for getting the results that indicate what the user base truly wants. Both can also help you set up psychographic segments for targeting your list based on those individual desires and preferences. For example, if only one of your test groups responds well to a new content offering, you could create a segment consisting of just those users based on the interest they share. If your reports are showing that a group of subscribers haven't opened your message in the last three months, they would make a fitting segment for the re-engagement program you launch before removing all disengaged users from your master list.

[Psychographic segmentation](#) is all about basing your targeting strategy on variables such as interests, lifestyle, and behavioral patterns. These variables offer insight into the psyche of the user and can help the marketer determine how segments will respond to certain content. With your segments in tow, you can devise a new marketing strategy, or retool an existing strategy to target your audience accordingly.

► Molding User Expectations

Upon first joining your list, subscribers will come in with their own expectation of your offerings and brand. However, these are expectations that can be managed by letting them know what to expect from the very beginning. Fill them in on the ordering process, your billing practices, and how long it takes to receive an order. Once they have a clear understanding of what to expect, they will be less likely to contact you with concerns or complaints.

Telling your audience what to expect may seem like a risky endeavor in times where consumers have more of the control, but it is actually the most reliable way to deliver on your brand promise. If want good results and better feedback, you

must have the utmost confidence in your business and the products or services it sells. If you can't stand behind your business then you're in the wrong game no matter what it is you're promoting.

Encourage your customers or subscribers to transcend from consumer to user, give them a reason to utilize their greater control over the marketing process. If you can deliver on the promise of flexibility and attentiveness that online marketing demands, recipients will reward you with the feedback you need to thrive. Synergy is a word that gets tossed around lightly in advertising, but year after year its use reverberates with stronger clarity. Engagement is fundamental to online success but you do not need to overdo it. Provide the user with the services and products you've promised and remain available for their future questions or upgrades. Interact and react hospitably and that alone will earn the feedback you've been looking for.

► 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 just \$9.95 a month to start. Find out for yourself by enrolling in our free, 30 day trial at www.benchmarkemail.com/register.

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