



Metrics: Tracking & Reporting with Benchmark Email

Track and React: How to Use Email Metrics Effectively

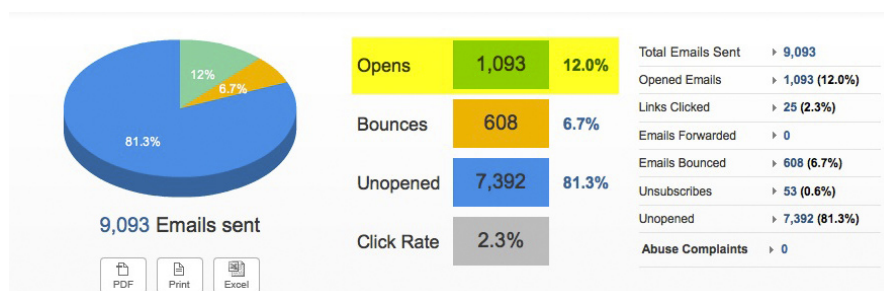
One of the strongest arguments for email marketing centers on its ability to provide detailed information on your campaign's performance. This data is powerful in the sense that it allows you to track the subscriber experience from the moment they sign up to the moment they make a purchase and beyond. However, the tremendous amount of data you have at your disposal can be overwhelming.

Coupling email's great possibilities with an eye to the user experience, Benchmark Email provides a comprehensive suite of tracking and reporting tools that offers a convenient way to measure and shape the success of your [email marketing campaigns](#). And since we also understand how challenging it can be to stay on top of all the data, this report will help you to identify and effectively use its most important metrics.

Meet Our Metrics

What separates Benchmark Email from many other email service providers (ESPs) is that we stock your reports with real-time analytics. No need to wait to view the results of your campaigns. Simply log in and track them as they occur. These reports provide statistics in the form of both percentages and raw numbers, giving you a complete snapshot of [email campaign](#) results so you know exactly where you stand in terms of performance.

Opened Emails



Getting your message to the inbox is only the beginning of the battle. Actually getting that message opened and read is where the engagement takes place. Opened Emails is a basic metric that tells you what percentage of your delivered emails were opened. [Email marketers](#) across the board are having a tough time

keeping this percentage respectable. According to eMarketer, the average open rate in the industry is 19.1%. If your campaigns are hitting below this, or more importantly, if they are not hitting your personal goal, it may be time to figure out what needs to be done to boost that percentage.

Some aspects of email marketing are beyond your control, but open rate will not always be one of them. Several steps can be taken to improve that percentage. Try the following:

- Send from a recognizable “From” name.
- Make your subject lines more compelling.
- Send less or more frequently.

Improving this metric is simple – get the recipient to bite. The specific actions you need to take depend on your audience, and real improvement requires testing. Experiment with different subject lines on different segments or scale back frequency for your less engaged subscribers. Test to find what approach is encouraging or discouraging opens. When you get the results, go back and test some more.

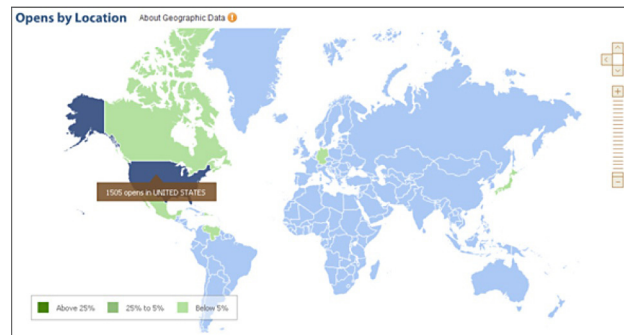
While [open rate](#) is indeed important, it is not the best way to gauge campaign performance. The metric is tracked by the HTML image tag included in your message, and for this reason, it can be affected by a range of variables that throw off its accuracy. For example, you may have subscribers with the preview window enabled in their email client, which could trigger an open even if they didn’t open or read the message. Similarly, some subscribers may have image viewing turned off, which could prevent opens from being tallied even though they opened and read the text in the message.

The rate for opened emails will never be 100% accurate, but it is useful for comparing multiple campaigns and improving your email marketing efforts in general.

Opens by Location

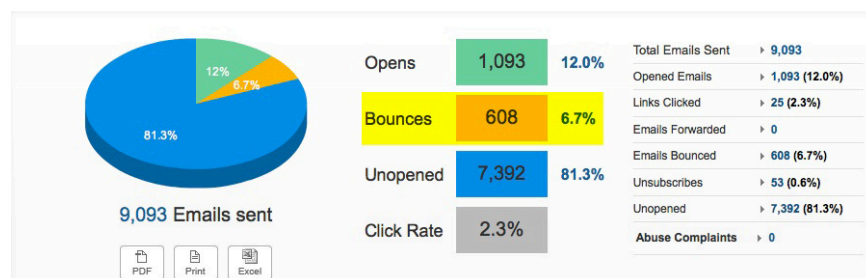
This is one of Benchmark Email’s more unique metrics. With [Opens by Location](#), you can view a geographic map that allows you to zoom in to see exactly where in the world your messages are being opened. This particular feature is ideal for email campaigns with a strong regional focus as it lets you track opens by country and state. It is a great metric to track if you want to know where the bulk of your

customers are located or improve your marketing efforts in certain locations.



Bounced Emails

The bounced email represents one of those metrics you can't afford to neglect. In fact, it plays such a huge role in the overall quality of your list that regularly tracking it is considered essential to [email marketing best practices](#). Commit to monitoring your bounce rate after each and every campaign. If you do not, you will likely continue to send mail to invalid email addresses, wasting your efforts and potentially tarnishing your reputation as a sender.



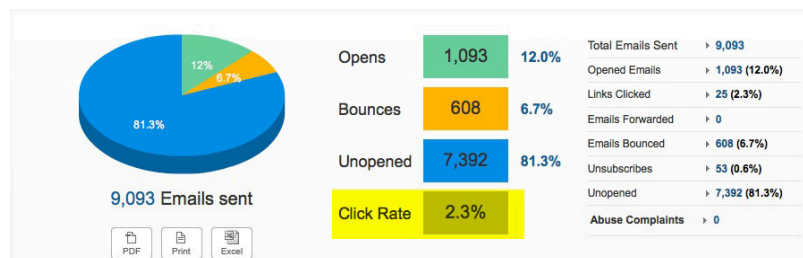
An efficient reporting system will divide bounced emails into two categories: hard and soft bounces. While a hard bounce is classified as a permanent failure and a soft bounce is considered temporary according to Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP), the definitions of these two types of bounces are not always as cut and dry as they seem. For instance, a full inbox is one of the common causes of soft bounces. However, some internet service providers (ISPs) have been known to consider sending mail to a full inbox a permanent failure. With others, a temporary failure could become permanent if you do not reduce complaints or fail to address your bounces.

Though bounced emails are often confused in terms of their definition, distinguishing them is no less important. When analyzing your metrics, you must be able to determine whether it is safe to send a failed email again, and when it is

time stop sending and start paring your house list. The worst thing you can do is nothing. Failing to address your bounces is the easiest way to fall into the spam traps purposely set up to block unwanted mail from their servers.

Click Rate

The click or [click-through rate](#) is another metric that needs to be monitored on a consistent basis. It is a metric that tells you the percentage and number of times the links in your email have been clicked. This measurement is extremely important because it indicates whether or not the recipient is taking action. Click rates tend to be low throughout the industry, and this is mainly because getting recipients to interact with your message can be a tough sell. This is why it is so essential to continually provide your subscribers with engaging, valuable content.



So how do you get your click rate looking more respectable? Here are some ideas:

- [Embed video content in your email.](#)
- Link to video content on your website.
- Link to interesting content on a popular social network.
- Avoid predictability. Update links and provide new links regularly.

There are many ways to encourage your subscribers to click-through: a link to a helpful how-to article, a generous discount on your website, a free report. The overall goal is piquing the subscribers' interests to the point where they take the action you want them to take.

When measuring the number of unique clicks against the number of opened emails, the click rate is arguably the more important metric. A click-through makes it clear you have accomplished your ultimate goal, second in significance only to your conversion rate. If you want to boost your responses, sales, and ROI, you must increase your clicks.

Click Performance

Click Performance

URL	Total Clicks
http://surveys.benchmarkemail.com/Survey/Start?id=37110&s=47237	16
http://twitter.com/benchmarkemail	16
http://www.benchmarkemail.com/about-benchmark-email/Email-Blog	15

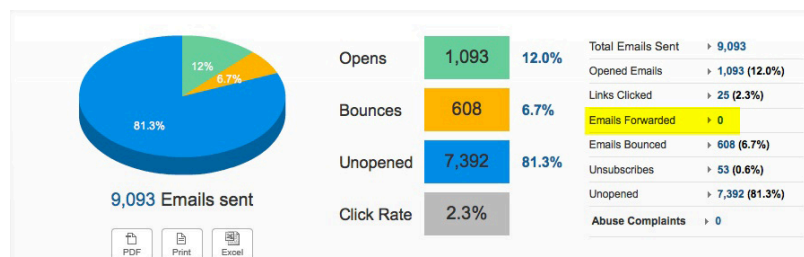
Benchmark Email gives you the ability to track and analyze beyond the click with a measurement aptly called Click Performance. This particular metric gives you a view of all the links clicked in your email in addition to the total number of clicks per link. Measuring click performance often comes in handy when trying to determine the best place to position your links and the value of specific links.

For example, if you have a link that describes the features and benefits of a product towards the bottom of your message, a low click performance rate could be a sign that it should be placed somewhere in the first couple of lines. If the link for a sales offer is positioned in the first paragraph, a low number could mean it needs to be closer to your primary call to action. On a similar note, if the link to an affiliate product is generating little to no clicks, that is probably a sign that subscribers are not interested in supporting your affiliate, and the link should be removed.

By analyzing your click performance, you can figure out where your links need to be and which links you should be focusing on in order to provoke the actions you desire.

Emails Forwarded

Greek playwright Euripides said “leave no stone unturned” long before we had the luxury to engage our target audiences through [email marketing](#). This famous quote just happens to represent the same approach Benchmark Email takes to measuring your email campaigns.

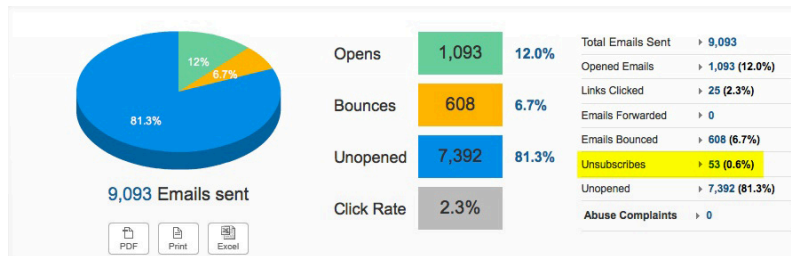


You can count on reports that provide you with the basic measurements, advanced

analytics, and even afterthoughts such as the rate of emails forwarded. This is simply a metric that tells you the total percentage or number of your messages that have been forwarded by a recipient. Don't underestimate its power. This metric can indicate the viral ability of your emails and helps you pinpoint your advocates.

If you notice that your forward rate is low, don't be alarmed. These rates tend to be low across all [email campaigns](#) for all marketers. However, they are still very important for the simple fact that they can be indicative of your campaign's success. Even if only a few subscribers forward your message, it is often a good sign that your content is doing its job of engaging and compelling others to share.

Unsubscribes



This is one metric that needs no introduction. It is the measurement several email marketers have come to loathe even looking at. Get used to dealing with it because no matter how valuable your content is or dead-on you are with your targeting efforts, there will always be subscribers who depart and choose to opt-out out of your mailings. Common causes for this include:

- Irrelevant content
- Frequency (too much or too little)
- General loss of interest

Every email marketer goes through the frustration and confusion that unsubscribes engender. The goal is to keep this rate as low as possible. A disengaged subscriber is one step away from unsubscribing. It is your job to stop that from happening.

Here are some simple things you can do to maintain low unsubscribe rates:

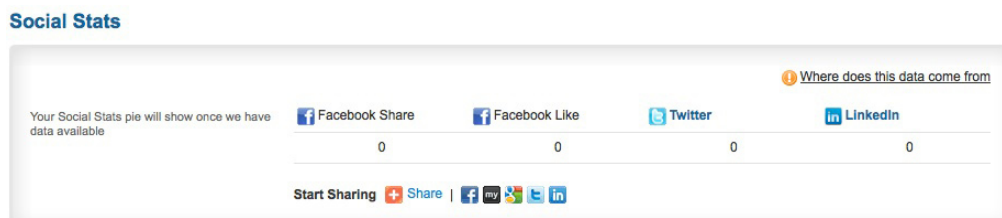
- **Be Relevant** – The people on your list have signed up for a reason – to get content that is somehow relevant to their needs, desires, and interests. Stray from the track of relevance just a little bit and there is a good chance you will see your number of unsubscribes increase. To keep this metric down, deliver

the relevant content that compelled your subscribers to sign up in the first place.

- **Be Valuable** – Your customers and prospects are a lot like you. They are regular people up to their necks in email messages and spam. Very few of them have time to read through fluff just to get to the good stuff. Don't waste their time. Give them the valuable content they crave by being as brief and to the point as possible. Be the credible authority they expect to provide sound advice, great bargains, or timely updates. Do this and unsubscribing will be the last thing on their minds.
- **Converse, Don't Sell** – Although [email marketing](#) is a great sales tool, being overly aggressive in your marketing can ruin whatever opportunities you have to promote your products or services. This is not to say that you cannot entice your audience with sales offers, but just know that soft sales tend to be far more effective in this arena. Also know that every message does not have to be designed to generate a sale. By providing content that makes the reader want to know more, you can lure them away from the inbox and let your website do all the selling.

Social Stats

Another Benchmark Email reporting feature that is proving more useful for marketers is a metric that allows you to track your social email efforts. Whether you believe social media is the next big thing in marketing or not, this channel is thriving and provides a continuous, easy way for you to connect with your users. Using the buttons that allow subscribers to share your content from the inbox, and custom FBML (Facebook Markup Language) applications for your fan page, are just two examples of how you can give your email campaigns life in the [social media](#) channel.

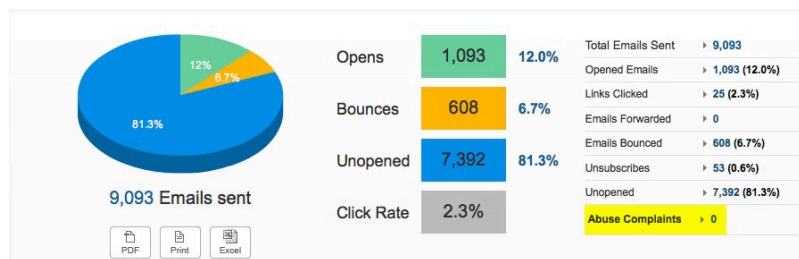


Some email marketers avoid [social media integration](#) because they don't have the time or don't see the value in it for their business. Others avoid it because they have no idea how they will measure their impact. Benchmark Email makes it

incredibly easy with social stats, a feature that gives you the ability to track how your campaigns are performing on the most popular social networks. It allows you to see how many times your campaigns have been shared on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. You can also track the number of Facebook likes your campaigns have received. If you are serious about making these two channels work together for your business, tracking social stats will undoubtedly be critical to your integrated marketing strategy.

Abuse Complaints

The final metric we will discuss is abuse complaints. Though it is not a traditional measurement in the sense of opens or clicks, it does reveal some rather vital information you need to be aware of. Abuse complaints are essentially spam complaints that start at the recipient's inbox and then end up routed to Benchmark Email.



Let's say you send your [email newsletter](#) to a subscriber who hasn't opened any of your messages in the last six months, and for whatever reason, they decide to mark that message as spam. Once this happens, that action is sent to the recipient's ISP, who then sends us a message notifying us of the complaint. When you accumulate too many of these complaints, with the actual number being at the discretion of the ISP and varying by industry, you could find yourself on a blacklist that prevents your messages from getting through to anyone on that particular mail server.

So how does Benchmark react to this? Well, after you send us all the necessary information (IP-stamped subscriptions or paper signups) and our evaluation does indeed show that you are a legitimate marketer who was wrongly accused of sending spam or inadvertently triggered a filter, there is nothing to worry about. On the other hand, if you are constantly sending mail to people who have expressed that they no longer wish to be on your list, or you are blatantly spamming, these actions will result in the cancellation of your account.

Even some of the best email marketers receive spam abuse complaints, yet just like

your unsubscribes, you want to make sure you keep this rate as low as possible. This is not only critical for being able to continue with your email marketing efforts, but also keeping your marketing costs to a minimum. When you focus solely on the subscribers who want to receive your messages, you will dramatically reduce those complaints and enjoy a higher return on your investment in the process.

How Do You View Your Metrics?

In December of last year, MarketingSherpa published a survey that uncovered some very interesting details about how [email marketers](#) are using their metrics. According to the report, 92% of marketers see the click-through rate as the most effective way to measure their success. Open rates came in second at 90% followed by delivery rates at 81%. What we found noteworthy is that only 36% of marketers use “response by list segment” as an important measure of success, a factor that may indicate they do not understand the value of this particular metric, or do not know how to measure it correctly.

The MarketingSherpa report goes on to demonstrate how email marketers are increasingly using their reports to measure performance by tracking metrics that range from opens to revenue per email.

While your reports can throw a lot of data at you, the issue is not too much information but rather too little focus on the metrics that have specific importance to your business, which according to our observation of MarketingSherpa’s recent data, appears to be a common mistake made by marketers. When you know which areas to pay attention to and how to improve them, you have essentially unlocked the answer to improving the performance of your campaigns. Benchmark Email is here with the key.

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.

Contact Benchmark Email

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

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