Email marketing Implementation Guide

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These materials are most effective when used in association with the book Digital Marketing Strategy

DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

Email marketing Implementation Guide

This guide is designed to give you a step by step guide to implementing your email strategy.

Other guides are available for other digital marketing channels. To best understand how this fits into your broader strategy see the book Digital Marketing Strategy by Simon Kingsnorth.

How it works

The guide is designed to be as easy to use as possible. Each guide is broken down into simple, key steps to take to ensure your strategy is as effectively and smoothly implemented as possible. So less of this chat and let's get to the detail.

1 Consider your targeting

The first step in email marketing is determining the market you wish to target and what sort of messaging you would like to target them with. In tandem with contentisdatabase quality. A killer campaign is of no use if it doesn't reach interested people or falls afoul of spam regulations. To boost your list, you may need to purchase data sets, but your own data is always more powerful.

A robust data collection strategy can include maximising sign-ups when selling products, promoting a newsletter, creating gated content on your website or collecting email addresses at events. Targeting happens at the message level as well. Understanding the preferences of your audience makes for much stronger results, lower unsubscribes and minimal brand damage.

2 Understand effective timing

Timing can be simply working out the optimal day of the week or time of day to send your email, and the frequency – once a day, week, month. It's always a balancing act between communicating often enough to be remembered, but not so often that you're annoying or worse –viewed as spam. Timing and frequency also need to take into consideration the strategy for other communication channels. AI-powered send-time optimization can automate delivery and customise content based on user behavior. Once a week might

be enough for a newsletter but could feel stifling if the prospect is also hearing from you frequently on social media or other platforms. What stage the prospect is on their buying journey is also a factor. Things like an automated up-sell message sent to a customer who has just made a complaint does more harm than good.

3 Effective template design

The first consideration with template design is making sure it functions and is visually appealing on all device formats. AI-enabled design optimization, subject line creation and predictive analysis can help guide layout decisions. Mobile email accounts for around half of all email opens on average. Other factors include making sure the visual hierarchy or structure makes sense, so the reader doesn't have to work very hard to access the information. A clear call to action is vital. The reader should be able to work out what they are supposed to do immediately.

Copy shouldn't be too long or wandering. Visuals are massively important and the images and colour palette need to be compelling and representative of your brand.

4 Implement a test plan

As with any other digital channel, test-and-learn principles are a fundamental part of email marketing. A/B testing is the simplest way to test factors like time and day, imagery, subject line and button colour and placement. For best results, determine what variables you're going to test and what metrics you need to capture and make sure the analytics and tags to do that are in place before the campaign begins.

5 Consider your tone

Dynamic content is an excellent opportunity to personalize communications. Once individual preferences are known and you are confident your database is in good shape, it is possible to turn a generic message personal with interests, account activity and behaviour information. Content can be based on what users have read, bought or ignored using integrated CRM and website behavior.

Subject lines are another key area of content and one that tests your copywriting skills to the fullest. It's tempting to be clever and try to trick the reader into opening the email. This is a bad idea. Headlines should be short, actionable, enticing, and localized where possible. Subject lines can now be tested using AI for sentiment and response behavior as well as open rates.

Creating a sense of urgency is a classical direct marketing tactic, and while it does work, it must be rationed. Once a reader knows a sale ending in 12 hours always gets extended over the weekend, they're less inclined to take immediate advantage.

6 Understand the regulations

The regulations around privacy and data protection are manifold and constantly changing. The General Data Protection Regulation, introduced in Europe in 2018, has been a game-changer for email marketing. While it's tempting to ignore it and hope for the best, this is a strategy sure to backfire. If you don't have internal data protection or legal colleagues who can help you keep up with the changes, then invest in regular external training courses. With third-party cookies being phased out, email marketers must prioritize direct user data collection and consent.

7 Review the platforms

It can be difficult to decide which email service provider (ESP) is the best fit for your business. There are many available, each with a variety of similar functions and some standout ones. Some (Mailchimp) concentrate on the small business market while others, like Salesforce, Adobe, Oracle, Marketo and Pure360, offer integrated, enterprise level solutions.

Factors to consider include CRM integration potential and timelines, pricing, ease of use, landing page optimisation, data protection, dynamic content functionality, data management and segmentation, and cloud or on-premise data storage. Many platforms now include AI and automation features as well as the ability to manage multiple trigger points to streamline communications.

Integrated solutions do a lot of the heavy lifting via automation, which makes it both possible and practically effortless to send emails based on how users interact with your site. Consuming specific content can trigger content containing a case study or offer. Inactive users might get an email containing a discount code.

8 Measuring success

Most email tools can tell you how many emails have been sent, how many were delivered, opened or bounced back, the number of clicks, the number of unsubscribes and overall list growth over time. More complex metrics include open-to-click rate – what percentage of opens resulted in a click; what percentage actually completed the desired action (purchase, video view, sign up) and cost per X, where X is conversion, click, sign-up, lead or any other variable.

There are two types of bounceback. A hard bounce, when an email no longer exists or is for some reason unreachable, is worrisome because it means your list is not up to date. A soft bounce is a problem on the customer end – their mailbox is full or the server was down. A few of these are ok, but if the percentage creeps up, it's time to cleanse your data.

To optimize future campaigns, use real-time dashboards for fast decision-making and implement performance modelling to identify high-ROI content themes. The goal is not only to measure what happened, but to anticipate what will happen next, and use those insights to refine your strategy continuously.