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Growing, Managing and Updating Your Client Email List

Best Practices Handbook



Introduction

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Everyone knows how central email is to conducting business today – how in the world did we live without it?

Since it's so engrained in our work lives, some take for granted that they are following best practices in using email to market to clients and prospects.

However, the world of email marketing is quite complex today as:

- Spammers continue to use sophisticated techniques to send their garbage*, making it more challenging for legitimate businesses to send legitimate messages
- Consumers are more hesitant to offer their email addresses or subscribe to promotional emails
- The number of email addresses “owned” per individual continues to grow and it is more and more difficult to keep up with email address switching behavior
- Delivery rules become more and more complex

This handbook is intended to give Vacation.com members current industry best practices in the most critical areas of email marketing – improvements you can start implementing today to bring more business in the door.



* In an April 2009 study Google estimated that 94% of emails sent are classified as “spam”

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Contents

- List Growth
- List Management
- Deliverability
- Top Ten Things to Do Now

Resource Appendix

- Email Terminology
- Email Service Providers
- List Update Options
- CAN-SPAM Legislation
- Email Design and Content





About the Appendix

The Appendix contains resources to help meet a number of needs:

- The Email Terminology dictionary defines terms you might see referenced here that you are not familiar with. Check for a definition in this section.
- If you have 500 or more client email addresses, you should consider using an Email Service Provider (ESP). We've listed three here that meet the needs of most small businesses at a reasonable cost.
- If you have many undeliverable email addresses and/or are missing email addresses for many clients, you might want to test one of the List Update Options.
- Email blasts are regulated by the Federal CAN-SPAM Act, which is summarized there.
- An overview of Email Design, Deliverability and Measurement are also located in the Appendix.



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List Growth



List Growth

A Simple Equation

List Growth = People In – People Out

To keep a list growing and to maintain a healthy sized list you must manage to maximize the number of new subscribers and minimize attrition of those who leave your list.

You have more to contend with than just the number of unsubscribes, as many as one in every three addresses will go bad in the course of a year.

As you are concentrating on filling from the top, don't forget about the hole in your bucket!

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List Growth

Factors of List Size

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List growth is affected by a variety of factors

- **Some are external and out of your control**
 - Slowing subscriber base growth
 - Today 55% of online households receive permission-based email
 - Consumer frustration with cluttered inboxes and email overload
 - More and more marketers sending out email to their consumer bases – because they find it the most cost effective way to generate revenue
- **Others can be controlled by your actions**
 - How smartly do you attract newcomers?
 - How diligently do you maintain your list?
 - How do you persuade subscribers to remain engaged with you?



List Growth

Suggested Techniques

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If you have collected email addresses for less than 50% of your client and active inquiry names, you are behind the curve and need to quickly implement one or more of the following list growth techniques:

- **Call center**
 - Agent scripts include requests for email addresses
- **Co-registration**
 - Subscription form placed on partner web sites
- **Events/shows**
 - Subscription provided via forms, kiosks, or verbal registry at shows or events
- **In-office registration**
 - Subscriptions solicited by agency personnel, through kiosks, or paper forms



List Growth

Suggested Techniques

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- **Online marketing/search**
 - Online marketing campaigns and search marketing seek to drive visitors to subscription forms located on agency websites
- **Viral marketing**
 - Emails and social media links (e.g. Facebook) sent from consumer to consumer includes a subscription link
- **Web site registration**
 - Sign-Up Form placed prominently throughout web site for email subscription

- **NOT RECOMMENDED: The following techniques are most often not cost effective, entail significant “blacklisting” risk and not recommended**
 - **List appends:** Third party services add email addresses to existing customer data
 - **List rental/purchase:** Mailings sent to rented lists request recipients subscribe



List Growth

Key Considerations

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- **Consider the following when thinking about growing your list and the audience you are addressing:**
 - Who do I want on my list?
 - Where do I find them – or they me?
 - What are their needs?
 - What value do I provide?
 - When and how do I make contact?
 - How do I treat them?
 - How do I engage and keep them ?



List Growth

Tips for List Growth

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- **Offer a subscription mechanism on your home page and in the same place EVERY page of your agency's website**
 - The subscription mechanism should be prominently placed and visually differentiated from the rest of the content on the site
- **Solidify a new email relationship with a well-crafted automated confirmation message**
- **Track and analyze what sources best attract new subscribers and best produce long-term subscribers and modify your programs accordingly**
- **Provide an enticing and relevant incentive to subscribe**
 - Contests & sweepstakes work best with existing customers
 - Prize needs to be relevant to the relationship
 - Discounts & Sales notifications can be an effective subscription motivator
 - News / notification updates: good strategy for both retention and acquisition
- **Clearly state the value proposition/benefits for signing up:**
 - Subscription offers with no stated benefits generally result in smaller lists
 - *Good Benefit Statements: "Sign up to receive weekly specials via email" OR "Be the first to know exclusive news and offers"*



List Growth

Tips for Phone Sign-Ups

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- **Create an agent script to capture (and/or confirm) new or existing email addresses and place reminders near their phones to prompt its use**
 - Read the email address back to the customer letter by letter to ensure the email address has been captured correctly
 - Notify the customer they will receive a confirmation message via email that they have been added to the list or that their information has been updated
 - Ask the customer to add your agency's "from address" for the email confirmation they will receive to their address book or safe sender's list. This prevents it from being rejected by their email provider and keeps it out of their "junk" email inbox
 - You can find instructions on how to add an email address to a safe sender list for various ISPs and Inbox providers at:
<http://content.silverpop.com/whitelist/>
 - Once the email address is entered into the agents' computer, send the client an immediate opt-in confirmation via an automated welcome message or "one-off" confirmation email



List Growth

Confirmation Message

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- **Confirmation messages are the recipients' first glimpse into your email relationship**
- **New subscribers are primed to receive your first message and are engaged with your brand**
- **Take advantage and make a great first impression by setting some expectations:**
 - **Expectations** – *“Will they let me know what happens next?”*
 - **Timing** – *“How long till they send me something?”*
 - **Personal** – *“Will they care enough to recognize me”*
 - **Informative** – *“Will they tell me what I need to know about...”*
 - **Relevance** – *“Will they keep my interest or bore me with housekeeping?”*
- **Well-crafted confirmation message fosters the beginning of the relationship**
 - Put thought into the design and avoid a dry, impersonal message
 - Provide a surprise reward of some sort (\$xx off your next trip)



List Growth

Industry Best Practices Permission Levels

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Opt-Out	Recipients added without clear permission: Pre-checked box or added without the recipient's knowledge	<u>Not Recommended</u> Brand Damage & Deliverability Problems
Opt-In	Recipient actively requests subscription	<u>Minimum Level</u> Some deliverability issues
Confirmed Opt-In	Recipient actively requests subscription and receives an immediate confirmation message	<u>Best Practice</u> Good balance between deliverability and marketing goals
Double Opt-In	Recipient actively requests subscription then receives an email which they <u>must</u> respond to before subscription is active	<u>Good Practice</u> Excellent deliverability but it will limit your list growth rate



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List Management



List Management

Tips for Keeping Subscribers

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- **Provide subscribers a change of address option that allows them to change their email address without having to re-register**
 - People change email addresses frequently due to
 - Changing jobs every few years
 - Changing ISPs or inbox providers
 - Avoiding inboxes that collect too much spam
- **Keep your content timely, fresh and relevant**
 - Bored subscribers have a tendency to tune out, unsubscribe or even worse, report your messages as spam
 - Keep your content relevant by allowing the subscriber to provide information on which communications are of most interest to them
 - Use that information to create highly relevant communications
- **Give recipients control and options for content and frequency via data collected through a Preference Center**



List Management

Tips for Good List Hygiene

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- **Remove Unsubscribes and Hard Bounces immediately**
 - Hard Bounce: Notification that the email address sent to does not exist
 - Soft Bounce: Notification that the email message was unable to be delivered at this time. Examples: "Recipient Mailbox Full", "Message Blocked Due to Content"
- **Remove and/or correct bad domains (Simple data entry mistakes like misspelled domains e.g. alo.com, hotmale.com, yaho etc.) can be easily corrected)**
 - Identify bad addresses and evaluate whether they are the result of a data capture issue or a non-existent domain.
 - If you have a hard high bounce rate (over 5% for a single email blast), you'll need to determine how those addresses got onto your list and if they're indicative of a data capture problem
- **Remove distribution accounts**
 - *Example: Sales @, Marketing @, Info @*
 - Not suitable addresses to connect with individual customers
 - These addresses facilitate high spam complaint rates



List Management

More Tips for Good List Hygiene

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- **Remove "spam" email addresses**
 - Any email address which contains the word "spam" – they can lead to blacklisting by an ISP
- **Remove inactive addresses**
 - Analyze recipient behavior such as open, click and/or conversion to determine if a recipient is engaged with your email program. For example, many companies consider those who have not opened an email in at least the past 6 months to be "inactive"
 - Remove the inactive addresses that meet the criteria you establish
 - Add these inactive addresses to a re-engagement list that is designed to regain their "attention" via other types of communications and/or promotions
- **Validate data upon email/information capture**
 - Ensure email address is properly formatted
 - Check for common mistakes, e.g. entering "!" instead of "@" or leaving of ".com" at the end
 - Make the space where you collected any handwritten email addresses **HUGE** to increase good penmanship and readability



List Management

Unsubscribe Re-engagement

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- **Highly successful email programs treat unsubscribes as critical customer touch points**
- **Surprisingly, many marketers do very little to maintain a relationship with people once they begin the opt-out process**
 - 73% of the companies in a recent study didn't take recipients to a preference page to allow them to change their profiles
 - Enhanced relevance may maintain the relationship
 - 93% made no attempt to reengage the customer
 - 97% failed to ask people why they wanted to unsubscribe
- **Make it fast and easy to get off a list**
 - But before you allow a subscriber to opt-out:
 - Provide recipients with a variety of new options (such as less frequent communication) and real incentives to stay
 - Give customers an opportunity to state why they are leaving
 - Consider modifying your email program based on their responses



List Management Re-Engagement Example

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The image shows a screenshot of an email from Bluefly. At the top, the Bluefly logo is on the left and a "forward to a friend" link is on the right. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links for women, shoes, handbags & accessories, men, house, new arrivals, clearance, and designers. The main body of the email has a green background with white text that reads "a special gift just for you" followed by "\$30 off \$150 or more*" in a large font. Below this, it says "enter code DOR160B at checkout". A dashed line with an arrow points from the code to a "SHOP NOW" button. At the bottom of the green section, there is a purple section with the text "Did You Know? If you choose Bluefly credit on your return label, you'll get FREE shipping on all returns." Below this is a footer with three links: "money-back guarantee", "secure credit card transactions", and "\$7.95 flat rate shipping". At the very bottom, there are instructions on how to redeem the \$30 discount and a small asterisked note about the promotional code's validity and terms.

Here's how online retailer Bluefly has success in Re- engaging Inactive Customers

- **Attention Getting Subject line:** We've Missed You!
- **Personal:** "Gift just for you" copy used to make customer feel special
- **Urgent:** Limited time offer valid for 10 days only
- **Simple, Short Copy:** Doesn't require any time to read

List Management

Getting it Right from the Start

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As with any important relationship, being responsive at each key step of the Email Relationship will keep it long-lasting and fruitful:

- **Dating:** Send a Welcome Email to all new subscribers
- **Engagement:** Find out what content is of interest and relevant
- **Marriage:** Send content specific to the stage of the relationship (inquiry vs. long term customer) interests (golf, river cruising) and behavior (purchase at the same time every year)
- **Divorce:** Find out why they want to unsubscribe and take action to try to stop it from happening



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Deliverability



Deliverability

What is Deliverability?

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Email Deliverability is how successfully a **majority of messages** in a mailing will be **delivered to a recipient inbox** in a **readable format**:

- **Majority of Messages**

- Any multiple mailing to a variety of domains will have a certain percentage of messages that do not arrive in the Inbox

- **Inbox Placement**

- Messages can be challenged, rejected, discarded, or routed to Bulk/Spam folders

- **Readable Format**

- Message should retain all elements as designed and render in the Inbox



Deliverability

Challenges Emailers Face

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- **Sender Reputation**

- **Recipient complaints** - “This is SPAM” button is often used by consumers instead of unsubscribing to email they no longer want. ISPs block senders who receive more than a handful of SPAM button complaints
- **Spam traps** – ISPs often turn unused email addresses (unused is defined as not having been checked by the consumer in the past 6 months) into spam traps for the purposes of identifying email senders who do not keep their lists up to date
- **Bounces** – ISPs block messages from email senders if too many of the addresses they blast are closed or no longer valid
- **Blacklists** – Lists of “bad” email senders that ISPs share and use to automatically keep emails from the listed senders from being delivered

- **Image suppression**

- Images and links in emails are stripped out by the ISP due to consumer settings or ISP policies

- **HTML rendering**

- HTML messages can appear or “render” differently across email clients and inbox providers



Deliverability

Challenges Emailers Face

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- **Anti-Spam Filters**
 - **Content** - A message can be blocked based on questionable content contained in the message.
 - *Example: Confidential or malicious information, inappropriate language, offensive jokes and the like*
 - **Bayesian Algorithms** - Calculates the probability of a message being spam based on its contents
 - Unlike simple content-based filters, Bayesian spam filtering are very complex computer programs that learn from spam and from legitimate email, resulting in a very robust, adapting and efficient anti-spam filter
 - **URL** - Blocks spam based on its intended destination of the “click me” link found in nearly all spam messages.

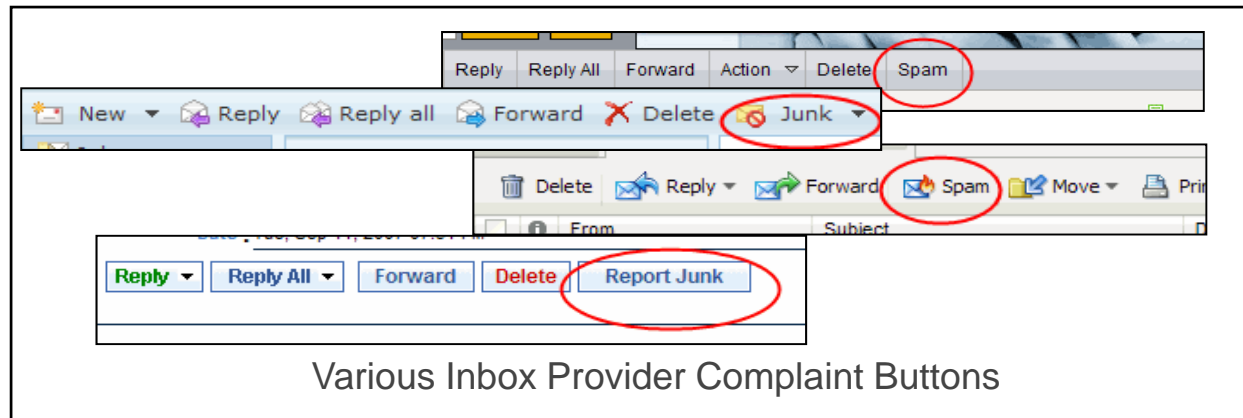


Deliverability Complaint Rates

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Each time a recipient clicks the Junk or Spam button for an email message, it is registered as a vote against your reputation as an email sender. Inbox Providers carefully track this number by sender IP address. They calculate a complaint ratio as the total number of these clicks divided by the total number of messages you have sent into their system. If the ratio is too high, your messages are rejected.

Keeping your list up to date and confirming with consumers that they want to receive your emails are the best ways to keep your complaint rate down.



Deliverability

Tips for Good Deliverability

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- **Mail regularly**

- To keep bounces and spam complaints to a minimum, be sure to email everyone on your list at least once every 90 days. If it has been six months and you haven't emailed someone, consider asking again for their permission, because if they don't remember you, they have a higher likelihood of reporting you as a Spammer.

- **Check content**

- Always run your outbound email through a content-check, such as SpamAssassin, (<http://spamassassin.apache.org>) to ensure the content is acceptable.

- **Use Your Brand**

- Make sure recipients recognize your messages. Put your brand in the "from" field and the subject line, and make sure your brand and logo are viewable in the top section of the email. Proper branding of your emails helps ensure recipients are more likely to opt-out rather than report your email as spam.



Deliverability

Tips for Good Deliverability

- **Test Graphics Appearance**

- Always test your message to ensure it will render properly for different recipient email clients. Set up accounts with the “big 4” major inbox providers ... AOL, Gmail, Hotmail, and Yahoo...then send test email to see how they look. Also, because a lot of email clients block images, try turning them off for a test to see how the message looks, and whether it still communicates meaning with the graphics disabled.
- Note, when recipients add your email address to their address book or “safe senders” list then generally images will automatically display.

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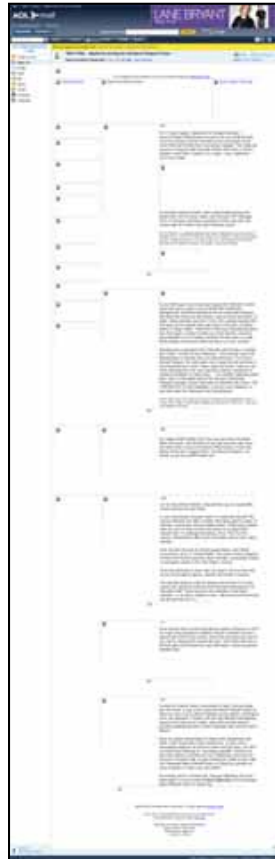


Deliverability

Email Deliverability Challenges Rendering

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AOL Webmail



Hotmail



Yahoo



Email creative can appear quite differently from ISP to Inbox Provider. No magic bullet or formula exists today to ensure your email message renders consistently across platforms.

- Most recipient email systems block images by default
- Copy must be visible as soon as the message is opened whether or not images are displayed
- Copy must convey the primary purpose of the message and offer a call to action
- Test email creative across ISPs and inbox providers before deploying any messages to ensure they are rendering as uniformly as possible
- For more information on how email clients treat email, go to:
<http://www.email-standards.org/clients/>



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Top Ten Things to Do Now



Top Ten

Actions Your Should Take Now to Improve Your Email Marketing

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1. Commit to reaching a goal of having valid email addresses for at least 50% of your current/past clients and “hot” prospects.
2. Develop and implement a plan to contact and update the records of those without valid email addresses – either using agent downtime or outside calling firms (see Email List Update Option in the Appendix)
3. Develop and implement a plan to collect email addresses from new clients or prospects contacting your agency, to include phone scripts, sign-up boxes on every page of your website, easy to use paper signup forms for shows, etc.
4. Keep Your Engagement List on File with Vacation.com Up to Date: Either resubmit your entire list at least once a quarter or make edits online to individual listings through the List Management tool.
5. Opt-in to every Vacation.com eEngagement promotion for the suppliers you wish to sell.



Top Ten

Actions Your Should Take Now to Improve Your Email Marketing

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6. Supplement Vcom eEngagements with your own informational email program. Utilize Best Practices outlined here, such as minimum mailing frequency, customizing content to your client's interests, differentiating your agency's services, and making the communications personal in tone.
7. Set up test accounts with the major free inbox providers and check to insure your agency's emails appear correctly in them.
8. Ensure your email practices conform to the key obligations of the CAN-SPAM Act.
9. If you do not use one, investigate whether the services offered by Email Service Providers (ESPs) make sense for your agency.
10. Review the email and design tips in the Appendix to see if any changes are appropriate for your agency's email communications.



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Resource Appendix



Email Terminology

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- **Blacklisting**

- Email senders who are deemed to be “spammers” and whose messages are blocked by major ISPs and Inbox Providers

- **Bounce**

- Messages that the Inbox provider did not allow to be delivered

- **Bounce message**

- Message sent back to an email sender reporting the message could not be delivered and why
 - *Note: not all bounced emails result in messages being sent back to the sender, and not all bounce messages are clear or accurate about the reason the email bounced*

- **Domain**

- The part of the email address after the @

- **Email client**

- The program used by the recipient to open the email, e.g., Outlook or Lotus Notes



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Email Terminology

- **ESP (Email Service Provider)**
 - A business specializing in outsourced email services for sending and managing email blasts
- **ISP (Internet Service Provider)**
 - An organization that offers users access to the Internet and related services, e.g., AOL, Bellsouth, EarthLink
- **Inbox Provider**
 - ISPs and other entities that host email accounts on behalf of recipients (Gmail, Yahoo, corporate IT departments)
- **IP (Internet Protocol Address)**
 - The numerical address of a web server on the internet, e.g., 100.153.66.201
- **Local Part**
 - The part of the email address before @



Email Terminology

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- **MIME (Multipurpose internet mail extensions)**
 - Additional rules that enable more than just a simple text message to be sent over SMTP
- **Preference Center**
 - A web page where email subscribers can unsubscribe, update their email address, indicate products they're interested in hearing about, etc. Provided by Email Service Providers (ESPs)
- **SMTP (Simple mail transfer protocol)**
 - The rules determining the format and transmission of email (the stuff under the hood)
- **URL (Uniform Resource Locator)**
 - The web address for a page, e.g., <http://www.cnn.com>
- **Whitelisting**
 - The opposite of Blacklisting, Email senders who are deemed to be "good guys" and whose messages are delivered by major ISPs and Inbox Providers



Email Service Providers

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Agencies with email lists of 500 names or more should consider using the services of an Email Service Provider (ESP).

Depending on the package you choose, ESPs can provide the following services:

- Email Newsletter Templates (HTML and Text)
- Tracking of Bounced, Delivered, Opened, & Clicked emails
- Preference Center for unsubscribes and change of address
- Easy to use *Sign-Up* boxes to place on your website pages for collecting new names
- Spam checking software and “whitelisting” with major ISPs

Below are 3 widely used ESPs which serve the small business marketplace. They have a variety of pricing plans, some starting as low as \$10 or \$15 a month:

- Constant Contact: www.constantcontact.com
- iContact: www.icontact.com
- Vertical Response: www.verticalresponse.com



Note: Vacation.com is providing this list as a reference for our members and does not warrant any of the services provided by the above named companies

Email List Update Option

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Many marketing savvy agencies utilize agent “down time” – slow days of the week or periods around holidays – to make outbound calls to past clients and “hot” prospect for the purpose of acquiring or updating the consumers’ email address.

This is the ideal way to achieve this objective – and in some cases these calls lead directly to a new sale!

Other agencies don’t have those resources and want to evaluate other means to collect and update client email addresses. While “Please update our records” return postcard mailings can be effective, telemarketing typically gets a higher response rate.

On the next page are two telemarketing firms you can test for this purpose – one with a low minimum investment and higher cost per hour and another one with the converse.



Email List Update Option

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The success rate of this strategy depends on many factors, including how current your client list is and how recognizable your agency is to the consumer. Taking those variables into account, we estimate that the cost per updated email will range from \$0.75 to \$4.00. Many agencies will achieve a payback of this investment in a matter of months, particularly with clients who have purchased multiple times from you.

- **Inteasure**

- **U.S. Based Callers**
- **\$ 32.50/ Calling Hour, \$199 Minimum Test Campaign**
- **Contact Chuck Coxe: ccoxe@inteasure.com**

- **Business Beanstalk**

- **Philippines Based Callers**
- **\$ 16.00/ Calling Hour, \$1200 Minimum Test Campaign**
- **Contact Kate Lagrimas: kate@businessbeanstalk.com**



Note: Vacation.com is providing this list as a reference for our members and does not warrant any of the services provided by the above named companies

CAN-SPAM

Definition and Major Legislation Provisions

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- **Definition**

- CAN-SPAM is the U.S. federal law that governs email marketing

- **Major Legislation Provisions**

- Provides for enforcement by the FTC, State Attorneys General, ISPs
- Prohibits fraudulent email practices
- Establishes fines up to \$2MM and prison sentences up to 5 years
- Segments transactional & relationship email from commercial email
- Prohibits sending additional commercial email more than 10 business days after opt-out is received

Note: This is a discussion of common practices, not legal advice. Please consult your attorney.



Understanding CAN-SPAM

Categorizing the Message

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- Under CAN-SPAM, there are three kinds of messages, based on their content ... which then governs what regulations apply:
 - **Transactional, defined as:**
 - Post-transaction (after a purchase or inquiry from consumer)
 - Change in email subscription or account information
 - Directly related to employment issues
 - **Commercial**
 - Primary purpose is to advertise or promote a commercial product or service, not transactional in nature
 - **Non-commercial**
 - Does not advertise or promote a commercial product or service, not transactional e.g. personal or intra-company email

Note: This is a discussion of common practices, not legal advice. Please consult your attorney.



Understanding CAN-SPAM

Obligations by Message Category

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- **CAN-SPAM does not apply to non-commercial messages**
- **If it is a Transactional message:**
 - Don't hide your identity
 - No deceptive subject lines
- **If it is Commercial:**
 - The Sender is the one who must abide by the specific terms of the law
- **If it is Transactional plus Commercial:**
 - To remain transactional, the subject line must be transactional and the transactional content must come first in the email body
- **Non-commercial plus Commercial:**
 - To remain non-commercial, the subject line must be non-commercial and the content of the message must be substantially non-commercial

Note: This is a discussion of common practices, not legal advice. Please consult your attorney.



CAN-SPAM

Who is the Sender?

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- **The Sender is the person whose products or services are advertised in the email**
 - Not the list owner, if different from the product advertiser
 - Not the person who paid to send the email, if different from the product advertiser
 - Not the email service provider
- **When there are multiple parties with promotional content in the body of the message, one can be established as the “designated sender” and all CAN-SPAM commercial email compliance requirements accrue to that sender**
- **To qualify as a Sender you must have transmitted, or arranged for the transmission of the message, and have promotional content within the message**

Note: This is a discussion of common practices, not legal advice. Please consult your attorney.



CAN-SPAM

The Obligations of the Sender

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- **Include a clear, conspicuous, Internet-based opt-out mechanism (unsubscribe) that works for at least 30 days after the email send date**
- **Take opted-out email addresses off your list within 10 business days**
- **Include a physical address (street or PO Box) at the bottom of the message**
- **The person in the “From” line must have originated, transmitted or procured the transmission of the message**
- **Do not hide your identity or use deceptive subject lines**
- **If the consumer has NOT given you “Affirmative Consent” (defined as “expressed consent in response to a clear and conspicuous request” ... in other words opted-in) you must:**
 - Include notice that the message is an advertisement or promotion
 - Does NOT have to include ADV in the subject line
 - Common implementation: “This message contains promotional content.”
 - No pre-checked boxes at the point of registration

Note: This is a discussion of common practices, not legal advice. Please consult your attorney.



Understanding CAN-SPAM

Understand How to Implement the Obligations

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- **Opt out of WHAT?**

- What line of business did the opted out message come from?
 - *Opt outs can be department specific. For example: If the consumer opts out of a “Marketing dept.” message they can still receive messages from the Sales dept.*
- The minimum obligation is to offer an opt-out of all commercial mail from business if you cannot segment messages by department.—“The Nuclear Opt-Out”
- Email Service Providers (ESPs) with “Preference Center” capabilities can give a selection of preferences, as long as total commercial email opt-out is one option
- Senders must provide message recipients with a single page visit option to unsubscribe without requiring a log in or password

Note: This is a discussion of common practices, not legal advice. Please consult your attorney.

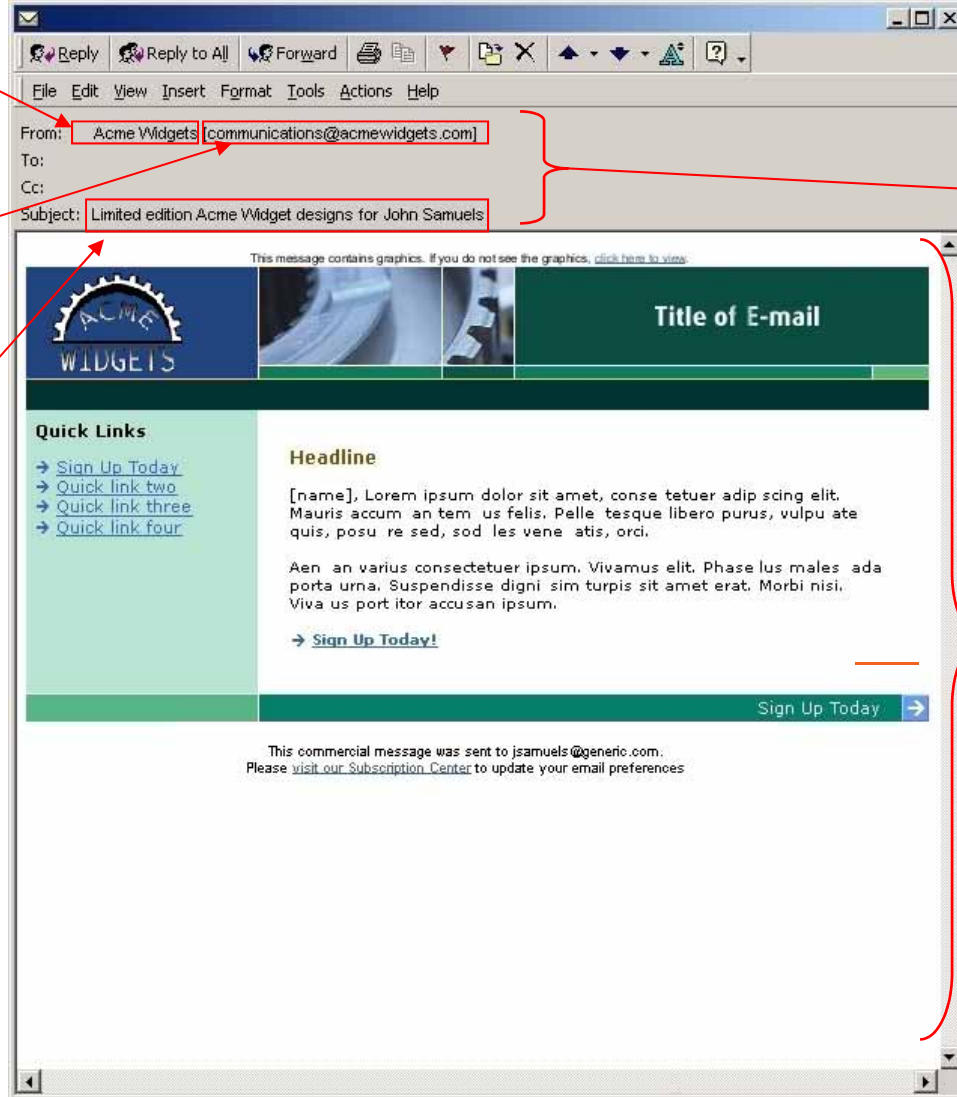


Email Design

Basic Message Anatomy

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- From Name
"Acme Widgets"
- From Address
"communications@acmewidgets.com"
- Subject Line
"Limited edition Acme Widget..."



Header

Body



Email Design

From Address

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- **From Address** - Recent studies indicate one of the most popular methods people use to discern which email messages to open is by scanning the “From” information
 - **From Address:** The e-mail address shown for the sender of a message
 - Friendly: Use an easy to understand and recognizable address
 - Consistency: Use the same address every time for similar messages
- **From Name:** A short phrase, usually a name of an individual or group, next to the From Address
 - Use a friendly, familiar name
 - Consistency is important from the perspective of recipient familiarity, but it is often appropriate to vary this somewhat depending on the type of message. For example, one email might come from the agency owner and another from the individual agent serving the client.

Email Design

Subject Lines

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- **Subject Lines dramatically impact open rates**
- **To encourage message opens and properly convey message:**
 - Include you brand or agency name early in the Subject Line
 - Limiting subject lines to no more than 40 characters avoids truncation by e-mail clients
 - Encourage open rates by using a subject line to generate excitement or curiosity, but never trick or mislead
 - Highlight the primary offer of the email message
 - Use a sense of urgency – recipient behavior is generally read the message now or delete it later if it's not immediately read
 - *Example: "Hurry Now! 20% Off Your Next Vacation!"*



Email Design

'Above the Fold'

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- The most important content should be viewable without the reader having to scroll down the page, or be located “above the fold”
- There is no exact fold demarcation since e-mail recipient environments differ based on e-mail software, viewing window size, and screen resolution. So, it’s always best to get key information high up in the message.
- This area should contain:
 - Offer
 - Call To Action (e.g. phone number or reply email)
 - Urgency Indication (act now)
 - Agency name and/or logo
 - Any other important content
- A ‘click to view’ link for messages with graphics (provided by ESP systems)

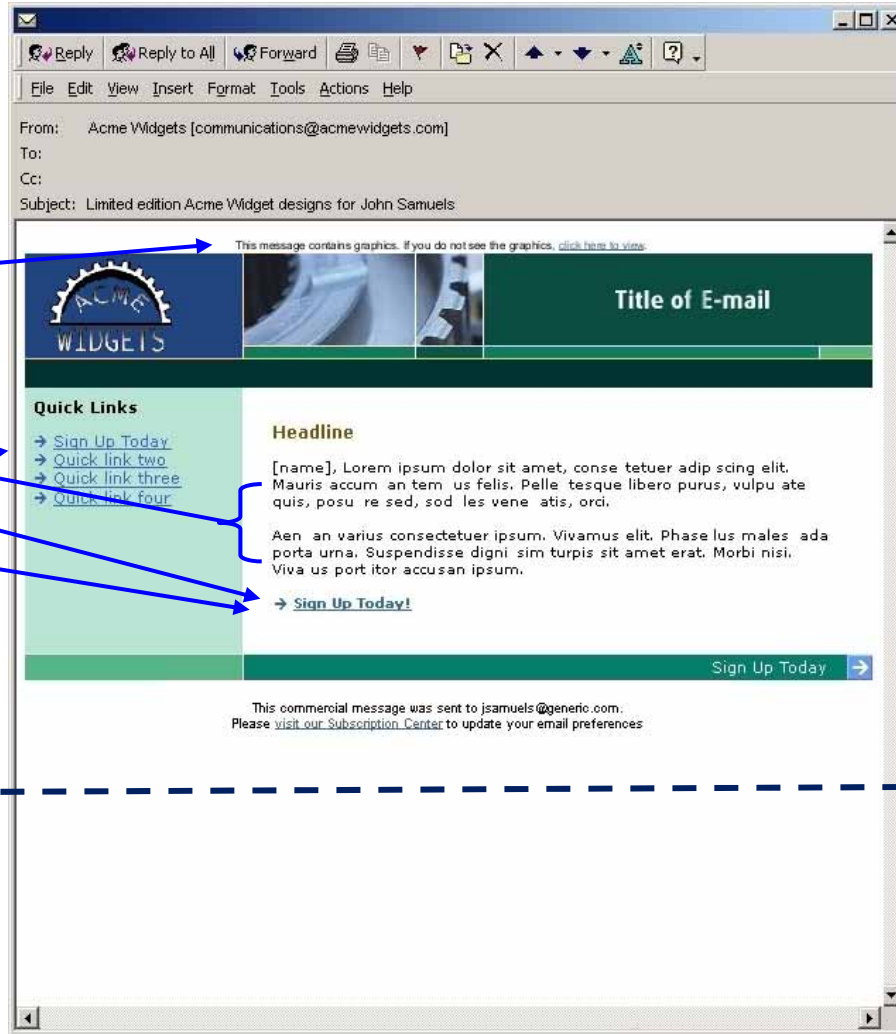


Email Design

Strong 'Above the Fold' Sample Message

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- 'Click to view' link
- Logo
- Offer
- Call To Action
- Urgency Indication



- Above The Fold (400 pixels)

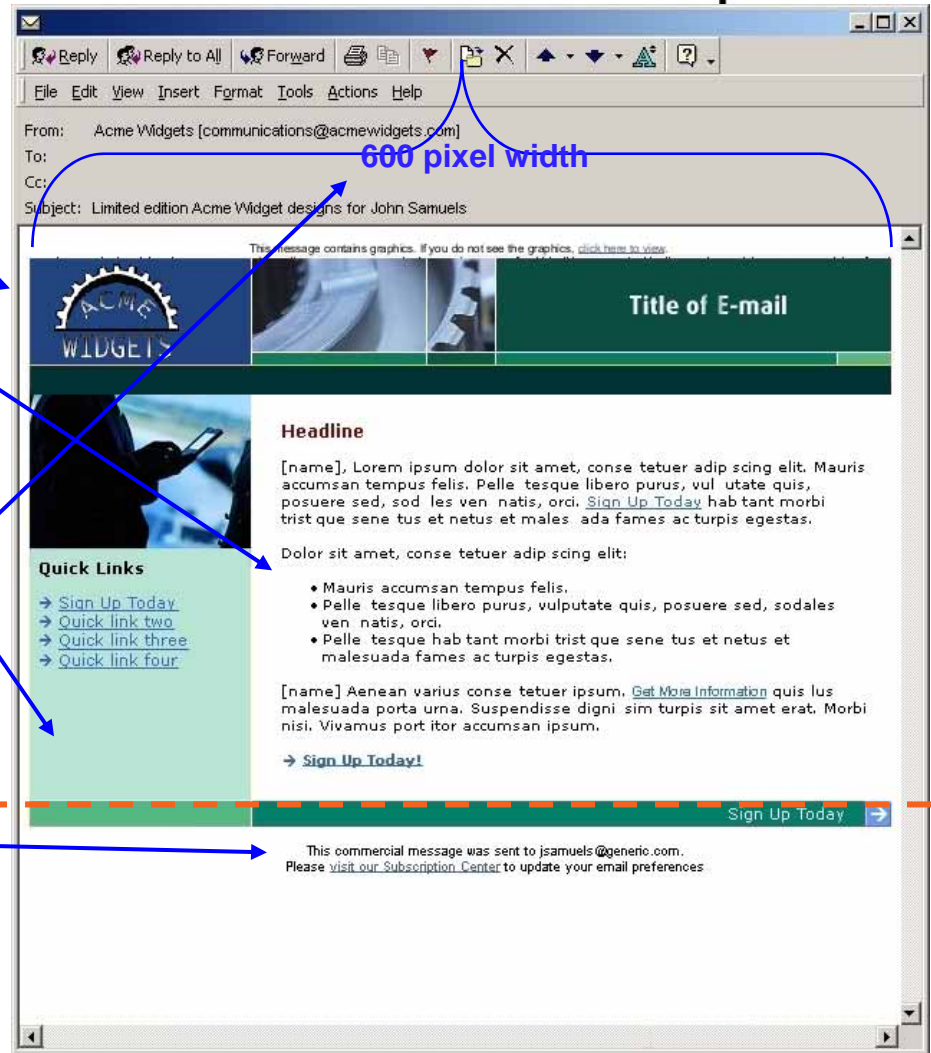
Sample Message

Strong Color & Layout

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- **Color Usage:**
 - Regions of message defined with blocks of color
 - Overall color usage unifies the message

- **Layout:**
 - Clearly defined regions ease navigation
 - Page header
 - Body
 - Quick navigation
 - Page footer
 - Easily scannable
 - Left justified primary body copy
 - Centered footer
 - Message width within approximately 600 pixels



Email Design

Images

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- Use images to enhance a message's overall objective or meaning and to capture a reader's attention
- Balance image to text ratio by designing messages to have at least 30% of the total message area devoted to text (including footer) whenever images are used
- Use images to display large and dramatically bolded fonts
- Messages that employ images and other downloadable media should always include a link that allows the reader to view a copy of the message in a web browser
 - *Example: "This message contains graphics. If you do not see the graphics, [click here to view.](#)"*

Email Content

Guidelines – Timely and Fresh

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- **Good content reflects these characteristics:**
 - Relevance
 - Timely and fresh
 - Appropriately structured
- **Content gives recipients a reason to read your e-mail, click through to your web site, and/or to act on an offer**
- **Timely content strongly relates to their needs or circumstances.**
 - Address seasonal or cyclical needs
 - Employ life cycle messages to match content to a prospect's or customer's stage of decision making:
 - Information Gathering
 - Considering Options
 - Ready to Choose
- **Fresh content offers readers something new with each message**
 - Contain useful and high-quality content



Email Content

Message Objectives & Goals

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- **Clearly define a specific objective for each mailing and focus content on it. Common objectives include:**
 - **Service & Efficiency** – Provide consistent, timely, seamless, cost effective and valued service to customers
 - **Promotion** – Build brand recognition by driving traffic to a web site or telephone, promoting awareness of the agency its products and services
 - **Revenue Generation** – Generate revenue by selling to existing customers and/or by attracting new customers
- **Define the mailing's goals**
 - What are the goals for the e-mail communication?
 - What content will help you achieve them (vacation destination teasers, vacation planning tips, etc...)?
 - What content will make users choose you over others or take the action you're trying to get them to take?
 - What will make it unique?



Email Content Relevancy Guidelines

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- **Understand your primary customer segment characteristics and target content effectively.**
- **To make sure your content meets this challenge, carefully assess your audience and their goals by asking the following questions:**
 - Who are the people in your audience (corporate vacation/trip planners, individuals/family vacation planners, group “pied pipers”, etc...)
 - How much knowledge do they have about your agency and associated services)?
 - Do they have any special needs? (For example, are they disabled, or do many speak a language other than English?)
 - What information does this audience need? Want? Expect?
 - How should the content sound to this audience?
 - Will people both learn and be called/driven to action?

