

# Better Email Marketing

How To Get Your Email Delivered and Read

Bob Stimolo

**E**mail, spam, search engines, ad words — our marketplace continues to change and new media continue to evolve. New media pose a special challenge to those of us focused in the school market. We continue to be challenged by the school purchase order and the difficulty it poses in tracking source codes. We struggle with our primary media and understanding what is working and what is not. New media, like email marketing, seem even more difficult to understand.

Under such conditions, it makes sense to look at other markets where tracking is not so difficult to see how success is measured. This gives us a model to follow as we try to develop our own data to guide our marketing decisions.

One of the sources I like to use to keep track of what is happening in the marketing world around us is a newsletter called Direct Response, Digest of Direct Marketing. It's published by Craig Huey, a veteran direct marketer. I've been a subscriber for as long as I can remember and often find useful tips and suggestions that I can apply to our marketplace.

In a recent issue, Craig wrote the following article about email marketing that I found very helpful and would like to share.

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Both email and snail mail can be

powerful and cost-effective sales tools when crafted by a knowledgeable direct marketing professional. The goals of both are the same — to generate leads, build databases, secure sales, and increase revenue. Similarities exist between powerful email and direct mail packages that get results. But there are also differences.

Your offer is a major key to how effective your sales message is — whatever vehicle you use. But to ensure your email message is properly received, use great direct response copy and avoid sending spam blockers such as HTML formatting and direct response graphics.

Whether you use email or traditional mail, most direct response strategies and tactics apply. Here are a few tips that will help your email direct marketing message have impact:

## The success or failure of your email starts with the "from" line.

Direct marketing professionals know that the first thing people notice is who sent the message. They also know how to persuade your target to look further.

If your message is sent in an envelope, people notice the return address first. With an email, most prospects (over 60 percent) first look to see who sent the email. If they know you or your company, they are more likely to take the time to see what the message is about.

Your copy should make a connec-

tion between you and your prospects. Recipients will be much more likely to open the envelope or click your email and at least glance at your message if they see a relationship or potential relationship between you and them.

## Depend on an experienced, professional direct marketing copywriter to craft "teaser" copy that will get your message noticed.

Your copywriter knows how important "teaser" copy is to your promotion's success — the outer envelope copy of a direct mail piece or the "subject" line of an email. Like the teaser copy on an envelope, the goal of the email subject line is to create curiosity about the email's content and to entice your prospect to open it and read further.

In email, 35 percent of recipients cited the subject line as the most important factor motivating them to open emails. (Not surprising, since the average person weeds through more than 2,200 spam emails every year — and that's after more than 90 percent of them have already been stopped at the Internet provider level.)

For example, in email subject lines news and discounts appeal to most potential buyers. Men (69 percent) are more intrigued by news-focused subject lines. Women (64 percent) are compelled to open an email if the subject line is focused on discounts.

The key is to develop a dramatic and powerful teaser that creates an irresistible desire to read the email.

## In business-to-business marketing, empower your copywriter to employ strategies that will get your message past the gatekeeper and to your target.

In business-to-business direct mail, the gatekeeper is usually the mail room, secretary, or executive assistant. In email, the gatekeeper is usually an email client filter like Yahoo!'s SpamGuard process. Client filters identify potential key words, as well as phrases in the subject or "from" lines and header information. Then it channels those messages into a special

folder, or marks them as junk.

It may be an Internet service provider filter like the one America Online (AOL) uses to keep out unwanted email. Or, it may be a blacklisting organization such as [www.mailabuse.com](http://www.mailabuse.com) or [Spamcorp.org](http://Spamcorp.org) that keeps your email from being received. Up to 15 percent of your email can get blocked by blacklisting organizations if someone annoyed by receiving your marketing message “nominates” your organization. Institutions may also create filters that block email based on parameters set up by the individual organization.

Even with a great understanding of what filters will block and what will get through, strategies to get by these systems are ever evolving. However, the following strategies have been successful in helping email get past these overzealous barriers and get through to your target.

- Construct your email so that it appears to be a personal message from a friend or associate. In fact, text messages will often out pull HTML messages.
- Do not send an attachment with your email – even when your email gets delivered, many targets will delete an email with an attachment as a deterrent to viruses.
- Begin your email with a salutation other than “Dear” or “Hello” and use personalization whenever possible.
- Don’t tip off the “test” software that your email is anything but a personal letter. Never explain that your message is not spam, that the recipient gave you permission to send the message or opted in to your list. Don’t say that you respect all removal requests, explain why the recipient is receiving your offer, or refer to various regulations, House or Senate bills.
- Reword in a positive tone the “remove me” link to an email address.
- Never use all upper- or lowercase letters. Instead, mix upper- and lowercase letters together.
- Avoid ending your email address with a number (e.g., [Debbie555@cdmginc.com](mailto:Debbie555@cdmginc.com)).

- Avoid exclamation points or other punctuation that may appear to be typical of spam email.
- If you’re sending a regularly scheduled newsletter, include the date (e.g., December 2005), the word “newsletter” or “news,” and perhaps even the frequency (e.g., “monthly”).
- Use a high percentage of text in your email and little to no graphics or images.
- Choose a white background rather than a colored one.
- It’s best to use black type, and be sure to avoid spammers’ favorite colors – red and blue.
- Eschew thick table borders.
- Avoid HTML. Spam filters automatically assume that HTML messages are unwanted by recipients. And especially don’t use software such as FrontPage to create an HTML message.
- Don’t use all caps to define the content type (e.g., “TEXT/HTML”).
- Don’t include a form – such as an order form – that sends an email.
- Don’t use scripts, such as JavaScript, and don’t include any JavaScript statements that open new windows.
- Convince spam filters that your message is a genuine personal communication. Attribute a source (e.g., “On Tuesday, November 29, Craig Huey wrote:”). Quote email text (e.g., “>”) at the beginning of lines. Take advantage of the reply line (e.g., “Re: Marketing Plans”) in your email header. Sign the email with a long signature, for example, Randolph J. Longenberger.
- One last trick: Be proactive. To be sure your email will get delivered, run it through predictive spam analyzer software. Your bulk email distribution provider probably provides this service. If it doesn’t, you’ll find a free spam-scoring tool at [www.gravitymail.com/spamscore.php](http://www.gravitymail.com/spamscore.php).

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## Use direct marketing copy that grabs your prospects’ attention and doesn’t let go.

You want copy that hooks your prospects before they realize they’re holding a sales piece in their hand (or their inboxes).

Great direct response copywriters don’t give away too much information, always tease, avoid questions, and are careful how they use humor. Great direct response copywriters motivate with fear versus self-interest, make your message sound urgent, timely, or valuable, turn features into benefits, and use very personal “you”-oriented copy.

There are big differences between email and postal mail, and understanding those differences can give you the power to break through the hype and boost the results of your email campaign.

One of the biggest differences between postal mail and email rests in the numbers. Consumers get a lot more email – 40 to 100 unsolicited emails a day. They regularly open and read email from 10 to 20 companies. To get opened, your email must displace mail from someone else your prospect already trusts.

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**MEN (69 PERCENT) ARE MORE INTRIGUED BY NEWS-FOCUSED SUBJECT LINES. WOMEN (64 PERCENT ) ARE COMPELLED TO OPEN AN EMAIL IF THE SUBJECT LINE IS FOCUSED ON DISCOUNTS. THE KEY IS TO DEVELOP A DRAMATIC AND POWERFUL TEASER THAT CREATES AN IRRESISTIBLE DESIRE TO READ THE EMAIL.**