



Twelve Email Marketing Blunders to Avoid

Your Guide to Planning an Effective
Email Marketing Campaign

Make the most of your e-mail budget by avoiding these costly mistakes.

Introduction

Email marketing continues to be one of the most cost-effective ways to generate and nurture leads. A survey from *Target Marketing Magazine's "Media Usage Forecast 2013"* indicated that email marketing is the leading driver of B2B customer acquisition (39.8%) and customer retention (53.1%), making it the single most important channel for B2B marketers looking to increase marketing ROI today.

If done right, email marketing can be a highly effective means of generating qualified leads and new business. If done wrong, the ramifications could erode brand equity and annoy your current clients. So, it's important to get it right!

There are several common blunders to avoid when launching email marketing campaigns. Most companies are making at least a few of them. The implications of making these mistakes are vast – and can **squash the success** right out of your e-marketing campaign. If you use email marketing to promote your business, you want to be aware of, and avoid, these pitfalls.

But, these blunders are easy to avoid and/or correct - *if you know what to look for...* In this white paper, we will review **twelve common blunders** made in email marketing, as well as tips and strategies to achieve email marketing success.

A **botched e-marketing campaign** may result in:

- SPAM filters stop your email from "getting in"
- Low percentage of "opens"
- Low percentage of "click-throughs"
- Prospects that DO read your email DON'T call you
- Creating ill-will with prospects

When done properly, email marketing campaigns can result in:

- Increase in email marketing conversion rates
- Dramatic increase in response rates by improving email subject lines
- Avoid costly email marketing mistakes and improve overall email marketing ROI to make the most of your marketing budget!

The Twelve Blunders

1. Bland subject lines

Many campaign subject lines look like they were an after-thought, just "thrown in" after all the hard work of creating the email was done. But, if your prospect doesn't open the email, it's over. The only thing they will see to determine IF they will open your email is the subject line. You need to entice people to open your email. You have less than a second to answer this question in the reader's mind: "What's in it for me?" *Think about this carefully.* But watch out for #2...

2. SPAM-detecting words in your subject line

If you are *too* aggressive in your subject line, you might not even make it in the front door. Spam filters are the gate keepers of the email world, making electronic decisions about what to let in, and what to block. Basically, spam filters assign ratings to your incoming email based on a long list of criteria. For example, these filters look at words in the subject line to help them "rate" the email on the spam scale. Though they vary, spam filters automatically flag certain key words that are commonly used in spam emails. These include spam words such as free, offer, trial, sample... Avoid use of these words in the subject line, if at all possible.

SPAM words to AVOID:

- Free
- Offer
- Trial
- Sample

Using ALL CAPS in the subject line will also trigger a higher spam-rating and cause deliverability challenges. And, if you add a * to distinguish a trigger word, you can be sure your email will go directly into the intended recipient's junk folder. (...Not the purpose of an email marketing campaign!)

3. No perceived value in your emails

We believe in establishing relationships with prospects instead of trying to "sell" them. If you *provide value* in your emails, then your prospects may not delete your email as soon as they see it. They may even *look forward* to receiving your emails.

Look at it this way: In general, you can't "sell" someone unless they are in the market to buy a product or service *like* yours. But how do you know exactly when they are in the market to buy your product or service?

To provide real value, you must:

1. Position yourself as the expert, and
2. Stay "in front of" the prospect regularly, so they will **think of you** when they are ready to buy a product or service *like* yours...

HINT: A great way to position yourself as an expert is to provide value by *giving away* some of your expertise at regular intervals. Let's be clear - to be most effective, regular email marketing campaigns **should teach, not sell**. Use thought-leadership pieces and curriculum-based marketing materials to accomplish this. Doing so will build trust and confidence in your company and your brand.

4. **No "Teaser" - give away the whole enchilada at the get-go**

If the body of your "teaser" email contains your *entire* message, your reader will have no reason to go to click through to your website - and you will have no idea who has *actually read* it. Making readers "click through" to your website is one effective way to capture and measure who has read your email marketing piece. If a prospect is interested enough to click through, then they are interested in your message. (Good information to know, right?)

➤ **Bottom line:** Good teasers drive traffic to your web site.

To accomplish this, you have to "tease" the reader by offering a few hints about the benefit they will derive from reading your article. **If** you have reached your target audience, carefully-crafted hints *should* entice them to click through to read the entire article.

5. **No bullets in your teaser**

People don't read your email - they *skim* it. Bullets allow someone to quickly see whether an email contains something of interest to them or not. If you make them read several paragraphs (i.e. no bullets) to get the main idea, they may skip it altogether.

6. **No "Oh, by the way" links**

Yes, we believe in providing value. It is also important to give someone the opportunity - *if they want* - to click through to read more about your offerings. This should be done tactfully and subtly. Don't try to masquerade your pitch as an article. If you genuinely try to teach something with your article, there's nothing wrong with having a link (where it applies) to your marketing or sales page of your website.

7. **No Call-to-Action**

Whether it is the "oh by the way" link mentioned in #6, or another link - you should move the reader to take action somewhere in your article. Request a specific action at the end of your email: "Sign up for our free webinar here." "Call today for a free demo." "Download our complimentary white paper." If your email doesn't contain a call-to-action, don't be surprised if the reader *takes no action at all*.

8. **Overcomplicated content**

Stay focused on a single message that adds value to the reader. Say what you want in as few words as possible. Don't use big words to impress. Be concise. Again, this falls under the "people don't read - they skim" category. In every article you write, go through it a few extra times to remove unnecessary words or sentences. We all know someone who "talks a lot, but says very little." *Don't do this in your emails or people may become annoyed.*

9. **Using an email marketing software with inadequate reporting**

Poor reporting creates performance "blind spots." Technology has empowered marketers with the ability to report on all kinds of information resulting from email marketing campaigns. Leverage this capability.

Use a robust email marketing software to collect vital campaign information such as:

- How many people opened the email?
- How many and who "clicked-through"? (i.e. read my message)
- Which page(s) did they click through to?
- How long did they spend on each page?
- Who read the email more than once?
- Who has read my emails *most* frequently over time?
- What types of companies are responding to my message?

Knowing the answers to those questions will then provide **vital feedback** to inform future email marketing campaigns regarding:

- What is working? What is NOT working?
- What should I do more of?
- What should I do less of?
- What are my "sweet spots?"
- Who appears interested? Can I use that information to market to them differently?

Using the right email platform will enable you to vastly improve your marketing results. Fine-tune your strategy based on the data and feedback collected.

10. **Not tracking the "click-throughs"**

See #9. This is the information that separates you from the "throw enough against the wall and see what sticks" crowd. Tracking click-throughs means you **KNOW** who is paying attention to your message. (*Isn't that what you are after?*)

11. **Not calling the click-throughs**

What you do with the information obtained in #10 is a critical next step. Once you know who is "paying attention", it only makes sense to reach out to them. It is

important to realize that calling on a lead who clicked through to your website is no longer a cold call. This is now a **warm call**.

What would *you* rather do? Cold call 5000 people, or "warm call" 250 people who recently read your newsletter and are more likely to want to talk with you?

Not only is making these "warm" calls more fun for a sales person, but it is also a MUCH more effective use of their time.

Even if you don't want to call everyone who clicks once, there are email marketing tools that allow you to create custom "Hot List" reports. For example, you can define a "hot lead" as someone who clicked three times within the last 90 days - all great information on which you can act to improve your marketing ROI!

Don't miss this opportunity:

"Hi Joe, my name is Bill Smith with XYZ Corp. I noticed you read our recent newsletter and I'm following up to learn more about what interested you in this issue."

This is the beginning of a dialog that is quite different than making a straight cold call.

12. **Sending out *too many* emails**

Remember: Too much of a good thing is not always a good thing.

- **Question:** What are you trying to accomplish? What are the goals of your email marketing efforts?
- **Answer:** You want to be "in front of" your prospects enough - positioned as "the expert" - so when they *are* ready to make a purchasing decision about a product or service like yours, they will THINK OF YOU.

Sending a curriculum-based email once per month is a great start. Twice per month is even better, to stay in front of prospects on a regular basis. However, sending emails every week or every day is overkill and by doing so, you will risk irritating or even angering your prospects.

Be sure to track and compare your unsubscribe rates based on mailing frequency and act accordingly. Don't bite the hand that feeds you.

Bonus tip: Did you know that if your website is not mobile friendly, you will lose 61% of people who click through using their phone as soon as they reach the site! Be sure your website is mobile friendly.

Now that we've covered the top twelve email marketing blunders, let's convert the list into a **prescription for email marketing success...**

Top 12 Factors to Create a Successful Email Marketing Campaign:

1. Take the time to create a GREAT subject line.
2. Avoid SPAM words.
3. Offer VALUE at every touch.
4. Create enticing "teaser" content.
5. Bulletize the teaser email.
6. Add links to your website.
7. Use a call-to-action.
8. Be concise.
9. Use a robust email marketing program with reporting options.
10. Track and follow up on click-throughs.
11. Email with regular frequency (but don't overdo it!)
12. Be sure your website is mobile friendly

Make the tweaks necessary and stop squandering the most effective vehicle to reach your target prospects. If you don't know where to find all those decision-maker email addresses, call us. Remember – Mentor Tech Group offers hand-built, [Precisely Targeted Decision Maker Lists](#) in Corporate Training, E-Learning, Talent Management and HR. You can outsource to an expert in your business!

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