

Digital Marketing

Your One-stop How-to Guide

In the ever-changing world of digital marketing, there are many resources out there; it's tough to keep it all straight. That's why we've assembled all the information you'll need in one easy resource. Click the bulleted links below to learn more about the many ways you can promote your business and attract new customers in the digital space.



Internet Advertising

Banners

- General Information
- Ad Networks

Social Sites

- YouTube®
- Facebook®
- LinkedIn®

Coupon Offers

- Groupon®
- LivingSocial®
- Google Offers™
- Facebook Offers



Online Search

Website SEO

- Website SEO

Paid Search

- Google® AdWords®
- Microsoft®
 - ◆ Bing®
 - ◆ Yahoo!®

Online Listings

- Yellow Pages®
- Google+® Local
- Angie's List®



Social Media

Social Media Sites

- Facebook
- Twitter®
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Google+



Direct Marketing

Email Marketing

- Email Marketing

Mobile Advertising

- General Information
- Text Messaging (SMS)
- Multimedia Messaging (MMS)
- QR Codes
- Coupons



Online Resources

Professional Association

- Mobile Marketing Association
- Web Marketing Association
- Interactive Advertising Bureau

Industry Experts

- Mashable®
- HubSpot®
- PR Daily
- SmartBrief®

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Always read and follow label directions.



Internet Advertising Banners/General Information

The Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) defines online display advertising as “a form of online advertising where an advertiser’s message is shown on a website destination, generally set off in a box at the top or bottom or to one side of the content of the page. These banners can consist of static or animated images, as well as interactive media that may include audio and video elements.”



How to Get Started

[Guide to Online Advertising](#)

[Online Advertising 101](#)

[How to Plan an Online Advertising Effort](#)

[Buying Display Ad Inventory](#)



Best Practices

[Utilize Standard IAB Ad Sizes](#)

- Utilize sites that offer cost-per-thousand models (CPMs) versus flat monthly rates. CPMs charge you by impression, whereas monthly rates do not guarantee impressions you are charged for.
- Any impressions delivered above the contracted amount are considered bonus (no charge).



Advice for AOs

- Request monthly performance metrics to ensure planned impression levels are met.
- Do not pay online invoices without performance metrics as proof of performance.



Internet Advertising Banners/ Ad Networks

An ad network represents many websites in selling advertising, allowing advertising buyers to reach broad audiences relatively easily through run-of-category and run-of-network buys. Ad networks provide a way for media buyers to coordinate ad campaigns across dozens, hundreds or even thousands of sites in an efficient manner. The campaigns often involve running ads over a category (*run-of-category*) or an entire network (*run-of-network*).



How to Get Started

[How to Choose Ad Networks](#)



Best Practices

[Utilize Standard IAB Ad Sizes](#)

[Ad Network Best Practices](#)

- Utilize sites that offer cost-per-thousand models (CPMs) versus flat monthly rates. CPMs charge you by impression whereas monthly rates do not guarantee impressions you are charged for.
- Utilize ad networks that are transparent. Transparency allows you to see every site your ads may be running on.
- Reputable ad networks will guarantee ads run “above the fold” (best positioning).



Advice for AOs

- Request monthly performance metrics to ensure planned impression levels are met.
- Do not pay online invoices without performance metrics as proof of performance.
- Confirm whether network has minimum monthly spend requirement as some do.



Internet Advertising Social Sites/ YouTube®

YouTube® is a video sharing site that is owned by Google®. Advertising on YouTube appears as banners at the top of a page, on the right-hand side of the page, as promoted videos or before a video. These ads can be targeted based on keywords, categories or demographics and are priced as cost-per-view, cost-per-click or via auction pricing.

[Link to Social Media/
Social Media Sites/YouTube](#)



How to Get Started

[Video Ads](#)

[Display Ads](#)



Best Practices

[Advertising Best Practices & Use Cases](#)



Advice for AOs

- This is a great media outlet to target your audience.
- YouTube is very affordable because you set the maximum daily expense or cost per click.



Internet Advertising

Social Sites/ Facebook®

Advertising on Facebook® is highly targeted and can be very affordable. These ads appear on the right-hand side of the user's Facebook page and include room for a title, image, some detail and a link. In addition to these ads, Facebook offers promoted posts and sponsored stories that appear in the user's newsfeed.

[Link to Social Media/
Social Media Sites/Facebook](#)



How to Get Started

[Ad Overview of Facebook](#)

[Creating Ads for Facebook](#)

[Use Promoted Posts](#)

[Use Sponsored Stories](#)



Best Practices

[Ad Targeting Best Practices for Facebook](#)



Advice for AOs

- Target your ad to your audience and remember to rotate content regularly.
- There is less graphic flexibility with ads on Facebook, but the targeting makes up for that.
- Remember the title is crucial to grab attention.



Internet Advertising Social Sites/ LinkedIn®

Advertisements on LinkedIn® include a title, image, short description and the ability to link to any website. They also can be highly targeted to your audience and are very affordable. The audience here tends to be professionals and business owners, so you have the ability to reach a different group of potential clients.

[Link to Social Media/
Social Media Sites/LinkedIn](#)



How to Get Started

[Ad Overview of LinkedIn](#)

[Ad FAQ for LinkedIn](#)



Best Practices

[Ad Specifications](#)

[5 Steps to Successful Advertising
on LinkedIn](#)



Advice for AOs

- LinkedIn ads have less design flexibility than standard display ads, but they are very targeted based on your audience.



Internet Advertising Coupon Offers

Coupon offers usually come to the user via email and offer daily deals for services significantly below the regular cost. They are popular with businesses because of the opportunity to reach new customers and the high volume of sales they can receive.

There are several programs you can utilize. Each of these programs have minor differences, such as the length of time before you receive your payment from them, but for the most part, they offer the same system: customers subscribe to their updates and are notified by email about daily deals, which they can purchase for redemption with the advertised company. The company gets their payment from the coupon site, not the purchaser.

These sites include Living Social®, Groupon®, Google Offers™ and Facebook® Offers.

Keep in mind, Facebook Offers is the one service that works a bit differently. In this case, customers find the deal on Facebook, so you would need to set up a business page first. After they find the offer, they get a coupon emailed to them, which they can turn into you. You get payment only when the customer redeems the coupon.

[Link to Direct Marketing/ Mobile Advertising/Coupons](#)



How to Get Started

[How Groupon Works](#)

[How Living Social Works](#)

[Overview of Google Offers](#)

[Using Facebook Offers](#)



Best Practices

[Mobile Coupon Guidelines & Best Practices](#)



Advice for AOs

- Make sure using group deal programs is right for you and find which sites are popular in your area.
- These can be a good way to introduce people in your area to your company.
- Research which coupon service site is most practical for your company.

[Home](#)



Online Search Website SEO

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the volume and quality of traffic to a website from search engines via natural search results for targeted keywords.



How to Get Started

[SEO Basics \(pg. 4\)](#)

[Improving Site Structure \(pg. 8\)](#)

[Optimizing Content \(pg. 14\)](#)

[Dealing With Crawlers \(pg. 21\)](#)



Best Practices

[SEO for Mobile Phones \(pg. 24\)](#)

[Promotions and Analysis \(pg. 28\)](#)



Advice for AOs

[Review Your Website](#)



Online Search Paid Search

Reach new customers by using the Google® online advertising program. With AdWords®, you can choose where your ad appears, set a budget that's comfortable for you (there's no minimum spending commitment) and easily measure the impact of your ad.

Reach potential customers exactly when they're searching the Internet for pest control solutions. Your ad can appear on Google and partner websites. With cost-per-click bidding, you're charged only when someone clicks your ad.



How to Get Started

[Setup and Basics](#)

[Manage Ads on Google](#)

[Starting Guide for Bing® & Yahoo!®](#)



Best Practices

[Measure Results](#)

[Improve Results](#)

[Other Tips and Tricks](#)



Advice for AOs

- Look at your existing website analytics to see which days and times attract and retain the attention of your visitors. Then use [custom scheduling](#) to run ads that coincide with those findings.
- Limit the [geography](#) of your ads to your service area. Further, you may choose to limit your ads to those areas where you want to spur growth.
- Activate [remarketing](#) to reach people that have previously visited your site. While they browse other sites among the thousands of [Google Display Network™](#) partners, they will see your ad that leads them back to your site. Ads appear on a variety of news sites, blogs and other niche sites across the Internet.

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Online Search Online Listings/ Yellow Pages®

Online Yellow Pages® transcend beyond those in the printed book. Yellow Pages online offers the traditional, basic listing for free, but premium, paid options exist, as well. These can direct visitors directly to your Web page. Yellow Pages online also offers help with other promotions, including websites and direct mail.



How to Get Started

[How Does It Work?](#)

[How to Get Listed](#)

[Local Ad Programs](#)



Best Practices

[Advertising Solutions](#)



Advice for AOs

- Much like your traditional Yellow Pages, your company can be listed or featured as a paid option.
- Encourage your customers to leave reviews on your Yellow Pages listing.



Online Search

Online Listings/ Google+® Local

Formerly known as Google Places™, Google+® Local is a feature integrated with Google+ and Zagat® ratings. These are different from Google+ business pages, but in the future, the two can link together within Google+. Your Google+ Local listing will still show up in a Google® search and on Google Maps™, just like Google Places listings used to.



How to Get Started

[Overview of Google+ Local](#)
[Local Pages Guide for Business Owners](#)



Best Practices

[Google+ Local Page vs. Google+ Business Page](#)



Advice for AOs

- Google+ Local is the new name for what used to be called Google Places.
- To get the most out of the listing, fill in as much information as possible.



Online Search

Online Listings/ Angie's List®

Angie's List® is a free listing option, where people rank and evaluate their experiences with businesses. Businesses can create a profile, or storefront, where contact information and a list of services can be provided for visitors to review. By setting up a business profile, you can receive email alerts and have the ability to respond to reports about your business.



How to Get Started

[Overview of Angie's List](#)



Best Practices

[Best Practices for Angie's List](#)



Advice for AOs

- Angie's List also offers tips and other services for businesses, such as deals and advertising.



Social Media

Social Sites/ Facebook®

Facebook® is the largest social networking site in the world. With such a large audience, there is significant marketing potential. It can be a great way to show customers the personality behind your company and to build a stronger relationship with them. When setting up a new Facebook profile, it's important to set up your company as a business page so you can maximize the business tools available to you.

[Link to Internet Advertising/
Social Sites/Facebook](#)



How to Get Started

[How to Create Your Page](#)

[Create a Page Here](#)



Best Practices

[Cheat Sheet for Facebook: Sizes
& Dimensions](#)

[How to Write Posts](#)

[Timeline for Facebook: 9 Best
Practices for Brands](#)



Advice for AOs

- Once your page is set up, try using Ads, Offers and Promoted Posts.
- Remember to post more than sales messages.
- Include questions, polls and trivia, for example, to engage your audience.
- Photos and videos are very popular, so include those often.
- Post on evenings and weekends in addition to weekdays, and strive to reply to people within 24 hours of their comment.



Social Media

Social Sites/ Twitter®

Twitter® is known to have strength in driving traffic to a website or other channel through the use of links. Often companies will share research, new videos, news updates or general information about the product or service they provide. Like most social networks, Twitter is meant to be conversation-based instead of a venue for sales messages.



How to Get Started

[How to Get Started on Twitter](#)

[Cheat Sheet for Twitter](#)

[Create an Account Here](#)



Best Practices

[Best Practices for Twitter](#)

[10 Best Practices for Businesses
on Twitter](#)



Advice for AOs

- Use links to drive traffic.
- Photos and videos also are popular and can be included in your tweets.
- Follow and retweet others to build a following and grow relationships, and remember to post more than just sales messages.



Social Media

Social Sites/ YouTube®

YouTube® is a video-viewing website owned by Google®. Anyone can create a channel on YouTube to share videos. The commenting feature on YouTube makes it open to social interactions from the audience. YouTube also provides a space where you can write a description about your company and link to your website and other online sites.

[Link to Internet Advertising/
Social Sites/YouTube](#)



How to Get Started

[Get Started Guide for YouTube](#)

[How to Set Up a Brand Channel](#)

[Community Guidelines](#)

[Create an Account Here](#)



Best Practices

[6 Best Practices for Small Business](#)

[Marketing on YouTube](#)



Advice for AOs

- How-to videos are very popular, but you should not expect your video to “go viral.”
- As a general rule of thumb, videos should be kept under three minutes and not exceed five minutes.
- Links to your website and social media accounts should be included near your “about” information.



Social Media

Social Sites/ LinkedIn®

Think of LinkedIn® as Facebook® for professionals; it's a networking site built for business. Users can build a profile for themselves as well as a company, then connect a feed from their blog or Twitter® account and share updates on their news or events. LinkedIn also offers targeting for business updates, which allows you to reach the people your message will impact most.

[Link to Internet Advertising/
Social Sites/LinkedIn](#)



How to Get Started

[New User Guide for LinkedIn](#)

[Company Pages Overview](#)

[Set Up an Account Here](#)



Best Practices

[Small Business Guides for LinkedIn](#)

[How to Target Your Updates](#)



Advice for AOs

- A personal LinkedIn account must be used to set up a company page.
- When posting from the company, use the activity feed/updates feature and connect your Twitter account and blog if you have one.
- You also can get recommendations from customers to feature on your page and highlight your products and services.



Social Media

Social Sites/ Google+®

Google+® is execution of social networking through Google®. The network features Hangouts (webchats) and Circles, which allow you to target who sees your updates, based on your audience needs. Your posts to Google+ can appear in search results because of how it ties to Google.



How to Get Started

[Setup Overview of Google+](#)

[Getting Started Guide](#)

[Google+ Business Information Page](#)



Best Practices

[Cheat Sheet for Google+](#)

[Best Practices for Marketers
on Google+](#)



Advice for AOs

- Google+ has a feature called Circles that allows you to target your updates to a certain group of people.
- It also has integrated with the former Google Places™ program, so small businesses can be highlighted via a local page (formerly a Google Places page).
- Posts should be more than sales messages.
- Photos are important to include in posts.



Direct Marketing Email Marketing

Email marketing is a process of sending out sales, promotional or solicitous materials to current and/or potential customers or clients. Email marketing is far more advanced than traditional direct mail as it is easier to customize and track, and is typically less expensive.



How to Get Started

[Crafting the Message](#)

[Sending Strategies](#)

[Choosing Email Service Platform](#)

[Growing and Managing Your
Distribution List](#)



Best Practices

[Maximizing Responses](#)



Advice for AOs

[Email Etiquette & Tips](#)

Additional Resources:

[eMarketing Association](#)

[Email Marketing Reports](#)

[Email Institute](#)

[Direct Marketing Association](#)



Direct Marketing

Mobile Advertising/ General Information

Mobile advertising is a form of advertising that is communicated to the consumer/target via a handset. This type of advertising is most commonly seen as a mobile Web banner (top of page), mobile Web poster (bottom of page banner) and full-screen interstitial, which appears while a requested mobile Web page is loading. Other forms of this type of advertising are short message service (SMS) and multimedia message service (MMS) ads, mobile gaming ads and mobile video ads (pre-, mid- and post-roll).



How to Get Started

[Mobile Guidelines \(pg. 3\)](#)

[How to Generate Sales With Mobile](#)



Best Practices

[Mobile Web Best Practices](#)



Advice for AOs

- Mobile advertising provides direct communication to your target audience.
- Be sure your distribution lists are up to date.
- Be conscious of how often you send messages.



Direct Marketing

Mobile Advertising/ Text Messaging (SMS)

SMS stands for *short message service*. SMS also is often referred to as texting, sending text messages or text messaging. The service allows for short text messages to be sent from one cellphone to another cellphone or from the Internet to another cellphone.



How to Get Started

[Text Messaging Guidelines \(pg. 7\)](#)



Best Practices

[Industry Best Practices](#)
[Mobile Marketing General Guidelines](#)



Advice for AOs

- Some people are charged for incoming messages, so ask if they would like to receive messages before sending them.



Direct Marketing Mobile Advertising/ Multimedia Messaging (MMS)

MMS stands for *multimedia messaging service*, which is often used to send pictures, extends upon SMS and allows for longer content lengths.



How to Get Started
[MMS Guidelines \(pg. 10\)](#)



Best Practices
[Mobile Marketing General Guidelines](#)



Advice for AOs

- Not all phones will display the images included in your message the same so be sure to develop content that can accommodate all screen types.



Direct Marketing Mobile Advertising/ QR Codes

Quick response (QR) codes are square bar codes that hold information that can be read and decoded with QR code scanners on smartphones or mobile phones with cameras. QR codes can contain links to websites, videos, coupons, directions and much more, and are fun and unique features that further enhance the consumer experience.



How to Get Started [Starter Tool Kit](#)



Best Practices [Best Practices for Print](#) [10 Great Ways to Use QR Codes](#)



Advice for AOs

- QR codes are very trendy right now and get a great response rate from users.
- QR codes can be leverage in a variety of ways — direct to website or engagement.



Direct Marketing Mobile Advertising/ Coupons

A mobile coupon is an electronic ticket solicited and/or delivered by mobile phone that can be exchanged for a financial discount on a product or service.

[Link to Internet Advertising/
Coupon Offers](#)



How to Get Started

[5 Stages of Mobile Price Promotions](#)



Best Practices

[Best Practices \(pg. 5\)](#)



Advice for AOs

- Couponing is very popular right now — who doesn't like a good deal?
- Coupons can be delivered on multiple platforms (email, text or via apps).
- Even though couponing is popular, make sure your target audience is engaged with couponing.



Review Your Website

After reading the best practices guide, you may be wondering what the next best step to take is — just follow these steps and you will cover most of what needs to be done to get a plan in place to optimize your website.

The good news is that many Authorized Operators (AOs) have relatively small websites consisting of a few pages outlining the services they offer, a service area page, a contact page and sometimes pest identification and blog pages.

Here is where to start:

- 1) Lay out a diagram of your pages so all are accounted for and can be reviewed.
- 2) Read the pages. Is your message conveyed in a regular speaking tone? Is it easy and interesting to read all the way to the bottom of the page? Are the graphics fresh and clear? Do your eyes get drawn to a certain part of the page and away from the text? This is a chance to rethink and rewrite the message. Do not write it for the search engines; write it for your customers and be sure the intended keywords are used on the page — keep it simple. Keep the keyword density of your target keywords low — less than 2 percent seems to make the most sense for most websites.
- 3) For each page, open up the source in your browser (right-click, select View Source). Look at the meta title and meta descriptions on each page. The meta title should be very clear about what your site is about and likely will use the main search term you want people to find you with — something like “Cincinnati Pest Control | Cincinnati Exterminating” is a good title if you are a pest control company in Cincinnati. Do the same for the meta description for each page. Think of the meta description as your enticement to get someone to click on your listing. Include an offer and maybe even your phone number on the home page meta description. Include a very thorough and unique description on every page. Each page should have unique meta titles and descriptions. This is very important to the search engines.
- 4) Be sure all images throughout the site have an alt tag that is friendly and readable.
- 5) Look at your URLs and be sure they are very simple and describe the page. If they do not, then change them to reflect the page.
- 6) Be sure you have Google Webmaster Tools™ and Google Analytics™ installed so you can track how people are finding your website and any issues that are occurring.

By doing these simple steps, you will be ahead of 90 percent of all websites that exist! If you are not comfortable with these tasks or are uncertain about making changes to your site, hire a professional to do the work for you. These are simple changes to make and should not cost much to review and implement.

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Always read and follow label directions.



Crafting the Message

Above all, emails should be clear, concise and scannable, so recipients can get to the key points quickly. This is especially important in the age of mobile devices, because screens are smaller and people are reading “on the go” more.

Length

- Using the preview pane is the way in which most people scan emails. Because recipients may not open the full email, it is important to get to the point in the first or second line, and then expound later if needed.
- The top of an email is valuable real estate, so don't clutter it with unnecessary words. For those who open the email, be sure to have important content above the email “fold” (which is generally the top 300 pixels) and avoid unnecessary scrolling for readers.
- Keep the email short. Recipients may get overwhelmed if they don't have time to read it, so it will get skipped over altogether.
- To help with content-heavy emails, provide a quick summary with a link to longer information for recipients who need to read more.

Content

- Provide compelling content as a value exchange for readers' time. It should be interesting, be to the point and provide readers with information they need and want.
- Use clear, action-oriented language with short sentences. Think of it as an electronic mail piece and use traditional direct marketing techniques and language to get the recipient to open your “electronic” envelope.
- Use short paragraphs, headlines, subheads, bolding, text fonts/color and bullet points to aid in scanning.
- Traditional rules of good grammar, spelling and punctuation apply to email. Create a professional appearance for the sender. Don't use slang or “text speak.”
- Compose emails as if you are talking to one person.
- Images can help break up heavy text. However, Microsoft® Outlook® can automatically block images, so try to keep things simple and don't make the message image-dependent.
- Be sure to reinforce company values and provide a uniform voice. This can be done through consistency in corporate branding, color themes, formatting style or other creative elements, such as a masthead.
- Use template signatures that can be stored in a drop-down menu and contain more information than the signature — perhaps a reminder about a sales promotion, change in service hours or a special event.



Crafting the Message (cont.)

- Company logos may come through as attachments. Avoid setting email signatures up this way, because it clouds the process of searching for document attachments.
- Avoid sending large attachments — period. Instead, provide a link to content via a website URL.
- Video in an email can add value and increase readership. Keep video length shorter than one minute (or even 30 seconds if it is not delivered through a link, as that is optimal for recipients' bandwidth on some devices).
- When preparing content for newsletter-type documents within email templates, do not copy and paste from Microsoft Word®, as Word content is not Web-ready content. First copy and paste into Windows® Notepad or Mac® TextWrangler before putting it into an email template. If a specific email platform is being used, fonts and headlines can be formatted using those tools.
- Aim for high quality, but do know that the content and style can be varied to continually present fresh information and engage the audience. One example of this is varying Outlook emails with HTML messages.
- Make calls to action stand out from the rest of the content.

Format

- Type font should be at least 10 points and a nonserif, readable font such as Arial. Script fonts and trendy fonts are not recommended.
- Links should look like links and be formatted blue and underlined. Be careful not to place the link before important information in the email; otherwise, the recipient may click on the link and not finish reading the email. Don't include punctuation after hyperlinks, as this can create a bad link.
- Predesigned, tested templates (tested across the globe on various devices to be sure it renders correctly) can help optimize email deliverability, save time for the writer and help to have the email recognized more quickly by the sender — ultimately increasing the chances of being opened.
- Text works better with mobile devices, so if sending HTML, always make a text version, as well. This will help with any spam issues if the email gets routed outside of the company, as spam filters are triggered when HTML is sent.
- Avoid complex HTML, graphics, columns and tables.



Crafting the Message (cont.)

Technical Design

- To render properly on iPhone® or Android® devices, any special email designs need to be closer to 480 pixels wide versus the standard 600. A piece of code can be added to designs to render the email properly.
- Make headlines and buttons at least 44 pixels tall to view properly on mobile devices.
- Don't use multiple columns in designs, because some devices will not display content on the far right. Instead, use a grid system, which gives the design a better chance of shrinking without compromising the "look."
- Test before you send so you know if the links work properly and the email renders correctly on iPhone, Android, BlackBerry® and other devices. (Some mobile testing tools like Email on Acid or D-Test exist to help do this.)
- If you desire a background color for your email, create a table with a width of 100 percent and set the background color for that table.
- Be careful with animated GIFs in email, as some email platforms do not support them. Same with Adobe® Flash®, movies and java scripting, as these types of rich media are not supported in many email programs and antivirus programs can block the whole message. (Instead, put these interactive pieces on a landing page that link to the email.)
- If you are linking to other websites or email, check to see if they are blacklisted or reported as spam sources. Even if the company has a clean history, the website could have been used illegally by spammers to send out spam mail. (Some of these spam-check services include Spamcheck, Delivery Monitor, Inbox Inspector and Campaign Monitor.)

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Always read and follow label directions.



Sending Strategies

The life cycle of an email is to get received, opened, read and stored appropriately. Here we will focus on a few key areas — subject lines, to/from lines and timing — that will make a difference in an email breaking through the rest.

Subject Line

- “Search” is key, and subject lines should always be written with the intent that they may be searched for later.
- Make every character count in the subject line by using 30 to 50 characters to describe the email content. The shorter the better to be sure users on mobile devices are getting the information succinctly and will be able to view on smaller screens.
- Create relevancy to the end user, and provide perceived value to the recipient. For instance, subject lines that use the words “how to” have higher open rates.
- Consider personalization in the subject line to also increase open rates. Calling out a person’s name will provide a better connection. (For example, *Jim, protect your home this spring.*)
- Test subject lines for more formal communications or frequent/standard communications before you send to the bigger audience. This will give you greater confidence that your important email will be opened. If you don’t have an email platform that can conduct subject line testing with your audience, there are many services that offer subject line testing.
- Likewise, for more regular communications, such as ongoing newsletters, keep an element of standardization to them for future searching ease and making it easier to recognize the content (e.g., name/tagline or volume number, such as *Marketing Motivations Vol. 2, No. 12*) but don’t use the same exact subject line description of the content; otherwise, customers won’t open it because they think they are getting the same thing. (For example, *Here is the most recent newsletter* would be an example of a nondistinctive subject line.)
- Use a call to action in the subject line to help give the readers an idea of what they need to do with the information. (e.g., *Provide feedback, For your information, Input needed*).
- Weekly newsletters with identical subject lines lack click appeal. If customers get the feeling they’re about to read the same thing they read in a previous email, they won’t open the email in the first place.



Sending Strategies (cont.)

Timing

- Between 6 to 10 a.m. and no later than 4 p.m. is the best time to send email. The time between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. should be avoided, as people go to lunch or are busy checking their personal email, Facebook® or Twitter® accounts.
- Try to avoid first thing on a Monday morning, when most people are not at their prime. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are the best days for email (especially newsletter-type emails to large distribution lists).
- As a sender, make sure you set expectations with recipients for regular scheduled communications so they know the frequency to expect them. If they know you only send emails once per month on specific topics, they will be more open to not missing your message when it arrives.
- Coordinate your timing of emails with other communication methods such as direct mail, voice mail or in-person meetings so email can help to deliver the one-two punch to make the message stand out more and be remembered.

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Choosing Email Service Platform

Email marketing can be easy to execute if you have the right tools. Email platforms (software or cloudware) can help you optimize your efforts and keep your time and resource investment simple.

Here are a few tips for choosing the right email platform for your business:

- 1) Set a budget. Email platform costs can range from entirely free to a high monthly licensing or subscription fee. Be sure when researching services that require payment that you also find out if you will be locked into a long-term contract or if you can exit at any time. Make a list of email platforms that fit your budget.
- 2) Identify the features that you want, and then prioritize them. Decide which ones are essential and which ones are not feasible or necessary.
- 3) Request a trial. You should always be able to view a demonstration, and more often than not, you can try a platform before you buy it.
- 4) Choose your platform! Install and test it before you “go live” with any programs. Be sure to include yourself and other staff members in the testing process so you can see firsthand what your target audience will receive.

Some examples of email service platforms include AWeber®, Campaigner®, Campaign Monitor, Constant Contact®, ExactTarget®, iContact®, Lyris®, Mad Mimi®, MailChimp® or VerticalResponse®.

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Maximizing Responses

Attention spans are short, so the goal of email is to communicate information quickly and clearly so recipients have current information at hand to move forward on a given project or serve as a historical recap of previous decisions made or items discussed. Always keep in mind, “What would I like this recipient to do with this information and what is the benefit for them?” For this reason, it may be useful to divide your audience into smaller groups to be sure they respond appropriately and are motivated to use the information provided.

Here are the do’s and don’ts of writing emails including a call to action:

Do:

- Include your call to action (or a suggestion of the call to action) in the preview area, because this is how many recipients read emails.
- Label items in the subject line area or the headline of the email, with action words (e.g., *Action Required*, *For Distribution*, or *No Action: FYI only*).
- Visible support from internal leaders in the company (used as the sender’s name) will increase the chances of the email getting opened and read.
- Use incentivizing language and highlight the value the recipient will get by replying appropriately. For instance, communicate why a customer would be interested in receiving this and how it could impact them.
- Synchronize emails for standardized communications so recipients are not receiving too many emails. The more emails received at the same time, the less likely you will get the response you desire.
- Utilize deadlines to give greater attention to what needs to happen by when.
- Create ongoing dialogues, but when asking for opinions of others in an email, use survey tools (such as QuestionPro, SurveyMonkey® or a dedicated landing page with a survey) to gather results and not clog inboxes with responses or votes from everyone on your distribution list. Be sure the forms/surveys are simple to read and react to.
 - Later, these surveys or polls can be shared with recipients, thus creating an ongoing dialogue. Quick poll questions can be interesting to ask and then share quickly. Many mobile marketers are using this tactic frequently.
- For standardized communications (such as newsletters), consider using email platforms that can measure results such as open rates and click-through rates. You will gain a better understanding of what content is being consumed and how motivated recipients are to read it. If a lot of people read the message but don’t click on the link (or respond to the call to action), then you need to identify new ways to interact with the audience.



Maximizing Responses (cont.)

- Create links to Web pages, blogs or social media sites for conversations to continue for interested recipients outside the email system.
- Free versions of Google Analytics™ can provide code to add to links and track where recipients are coming from to get to certain pages of websites and how long they are staying to review content.
- Email platforms allow senders to test various subject lines before the email is sent out to the whole distribution group. This is called an A/B test, and by doing this, one learns which subject line will create higher email open rates and increase the chances of getting the responses requested.
- Use action words or buttons such as *Download Now*. Also, if possible, include a small graphic to make the call to action feel more tangible (such as a picture of a white paper).

Don't:

- Don't blend the call to action with the regular copy. Make it stand out with bolder text or a different color.
- Don't put the call to action before another piece of important information that you want people to read, as they may do what you ask but then don't go back to read the rest of the email. (However, it is important for the call to action to be above the "fold" on the email.)
- Don't ask for more than one call to action per message, and make it clear and easy to understand. When more calls to action are given, this can decrease response rates. However, it is appropriate to repeat the same call to action in the email.
- Don't wait! Emails sent right after an event, trade show or a noted behavior (like a triggered email right after someone provides information, purchases or visits a certain website), have higher open rates. So if you would like the recipient to do something, these types of emails have higher open rates; therefore, the response to your call to action will be greater.
- Don't link to a landing page for more information unless you have the call to action prominent on the page, and make sure the landing page connects graphically with the email, so recipients know they have landed on the correct landing page.

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Email Etiquette & Tips

- Because of the number of recipients checking email on small-screen devices, write responses above the quoted text and avoid mixing in replies in the middle of quoted text.
- When people send emails, they are looking for quick responses. So, try to answer right away (during your dedicated email answering time) and don't put it off; otherwise, you may get another email following up for a response, which just adds to more in the inbox.
- Develop a system for email reading. Don't be glued to it and have it disrupt other work projects that need dedicated "think/work" time. Set aside periodic times during the day to answer emails and try not to let it accumulate, as it will be harder to catch up later and figure out what is important and what is not.
- When distribution lists are large, avoid replying with one-word answers that indicate the email was received (e.g., *Thanks* or *OK*), as this creates an influx of additional emails sent to the sender that are not necessary.
- If a sender copies other people on the note and asks for some information, assume it is most time-efficient to "reply all" so all people copied on the note see the response, versus the sender needing to forward your response to everyone on the email distribution list.
- On a similar note, resist the urge to press "reply all" unless everyone really needs to see your response (especially on larger distribution lists).
- To help save time, only look at the last message in a conversation chain, as the discussion may have been concluded or the problem already solved.
- To help control the amount of email received and manage what you have effectively, tell individuals/groups which types of emails you need to be copied on (for instance, only action-oriented emails.) Also, send fewer emails yourself and rely more on conversations in person or over the phone to help limit the amount of back-and-forth email discussions.
- Fill in the *cc:* and the *to:* last on emails. This way, you won't accidentally press "send" before the email is completely drafted and risk looking unprofessional.
- For more complex emails that involve many elements, keep a checklist of things to test before sending the email. (These can be links and versions as how the email renders on various devices through the sending of a few test messages.)