

Email formatting for success

By David Callan

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David Callan
admin@akamarketing.com

AKA Marketing.com <http://www.akamarketing.com>

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So you've started using autoresponders, ezines and opt-in lists to market your products and websites. You've been waiting for a few days for the profits to roll in, but nothing, not even one sale. Why? You might ask yourself, well the problem's either that your ad copy is so poor and filled with so many misspellings that people simply couldn't be bothered to check out, never mind buy your product.

The more likely problem is the format of your email. Ask yourself the following question, am I sure that everyone can see my email alright? The answer - probably not. But you should be sure, well at least 90% sure because there are always going to be quirky and weird email services and programs out there, which display everything differently from the standard way.

I presume you understand why email formatting is so important to your email marketing campaign. But if not here's a few sentences that should enable you to understand.

Our new product is so

great, please buy our product, it's

really cheap and

great value.

If you buy now you can save 55% off the

normal

sale price. You probably don't want

to buy from us because as you can see, we don't take our

job

seriously, heck we don't even to both

er to format our emails that

we send out to our

potential customers, but if you do, for some reason still want to

buy, [click here](#).

When someone opens this email, you instantly lose any professionalism and credibility you may have had before. The effect is twice as negative on your sales than the poor copy filled with misspelling problem outlined above. This is because people won't bother to even read your email, never mind about them noticing poor spelling and copy. If people don't even read your email then you're not going to make a dime. Making money is what it's all about and your not going to make a dime, total failure is therefore certain. That's why email formatting is so important.

So what can you do the make sure that at least 90% of the people you're emailing your message to can see it properly. Well there are two or three things that stand out in my mind when I'm writing and therefore formatting my emails.

First up there's line length, this is what I consider to be most important when formatting. It is the main cause of the silly looking email extract above. Most email readers such as Eudora, Pegasus and both Microsoft's Outlook and Outlook Express will open on default to line length's of 65 characters. So all you have to do to avoid the problem is set your line length to 65 characters which equals an indentation of about 2 and a half inches. Doing this will mean that almost everyone you send emails to will all be seeing the same or similar layout.

I say almost because some older clients don't have text wrap and your email could display as one long line of text. These clients are dying fast, especially as Eudora and Microsoft both offer a free client from their respective websites. For extra piece of mind however, always press the return button every

65 characters, doing this will eradicate the problem of older clients.

Make sure your paragraphs are short, maybe around five or six lines, anything longer will take up too much space and the reader will most likely find it very difficult to read. Again if someone can't read, they also can't buy. Having white space will make your email look and read better, so remember five or six lines per paragraph, no longer.

The next point to remember when formatting an email, is that most email clients use fixed width fonts to display emails. So if you're typing and formatting an email in Arial or any other non-fixed width, when in fact most of the people that are going to see it have email clients that use a fixed width font such as Courier, you can bet your bottom dollar that it's going to look very messy for them.

To be sure this doesn't happen always type your emails in Courier. The Courier font looks good even when the person uses an email client which defaults to a non-fixed width font like Arial. Currently however the only big name email client that does not default to a fixed width font is Eudora, so using Arial just does not make sense at all.

So there you have it, the above few pointers should steer you onto the right track and at least give your ezine, autoresponder and opt-in emails a chance of pulling in at least a bit of the profit we both know you deserve.

Article by David Callan - admin@akamarketing.com

David is the webmaster of <http://www.akamarketing.com> .

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