

# To Email or Not to Email?

By Melissa Werkenthin

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A new spin on an old idea is email direct marketing. Traditional direct marketing, or mailers, can be costly in both production and shipping. Even a simple letter mailer to a few select zip codes or targeted demographic of a few hundred names can cost thousands of dollars.

Email direct marketing, or email marketing, has the benefit of low production and no shipping costs. Never again will you be subject to the constraints and costs of shipping with the United States Postal Service. Additionally, tracking of results happens in a matter of days instead of weeks or months, and multiple messages can be sent for the same campaign without additional production or postal costs. Using HTML formatting and customization tools to personalize the message are also available at the fraction of traditional direct mail costs.

Unfortunately, email marketing has acquired a bad reputation due to "spamming" (sending unsolicited emails). Additionally, recent Internet privacy litigation and legislation has made many leery of using email marketing. However, by following a few simple guidelines, email marketing is an effective and cost efficient advertising tool.

- (1) Only use an opt-in email list. For an email to be added to this list the person must specifically request to receive periodic information on that specific category (i.e. Sports, Shopping, Travel, etc.).
- (2) Have a measurable purpose for the email campaign. Email marketing should not be used for branding campaigns. Instead, use them for special offers, contest, surveys, or other call-to-action campaigns.
- (3) Target specific demographics to maximize response.
- (4) Create a campaign specific URL to track results.
- (5) Only choose 1-2 messages for the campaign. Over-subdividing the mailing list skews the results, thus making it difficult determine the success of the campaign. In general, have at least 10,000 names per message if running multiple messages.
- (6) Have a compelling offer. Saying you have the best prices or a great selection is not enough for a person to click-thru. Offer a special discount (i.e. 15% off first purchase) or limited time offer to compel the user to click-thru.
- (7) Tie the email campaign into the overall marketing plan.
- (8) Set realistic goals. Though email marketing can produce results up to and beyond 30% click-thru, these are extremely rare instances. A more realistic goal is 2-10%.

As with any facet of your marketing plan do not be afraid to experiment or think outside of the box. Try a variety of email list, text messages, and formats until you find the best performing one for your business. By keeping these guidelines in mind will help you plan and execute an effective email

marketing campaign as part of your overall marketing strategy.

Melissa Werkenthin is the owner and founder of Loki Media, a marketing and advertising consulting firm specializing in electronic media. For more information about her services or if you would like to receive a free monthly e-newsletter, Marketing Your Business, please visit [www.lokimedia.com](http://www.lokimedia.com) or email Melissa Werkenthin.

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