

Do you have an email marketing strategy?

So, you've done your homework, checked out the relevant stats and have happily concluded that email marketing offers you all the right things and suits your business needs perfectly. That's a decision well made, because even a decade on it still delivers one of the highest ROI's over any other e-marketing activity.

 By [Georgia Christian](#) 11 Apr 2011



And while email marketing doesn't require an astrophysics degree to understand it, you do need to have a solid strategy in place before you start on any projects. Here are some important points to help get you started and thinking about your strategy:

1. What are your goals?

It's absolutely vital that you determine what you want to achieve with your email marketing campaign before you launch the first into it. There are a couple of questions that you can ask yourself that will help you determine what these are.

Firstly, besides brand awareness, think about the purpose of your email campaign:

- Do you want to impart your expert knowledge of an industry with interesting articles and posts?
- Are you selling or promoting your product or service?
- Are you providing transactional details about something a customer has purchased or requested?
- Are you informing them about your updated website, or new social network platform?
- Are you trying to build your subscriber database?
- Are you offering a limited special deal or discount?
- Are you sending event triggered email campaigns? These include abandoned cart messages, newsletter sign ups, transactional messages, event registrations, subscriber's birthdays, updated profile confirmations, friendly reminders etc.

Different functions generally require different email formats and content, which is why it's important that you determine the purpose of each campaign and then think about the message that needs to go into each of them.

2. How often do you want to send emails?

The frequency of your campaigns is hugely relevant. Hit the send button too often and your subscribers will get irritated; ignoring you or flagging you as spam. Send too infrequently and they might forget who you are, what your product is and why they signed up in the first place, in which case they'll likely also just report you as a spammer.

It's up to you to find out what your subscribers are interested in and how often they'd like to hear from you. There are two main ways that you can get this information from them; the first is with an email preference centre. When your subscriber first sign up direct them to this page and let them know this is where they can update their profile, choose which email newsletters they're interested in (if you have more than one) and decide how often they'd like to receive them. A preference

centre is also a good idea because your subscribers can make changes as and when they like.

Another way to get this information is through a brief customer survey, which can be sent out immediately after someone signs up or a couple of days later. Ideally, you want to gather this data as soon as you're able, so that you can ensure your campaigns are relevant and targeted right from the beginning.

3. Have you thought about what content or campaigns can be created in advance?

It's a good idea to have a list of topics for your newsletters that you can fall back on when you simply can't think of anything and you're scheduled to send your next newsletter tomorrow. Easy ideas you can work off the back of and which have proven to be popular with different customers and subscribers include:

- Event listings,
- Trivia, history and interesting facts
- Lists and how-to guides
- Industry questions and answers
- Trends and predictions
- Customer survey and feedback
- Product reviews
- Links to interesting and relevant articles
- Your latest/most popular blog posts

It's also not a bad idea to carry a small notebook with you so that you can jot down ideas as and when they come to you. Remember that everything you see, hear, read, watch and experience can be a potential story for your next newsletter.

Think about campaigns that you can create in advance and have ready to go at short notice, just don't forget to personalise or update them before you send them out. These could be promotions, specials, discounts, vouchers etc. based around:

- Valentine's Day
- St Patrick's Day (because everyone is Irish on St Paddy's Day!)
- Easter
- 4th July
- Thanksgiving and Christmas
- Eid, Hanukkah, Passover and other important religious holidays (of course with any religious holiday email campaign needs to be thoughtfully segmented and you need to be sure you have the subscriber data to back it up.)
- Customer loyalty, prestigious buyer etc.
- Change of season
- Customers who haven't visited the site/bought anything recently ("where have you been?")

It's really worth taking the time to consider these points and put into place a strong email marketing strategy that you're happy with and that's relatively simple to maintain, because at the end of the day, if you aren't able to define what it is you want to achieve, then how can you begin to go about getting it?

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