4 Tips for Maximizing Your Email Open Rates

In case you haven't noticed, this month on the Outward Media blog we're following a Halloween theme and focusing on the biggest fears that entrepreneurs face. It's no secret that low email open rates are scary for businesses any way you slice them. For your customers, a full inbox can also be terrifying – there are so many unopened emails with all kinds of content lurking inside. But you can remove the fear factor for you and your customers by using the tips below to start maximizing your email open rates now.

First, let's look at what a successful rate really is. While statistics vary widely depending on industry, advertisers saw an across-the-board average open rate of [nearly 20% in 2012](#) when emailing to customers on their "house" lists. If you are consistently seeing rates fall below 15% for your house list campaigns, as opposed to an acquisition list, you may need to make some major changes. Click [here](#) for more detailed information on email statistics.

1. Perfect Your List

As always, your mailing list is of paramount importance in email marketing. Make sure you get it right. The highest quality lists are permission-based (where the customer signs up for your list) or double opt-in (where the customer is required to confirm their email address). In these cases, the customer is likely to open your emails because they already have taken action and are expecting to hear from you.

It's ok, though, if your list isn't prequalified by the customers themselves. You just have to make sure you find the right people yourself. Be specific about the characteristics of your target customer as you compile your list. The more specific you can be about your ideal customer, the more accurate your list will be.

As an alternative to your house list, reputable [email acquisition services](#) will allow you to drill down by demographics, industry, job title and more. Take advantage of these services to build a targeted prospect list that will yield higher open rates and data accuracy of as much as 90%. Best-of-breed data acquisition providers will also allow you to download the business contacts data so that you can add it to your existing house list and continue to use the information over time.

After preparing your list, the next step is to segment it. For instance, don't just mail to a list that focuses on the residential real estate market. In reality, you probably want to target just buyers, or sellers, or builders, but not all three with the exact same message.

And last, get the email addresses right. Make sure you are sending to the correct people and that you have their email addresses correct. Also make sure the sender email is professional and recognizable as coming from your company. You want your customer to trust your sender address, not to be spooked about spam. Again, a reputable business contacts provider will do the heavy data cleansing for you, which will bolster email accuracy and ultimately lead to higher open rates for your campaigns.

2. Get the Timing Right

It may surprise you to know that the timing of emails has a huge impact on whether or not they are opened. It seems that, in general, the sweet spot for email timing is early Thursday morning.

Of course, this doesn't mean every email you send has to go out at that time, but the statistics on email timing, coupled with knowledge of your customers' habits, need to be considered for the best open rate results. If you are targeting an industry full of people who work primarily on weekend nights, for instance, Thursday morning is not going work for your email campaign.

3. Subject Line and Pre-Header Text

Now that you're pretty confident you have your email in the customer's inbox at just the right time, you need to make them want to see what's inside. The subject line and pre-header text are critical. Make sure your subject line is brief, pertinent and compelling to your customer. Then use the 50 or so characters that will show up in the pre-header text to draw the customer in and make them want to click open the email.

Be careful not to go overboard with your sense of urgency, though. All-caps and multiple exclamation points can feel like yelling to your customer. You don't want them to think you are angry or desperate. Instead of "ACT NOW AND SAVE!!!!" try "Replacement widgets 20% off – coupon inside." The first subject line is too vague and a little scary, but the second tells the customer exactly how they will benefit by opening the email.

4. Tracking, Measuring and Adjusting

Once you've got these variables nailed, don't forget to track and measure everything. That way you can see what is working, and make adjustments to what isn't. Use your email service provider's data to check which emails were opened, when they were opened, and by whom.

You may find that your message was particularly appealing (or appalling) to a certain subset of your list. You can capitalize on that with future campaigns.

Or you may find that the highest open rates occurred at a time you weren't expecting, say Tuesday at 4:00 p.m. If that's the case, then send your next email on Tuesday at 4:00. It is up to you to keep track of what happens to your emails after you hit "send" and to adjust accordingly.

As you begin to use the keys above, followed by constant observation and adjustment, you will see your open rates increase, which will inevitably lead to more engagement with your customers, and ultimately more sales.

###

One way to put your sales pipeline on the fast track is to use a business contacts service like BizFACTZ. Specifically designed to fuel sales, profits and customer growth for entrepreneurs, BizFACTZ allows you to

*quickly identify and download contact information associated with your desired target markets across a broad section of business demographics and industries. If you think you might want to give BizFACTZ a try, use offer code **INTRO** and receive a 20% discount on your first order. Click <u>here</u> to find out more.*