



# Mastering Email Marketing

A Guide for Today's Marketer

# Email marketing: The way forward

Email is an incredible tool in digital marketing. That idea is not new.

More than 4 billion emails were sent by APSIS customers alone in 2023, and Statista predicts that the world will send and receive about 392.5 billion emails by 2026. So, it's clear that emails will continue to play an even more important role in our everyday lives.

What is new, however, are the ways in which we marketers can harness the power of email to grow our business and offer greater value.

Technology has advanced in recent years. One of the most notable developments has been the integration of AI (Artificial Intelligence) into email marketing platforms.

These AI-based systems use machine learning and natural language processing to analyse users' past behaviour, preferences, and interactions with emails, allowing to create hyper-personalised email campaigns that are tailored to each subscriber's interests and needs. This makes it easier to enhance your email marketing strategy and consistently deliver relevant, engaging, and impactful content to subscribers.



## The future of email is here

Although email has come a long way since its inception, it remains one of the most powerful tools for marketers everywhere. So, what does the future hold for email?

Today's consumers are demanding and expecting higher levels of personalisation. Just addressing them by their first name no longer cuts it. You need to be able to cater to where they are in the customer journey and react to their actions — and inactions, in real time.

Marketers are shifting away from bulk promotional emails towards data-driven, action-based, targeted communications at scale.

Personalisation and Automation are your keys to the future. You need to reach the right people at the perfect time if you want to stand out in a crowded inbox.

That is where we at APSIS have you covered.

This Email Marketing Handbook will cover everything a modern marketer needs to know. With our help, you can expand your knowledge, discover new methods and increase the overall value of your email marketing efforts.

Before we get into it, remember this:

## Email is for **more** than selling

Email is great at getting people to buy a product or download that new report you wrote. It's so effective that it's easy to lose sight of broader and long-term marketing responsibilities and goals.

There is nothing wrong with a newsletter containing an offer. In fact, that's one of the most common forms of email marketing. However, if you only ever send emails that say, "Buy NOW!", then you're missing out on all the other potential in email marketing

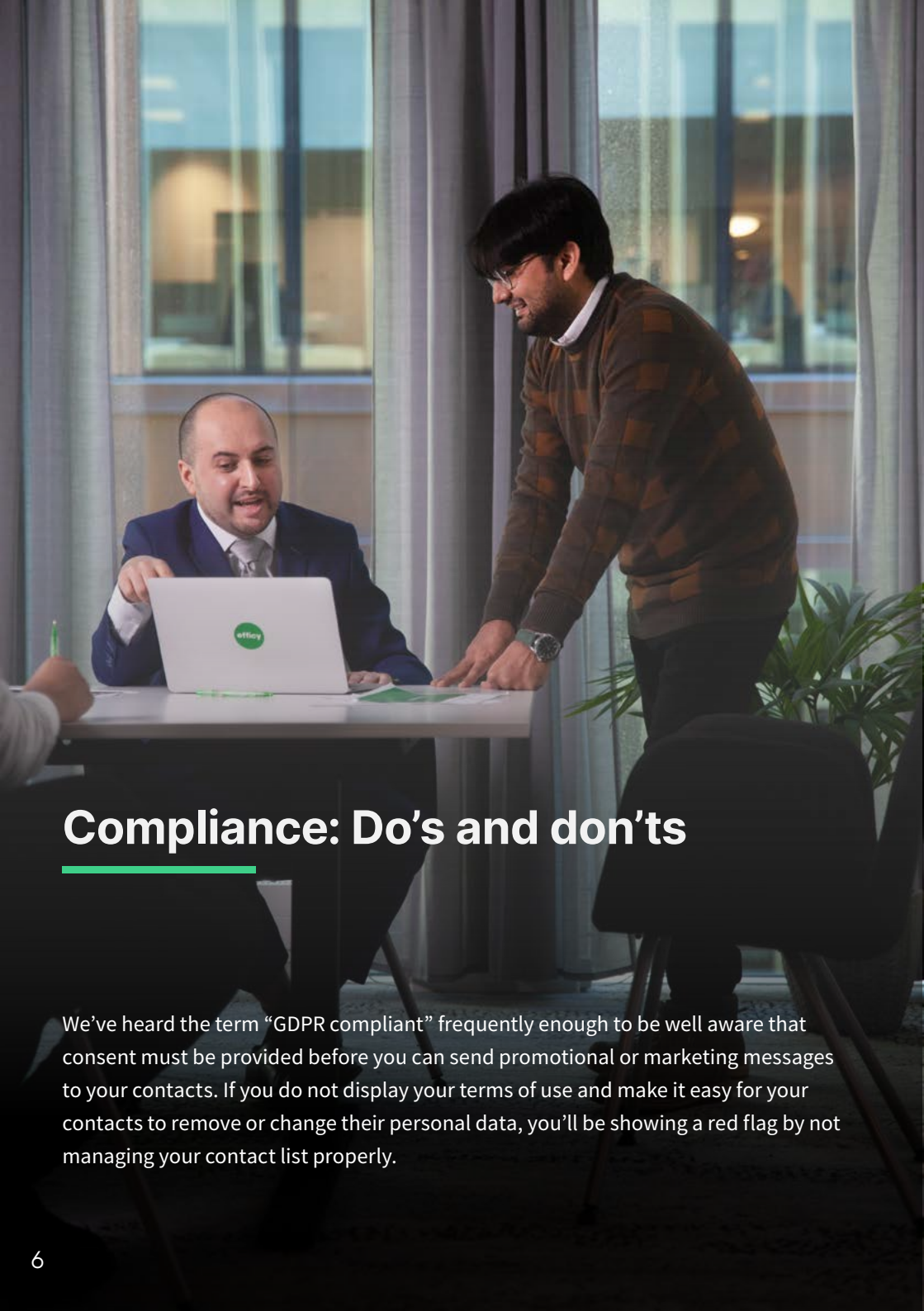
A better alternative is a well-implemented email marketing campaign that encourages both direct and indirect responses.

Such campaigns don't just sell but also strengthen the brand, build relationships, and create value for your email subscribers. You invest in the future by providing your contacts with something valuable today.



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## Compliance: Do's and don'ts

We've heard the term "GDPR compliant" frequently enough to be well aware that consent must be provided before you can send promotional or marketing messages to your contacts. If you do not display your terms of use and make it easy for your contacts to remove or change their personal data, you'll be showing a red flag by not managing your contact list properly.

## Why is permission important?

The vast majority of marketers who send newsletters do so with good intentions. They want the email to be read and acted upon, and they don't want to be perceived as someone who sends junk, spam or unsolicited bulk email.

When you ask people how they define spam, you get a range of answers. But somewhere at the top, you usually find "email I didn't ask for" or "email from a sender I don't know".

While people may not be particularly emotional about their physical letterbox, the inbox is typically seen as a more private, personal space, and respecting that is crucial.

There are negative consequences of sending marketing emails without the recipient's permission. But while permission is a serious issue, it's not complicated! Here are a few practices to make sure you're protecting your contacts' personal data as you grow your audience.

## Are you getting permission?

Your contacts must actively provide consent before you send any marketing to them.

## Are you in touch with inactive subscribers?

Contacts might not remember that they signed up to your list. Reconfirm addresses or unsubscribe inactive contacts to avoid spam complaints.

## Are your contacts able to modify their data?

Contacts should be able to modify or complete their info at any time. You can create a preference form where they can update their info and preferences by themselves.


## Are you making it easy to unsubscribe?

Have you provided a clear unsubscribe link in your email footer? It's never nice when someone leaves, but it would improve the quality of your list, and the law requires it.



## Is my list compliant or not?

Ever been uncertain if your email list is safe to use or not? Worry not! Here are a few examples of common situations you may find yourself in to help you navigate the tricky world of compliance!

| Example   | Compliant or not?   | Tip   |
|---|---|---|
| "We bought a list of email addresses from an online website".   |    | Lists like these violate the rules of consent under GDPR and other data protection regulations. These lists usually have high bounce rates with outdated or incorrect email addresses, and because these contacts did not actively give permission, it could result in spam complaints — both of which damage your sender reputation. |
| "We would like to add new customers who signed into our app through Google and LinkedIn"  |    | This also violates the rule of consent as they have not explicitly agreed to receive your emails. Like buying a list of addresses, this can also result in bounces and spam complaints.   |
| "We were at a trade fair last week and collected some business cards. We'd like to start sending them emails about our upcoming event."           |  | If you explicitly told them you would be sending emails, it's fine to add them to your contacts list. Keep in mind that it can be difficult to prove consent or permission this way   |
| "We just launched a newsletter program and would like to start emailing people from a list of email addresses gathered from an event a year ago." |  | There's a chance these contacts have forgotten about this or have changed email addresses. Old lists might contribute to high bounce, and low opens and clicks. Send them a confirmation email to ask if they still wish to hear from you.  |

\*Note that the guide above cannot be considered as legal advice. Always check your local regulations before using our services.

## Consent is key

It's unlikely that any regular Internet user will be happy to receive irrelevant commercial emails without knowing who's sending them.

That's your first red flag that buying lists isn't a good idea at all. In fact, sending emails to a list of bought addresses is such a bad idea that professional email marketing services actually forbid their customers from doing so.

Receiving emails from companies they don't know, with content they didn't ask for, may lead to it being marked as spam, and end up altogether rejected by email service providers. Lack of permission also usually means emailing such lists is illegal under most email laws around the world.

**The average email open rate to recipients who have given you permission to contact them is around 30–40%.**

**While the average open rate for non-permission-based emails is 2%.**

Take the time to build your list, and maintain list hygiene with your existing subscribers so that their permission doesn't go stale. This will help reduce bounce and spam complaints as well as increase your open rate and overall health of your audience!



“Building and maintaining compliant email lists is very much the heart of effective email marketing. Just like regular exercise keeps our bodies healthy, list hygiene ensures that your campaigns will stay strong and responsive.”

**Samantha Savage**  
Email Marketing Specialist



## Why data privacy matters

How do you strike a balance between respecting your contacts' privacy and offering them a personalised email experience at the same time? The answer is: with transparency!

Here are 4 ways to accomplish it:

1

### Clearly display a link to your privacy policy

Trust and respect are important parts of email marketing. So be honest about your email policy. Many new subscribers want to know that their privacy will be respected after consent has been provided. Display a link to a detailed policy or summarise it like this:

*We will not share your information with others. Click to learn more.*

2

### Tell them what kind of emails you're sending

A subscriber should know from the start what your newsletter will contain. This sets the right expectations. Consider linking to an archive page. Don't overpromise as that will lead to disappointed subscribers, but don't restrict yourself either.

**By only sending to people who have given you permission to email them, you'll likely get **open and click-through rates 10x higher** than if you were sending to a list of people who did not subscribe.**

3

### Tell them why they should subscribe

Treat the sign-up process as an opportunity to sell your newsletter. Don't expect people just to subscribe to a "newsletter" or an "email list".

Will it help them improve something? Can they save money by signing up? They must see the clear benefits of a subscription, so ensure you communicate your email value proposition to them!

4

### Ask for just their email address first

You might like to get data such as first name, country, phone number, interests or other personal information that lets you send more targeted emails. However, the more you ask at this stage, the less likely people are to actually complete the process.

You can collect more data after they click on the Subscribe button. Create a welcome email with a link to your preference centre where they can choose to fill out their information.

## Let's talk about opt-in

When you set up your subscription form, you usually have the choice to use single or double opt-in.

Single opt-in is as easy as it sounds. People fill out a form and are subscribed to that mailing list. Nothing more than that. This could be a good sign-up method if you are trying to grow your audience size or keep the user experience as simple as possible.

Additionally, it shows that your subscribers are genuinely interested in your brand and what you have to say, meaning you will also see better levels of engagement and results with your email marketing.

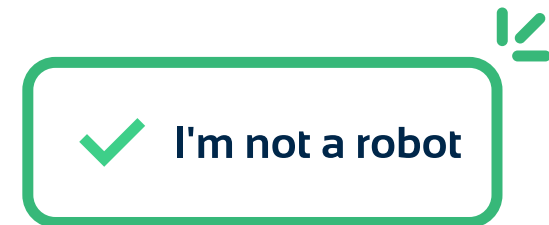
Double opt-in means people are required to click and confirm their subscription by email before they're added to your list as a subscribed contact. Doing this keeps incorrect email addresses away, greatly reduces the chances of spam addresses being added to your list and protects your sender reputation.

## I'm not a robot

There are many ways in which fake profiles can negatively affect your emails and marketing activities, from harming your deliverability rates to impacting your contact lists' hygiene and trustworthiness.

The answer is 'no' if you're wondering if reCAPTCHA, a system to detect bots, is a necessity if you already have a double opt-in process.

However, if you want healthy lists, it's always recommended to do both, especially since today's reCAPTCHA has been improved and won't require any action from the visitor — like clicking on squares with crosswalks, street signs, or deciphering hard-to-read texts.





## Know your audience

Besides the challenges of being compliant, learning how to grow your subscribers list, and target messages based on insights is another tricky task to master.

But with the right set of segmentation tools at your disposal, your email service provider will be able to do most of the heavy lifting for you.

You just need to know who you want to talk to and what you want to say. Here's how to do it:

## Step 1: Build your list

Within your organisation, it's quite common to find most people in your company are unaware you send out a newsletter. Even if they are aware, they may not know about the benefits.

Raise the status of your newsletter internally. Mobilise and motivate staff to recruit subscribers for you. Share email campaign reports with colleagues. Demonstrate how your emails are helping the company achieve its objectives.

When your colleagues see the positive effects, their interest in email marketing and finding new subscribers increases too. Suddenly, sales and account managers are keener to talk about the newsletter with their contacts — and the subscriber list grows!

### How to grow your subscriber base outside of your organisation:

#### 1 Offline contact points

When email marketers think about points of contact with potential subscribers, they usually focus on the website. Be creative and think about all your offline touchpoints with customers and prospects. For example: tablets where people can enter their details directly online, link to your mailing list in your email signatures, or paper subscription forms in waiting areas at reception.



2

### Promote your newsletter elsewhere on the internet

Become a guest-contributor in return for the promotion of your own emails or engage your social network. For example: tell your followers about soon-to-come exclusive email offers, post links to your signup page, embed sign-up forms in your social pages, or place sign-up forms on your blog.



3

### Is your newsletter “share-worthy”?

Social media has made email an even more powerful marketing tool. They complement and strengthen each other. And social media adds the possibility to reach more recipients. Having high-value content means people will share it with friends, family, and their social network. So, the better the content, the more likely they are to promote your newsletter for you!

## Step 2: Know who you’re talking to

Viewing downloads, frequent visits, and products browsed are excellent ways to see who is hot and who is not out of your customer base. It’s a wonderful way to tell who is genuinely interested in you. This is how visitors communicate with a business, so pay attention.

If they already signed up to your

mailing list, it’s a green light for you to contact them with more targeted info. But this needs to be clever; listen to them, give them what they want, and they’ll trust you more. Focus on trust — not attention.

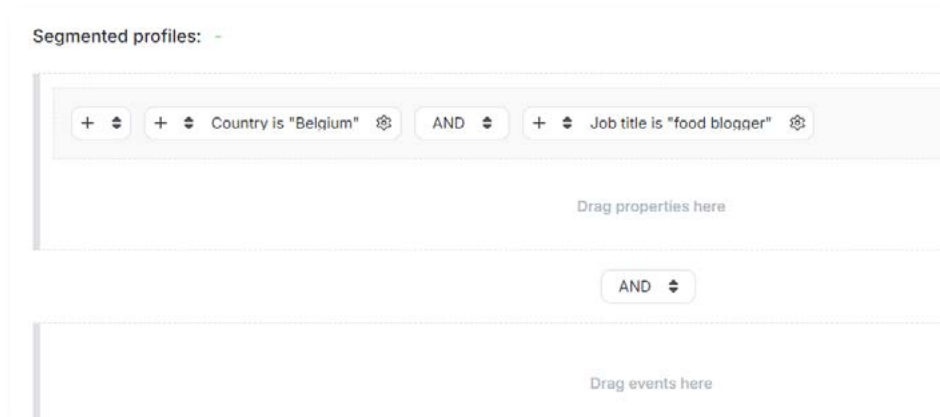
**Here’s how you can get on the right track of relevance with your subscribers:**



## Use people's attributes

Attributes, also called criteria or characteristics, are containers of essential profile data belonging to an individual who has interacted with your company. First name, location, and email address are

classic default attributes, but you can add on custom attributes with specific data that is relevant to your business to further enrich every individual profile — like, “Industry” for B2B companies or “Favourite category” if you're a retailer.



You can understand attributes as something like “type of data = data”, so: “Industry = Finance”, for example. As attributes gather data automatically and feed it into a profile, they can change depending on whether a profile meets a condition, or when a profile updates their information in your preferences centre. Here, your CRM data can be a key factor for segmentation success.

A use case for an attribute would be if you wish to send an e-invite for a restaurant opening to food bloggers living in Brussels. Then, you would segment the e-invite to go to profiles containing the country attribute “Belgium”, and occupation attribute, “food blogger”. Think of them as filters.

A modern marketing solution may assign attributes and tags to profiles when they complete a form, action — or even inaction through marketing automation, that way you won't have to manually attribute every profile yourself.

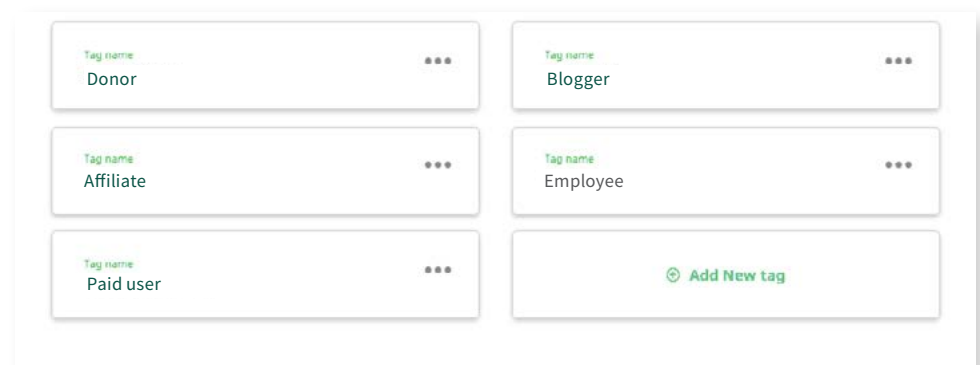
## Organising contacts with tags

What's different is that tags do not contain data. While attributes are data holders, tags are more like “Label = Yes / No” and can be added or removed manually, during a file import, or via a marketing automation flow.

Tags are usually used for internal audience organisation, and the relevance of a tag depends on its creator, so you can think of them as sort of a “label” for internal use.

For example, you can tag profiles as “Webinar attendee”, and then send specific emails to these people later. You can even create an automation that triggers when you add a tag to a contact.

There are many ways to group people, depending on the type of business you run:





## Step 3: Send the right campaign to the right person

Your audience contains a lot of information about your contacts, data like recent purchases, location, and how they interact with your channels. You can use this information to filter contacts into segments, and then target them with personalised marketing.

**Segmented email campaigns show 50% higher CTR than non-targeted campaigns.**



To segment is to filter and group audiences based on shared data, and the resulting list of grouped contacts is also called a segment. This is your first step towards communicating with relevance! Here are 3 basic ways you can group your contacts:

### 1 Segment by... demographics

Retailers, for instance, might ask subscribers to select their nearest store. This allows them to only send information about a local event to customers who actually live near the relevant location. If a subscriber is an existing customer, you might already have other information you can use, such as gender, age, or postal code.



### 2 Segment by... email response data

Statistics from previous emails will give you an idea on what type of information is effective with recipients. What links, offers or topics generated the most clicks? Use that data to adapt future emails. Let's say you send an email with offers for both wine and beer drinkers. Those who click on wine-related links can then be targeted with wine offers in the future.

### 3 Segment by... stage of the customer journey

All customers do not need the same information at the same time. Subscribers can react to content or offers differently, depending on which stage of the customer, product, or service lifecycle they are in. Imagine you market a music streaming service; you could send an offer for a plan upgrade just before a customer's free trial expires.

Taking the steps to group and organise your active profiles is important, but you don't want your list clogged up with "sleeping" contacts. All the addresses that are technically incapable of receiving emails should always be removed from your database.

## Send the right message, at the right time.

These tools give you all you need to market smarter and send people messages that matter to them. Remember to:

- ✓ **Use your insights.** Assign tags or attributes based on business needs, events, or goals.
- ✓ **Sort your contacts.** Organise audiences based on shared data, like location, event, or industry.
- ✓ **Target your emails.** Acknowledge their needs by sending the right messages and campaigns.

**82% of marketers have reported an increase in open rates through email personalisation**



# How to make your email campaigns resonate

The online customer journey is not a fast track. So, as your customers move in and out of the sales funnel, your messages need to follow suit.

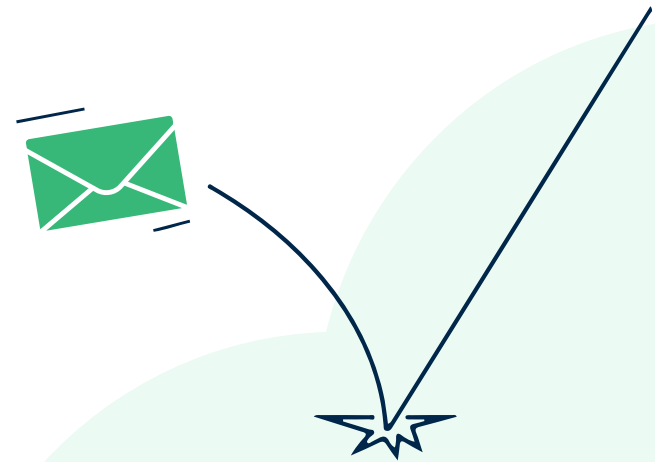
Building this trust and value comes from respecting your reader's time and attention by sending them the right information. Get the steps you need to capture and maintain the distracted audience's attention through personalised emails.



## Value needs relevancy

A high-value offer, for example, would be a new spacesuit for €5,000,000. That's considered a steal, but it won't make valuable email content unless your subscribers are NASA employees. And a 50% discount on the first order of your meal kit delivery service also makes for valuable content, if you send it to a new subscriber who hasn't purchased from you before.

But not even the best marketing systems can send emails that please everyone — and you don't need to. Your only goal is to build trust and be interesting to YOUR own target audience and subscribers.





## Flutter two (or more) hearts with one email

Splitting your list into dozens of different audience groups and associated email campaigns could prove impractical. But modern email marketing solutions support smart content segmentation that will allow you to personalise your emails without having to duplicate your efforts.

You create one email, apply multiple segment conditions to filter content so you can control who sees what. For example, say you create an email with pet food offers, and you want to show the right type of pet food depending on whether your recipient is categorised as a dog, cat, or rabbit owner. Imagine the possibilities for relevance.



Here are some examples of content segmentation you can set up in your regular marketing newsletters:

- > Upsell upgraded accounts to your freemium or lite account users in one email. After you segment these two groups, you can hide email content about lite account upgrades to those users, while showing it to freemium users
- > Offer a 30% discount in your newsletter to new leads if they buy a one-month subscription. Build your marketing email with extra content showing the discount and include it for only the segmented audience who has never made a purchase before.
- > Throwing a last-minute sale on your online and offline stores for shoppers in Denmark? Build your regular marketing email with the sales content, and show it to just your segment of audiences in Denmark.
- > Have different types of memberships and wish to automate every welcome email to new members? Let's say you have three membership types. You'd build one email with 3 different welcome messages, and show the right "Hello" message to each member-type.
- > Want to market your upcoming beach destinations? If you've previously built segments for customers who have made bookings for beach vacations, or for the summer, you can segment your content for these audiences, or send the entire email to just that segment if it's a specific summer campaign.

Segmented content means multiple groups of audiences only get the relevant email from you. It adds value for them and it's more cost-effective for you.

## Segmented email marketing campaigns can lead to revenue increases of as much as 760%.

### Fresh content delivery

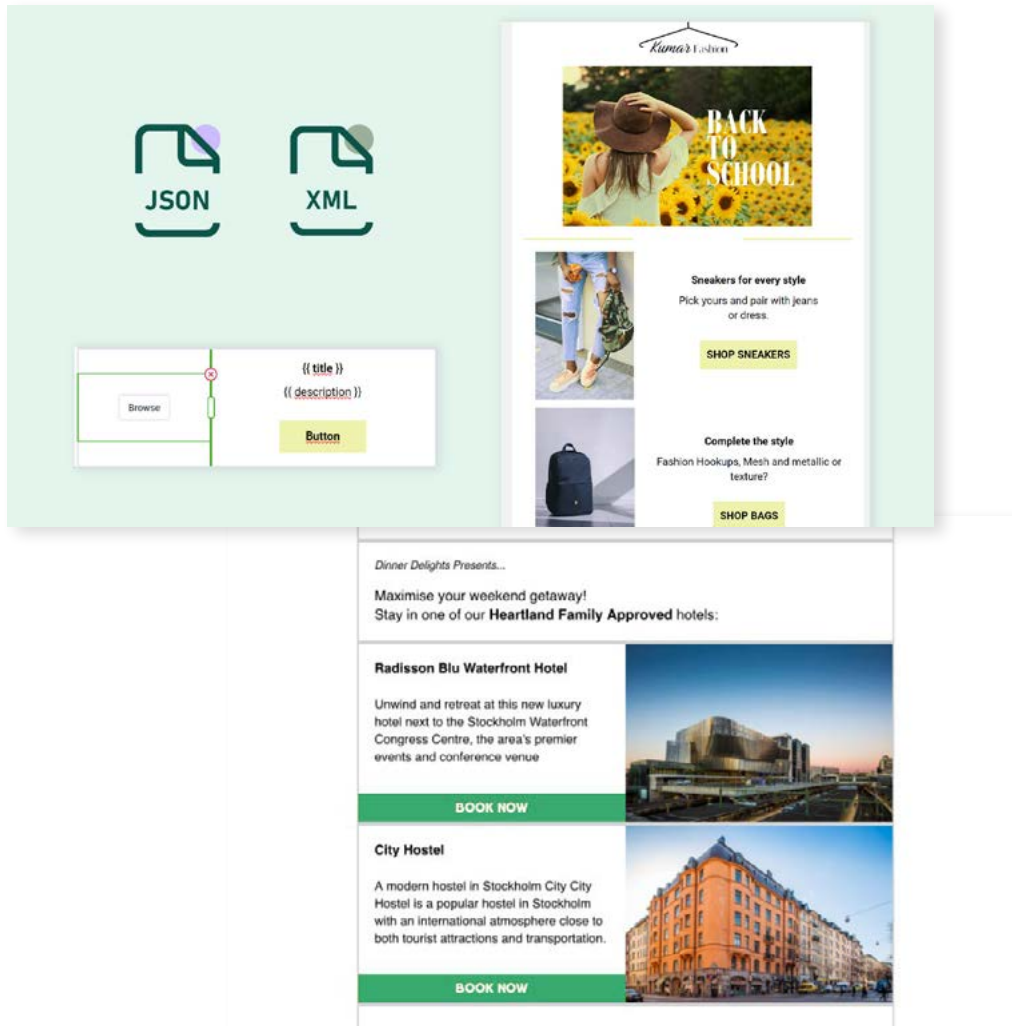
In today's fast-paced world of digital marketing, the content on your website is another way for you to stay relevant to your visitors, subscribers, and customers. While optimising and deleting old content is essential, sharing your most up-to-date content is equally important.

We discussed email content segmentation above as a way to stay relevant with your audience, but there's another way to deliver relevance when you build your email content!

Let's say you write 3 blog posts a week and want to share them in your monthly newsletter. Instead of having to manually copy, paste, and design the content for each blog post, wouldn't it be easier if it was automatically fed into your email through "placeholders"?



Most modern email marketing services can do this! Using the content from an external source, like an RSS, JSON, or XML feed into your email campaigns helps you easily deliver relevant, timely content to your subscribers.



Here are some reasons to use placeholders or assets like these in your emails:

- > An online travel agency that sends out weekly or even daily newsletters about your latest promotions or price changes on hotels and flights, feeding your emails with source data would help tremendously.
- > Let's say you're an email marketing service provider like us, APSIS. Subscribers look forward to your monthly newsletters for up-to-date tech blogs. As blogs are a monthly staple, it would be smart to set up a placeholder template so it automatically picks up your latest posts!
- > Host webinars, workshops, or events frequently and don't want to clog up inboxes with emails every minute? The content placeholder would be your best solution. Keep them informed of the latest events whenever your next newsletter is scheduled.

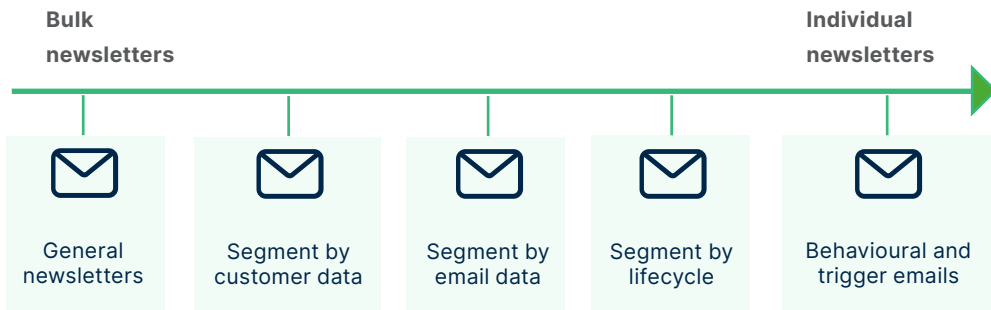
If saving time and slicing workload is something your marketing team needs, equip your emails with RSS, JSON, or XML feed assets.

And save even more resources by turning these placeholders into fully automated RSS email campaigns powered by marketing automation to deliver relevant, timely content to your subscribers!

## Email marketing is not only about newsletters

There's more to email marketing than just marketing. Successful email marketing is about nurturing your subscribers and building meaningful relationships. For long-term success, it's about balancing subscriber growth, nurturing them, keeping them informed, monitoring your results, and keeping your audience interested with valuable content.

We pretty much know how not to do email marketing — clickbaity subject lines, text-heavy content, and just about any type of email you can find in your junk folder right now. Smart marketers also know that because of the demand for attention in today's digital landscape, there's a need to move further away from bulk emails and deeper into personalised, data-driven content.



This illustrates how your emails become more individual and targeted as you move up the segmentation spectrum, into higher levels of personalisation. This handbook will cover more about triggered and behavioural emails later in this chapter, but right now, we'll talk about some tried-and-true email formats you can work with besides your general newsletter:



**The welcome email** is typically the first email that a new subscriber or customer receives from you. It's the best opportunity you have to make a great first impression, set expectations, and keep your brand top-of-mind with newcomers.



**The update email** helps you keep subscribers and customers informed of changes within the organisation, brand, or product. Besides sending news updates in your regular newsletter, a standalone email is a brilliant way to keep people informed.



**The reminder email** can be exactly what it means, or an effective way to nudge them back to your website, so they can take action. Abandoned cart emails and event reminders are some examples. Send it before something is due to happen, or has failed to happen



**The special occasion email** lets you tailor your email content to make customers or subscribers feel special. Offer a discount to bring in sales or simply send a greeting to keep your brand top-of-mind. Request for such data during the sign-up process or in your welcome email.



**"We don't just create messages, we cultivate connections. Every subscriber represents an opportunity to create an authentic connection, building trust and loyalty in their inboxes."**

**Samantha Savage**  
- Email Marketing Specialist



## TIPS!

### Subject lines best practices

- **Keep it real:** Make every word count. Try to use between 40 and 60 characters for optimal visibility.
- **Create intrigue:** Use curiosity or a hint about the content to pique the recipient's interest.
- **Personalise:** Personalisation can significantly increase open rates.
- **Avoid spammy language:** Such as “urgent”, “free”, “guaranteed” and overuse of exclamation points. They can trigger spam filters and decrease trust.
- **Test and analyse:** Try different subject lines to see which ones work best.

## Transactional emails

What exactly qualifies as a transactional email? Generally speaking, it's an email that is sent to a single recipient following a commercial or non-commercial transaction, or action performed by the recipient. It should contain information specific to the transaction that took place. Common examples include:

- **Confirmation emails** (shipping, subscription, etc)
- **Notification emails** (order refunds, products back-in-stock, etc)
- **Lost password requests**

## Transactional email open rates are 8x higher than traditional emails.

Remember when we talked about compliant lists before? Because transactional emails are not marketing emails, they do not require the recipient to be subscribed to your email marketing in the first place! Transactional emails relate to a specific commercial transaction, and the recipient expects that they will not receive any other emails that aren't related to the transaction.

### Do transactional emails require an unsubscribe link?

**No, they don't.**

If you wish to send these customers marketing emails, you should offer an option for them to sign up for your newsletters when they make their purchase, in a transactional email, or when you ask for a product review.





## Personalise emails with a click

Imagine being able to guide your customers on an individual level toward the next conversion, without even having to lift a finger? This is where Marketing Automation comes in.

Curate the right journey and trigger the right email based on actions or inactions in real-time. It's about taking impersonal bulk emails and turning them into automated, personalised messages.

Marketing automation works so you never miss an opportunity to connect with your subscribers when it matters most. Like transactional emails, automations send targeted emails when it's triggered by a specific date, event, or behaviour. Here's how you can trigger targeted emails based on behaviours for your industry:

## Trigger-based emails perform **3x better** than nurture or batch emails.

[Want to discover more about drip campaigns?](#)



## How to go with the flow — starting points

Each automation begins with a trigger that sets off the entire flow or journey. When you build your own flow, the first thing you do is choose your starting point. It's based on a condition you set and profiles that meet the condition will 'flow' through the automated journey. There are many triggers to choose from.

Here are 6 fundamental starting points you can use:

**Dates:** birthdays, recurring dates, specific dates

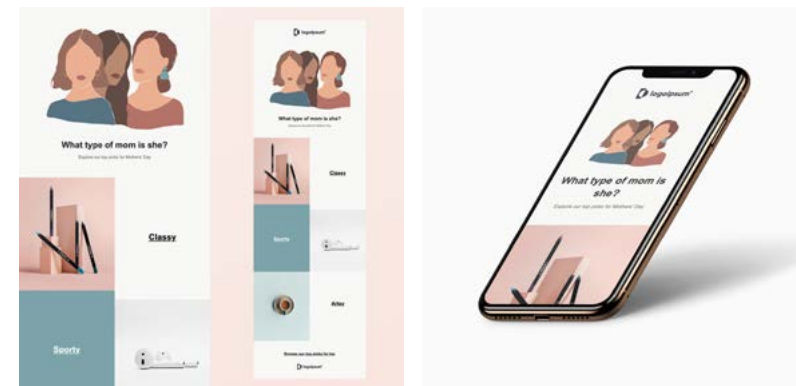
**Profile data:** profiles in your chosen attribute, tag, or segment

**Email events:** clicks, opens, views, inactivity

**Form events:** newsletter subscription, content download, event signup

**Web events:** web search, page view or clicks, cookie banner submission

**Other events:** SMS clicks, abandoned cart, order created, product view



Trigger with automated Mothers Day email template



## Ask your subscribers what they want to receive

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Smart marketers know that they need to listen to their audience's needs and deliver valuable content that resonates with their subscribers.

Although automation, segmentation, and personalisation are great ways to build trust and engagement with your audience, you will need the right data to effectively deliver successful data-driven campaigns.

Check, are you gathering the information you need to be relevant and personal? The first place data is usually collected is through your signup form, checkout page, or survey.

But if you haven't collected enough relevant information, or simply more, a marketing preferences form gives your audience a chance to tell you about themselves, update their information, and tell you more about what they want from you. This is the data you'll need to communicate with relevance, and to craft hyper-personalised automated journeys.

Giving your subscribers a choice over the types of marketing messages they receive will decrease the odds of opt-outs, since they're already getting the content they're interested in.

## "Bye" or "Hi" again to your inactive subscribers?

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In an ideal world, the more active, engaged, and interested your readers are, the better. Realistically, however, what's important is making sure you appeal to your readers enough of the time so they keep paying attention and keep valuing their subscription.

Because subscribers grow and develop, they may also grow to become inactive, so it's normal to have subscribers that don't always engage with your emails. Here are 6 fundamental starting points you can use:

### So, do you say "bye" or "hi" (again) to inactive subscribers?

Since it's much less costly to retarget an existing customer than it is to acquire a new one, we at APSIS think that an inactive subscriber is sometimes better than no subscriber. Another reason not to say bye is because your currently-inactive subscriber was once interested in what you had to SAY or SELL, so it makes sense that you could possibly get them interested again, so, say hi again with a winning re-engagement strategy.

## Types of inactivity and how to identify them

An inactive subscriber who hasn't interacted with your emails or bought anything from you is different from an inactive subscriber with a purchase history.

This information matters, because you're trying to win the attention of someone who has been ignoring your emails for a period of time, so make your email count by retargeting with precision and relevance.

This is where segmentation comes into play, and you'll need multiple segments, rather than just one, if precision is the name of the game. For example, a segment of subscribers with no interaction on your emails but with recent purchase history, and another for subscribers with a lack of activity on both your emails and web store.



## 3 easy-to-implement reactivation tactics

Depending on your industry and business model, your tactics for reactivation should differ. But no matter what industry you're in, a successful campaign relies on relevant content.

**Here are 3 useful tactics that you can adapt to fit your business needs:**

**Get subscribers to fill out a survey** in exchange for a promo code. The responses will help you understand what your inactive subscribers are interested in, and you can make use of that information to retarget them with additional campaigns.

**Re-engage with an online contest** or giveaway to get them interested in your campaigns, brand, and content again. This will not only give them a reason to come back, but you'll be able to nudge them gently back to your website.

**Offer an incentive with a promo code** and tell them you've noticed they haven't been back in a while. They might also be more forgiving if you choose to add on some recommendations or talk about new products.

### If these tactics still don't work...

It's time to consider unsubscribing them. But before, you might want to double-check some best practices for dealing with these inactive subscribers.

## Best practices for tackling inactivity

If someone never responds to your emails, you're wasting resources sending to them. But before you remove them from your list, consider these points:

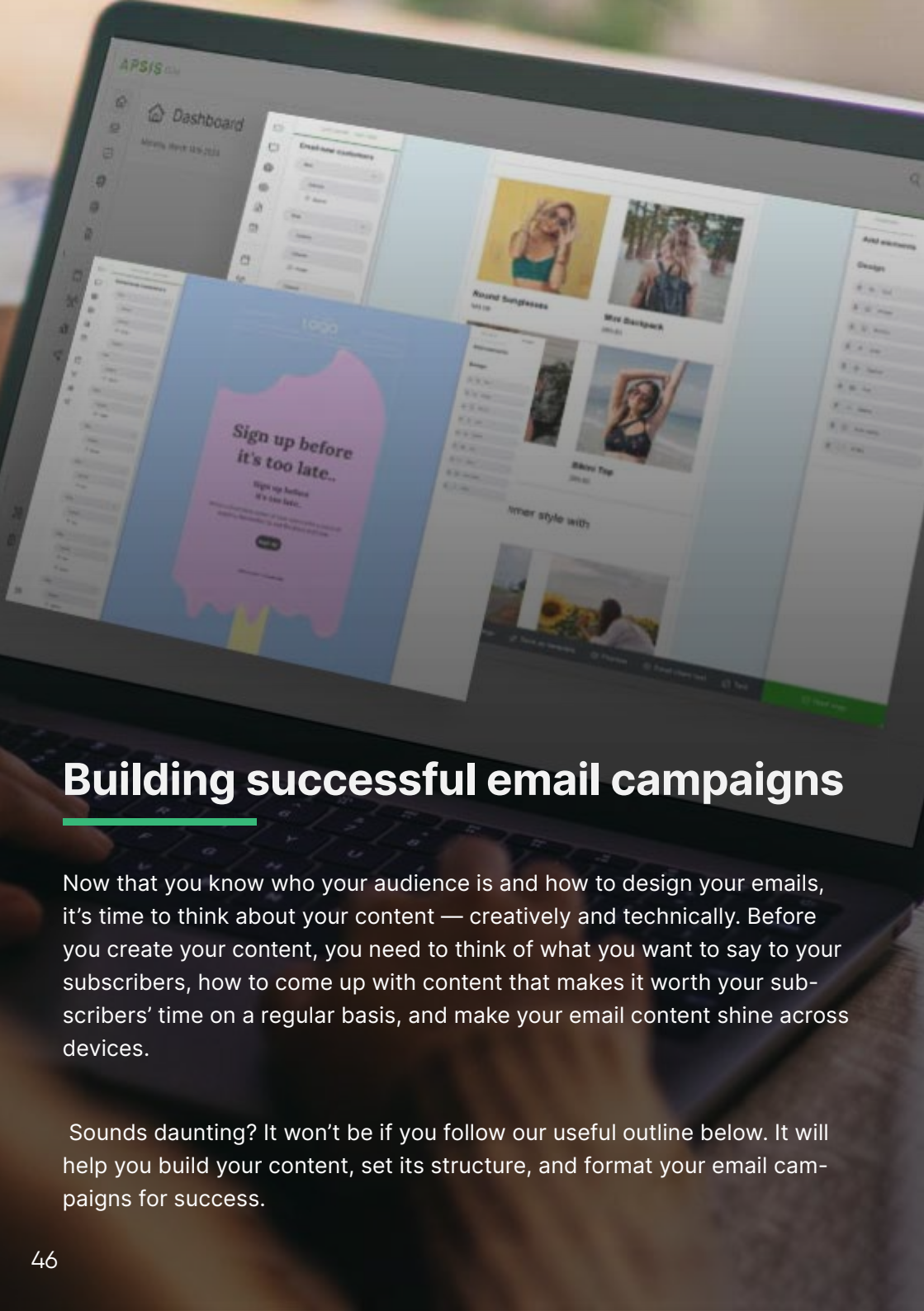
- 1 Just because someone didn't click on the last five emails**, doesn't make them inactive. Define inactivity in a way that makes sense for your newsletter. If you sell Halloween costumes, people might never open or click on an email between November and August, but you don't want to delete them from your subscriber list.
- 2 Some of those inactives might be responding in some other way.** Maybe your emails are a reminder to visit your flagship store or to copy and paste a web address? If you can, cross reference with other customer data to make sure active customers are not removed from your distribution list, just because they don't seem to be clicking.
- 3 Before you delete anyone, consider special email campaigns** designed to recapture their interest or give them a chance to stay on the list. Since they're not responding anyway, you can take the opportunity to experiment a bit!

Work with marketing automation for the tactics and best practices above, so you can end the journey with an automatic unsubscribe, when and if those contacts do not interact with your re-engagement emails.



Maintaining a clean list of inactive subscribers is essential to effective email marketing. It's about focusing on those who actually engage, ensuring your messages reach the right audience and getting meaningful results.

**Samantha Savage**  
Email Marketing Specialist



## Building successful email campaigns

Now that you know who your audience is and how to design your emails, it's time to think about your content — creatively and technically. Before you create your content, you need to think of what you want to say to your subscribers, how to come up with content that makes it worth your subscribers' time on a regular basis, and make your email content shine across devices.

Sounds daunting? It won't be if you follow our useful outline below. It will help you build your content, set its structure, and format your email campaigns for success.

## How to write subject lines that result in high open rates

The email subject line is often the reason people decide which messages are worth their time and attention.

With so much pressure riding on the subject line to yield good open rates, it's important to keep your subscribers in mind, test different approaches for yourself and learn what your subscribers respond to best. There is no right answer, as it all depends on what you're sending, to whom, and why.

Here are 10 general tips for successful subject lines:

- **Say what's necessary** to encourage subscribers to take a closer look and use as few words as possible.
- **Make sure the important words** are as near the front as possible in case your subject line gets cut off.
- **Be descriptive and direct.** You only have a few words to communicate the benefits of your offer and bring attention to specific content in your email.
- **Apply copywriting techniques,** like asking a question or communicating a sense of urgency.
- **Keep subject lines short.** Consider the recipients reading your emails on mobile devices. According to Marketo, 7 words or 41 characters is ideal for subject lines.
- **Make sure your subject lines aren't misleading!** Make it click-worthy, not clickbait. Meaning, the subject line should get to the point and set a

clear expectation. Your email should not be a surprise when they open it.

- **Be careful with “free”**, using humour, or clickbait-type words and sentences. What does well for one industry could produce completely opposite results for another. Think of your audience.
- **Emojis should complement** your words rather than replace — your main message should still get across clearly. Keep in mind that different email clients render emojis differently, so you need to test!
- **Choose your words wisely** when asking for help like donations, surveys, and feedback, or when announcing something like cancellations or repeated reminders.
- **A/B test subject lines.** Test length, comparable words, and even capitalisation. The more you test, the more you’ll come to understand your subscribers and what works with them.

## 69% of email recipients use the subject line to tell if it’s spam.

Basic campaign stats can help you figure out what works best with your own recipients, review all your past emails and conduct tests to find what works for your subscribers!

## Get more action from your call-to-action

A metric of success for your email campaign is the number of subscribers who took action from your email’s call-to-actions (CTA). So it’s important that you help guide them towards conversion with effective CTAs.

Although each campaign might require a different action to take, there are several tactics you can use to bring your reader closer to your business goal.

Below are some that might help you:

**Be creative but clear:** CTA copy should be clear and actionable. Skip overused words like Submit or Click here for something more striking like *Start saving*, *Get your copy*, or *Discover more*. Remember to keep the copy short. Two to three words are ideal.

**Including a call-to-action button instead of a text link can increase conversion rates by as much as 28%.**

**Make it pop, make it obvious:** Draw the eye to your CTA button by using contrasting colours, and keep it consistent across your email. Don’t forget to hyperlink the associated image too.

**Tease the CTA:** This teaser text or subcopy, provides context for what will happen after they click. A short, clear preamble is generally better at attracting clicks than a long sentence.



**Above the fold:** Important information, like your CTA, should always be above the fold. Make full use of your reader's short attention span by showing key, actionable content just as they open your email.

**The average time a recipient spends reading an email is 10 seconds.**

**A/B test your CTA:** Does first-person copy work better than second-person? Try things like "Get your copy" vs "Get my copy" or "Book your free demo" vs "Book my free demo".

## Start making your emails mobile-friendly

Nowadays there's no doubt that your emails are being viewed on mobile as much as on desktop. This means it's more important than ever to design with mobile devices in mind. This chapter will show you what it means to take a mobile-friendly approach to email marketing.

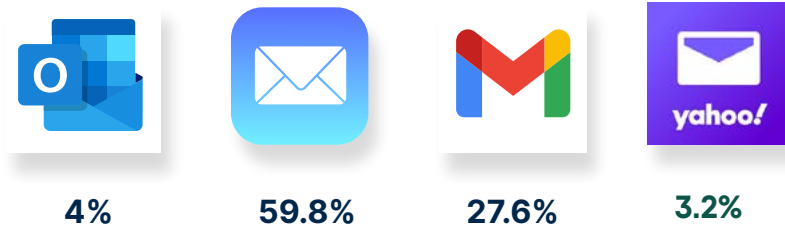
**60% of email opens are from mobile devices.**

## Is your email optimised for every inbox?

Every email client displays emails a bit differently. A campaign that looks great in Gmail may appear odd in Apple Mail. Before you send your email, always do an inbox preview test to ensure your design is on-brand and error-free for every subscriber.

APSP One and most digital marketing platforms with email tools support this testing function. Marketers should have access to an email client preview tool like Litmus, that generates a view of how your campaign will appear in different email clients. You can even see how it looks across different devices, apps, and web-based clients as well.

According to Litmus, the top 4 most popular email clients are:



This will change over time and usage will differ for each industry and brand, so it's essential that you look at your data and test for as many clients and devices as possible to make sure your emails look great every time.



## Checking your own emails

With dozens of email clients and multiple devices to open with, it's important to test your emails before sending them out because they will display differently depending on how and where it's viewed. Sometimes, the difference might be insignificant, but other times, it could be painfully obvious. You won't know until you test, so don't leave the outcome up to guesses.

Before we get into the As and Bs of A/B testing, here's a checklist of tests you can do yourself to make sure your email looks as it should before sending.

### Check-it-yourself Checklist

- > Proofread. Check for typos, grammar, consistency and layout of the info presented.
- > Make sure your links are working and tracking is in place.
- > Are your segmented content showing or hiding as it should for the right audiences?
- > Preview your email in desktop and mobile view.
- > Preview your email in different email clients, like Gmail, Apple Mail and Outlook.
- > Send a test email to yourself.
- > Send test emails to colleagues and people outside your organisation.

## What is A/B testing, and why should marketers care?

A/B testing, or split testing, is creating two versions of one email campaign and sending each version to one group of subscribers, with the goal of comparing results to find out what works better with your audience.

Ultimately, this helps you figure out the most effective way to drive opens and clicks, and improve personalisation.

## A/B testing improves conversion by 49%

### What can you A/B test?

Almost every element of your email can be A/B tested for success. But here are some of the most common variables that marketers love testing and improving.



## Element: Subject line

### Associated metric: Open rate

Marketers who wish to improve their open rate always start by testing different subject lines. Test if being more general or specific works better with your audience. Try varying lengths, use different keywords or phrases, including first names, or just change the word order. For example:

*We have an exclusive promo code for 10% off your next order*

*Want 10% off your next order? Get our exclusive promo code*

## Element: Sender name

### Associated metric: Open rate

Test responses with different sender names. Make it casual by using a personal name or combine it with a company name. If it fits your brand you can try these examples:

*Personal sender name - 'Reed Hastings' instead of just 'Netflix'*

*'The team at Netflix'*

## Element: Send time











### Associated metric: Open rate

Want to know what time of the day, or day of the week your recipients will most likely open your campaigns? This test will help you best decide on the schedule of your future campaigns.

## Element: Content

### Associated metric: Click rate

When it comes to content, you can test a bunch of different variables here that make up the entire email. Elements such as these can be A/B tested:

-  **Call-to-action copy**  
Would 'Buy now' or 'Save now' work better?
-  **Call-to-action button colour**  
Readers might find lime green to be more actionable than mint green.
-  **CTA button position**  
Does it drive more clicks to put the button below or next to text?
-  **Colours of text links**  
Like the button, different text colours might be more clickable than the other.
-  **Style of text links**  
Would underlined text work fine or a combination of bold and underlined text produce better results?
-  **Content layout**  
Do readers prefer centralised or left-aligned for the top-most content?
-  **Image formats**  
Would .gifs get better results compared to static images?
-  **Style of images**  
Multiple images or one full-sized image? Lifestyle image or product image?
-  **Length of copy**  
Shorter or longer-form copy that explains in detail work better to drive clicks?
-  **Tone of voice**  
Would positive or negative words engage your readers better? For example: "Using new software can be daunting." vs. "Using new software can be fun!"

Once your test is concluded, you should select the winning version of the campaign for the remaining subscribers.

Some email service providers let you automatically send or schedule the winning version to your remaining subscribers based on your pre-selected winning metric — open or click rate. While some other services let you complete the sending once the winning version is determined.



## Our recommendations for finding the best version of your emails

1. **Test one variable at a time.** Changing more than one element in your emails makes it difficult to determine the difference in performance.
2. **Don't just test your monthly newsletters.** Test every email, from the automated welcome series to the post-purchase transactional email.
3. **Have a strong rationale and don't make random changes.** Know from the get-go that what you're testing will help you achieve your desired goal.
4. **Unless you're sending a re-engagement email campaign,** you will want to ensure that your A/B tests are going to subscribers who are also active recipients.
5. **Have a big enough test audience** so that your results are statistically significant. Check out [Optimizely's](#) A/B test calculator for a guide!
6. **Test once, twice, and thrice.** In the long term, subscriber behaviours and needs, as well as your business will change. Create a test schedule to test your winning version over a period of time to ensure it won't be because of novelty.
7. **A/B test within a segment.** Such as testing content or offers to segments of the same location, age, or gender to better understand different audience groups.
8. **Clearly name your A/B test campaigns** to make it easy for you to go back and analyse tests you've done in the past. For example, 'Red button vs Blue button' or 'Single image vs multiple images'.

When you know what metrics you should be measuring, and how you can test and personalise at the same time, you'll be able to deliver campaigns that really resonate and drive conversions beyond your email results



## Measuring your email performance

We've talked about building your list, writing, designing, and testing your emails. Now, we'll talk about how to measure the value of your marketing efforts and make use of that data to refine your next email.

## Opens

The open rate is one of the most looked-at statistics for measuring engagement, as it indicates how well your subject line and content resonates with your subscribers.

Although an open rate shouldn't be seen as a true measure of engagement, it can be useful to see how open rates change over time. Sudden jumps or falls in opens alert you to particular successes (a fantastic subject line) or failures (delivery issue with Gmail).

To use open rate as a measure of success, you need to consider how your open rate compares to competitors in the industry.

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## Clicks

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Like the open rate, this is the other metric that's used to measure engagement success. But unlike opens, clicks give you a better understanding of the content that's working and not working with your subscribers. And you should always A/B test actionable content to improve clicks, so you can then use this information to guide the angle of your content development for future emails.

While clicks measure the number of the total number of times any link in the email was clicked, it's not to be confused with click-to-open rate and click-through rate.

### Click-through rate (CTR)

The click-through rate measures how many people who received your email, also clicked on a link or CTA. It divides the total number of clicks an email receives by the total number of delivered messages. Click-through rates give insight into the percentage of the audience interested in your content over time.



### Click-to-open rate (CTOR)

Click-to-open rate measures the number of unique clicks divided by the number of unique opens, and this measures the email's content performance. Because the click-to-open rate only evaluates clicks from people that actually viewed the email, it's many marketer's preferred metric when it comes to assessing engagement.

## Bounces

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While bounces tell you how many emails were not accepted by receiving systems, it's not a measure of performance but a measure of your list hygiene. The longer you go between sending emails, the higher the bounce rate will become.

If you find any unusual increase in bounces, look to see whether the sources used to collect your latest subscribers are capturing correct email addresses. Take the time to review the statistics for the bounces — it tells you a lot about the state of your subscriber lists. We'll go more into deliverability in the next chapter!

## Unsubscribes

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It's never nice when a reader unsubscribes, but it's simply part of email marketing life. However perfect your emails are, there will always be people who don't want them any more due to changes in their needs and wants. For example, after someone purchases an apartment, they're not going to stay subscribed for more real estate newsletters.

### Why unsubscribes can be good news

While seeing your subscribers choose to opt-out of your content isn't ideal, you should think of an unsubscribe as a list cleanup of the contacts who are least likely to convert or positively interact with your future emails. This ensures uninterested readers opt-out instead of turning into a spam complaint, resulting in bad email deliverability and a sign that your content is not suited to a specific profile.



In such cases, you can compare your opt-outs from different audience segments for insights. And if you notice that certain audience groups are unsubscribing at a much higher rate, it could indicate that that email content isn't working well for certain personas.

### “But my unsubscribe rate is REALLY high!”

Sudden leaps in unsubscribe rates indicate something went wrong with the email — perhaps the topic was inappropriate, or you sent it to the wrong subscribers? Here are a few things to consider if you notice a spike in opt-outs:

- > Firstly, check on the **email segmentation** used. If you're sending the wrong message to the wrong audience, that email would have been irrelevant, resulting in more than usual opt-outs.
- > Secondly, are you only sending to **subscribers who have opted in** to receive your emails? Recipients who aren't expecting your email will be more likely to unsubscribe. Check back on our previous chapter about list sources to ensure you've been compliant.
- > Last but not least, did you **change your sending frequency** recently? If you're sending more or fewer emails than you're known to, they could be unsubscribing because you're not meeting their expectations. Create a survey to ask subscribers what they prefer. If you're sending more, let contacts choose to opt-in or out of the new topics, rather than unsubscribe completely.

## The marketer's real measures of success

Email campaign reports are full of interesting metrics, but don't ignore other numbers that tell you how successful your email was. For most marketers, opens and clicks are not the true goals of their emails. It's probably to sell products or services, get a handbook downloaded, or have people sign-up for an event. Those are the numbers you need to focus on as well, for two important reasons:

- 1 **These are the numbers you need to communicate** the success of your email marketing efforts to others in your organisation. They don't want to hear about your open rate, they want to hear about how many leads turned into sales because of your email.
- 2 **The end results don't always mirror patterns in email metrics like opens.** If you judge your emails on opens and clicks alone, you may get a false impression. The best subject line in terms of getting sales may not be the one that received the highest open rate. Base your insights and conclusions on the big picture, and not just on individual metrics.





## 10 Essential takeaways

- 1 Use email for more than selling.** If you only ever send emails that say "Buy NOW!", you're missing out on all the potential of email marketing. Invest in the future by providing your contacts with something valuable today.
- 2 Get explicit consent** before you send any marketing, and never buy subscribers. Make sure your list is compliant and respect data privacy when you ask for consent.
- 3 Build segments,** and assign tags or attributes from the get-go, so that you can effectively send the right campaign to the right person once they consent to receiving marketing from you.
- 4 Use content segmentation** and dynamic RSS placeholders in your email to keep content fresh and relevant at all times.
- 5 Don't design images for your emails to include headlines** and copy in them. Subscribers that disable HTML or images will receive blank emails.
- 6 Stick with web-safe fonts** at size 14, 15, or 16px, and leave your brand typeface for PDFs and print.
- 7 Remember to include the unsubscribe link** and the permission reminder in your email footer.
- 8 Always be A/B testing!** Test subject lines, content, and CTA. Test with a strong rationale and a goal in mind.
- 9 A great open rate is not a true measure** of successful email campaigns. Look at clicks and conversions.
- 10 Spam, bounce, and blacklisting** can all be prevented with habitual list maintenance. Manage your audience regularly!

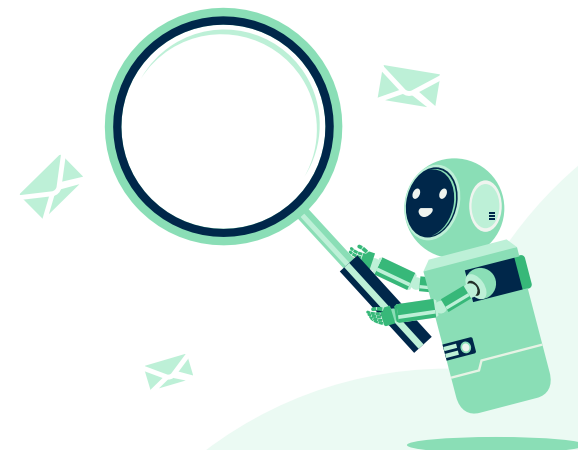
## Use your data

Whether you want to build better customer relationships, optimise conversions, or increase your teams' efficiency, APSIS is the simple solution for you.

Discover how our marketing tool can put your data to work to take your business to new heights.

**49% of companies** are now using marketing automation

— **55% if they're in the B2B industry.**



Thrive in the ever-evolving world of data-driven marketing with APSIS One's/efficy Marketing —combine data with technology to curate individual experiences for every potential subscriber and customer.

“ Our customers are very loyal to their brands. As an effect, we segment our lists and create sendings with content targeted towards the brands they love. APSIS helps us to create great and inspirational emails.”



Charisse Wierup  
- Digital Strategic Director

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