

THE TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

Secrets of Email Marketing

I still remember the first day I became a believer in email marketing. I was new to Gist Piano Center, and it was my job to build a successful campaign around a university piano sale. In previous years, the company had spent around \$15,000 to secure 30 or so sale appointments. My goal was to achieve the same results with less than half that budget. After several planning meetings, my team and I built our first strategic email marketing campaign. We were amazed to discover that we could achieve the same number of appointments for around \$1,500. I was hooked. Since that first campaign, I have made mistakes, but I've built a philosophy for making my emails successful.



'It's better to send several short emails to targeted audiences than a huge email to everyone.'

1.) TAKE TIME TO STRATEGIZE.

According to Constant Contact, the average open rate for an email "blast" is not too explosive. It's around 18 percent. The average click rate is even lower — close to 15 percent. The best way for your emails to beat the average is to make them part of a larger strategy. Include topics that are trending on social media, tease upcoming product or program launches, and tie everything into an organized message that recipients will see echoed in social media, on your website and in your store.

2.) MAKE IT EASY TO JOIN.

It's important to remember that your recipients can opt out of your emails at any time. Make sure you fill your lists with people who want to consume your message — and make it easy for them to do so. Include "join our list" links in key places around your website and in the descriptions for your YouTube videos. Check with your email marketing company to learn about sign up tools like "text to join" or custom Facebook tabs.

3.) DIVIDE AND CONQUER.

Today's mail service companies make it easier than ever to segment your email list — and it's very important that you do so. You should have separate emails for your service customers, students, teachers,

technicians and prospects. It's better to send several short emails to targeted audiences within your list than to send a huge email to everyone. Your readers want to feel that you've customized your message for them.

4.) DELIVER ENGAGING CONTENT.

Once you target a group of prospective readers, tailor your message to that group's specific interests. Create compelling subject lines that draw a reader's eye, but keep the text short and punchy. You should include a "read more" link after each story so interested readers can find more details and/or commentary on your website, social media or blog. Your goal should be to entice your readers.

5.) THINK MOBILE.

Remember that a huge majority of your readers will be consuming your content on a mobile device. Make sure your emails are designed to work well on smartphones. Mobile readers need larger text and bright, compelling images scattered throughout.

Overall, build the emails you would want to read. And as your emails improve, so will your bottom line. **MI**

James Harding is the president of Gist Piano Center, a freelance Web designer, pianist and blogger. Email him at jharding@gistpiano.com.