

Background

I have been designing, developing and delivering email newsletters and campaigns to clients for over a decade and have worked in a variety of email platforms, including MailChimp, ExactTarget, ListTrack, ConstantContact, and Cheetah Mail, to name a few. Understanding that the basics of email are to get them to act, there are standard steps to successful email design and development.

Deliverability

- **Make sure the emails can be delivered**
Ensure all CanSpam rules are followed, as well as adhere to each platform's individual requirements to increase deliverability rates, and stay out of junk mail
- **Use White Labeled email service providers**

Segmentation and Targeting

As your email database grows, not just with new users but also with more information about your existing readers, you will begin to learn more about the different "groups" of readers. This will allow you to develop different types of content to give to different audiences (for example, readers who typically click on specific country trips can get an email with the main content being that country, with smaller callouts on other deals nearby, while global travelers can be given variations of exploration and adventure versus educational opportunities to fine-tune their interests).

Audience Engagement

- **Get the customers to open the emails**
The subject lines and from addresses are critical, and understanding the right number of characters, how to entice the reader, and respect their time, is the first step. Your customers have to open your email to get your message, and they have to be reassured it's from you.
- **Make the email design functional and appealing**
Knowing not all email programs automatically load images is important, so all email designs and content should be available without requiring your customers to do anything. Your email template and design should be functional and appealing even without the graphics, and links should be obvious without a picture. The email templates also have to be flexible to be viewed on mobile devices and a variety of email clients.
- **Give them good content**
Make sure the content you deliver is something they are interested in. Good content is important, but you also want them to act on it, so give them a variety (at first) to choose from until you know your audience better (see customer database management)
- **Tell them what you want them to do - CTA (Call to Action)**
Customers are busy, and they've already taken the time to open your email, give them the information and next steps clearly, quickly and directly. And make sure the links and landing pages you send them to are working well, and also viewable and accessible from multiple devices!

Reporting & Management

Understanding who your customers' behaviors is key to continued success with your content. As you are just starting out with your list, content should be developed based on the campaign they responded to, slowly integrating new content and topics. This will allow you to track what different customers are responding to, and when. It will allow you to track the success of the emails (after determining what is important, using standard key performance indicators such as open rates, click rates, but also testing subject lines, times of day, content and content placement), and optimize emails moving forward.