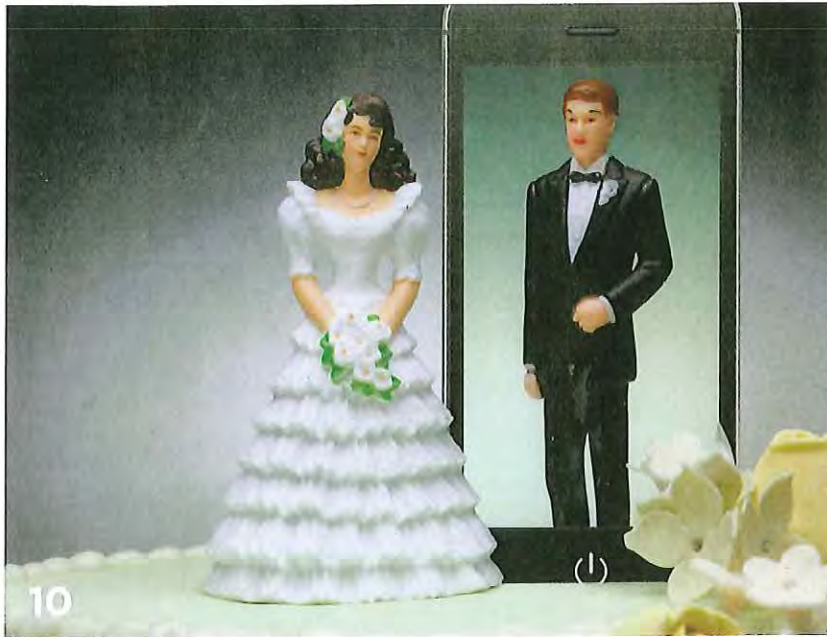# 2014
ESSENTIAL GUIDE

EMAIL MARKETING

- Email's Top 12 Teachable Moments
- Ensuring a Happy Mobile-Email Marriage
- 11 Email Trends That Marketers Can't Ignore

A supplement to

DIRECT The Independent Authority for Direct and Digital Marketers
MARKETING
NEWS

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+DATAENTRY

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64.5% Email opens on mobile **page 22**

Opens among active email subscribers have increased **6%** year over year.

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The Best Birthdays Are Multichannel

Ginger Conlon
Editor-in-Chief
Direct Marketing News

For many, birthdays are all about the gifts. And while I'm certainly not one to shun a bow-topped package, presents aren't the only things that I enjoy about my birthday. Another is the birthday marketing. Really. One reason: I like to see who sends "the best" birthday greetings..

I don't define *best* as the biggest dollars-off coupon, though I certainly won't turn one down. What most impresses me are the triggered multichannel birthday campaigns that weave email and direct mail seamlessly together. Retailers Victoria's Secret and White House | Black Market are two companies that do this well.

Victoria's Secret takes the adage "Anything worth doing is worth overdoing" to heart. This year it sent a greeting card with an insert for $10 off a purchase during my birthday month, followed a few days later by a catalog that included a tear-out reminder of the the same offer; then the retailer wrapped up the celebratory campaign with an email birthday wish that included a digital coupon for the same special birthday offer to seal the deal. Three times a charm, I say. I'll be taking my birthday coupon to the store this weekend. After all, I have some, shopping, er, celebrating to do.

White House | Black Market is also a multichannel birthday marketer. The retailer created anticipation with its triggered birthday email, which instructed me to watch my mail for a treat. You can be certain that I checked my mail enthusiastically until said birthday surprise arrived.

Email wishes

Although I'm most likely to vote multichannel birthday campaigns as most effective for "surrounding" me with a message, I also enjoy the fun some companies have with email birthday greetings. Wine seller Lot18, for example, sent an email with candles that light up when opened. And JetBlue Airways not only designed its birthday email to look like a wrapped gift, but the airline also used a clever play on an oldie with its tagline, "It's your party and you can fly if you want to."

Direct mail remains a popular option among retailers for birthday greetings; it's an occasion when the medium is certain to pay dividends. What I'm still waiting for are the mobile-centric birthday campaigns. It's likely that some brands are already doing it; I'm just not on their lists. That's not to say that the emails I received weren't optimized for mobile; they were. The Lot18 candles lit up just as well on my iPhone as on my Mac, and the Victoria's Secret email was clearly laid out in the long, narrow format that suits mobile so well. It's the SMS and geo- or context-based campaigns that I'm eager to see roll out as marketers get more comfortable with the medium.

In the meantime, I'm thankful for all the birthday wishes my favorite brands send via any channel—and plan to show my appreciation in the way their marketers aim for: by buying a few birthday presents for yours truly. ∎

Who has the *sexiest* birthday ever?

8 WAYS TO INCREASE QUALIFIED LEADS THROUGH EMAIL

Attracting and nurturing leads is tough in today's distracting digital environment. Here's how marketers can use email to grab and hold the attention of the prospects who matter most.

By Perry Simpson

Email has long been a lead generation mainstay. But as the definition of a lead itself changes, marketers' approach to using email to attract and nurture highly qualified prospects must evolve, as well. "The Ice Bucket Challenge has been a fantastic driver of leads for The ALS Association, but things like that are really hard to replicate through email," notes Gudmundur "G.B." Heidarsson, CEO at email intelligence company eDataSource.

The issue here isn't that email is less effective at generating quality leads, but rather that the term *lead* has acquired additional meaning over the past few years as e-commerce and social media continue to evolve and disrupt both marketing and sales. "In the not too distant [digital] past a lead was someone who downloaded an asset as a result of an email campaign," says Mark Coleman, VP of digital marketing services at marketing agency LSC Digital. These days the definition is much broader. Going back to Heidarsson's Ice Bucket Challenge example, how many of the millions of people who made videos qualify as leads at all, let alone quality leads? Some people just wanted to participate in the viral hype. Others donated instead of taking the challenge and may not be likely to become long-term supporters.

"Some 'leads' may not be interested in converting in the first place; I'd say 95 percent of leads aren't qualified [today]," says Jerry Jao, CEO and cofounder of retention marketing company Retention Science. "Leads are people who have shown interest. That aspect of a lead hasn't changed much, but there are so many companies trying to get in front of you that most people are distracted. A lot of the time people are just doing research."

This broader, more nebulous definition of a lead brings with it ambiguity, but it also brings opportunity to uncover the leads that matter most. Here are eight ways to use email to harness that potential.

Keep the first contact light

The first impression is as crucial as it is delicate, whether in person or online. And, like dating, coming on too strong can turn off a prospect. Marketers need to resist the temptation to request too much data or rush prospects down the funnel. Getting people to share their email is difficult enough; pushing for too much personal information when requesting an email address—or too soon after—is likely the surest way to stifle any chance of building a relationship with a qualified lead. A better approach is to ask a few questions essential to determining or ensuring lead quality, and building on that information over time as prospects interact with a company's emails, website, and content.

"Asking for 10 fields of data when collecting an email address will kill your form conversion numbers. Marketers have to take the onus of creating continuous value if we want to build deep customer knowledge over time," says Dave Walters, digital marketing evangelist at Silverpop.

Segment as early as possible

According to Silverpop's "2014 Email Marketing Benchmarks" study, personalized email messages achieved an open rate nearly 15% higher and a click-through rate nearly 79% higher than other emails. Marketers who want to reap the benefits of these targeted emails must start by segmenting their lists not just by demographic information, but also by behavioral data. For example, prospects with characteristics or interests similar to top customers may be a segment to prioritize in term of targeting.

"Identify ways to segment [prospects] as early in the process as possible so that nurturing communications are relevant to the interests and intentions of the leads," says LSC Digital's Coleman. "If a lead opened an email and clicked a link, then the follow-up communications focus on that. If not, they would flow through a different series of communications. Targeting based on behavior is the key to all marketing communications."

Leverage dormant lists

Marketers often focus heavily on acquiring new prospects. While this may be essential to business growth, it doesn't mean that prioritizing new lists over existing ones is the optimal strategy. "I'm seeing marketers going back and really working the dormant part of their lists," eDataSource's Heidarsson says. He cites Macy's as an example. "Macy's has been very active in getting dormant people to engage," he says. "[The retailer] is seeing more than a 20 percent open rate on the emails to non-paying subscribers, which is a higher open rate than their general emails."

Consumer-facing brands, especially in the

retail sector, have an advantage in that they can more readily send promotional offers to prospects who have opted in to communications but haven't yet made a purchase. But any marketer reaching out to dormant leads must do so cautiously to avoid the spam button. Personalization can be valuable here. For example, remind prospects of previous communications or their initial opt-in: "Because you attended our webcast on conference management strategies last year, we thought you'd be interested in downloading our white paper that delves further into the topic."

Maintain a killer content strategy

Few tactics are as effective as content marketing when using email to move the right prospects through the funnel. But not just any content will do. Personalization by virtue of sending appropriate content is as important, and potentially as effective, as personalization of other elements of the email delivering or linking to it. "Content needs to match my interests," Coleman says. "If I've identified that I'm interested in study-abroad programs, please don't communicate with me on local education opportunities."

Know how deep prospects are in the funnel

An essential aspect of optimizing email communications today is in realizing that by the time marketers reach out to potentially qualified leads those prospects are much further along the path to purchase than they were in the past—when purchasers often started their buyer's journey by contacting a salesperson or visiting a site such as a store or dealership. Indeed, this can mean that a lead coming in deeper in the funnel is more qualified than those coming in earlier.

"The highest performing marketing teams I work with understand that the customer normally shows up very late in the consideration cycle, and is almost ready to buy," Silverpop's Walters notes. "Much of the social proof and Web research that precedes the purchase event has already happened, and it's difficult to undo someone's perception that your competitor's product is better than yours with just a last-minute email or a coupon. This is the simple reality of today's buyer, and marketers who ignore this are absolutely underperforming on the revenue side."

Be fresh...

Marketers must ensure that their emails are engaging and creative. While this may seem obvious, too many marketers miss the opportunity to engage best prospects by weaving their unique brand attributes into their email communications to illustrate such attributes as creativity, relevance, and attention to detail. Marketers often lean on industry best practices in this area, which can lead to dullness in marketing emails. This is especially true in B2B.

"I think B2B is losing out because they're trying too hard to be B2B. Every B2B email I get has something to do with a white paper or a webinar or a download and it's all very bland and doesn't grab my attention," eDataSource's Heidarsson says. "Anyone that has an event in Vegas says something about, 'What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.' I think B2B marketers might want to look at their private inboxes to see the creativity of their B2C counterparts."

...Yet concise

Prospective customers are inundated with emails from preferred and prospective brands alike—especially as they move through the purchase funnel and their lead quality increases. Concise copy that gets right to the point will go a long way toward currying the favor of today's time-starved, overstimulated customer, and this brevity should start with the subject line.

"The subject line is the ice breaker. You have one chance and only a few dozen characters," Heidarsson says. "Subject lines need to be urgent and create interest, but you have to follow up on that in the copy. The subject line and copy have to work in tandem."

Keep the faith

The rate of change in digital communication is staggering, but many of the most disruptive technologies rely on email to stay connected to customers and prospects. Email is a direct and personal form of communication that's effective and engaging all along the purchase cycle—as long as it's relevant. "Email is still the best way to qualify and nurture a lead," Retention Science's Jao says. "Focus on how you can provide meaningful and valuable resources to consumers. The most effective messaging is when it's relevant and the communication is thoughtful." ∎
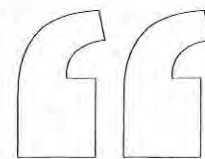
> "The highest performing marketing teams I work with understand that the customer normally shows up very late in the consideration cycle, and is almost ready to buy."
>
> **Dave Walters**
> Silverpop

THE MOBILE-EMAIL MARRIAGE

Marketers who considered leaving email at the altar are finding renewed passion for the channel as an ever-increasing number of customers triage, read, and click-through email on their smartphones.

By Jason Compton

The quick-flick mobile inbox has revitalized email as a relevant, vibrant customer communication channel. Mobile has radically altered the way customers triage, preview, and read email, as well as click and convert. In fact, mobile devices now account for the majority of all email opens; 80.8% of users read email on their mobile devices, according to Hubspot. Marketers need to take notice of the preferences, tastes, and whims of mobile customers to harness the relationship potential email and mobile offer when paired. But that happily ever after is only assured for marketers who rethink everything from subject lines and layout to customer behaviors and context when planning email campaigns in today's mobile-centric world.

Text matters

Discussions about mobile email strategies quickly converge on visual techniques, such as responsive design, which ensures that emails render correctly and coherently on a variety of devices—from widescreen desktops to narrow smartphones. But visuals are irrelevant to the most important step in the mobile reader's decision process: whether to open the email at all. "Three key factors determine if somebody is going to open and none of them have anything to do with design: the subject, the preheader text, and the brand name," says Aaron Pearson, responsive design expert at Listrak.

The typical mobile client displays about 40 characters of subject line and about 70 characters of preheader, which is either defined by the sender or culled from the first text in the email. Those constraints have motivated marketers to stay punchy and concise. "We've shortened our subject lines since we noticed in the last year that opens on mobile devices ticked over 50 percent," says Peter Langenstein, founder of online wine retailer Brix26.

Because devices and design strategies change so frequently, Pearson recommends thinking not in terms of specific, trendy layouts, but the more durable notion of *hierarchy*. Deciding which elements should catch the eye and in which order is more important than deciding on a single- or dual-column layout. "If the call-to-action is the most important item, you want the flow to [it to be consistent] no matter what [device customers] view on or how much they scroll," he says.

Another popular strategy guiding email design, as well as overall online experience, is to take a mobile-first approach. That's why so many brand pages have become single-column scrollers, and marketers send email with a mobile layout to desktop clients. A desktop's wider screen could accommodate more content, but marketers don't need to use the space just for the sake of using it. "The desktop user will respond to the same streamlined messaging [as they would on mobile], so we let mobile drive the email design now," says Ron Rule, director of Internet marketing at direct marketer Infusion Brands, whose stable of brands includes As Seen on TV, Dualtools, and Ronco. Rule favors short emails with just a few images and sparse text, motivating recipients to click through to get more detail and make a purchase.

Switching to a tighter, narrower design also forces a spotlight on

THE NUMBERS

26%
➔ Market share for the iPhone default email client, nearly twice the share of second-place Outlook
-Litmus

63%
➔ Share of emails opened on mobile phones and tablets
-Movable Ink

70%
➔ Users who will immediately delete a poorly formatted email
-StrongView

30-50
➔ Ideal subject line length, in characters
-DoSomething style guide

33%
➔ Outlook.com users opening in browsers, highest among major webmail providers
-Litmus

5 WAYS TO MARRY MOBILE AND EMAIL

→ Ensure that landing pages are just as mobile-friendly as the email content itself.

→ Some mobile emails will still look wrong, so protect the experience by taking advantage of clever fallback for unloaded images. "Don't just repeat the picture name. Be just as creative with alt text as you would with the visible email," says Alyssa Nahatis, director of delivery for Adobe Campaign.

→ Send emails out at times proven to be effective at reaching each individual contact. Look for trends, rather than slavishly repeating the previous email's open time.

→ Write subject lines that are short, engaging, and demand action. "Questions have been tested to work a bit better," says Aaron Pearson, responsive design expert at Listrak. Caveat: Be careful when using a yes/no question, because the response may lead a recipient to *not* open an email.

→ Brands matter when readers decide which emails to open. Don't get cute with the "from:" field unless you know what you're doing. Brands should stay clear and honest about who's doing the sending.

clear, obvious calls-to-action, which drive higher performance. For years ExactTarget customer Apartments.com had no concise focus in its welcome email. "The call-to-action was a YouTube video nobody watched that didn't even lead back to our website," says Lisa Schuble, email and SMS marketing manager at Apartments.com. "We knew we had to talk about who we are and what we do."

When Apartments.com introduced a new welcome email that quickly invites users back to the website to continue their search, it garnered a 24% conversion rate. Promoting a similar call-to-action in the brand's regular newsletter produced 16% conversions.

## Audience, not platform, still calls the shots

Because mobile emails are so easily received and dismissed, some marketers have increased their mailing frequency. But the right mix is more a function of audience than technology. Youth-oriented activism platform DoSomething didn't realize it was over-stimulating followers until it created a wall-sized visualization chart showing all the communications a member was receiving.

The problem wasn't with the medium or the message, but the organizational controls. "Anybody could send email at any time, any day of the week, or multiple times per week," says Marah Lidey, DoSomething director of mobile product and messaging. "So, we cleaned up the process and cut everyone out who wasn't necessary."

Now, just two people sit at the controls of the MailChimp-powered email program and a weekly, personalized newsletter sums up all of the current charitable projects visitors have signed up for. The individual campaign emails, freed from clutter, now see open rates of between 10 and 20%, while the personalized newsletter has earned a 28% open rate. Provocative subject lines also provided a boost. "We *want* to get a phone call about our subject lines saying, 'That's crazy!'" Lidey says.

Infusion Brands sets a different email campaign schedule for each product line. "We could send videos of people cutting things in half with a Dualsaw every day and get away with it. With Ronco we send weekly recipes because if it was every day, people would unsubscribe," Rule says. "As long as the timing is in sync with what users are expecting when they get on the list, it's all right."

Audience dictates more than just email timing and frequency. The current standard formula of strong hero images, pithy headlines, and succinct calls-to-action are not the winning strategy everywhere, every time. "There are many similarities between consumers in the West, but you can't have a single template or layout for
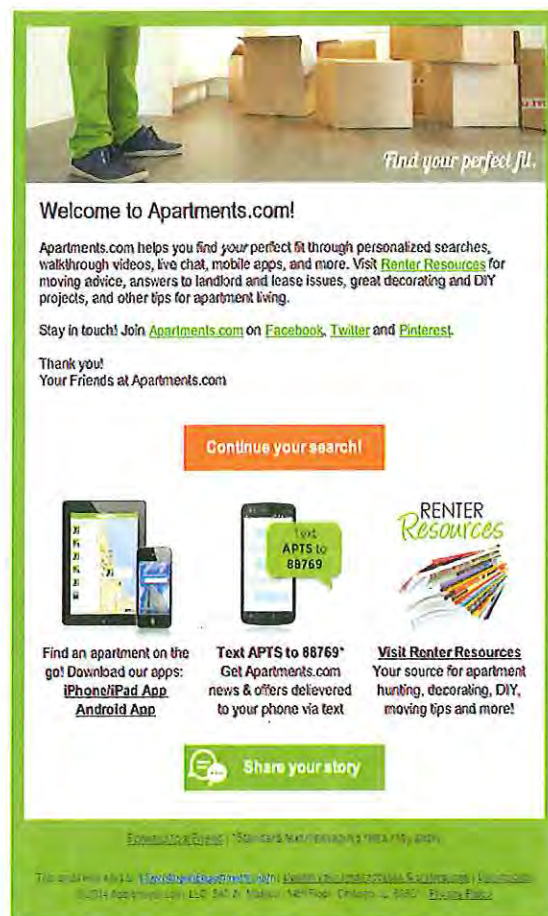
Apartments.com's action-oriented welcome email garnered a 24% conversion rate.

email that's going to work in every global market," says Clint Poole, VP of corporate marketing for marketing localization service provider Lionbridge. "For example, [consumers in] Japan, Singapore, and China have a preference for lots of on-page content."

The email/app interplay

Mobile messaging can be more complicated than desktop outreach, particularly when in-app push messaging comes into play. "In a desktop world you send to the mailbox, and that's it," says Steve Krause, group VP of product management for Oracle Marketing Cloud. "Increasingly, brand apps have their own inboxes, and the continuation of an experience from an email may make more sense in an app rather than on a [mobile] website."

Apps give brands greater control over the experience and can make executing a call-to-action more seamless and natural. However, the user experience can be quickly disrupted when a mobile email launches an app if the app hasn't been recently updated and can't

support the email's call-to-action. There are several real-world examples. Skype recently discontinued support for several generations of its mobile clients, and Facebook split its messaging tool, Messenger, into a separate app—and they're not the only moving targets.

Many Android devices are configured to automatically update apps, but iPhone users must manually launch some updates. Launching an app only to greet the customer with an error message will leave a nasty aftertaste. Targeting can help resolve this. "You can target certain pushes only to people who you know are Android users," Krause cites as an example.

Furthermore, brands often miss a glaring opportunity to personalize mobile email by blanketing the footer with download links for every mobile platform. Instead compose emails that detect the opening device and show only the relevant button (App Store for iPhone, Google Play for Android), an easy way to speak with precision and relevance.

The effort is worth it because mobile devices lend themselves so well to sharing and engagement. When Apartments.com ran a promotional contest to share images of summertime activities, 85% of the entries were submitted on mobile devices. "The majority of people were either opening the information in a text message or going through email received on mobile," Apartments.com's Schuble says.

Looking ahead

Being on the leading edge of mobile email means personalizing not just to the recipient, but also to the device opening the mail, the time of day, and whether the email has been opened already. Certain
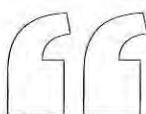
> "Mobile won't just be about the phone."
>
> **Katrina Conn**
> StrongView

calls-to-action are stronger plays on different devices. For a considered purchase, the mobile version could focus on a click-to-call button to reach a sales consultant, while the desktop version pushes a long-form case study. "There's a fair amount of low-hanging fruit to do better in this 'not-one-size-fits-all' regard," Krause says. "Many people are still struggling on the first floor of that skyscraper."

Highly customized, dynamic emails can provide an interactive countdown timer for an offer, offer updates on quantities available, or use location services to refer recipients to the nearest retail outlet. "These real-time inbox offers save time for customers, bringing them the most relevant content without asking them to click through," says Alyssa Nahatis, director of delivery for Adobe Campaign.

Get ready for your definition of "mobile" to change rapidly as the Internet of Things grows. It's still too early to reach any firm conclusions about the most compelling offer to project onto a car windshield, but it's not too early to start thinking about how it will expand the concept of a mobile email. "Mobile won't just be about the phone. You have to take into consideration wearables and vehicle displays," says Katrina Conn, VP of marketing services at marketing platform developer StrongView.

As ever, the real advantage lies not in any one technology, but in the relationship the marketer can create and nurture with customers by marrying technologies. "Hopefully," Krause says, "marketers aren't just thinking about 'What's in the email?' but 'What's the customer's experience?'" ∎

ANATOMY OF A MOBILE EMAIL

Grill an Entire, Healthy Meal in just 15 Minutes!*

Grill your favorite meats, vegetables, even fruits for dessert in less time that it takes to have pizza delivered!

Watch the Video

HEADLINE

ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY

HERO SHOT WITH PLAY BUTTON OVERLAY

HAND DRAWN UP ARROWS TO FRAME THE FOCUS

RESULTS

Ron Rule, director of Internet marketing of Infusion Brands, explains the thought process behind a recent mobile email campaign.

Headline: "We're closely monitoring how effective these curiosity-hook headlines are. Sites like Upworthy and The Blaze have ridiculous headlines, but they're so compelling that everybody wants to click through. We avoid words like 'save' and 'deal' [and symbols like] '$' and '%' and 'shop,' or anything that indicates it's a product pitch."

Preheader: "In as few words as possible, sum up the most important benefit. This is all about them—not you—so don't talk about features. Nobody wants to be marketed to, so we tell them cool ways to use our products."

Hero shot: "This video-style hero shot is a new method we've been testing that has sent click-through rates through the roof. The image is just a hyperlink to a Web page with the video. Take your best hero shot of the product and make it look like a play button, you'll be surprised how many tap it."

Hand drawn call-to-focus: "These simple 'hand-drawn' elements break the normal flow the recipient is expecting, and frame the area you want to get their attention. In our case we want them to watch the video and let that seal the deal, so we have to make sure that's above the fold."

Partially obscured completed meal at bottom: "Show two or three photos, and that's it. You have everything you need right here to decide if you're going to click through, and the website you land on will 'continue the story' and close the deal."

EMAIL'S TOP

12

TEACHABLE MOMENTS

The frequency marketers use email provides plenty of possibility for error.
But those who learn from their mistakes can turn a problem into an opportunity.

By Michele Meyer

Email Subject Field: Boy, did we mess up! That's not a message marketers ever want to send, but with the frequency—and speed—in which they email, they're bound to blunder.

"There are at least 107 ways an email can go wrong, any of which can alter its original intention," says Andrew Kordek, cofounder of email marketing firm Trendline Interactive. "Like us, prospects scan and delete badly written emails without a second glance."

And thanks to social media, frustrated consumers can brandish a company's messed up missive. "If your mistake goes viral," says Katrina Conn, VP of marketing services at StrongView, a cross-channel solutions provider, "one email's ripple effect can be significant."

Yet, marketers can learn from their mistakes—as have the marketers who've shared their stories with us. Here, they reveal their top 12 email nightmares and corrective measures they took when those bad dreams became reality.

GAFFE: My pitch started "Hi [First Name]" or "Hello NULL."

WHAT HAPPENED: Steve Smith, cofounder of CakeMail, a small-business email marketing services provider, sent personal emails to his channel partners, but failed to format the database field properly—thus addressing everyone as "[First Name]."

"I'd made a rookie mistake after 10 years in the business," Smith says. "So, I sent an apology email for my 'stupid' gaffe and explained, 'Here's why it's important to validate your list attributes before you send out content.' Not only did I get lots of feedback, but they thought it was funny and busted my chops," he says. "Weirdly, my gaffe strengthened my relationship with these guys."

Yes Lifecycle Marketing also erred trying to send personalized greetings, learning seven of its recipients had been greeted as "Hello NULL," despite a fallback code that should've written "Hello, there" for recipients whose first names were unknown, says Linda Vetter, marketing VP at the cross-channel services provider.

"They'd been entered into our database with 'NULL' as their first names," Vetter says. "We corrected this and emailed a brief explanation with a quip in the subject line: 'You were never a NULL to us!'"
TEACHABLE MOMENT: Always validate field names and attributes—and ensure that tags and subject lines match—before sending any emails, Smith says.
OUTCOME: CakeMail not only has two people validate and test

every email, but also incorporates a feature that allows for easy testing of personalization before sending. A pull-down menu shows how each individual's version will look. Yes Lifecycle Marketing regularly reviews its database to correct inaccurate subscriber information, rather than rely solely on backup code.

GAFFE: We sent a gift offer a week after it expired—and the correction made matters worse.

WHAT HAPPENED: A major discounter emailed a "really great offer" to rewards and non-rewards program members, for not only an extra percent off, but also a free gift (a pillow) in-store. Unfortunately, the retailer sent it to StrongView's Conn a week after the sale ended.

Fifteen minutes after the original missive, the retailer sent a follow-up with the subject line "Oops, we made a mistake. Here's the correct email," Conn says. Some folks received the second email, but not the first.

Those opening the second post found it specified the percent off, but made no mention of the freebie or if the offer was in-store only. Thus, the discount chain further erred by not noting the mistake or whether discounts applied to in-store or online points-of-sale.

"Some people probably went back to the previous email to see if they'd missed out on an opportunity," she says. "They may have tried to fulfill an invalid offer." As Conn notes, customers "wound up irked, and less trusting of the brand."
TEACHABLE MOMENT: Don't assume that regularly sent posts remain current. Review every detail before hitting send and make sure that corrections are clear and specific, Conn says. "A diligent quality assurance process would have caught all these errors."
OUTCOME: StrongView's QA team reviews content—even of weekly and automatic offers—one last time before sending it first to a small feed, so an extra set of eyes reviews it, Conn says. Only then are promotions broadcast widely. And should StrongView blunder, it will specify their mistake in corrections.

GAFFE: I followed my client's gut, not my testing.
WHAT HAPPENED: Years ago, Trendline Interactive's Kordek painstakingly developed a new form of campaign. Then the firm tested new and old styles. "Lo and behold the other (older) version wins, to everyone's surprise," he says. The clients decided the results had to be a mistake, and went with the newer one. It bombed.
TEACHABLE MOMENT: "Numbers don't lie," Kordek says.

> ## "My gaffe strengthened my relationship with these guys."
> **Steve Smith**
> CakeMail

THE NUMBERS

75%
→ Emails opened within two hours of delivery; 90% are opened within the first 24 hours
-*Cakemail*

70%
→ Recipients who say they'll always open emails from brands they trust
-*Silverpop*

33%
→ People who open emails based on subject alone
-*Convince and Convert*

158%
→ The percentage that click-through rates increase for emails with social sharing buttons
-*Get Response*

75%
→ Buyers who want marketers to curb sales-speak in their content
-*Demand Gen Report*

6 a.m.
→ The highest click-through rate of any hour
-*Hubspot*

8 ACTIONS FOR AVOIDING EMAIL ERRORS

ONE
Check grammar and spelling (especially names) in emails and headers.

TWO
Review automated emails to ensure dates and discounts remain valid.

THREE
Heed testing results, even if they're counterintuitive.

FOUR
When disaster strikes, review preset correspondence for inappropriate content.

FIVE
Check inventory to see whether offers can be fulfilled.

SIX
Make corrections concise and complete.

SEVEN
Check every detail and link before hitting send.

EIGHT
Review emails and subject heads for spam filter triggers.

"Listen to your [recipients] and trust your data, even if it goes against every fiber of your being. If subscribers tell you they're more engaged in the control version, go with it even if it isn't your preference. Sometimes ugly wins."

OUTCOME: Kordek heeds testers' input. "What's the point of doing a test if you're not going to listen to the results?" he says.

GAFFE: No one was signing up for our deals.
WHAT HAPPENED: A new client asked Kordek to determine why his list wasn't growing despite new efforts to encourage sign-ups for newsletters and deal emails. Kordek reviewed the firm's process and found a small but key IT change to the website seven months earlier that routed sign-ups into a phantom hole in the database. "People were signing up, but the desired experience wasn't happening for them."

TEACHABLE MOMENT: Assume nothing works and review every step before a launch. "S*** happens, so be aware of it," Kordek says.

OUTCOME: Trendline audits its process monthly. This includes checking whether auto-responses might promote out-of-date products and sales, or offer no-longer-valid discounts.

GAFFE: I offered the wrong contest prize.
WHAT HAPPENED: "Brandvocate" firm Publicis Kaplan Thaler emailed a mobile handset maker's 500,000 VIPs, inviting them to play a Facebook game and become eligible for prizes. The subject line beckoned, "Enter to Win a New X." (Prize not specific to protect the client.) If only. Unbeknownst to PKT, at the last minute the client's senior management changed rewards due to inventory shortages. "Word came to us *after* the email was delivered," says Danny Flamberg, EVP, managing director of digital strategy and CRM. "There was a 'holy s***' moment. Within 24 hours, PKT sent a follow-up email with the subject line 'Corrected Prize Info.'" To Flamberg's surprise, the open rate rose from 19.4% for the original pitch to 22.3% for the second.

TEACHABLE MOMENT: "Our secondary responders (there was only a 55% overlap) were motivated by curiosity," Flamberg says. "They effectively expanded the reach of the campaign by 45%, and the resulting game play was two times greater than we'd forecast."

OUTCOME: PKT now tests one-two combination campaigns and tries to boost curiosity-driven clicks. "We'll use offbeat and unexpected language in heads to build suspense," Flamberg says. "We'll also urge people to hurry before it's too late."

> "What's the point of doing a test if you're not going to listen to the results?"
>
> **Andrew Kordek**
> Trendline Interactive

GAFFE: I triggered spam filters.
WHAT HAPPENED: Eric Marcy, VP of demand generation and marketing operations at sales enablement software provider SAVO, realized some of his emails were diverted as trash.

TEACHABLE MOMENT: "Spam filters are becoming smarter, so you have to avoid trigger words and actions," Marcy says. "Plus, people are more likely to delete than open an email with an over-the-top subject line."

OUTCOME: In headers, SAVO avoids slang terms like 'LOL,' words in all caps, or trigger terms like 'Sexy,' 'Free,' 'Buy,' 'Act Now,' and 'Click Here.'

GAFFE: I messed up basic grammar in my pitch.
WHAT HAPPENED: During 14 years as an email marketer, "I've used wrong punctuation and run-on sentences, which got through," Trendline Interactive's Kordek confesses.

TEACHABLE MOMENT: "There's no substitute for good copy writing," he says. "Things we tend to overlook, such as spelling, are the most important."

OUTCOME: Take time to proof every single message. "Hiring a good QA person is critical," says Kordek, who has two such "anally retentive" gems at Trendline. "We strive for 100 percent error-free rate and are running at 99.7 percent."

GAFFE: I gave a response email address for someone who was unreachable.
WHAT HAPPENED: Early in Kordek's career he created an email program for a customer-focused CMO who insisted that replies be directed to his personal email address. "We warned him, customers will hunt you down." A targeted pitch went out worldwide to perhaps 100,000 customers and the CMO happened to be out of office that day. "People replied thinking they'd reach him, and instead their emails bounced back with his out-of-office automated email. As a result," Kordek says, "recipients thought 'Why did this clown send an email when he wasn't there?'"

TEACHABLE MOMENT: Run fail-safe measures until the last minute. "Some nuance you never thought of might go wrong," Kordek says.

OUTCOME: The day Kordek hits the send button, he runs a final check of every detail.

GAFFE: I received a promotion at the worst time possible.
WHAT HAPPENED: Thirty-two travelers died when the cruise ship Costa Concordia sank off Italy's Tuscany coast in 2012. A week later the cruise company emailed prospects, including Joe Stanhope, SVP

Before (subject line, "We Want Your Feedback | CXPA's 2014 Insight Exchange"):

CXPA
INSIGHTEXCHANGE
May 13-14, 2014 • Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Shannon,

Thank you for your participation at the fourth annual CXPA Insight Exchange. The conference continues to exceed our expectations each year, primarily due to your participation. We trust that you found this year's event to be valuable, relevant, and most importantly - fun!

We have developed a survey seeking feedback on the CXPA Insight Exchange to ensure that we are delivering the highest quality events for our members. Please take a few minutes to complete our survey and tell us how we're doing.

We appreciate your time and look forward to sharing with you what we learn, as we start to plan the 2015 Insight Exchange -- returning to Hotel Del Coronado in San Diego next May 5-6.

Don't forget, it's all about the community. We all get stronger as the CXPA community grows. We hope that you will help us grow by spreading the word about the CXPA to your CX colleagues.

>> Complete the 2014 CXPA Insight Exchange survey.

Sincerely,
Bruce Temkin, Co-Founder and Chair, CXPA
Parrish Arturi, Vice Chair, CXPA
Karl Sharicz, Co-Chair, CXPA Insight Exchange Planning Committee
Diane Magers, Co-Chair, CXPA Insight Exchange Planning Committee

After (subject line, "You're Not Shannon..."):

CXPA
INSIGHTEXCHANGE
May 13-14, 2014 • Atlanta, Georgia

...but SHE is!

Our last email mistakenly addressed you as Shannon, but don't worry Jeannie, we know who you are.

And the real Shannon wants YOU to take the attendee survey so we can hear all about your experiences at the Insight Exchange.

>> Take the Survey Now <<

A glitch addressed all of CXPA's conference follow-up emails to "Shannon." The association quickly responded with a clever email apology.

of marketing at cross-channel marketing provider Signal, the chance to book a seven-night cruise on that very ship. No doubt, the pitch had been pre-scheduled and Costa was so focused on public relations that it failed to cancel the promotion.

TEACHABLE MOMENT: When disaster strikes, remember your entire communications package, including preset emails, Stanhope says.

OUTCOME: Signal reviews pending marketing communications to prevent insensitive or ill-timed messages.

GAFFE: I promoted a sale for merchandise that wasn't available.

WHAT HAPPENED: A StrongView client didn't check inventory before broadcasting a deal. "They didn't realize the campaign would do so well," StrongView's Conn says. "Success can be a blessing—or a curse if you can't fulfill it, and risk losing loyal consumers."

TEACHABLE MOMENT: Check inventory supplies before offering discounts, and warn shoppers to act quickly. Specify "while supplies last" if appropriate.

OUTCOME: StrongView asks suppliers to check their ability to meet demand. Should merchandise run out, StrongView reinforces the popularity of targeted follow-ups: "'Sorry! Our offer was so good, we ran out of inventory,'" Conn says. "Then offer comparable deals on comparable items."

GAFFE: I turned off prospects with verbose, vague subject lines.

WHAT HAPPENED: Four of five emails are seen on mobile devices, according to HubSpot. Readers tend to make faster judgments when triaging email on mobile. SAVO's Marcy realized that he lost clicks due to pitches starting with product names or industry jargon, rather than information about clients' needs.

TEACHABLE MOMENT: Customers scan emails and will delete them if headers are vague or fail to address their concerns.

OUTCOME: With only a split second to seduce, "we keep subject lines crisp and clean with four to eight words," Marcy says. "We test subject lines among ourselves, then beta test before sending to a broader audience." Email bodies are clear and focused on the target audience's needs.

"You want the prospect to say, 'Let me find out what my peers are doing to solve this problem,'" he says. "Then add something memorable: a quote, humorous one-liner, or statistic that'll get them to forward the email."

GAFFE: I sent the same email three consecutive months, instead of updating it.

WHAT HAPPENED: In the early days of CakeMail, Smith's marketers forgot to check whether recurring campaigns were updated.

TEACHABLE MOMENT: "Don't assume someone else is taking care of the task of updating recurring content," Smith says. And remember: When you've got multiple people working on a project, all it takes is one who didn't click save or update their work for it to go wrong.

OUTCOME: At least two CakeMail marketers verify each message, even automated ones. The firm also began sending a monthly newsletter to reduce repetition.

"These things happen," Smith says. "It's a question of when, not if. Too bad you can't recall emails without anyone knowing. Once you hit send, you can't get it back!" ∎

What's Hot in EMAIL MARKETING?

By Ginger Conlon

From mobile email and responsive design to dynamic content and Gmail to preference centers and clicks versus opens, the world of email marketing is more frenetic than ever. Staying abreast of what's not just hot, but also relevant—and likely to have a long-term impact—is an ongoing challenge for email marketers. With that in mind we asked 12 industry experts, "What's hot in email marketing that marketers simply can't ignore—and why?" Their ripostes:

LINDA VETTER
VP, Marketing,
Yes Lifecycle Marketing

While a successful email marketing program incorporates many best practices and has a variety of components, triggered messaging should be a key part of it. Triggered messaging—messages prompted by behavior, events, or milestones relevant to the subscriber—combines the two most important factors for successful communications: relevance and timeliness. Since triggered campaigns are a direct response to the actions subscribers take, they achieve a level of personal relevance most other types of campaigns can never ensure; a welcome series follows an email signup; a transactional message follows a purchase; an abandoned shopping cart email follows a demonstrated intention to buy.

According to our most recent Email Marketing Compass benchmark report, triggered campaigns achieve, on average, 2.5 times higher open rates than business-as-usual campaigns and garner twice their unique click rate. Those are stats marketers simply can't ignore when developing their email programs.

ROSS KRAMER
Cofounder and CEO, Listrak

We all know that triggered emails produce some of the best ROI of any campaigns in a retailer's email program. Currently, we're seeing a great deal of demand for browse-based campaigns that are auto-triggered off category or product display-page browse events. Savvy retailers are making these campaigns impactful by merchandising product recommendations next to the product or category last browsed. Few retailers are taking this experience to the next level by incorporating category, sub category, or brand browse-level details into broadcast campaigns; however, data-driven campaigns that use clickstream data to inform merchandising and promotional decisions will become the next best practice in retail email marketing. Marketers who are leveraging technology to run these types of campaigns are achieving a significant campaign performance lift without having to add more human resources to accomplish it.

GREG GRDODIAN
CEO, Reach Marketing

With mobile viewership surpassing 65%, depending on the audience makeup, marketers can't afford to ignore mobile acknowledgement within their email marketing strategy. Some business-sector markets have a larger mobile audience; business services have more mobile engagement than agriculture, for example. In the consumer sector younger audiences tend to have a much higher affinity for email on a mobile device than their older counterparts.

So, mobile awareness remains the craze, especially responsive design. Responsive design automatically formats HTML to fit a recipient's mobile device no matter which platform he uses. With fluid, responsive email design, tablets and smartphones can display mail optimally and let viewers interact with it effortlessly.

Whether their mobile email market is about 50% or reaches beyond that 65% figure, nearly every marketer recognizes that responsive design is yielding higher engagement rates across almost every vertical. Therefore, marketers are also extremely hot on responsive design to improve their customers' interaction with their content and are making adjustments to optimize their creative for a more mobile-friendly audience.

MATT SEELEY
President, North American, Experian Marketing Services

Now more than ever it's critical for marketers to make every interaction with their customers count. Creating strong customer experiences is beyond a marketing priority, it's a business imperative—and email plays a critical role as the connector of all digital channels. Successful and sophisticated marketers understand where email is most relevant and persuasive in the customer's path to purchase, and are integrating additional channels along that path to optimize the cross-channel experience.

Deploying an operational approach to message strategies at the customer level, not just at the campaign level, is critical and must not be ignored. Technology and tools are largely worthless in the absence of a strategy for managing complex cross-channel interactions. Email remains the veteran among digital channels, and smart marketers are focused on building on the foundation of email to create a single, shared, and immediate view of the customer across all channels.

SHAWN MYERS
VP of marketing, StrongView

What's hot in email marketing? In one word, context. Email marketing has spent the past two decades striving to be personalized, but in that same time frame customers have raced ahead of us with their expectations on what a beneficial marketing engagement looks like. The best practices in email today mostly fall short of these expectations, failing to be contextual to each customer's location, activities, conditions, and devices. Being contextual with email marketing means having solutions that understand and activate your customers at the moment of engagement. Marketing is being pushed to gather and leverage massive amounts of contextual data on customers, and many traditional solutions are breaking under the burden of doing this at scale. This shift towards contextual messaging will be the new measure of success in how brand relationships are established and maintained, and therefore is the hottest thing in email marketing today.

DANIEL P. SMITH
CMO, Outsell LLC

There are three main ingredients for email marketing success:

Analytics – The key to building loyalty is engaging with customers on an ongoing basis based on what's relevant to them. To win that next sale requires that you understand their interests and preferences, and are able to detect when they're ready to buy. Using predictive analytics gives you the ability to anticipate customer needs and understand purchase timing.

Consistent cross-channel messaging – Being consistent across social, email, mobile, and print marketing efforts creates a force multiplier. Tailoring the content and offers to individual customer interests (as determined by your analytic models) and keeping that content consistent across channels results in significantly higher conversion rates.

Responsive design – With 66% of all emails today being opened on a mobile device, brands need to code their email communications to adapt to variety of different devices. Customers can't respond to offers they can't read.

DAN ROY
CEO and cofounder, MessageGears

Companies today must aim for relevancy with their email campaigns. Email marketers face myriad complexities delivering the right message at the right time to influence purchase. With customer data being the driving force behind campaign decisions, marketers must leverage customer data through internal data warehouses, e-commerce systems, inventory management, POS, and other systems. In addition, time sensitivity associated with this behavioral information poses challenges to the effectiveness of email campaigns.

So, how can our industry efficiently provide relevant content to customers and prospects in a timely manner?

Luckily, we've seen a new breakout approach in the marketplace that solves these data-driven marketing challenges. We call it the hybrid email method; it allows marketers to have easy and direct access to all of their own internal rich CRM data, which is typically only offered by on-premise email service providers, combined with the ease and scalability of delivery in the cloud. The effectiveness of this hybrid approach has begun changing the data-driven marketing landscape.

KELLIE BOGGS
Marketing strategist, Bronto

Abandoned cart messages are one of the top revenue emails that a marketer can send; however, instead of treating all cart abandonment the same, marketers can now personalize and target these messages using data they're able to pull in from their e-commerce platform. This helps to boost engagement and conversion rates.

Marketers must be sure to include product recommendations, information on exchange policies, or reward points awarded in their abandoned cart messages, but also take the time to review their recovery strategy and consider what improvements they can make. Marketers should use the data they have access to on their customers, whether it's profile information or even past-purchase details to personalize those messages. But remember, consumers expect to receive abandoned cart emails now, so make them stand out.

QUINN JALLI
SVP, strategic initiatives group, Epsilon

When we look around the email landscape, there are two things that are really hot. The first is consumer-level deployments that leverage consumer opens and clicks to determine optimal deployment timing. Getting away from campaign-level timing has long been discussed, but over the past year consumer-level email timing is taking hold and companies are realizing greater than 10% increases in unique consumer clicks. This consumer-level personalization not only increases opens and clicks in the short term, but it also ensures better deliverability, brand engagement, and revenue in the long term.

The second item is one-click purchasing capabilities from within an email. While largely still "beta" in concept, allowing consumers to easily purchase within an email provides two distinct advantages: It naturally reduces the abandoned shopping cart phenomenon, more problematic today as more online "distractions" interrupt the shopping experience; and, most important, it helps minimize the decline in purchases associated with email interactions on smartphones.

DELA QUIST
CEO, Alchemy Works

Email is finally gaining recognition as the crucial link between two of the hottest things in marketing at the moment: content marketing and Big Data. In this era of content and data, marketing goals must become the main focus of email strategy; concerns about device proliferation, getting delivered, and setting up triggers have been relegated to the day-to-day campaign production process. Serious email marketing has been around for about a decade and is a pretty mature market. For brands that have been developing their email program for years, technological concerns that feed much debate within the industry are no longer strategic. The question for brands today is how to monetize the technology they've already acquired to best exploit email's unique place as the conduit between content marketing and Big Data to drive revenue.

RONNIE BRANT
Director of product marketing, Movable Ink

Imagine what you would do if you could target, segment, and adapt every email to every recipient when they open a message. Finally, there is real innovation happening in email marketing and one of the biggest breakthroughs—real-time responsive content—has given email marketers the ability to select and optimize the content of every message at the moment it's opened instead of locking it in before an email is sent. Email marketers are no longer trapped in a "pre-send" framework and can use live data from the world around us to send email filled with content that senses and responds to the person who opens it. The highest ROI channel is catching up and again becoming the most relevant one. Real-time responsive content and optimization are game-changing abilities that can unleash creativity in email marketing, making marketers' jobs easier, increasing campaign performance, and better serving customers at the same time.

JUSTIN FOSTER
Cofounder and VP market development, Liveclicker

Real-time content is hot, but few understand what it is or its long-term impact. In short, real-time content is email content that's personalized in real time—right at the moment someone opens a marketer's email message. The real-time nature of the personalization allows marketers to improve the productivity of email marketing campaigns for the long term, even after the send button is pressed. Not only does it mean that emails can stay relevant in consumers' inboxes longer to boost response rates, but it also helps the marketer optimize campaign ROI—and we're all trying to squeeze more profits out of our programs.

Email's Mixed Messages

Marketers love email. Volume has increased 9% year over year in their attempts to woo customers, according to Yesmail Interactive's "Email Marketing Compass," based on analyses of email metrics from 25 billion emails sent from Q2 2013 through Q2 2014. Customers, however, have mixed feelings. Unique clicks have decreased by 14% and the overall email open rate is down 3%. As email volume increases, so does recipients' selectivity with what they open. But engaged customers are undeterred by volume. Opens among active email subscribers have increased 6% year over year.

The incongruity doesn't end there. Here are other key findings from the report.

↑9% Increase in email volume year over year

↓14% Decrease in email unique clicks

↓3% Decrease in overall email open rate

9.3% Average mobile click-to-open rate in Q2 2014

22.6% Desktop click-to-open rate in Q2 2014

13% Increase in the click-to-open rate for responsive emails over non-responsive emails in Q2 2014

OPEN RATES IN Q2 2014
15.1% All campaigns
38.9% Triggered campaigns

UNIQUE CLICK RATE IN Q2 2014
1.7% All campaigns
3.4% Triggered campaigns

Mobile purchases comprised **22%** of all email-driven purchases in Q2 2014, a **40%** year-over-year increase

↑1.8% Mobile conversion rate in Q2 2014, up from 1.3% in Q3 2014

↓2.7% Desktop conversation rate in Q2 2014, down from 3.7% in Q3 2014

64.5% Email opens on mobile

35% Email clicks that are mobile, a 9% year-over-year increase

2.5 Times higher open rates for triggered campaigns are than for general campaigns

AVERAGE ORDER VALUE FOR PURCHASES MADE...
↓$55 on mobile devices, down from $79 in Q3 2013
↓$83 via desktop, versus $88 in Q3 2013

CLICK-THROUGH RATE FOR
12.5% Responsive emails
11.1% Non-responsive emails