

## The Future of Email Marketing

by Audrey Howes

At this time of year, we all just want to make it through the holiday season. We are often so caught up in the now that we forget the New Year is beckoning. The reality is, now is the time to start planning for your email marketing in the New Year. Here are 6 tips to get you started.

### Let's start with some strategy...

#### Integrate Social Media

Social media is here to stay and is only going to grow. Integrate social media into your email marketing by posting emails to your Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Invite email readers to become members of your social networks and give them the opportunity to share your email with their social networks.

#### Let Out Your Personality

The socialization of media has left readers desiring humanness in your communications. They are growing tired of the corporate speak and want to know more about the team running the business. [Email Insider](#) says, "Add more personality and 'voice' to your messages, such as content by employees, subscribers, customers or other stakeholders." As you are writing your email and social communications, do a personality check. What kind of person are you representing to your audience with your content and is it who they want to hear from?

#### Rethink Your Segmentation

Most of us segment our lists based on geography, age, gender, psychosocial factors, etc. Forrester research found that the leaders in segmentation effectiveness take it a few steps further. They use a customer value metric such as [Lifetime Customer Value](#), integrate marketing well across traditional marketing platforms as well as digital marketing platforms, and *use customer engagement as the main factor that impacts customer communication*. We can all take a look at how our customers engage with our emails and social media and tailor our communications in that direction. Find answers to questions such as: What pages on your website are visited the most often? Which product emails generated the highest open rate? or What posts were the most talked about on Facebook and by what type of customer? Tailor your email and social communications based on your discoveries about your customer's engagement.

### Now that we've talked strategy, let's talk design.

#### Give it a Quick Once Over

A moment of truth: Your recipients are not reading your entire email. In fact, ClickZ found that 60% of email readers only see about 50% of the message. Other studies have shown that people simply scan emails for items that pique their interest. Design your emails with the most pertinent information and call to action near the top. Use blocks of color, images, bullets, and bold text to help draw your reader's eye where you want it to go.

#### The New Mouse

Many marketers are calling 2012 the "Year of Mobile." Smart phones and tablets are quickly changing the email landscape and fingers have replaced the mouse. Take a look at your email template and give it the "fat finger" test. When sent to a mobile device, are all of the links easily clickable with a large finger? Is

there enough white space and line spacing to easily navigate through the email? Litmus offers a great [infographic](#) with additional mobile email considerations. It may be time to redesign your email template with mobile in mind.

## **To Open or Not to Open**

Most email clients give their users a sneak peek at the interior of the email via the preview pane. Typically the preview pane reveals the top section or the top left section of the email and will not show images. MarketingSherpa found that only 33% of email readers have images turned on by default in their email client. All of the above tells us that we need to give our readers a reason to open our email in full using subject line and the top section of our emails without relying on images. Carefully review your templates to see if you have enticing text sections in the preview area of the email. Images are still important, but we can't rely on them as the main attraction. If you are using an HTML email, take advantage of the alternative text to communicate your message when images are turned off.

Email marketing still continues to provide incredible ROI for your marketing budget. Get started applying these strategies and design tips now to jumpstart your email marketing in 2012.