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Email blast marketing – tips for email list owners

HTML email blast marketing has advantages over plain-text because HTML emails are brandable, measurable and more readable for the subscribers, but make sure to obey applicable laws. This is the first article in a three-part series on HTML email that was delivered by CrossComm's Steve Hong to the [Raleigh-Durham Web Design Group](#) in February 2010. You can also [download these email blast marketing tips in PDF](#). Check out MailChimp's comprehensive [how to HTML email marketing guide](#) for a lot of great best practices. We've condensed and reorganized many of those HTML email tips to specifically address email list owners.

Prepare email carefully. Don't be a spammer.

- **Avoid being reported as an [email spammer](#)** because this could prevent your emails from reaching your subscribers. Give your subscribers every reason to open your email.
- **Follow the rules of the [CAN-SPAM Act of 2003](#)** which essentially tells you not to be deceptive and to let people unsubscribe from your list. You should also list your physical street address. Talk to a lawyer for legal counsel.
- **Send only to [opt-in lists](#)**. Don't buy lists. Follow the spirit more than the letter of opt-in rules. It's spam if your subscribers think it is.
- Use double opt-in: customer signs up on your website and receives a confirmation email with a link he or she must click to confirm subscription.
- Provide example emails with your opt-in form to start familiarizing potential subscribers with your email brand and to let them know what to expect.
- **Ask people to [whitelist your email address](#)** in their spam filters.
- Send email regularly to avoid subscribers forgetting about you and marking your email as spam. Be consistent.
- Don't sell with your subject lines ("GREAT OFFER JUST FOR YOU. HUGE SALE!!!"), just describe.
- **Avoid spammy language** like bright red text, excessive exclamation points!!!!, ALL-CAPS and spammy words (mortgage, Viagra, click here, limited time, etc.). Check your email's spam score before you send it with [Contactology's email spam checker](#).
- Set up abuse@yourdomain.com to accept complaints from ISPs when their members flag you as a spammer.
- Host images on a server instead of sending them as attachments. Be prepared to host those images indefinitely because emails will be reopened well into the future.
- Use an email sending service because **you can't send HTML email from your own desktop email program** like Outlook or Apple Mail. It needs to be sent from a server that combines HTML and text versions of an email together. Email services

also handle a lot of complicated issues around helping your email pass spam filters. Here are a few companies to consider:

- [iContact](#) (based in Durham, NC)
- [Bronto](#) (based in Durham, NC)
- [MailChimp](#)
- [Campaign Monitor](#)
- [Vertical Response](#)

Use email marketing strategically.

- **Consider creating multiple lists** for different kinds of emails, different audiences and different send frequencies. Don't send the same email to all 1000 people on your list. Send a different offer to recent customers or people interested in particular subjects.
- Sign up on your own lists so you get your emails just like your subscribers and can see any potential problems.
- Set the reply-to address to a separate account you can check at your leisure. Use a generic account that can be transferred to different employees. You don't want to get everyone's vacation away messages at your regular email account. Also check for challenge/response emails to manually get on a subscriber's whitelist.
- Check your email statistics but **expect only about 20% or 30% of subscribers to open your email**.
- **Test each aspect of your email:** subject, links, day of the week, time of day, etc. Consider segmenting your list into test groups to test variations with each segment. Send to one group at 9AM and another at 12PM and see which group opens and clicks more. Test one factor at a time.
- Watch your web analytics and see if your website traffic and conversions improve after emails.
- Coordinate your team to handle traffic and inquiries resulting from emails. Be aware of time zone differences.

Articles in this series

- [Email blast marketing — tips for email list owners](http://www.crosscomm.net/blogs/web-strategy/online-marketing/email-blast-marketing/)
- [HTML email design — tips for designers](http://www.crosscomm.net/blogs/web-strategy/online-marketing/html-email-design/)
- [How to code HTML email — tips for coders](http://www.crosscomm.net/blogs/web-strategy/online-marketing/how-to-code-html-email/)