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**PROFESSIONAL
EMAIL MARKETING BASICS**

1. A few seconds to make a good impression.

The attention market

If we had to describe the currency of today's web, it would be without a doubt **attention**: so much that the discipline of the **attention economy** has not only become essential for theorists in the industry, but also for advertising and marketing experts.

Until recently, ads or any piece of info was not supposed to compete too much in order to grab the individual's attention. Above all, it was still possible to carry out a qualitative or in depth analysis in order to decide the importance of the object.

Today things are a lot different. Many studies have shown that the extraordinary **growth of the infosphere** and the increasing number of messages that get exchanged and received - not only emails, but also social tools, sms, news, etc - is **literally changing the human brain**.

The result is that we are less willing to find out about whatever we come across on the web in more detail, and prefer to "nibble" at bits of info here and there, often skimming over the data.

So the **information overload** we are subject to every day makes it particularly difficult to capture peoples' attention - and this directly affects email communication. Data collected by the famous (even if a little bit out-dated) [Nielsen Group survey](#) confirms this. Only **19% of newsletter recipients read it from the beginning to the end**, and the way it is viewed - is of particular importance - follows a sort of **"F shape"**:



As one can see, it isn't read in the traditional sense but rather **skimmed over** in a fragmented and often superficial manner.

But the average defined by Nielsen's study should be reduced even further. Just think how many times we ourselves have quickly glanced over a message's general layout - or every time **we binned a newsletter without even opening it.**

In light of all this, it is clear that **commercial or editorial emails must be straight to the point, creative, simple and have instant appeal.** From the first line, and even better from the subject.

There is no room for second place, in the world of email marketing - you've got to **get straight to the point.**

2. Having a long-term strategy

In this scene, we are dealing with structuring messages so that they strike readers and get them interested as much as possible. But even before you figure out how to do it, you need to understand a little **underlying philosophy** about proper email marketing.

One of the most common pitfalls is the idea of considering email marketing as a “push” method able to produce only immediate results.

On the contrary, although using email marketing it is possible to achieve returns in a very short period, the more sensible strategy is a **long-term one** whose main purpose is not so much to get the most out of a single campaign, but rather to **foster a loyal relationship with users**.

Any expert will tell you the same thing, but unfortunately there are still many companies that haven't truly taken on board this concept. The concept of **forward-thinking** email marketing has yet to take root.

In his *Constant Contact Guide to Email Marketing*, Eric Groves offers us some important advice: "Don't treat email addresses as email addresses; treat them like relationships."

That's exactly right. What lies behind your contacts are people and **peoples' lives revolve around relationships.**

How can that be put into practice? Don't start thinking you can get out of it so easily just because you send a well-crafted newsletter every week, or a fantastic discount campaign every now and then. The only true way to add any real value to this method of marketing is to **establish a line of continuity between actions and reactions**, creating a **positive feedback loop.**

In other words:

- **Always reply to one's emails** and don't be afraid to **establish a genuine dialogue.** This is definitely one of the most important points of any email contact strategies, and one of the factors which determines the difference between other forms of advertising - completely one sided. Newsletter senders using

a no-reply@domain address, give the fatal impression that any form of conversation has been severed right from the beginning - a rather unpleasant feeling. Make sure that recipients are able to reply to every email you send, and get back to them as quickly as possible.

- **Create customized strategies.** One of the most extraordinary advantages of email marketing - yet highly underrated - is the ability to mail-out a raft of different messages depending on the target, the tastes and needs of users. Unlike traditional forms of advertising that bombards everybody with the same content such as TV ads, email marketing enables a **true customization** of one's message. Not only does this heighten your chances of selling more or satisfying specific customer's tastes, but also helps rebuild a trusting relationship that was lost in the era of the global market. A bit like the **old local shopkeepers** who used to put aside our favourite products. For us and only for us.

- **Keep the relevance of the messages high**, according to users' previously stated preferences and interests. Always show a high standard of **quality** and avoid any content that is not useful.
- **Avoid flooding your contacts with too many emails**, especially in peak periods such as summer, holidays, Christmas. It's much better to continue building a customized path.
- **Hold on to acquired information**. User feedback and all the information customers are willing to give you in the registration form, i.e. age or tastes, are immensely valuable. With the right scenario analysis, they'll help you improve content or offers quality.
- **Look ahead**. As much as emails may seem a fairly static tool, the email marketing world is constantly moving, and there are always new ways to integrate and improve them. Strive to come up with new tips and different strategies, and never give up experimenting.

Finally, to leave you with a tiny pearl of wisdom from Middleton Hughes and Sweetser, authors of *Successful email Marketing Strategies. From Hunting to Farming*:

Email marketing is just one frantic campaign after another, and sales are down. Solution? Send more emails. People are unsubscribing. Solution? Frenetically try to get more subscribers and send more emails to those are still there. How can we measure the success of email programs conducted at this breakneck pace? There are two basic ways to look at email marketing: as hunters and as farmers. All email marketers measure email campaign performance. Only advanced email marketers also measure subscriber performance.

3. Putting oneself in the user's shoes

One of the greatest risks when working in the email marketing industry, is to overlook the fact that **we have an inbox too**. And we also receive dozens of messages, often unwanted.

Putting oneself in the receivers' shoes is crucial if we want to come up with truly relevant communications: do not think like marketers or professionals, but **try thinking like a recipient**.

Eric Groves, in his *Constant Contact Guide to Email Marketing*, doesn't beat around the bush when he bluntly states:

Quite simply, if they think your email is spam, then it's spam. [...]

Your definition of spam doesn't matter, and neither does mine, unless we define it in exactly the same way as our recipients define it. The ultimate judge and jury when it comes to spam is the recipient of the message, not the sender.

Consumers consider spam as anything they don't want or can't verify.

It may seem a bit too harsh - there are definitely some good indicators to give us advanced warning as to what is or isn't spam - but Groves isn't too far off the point.

Spam is not restricted to emails with "SEX VIAGRA \$\$ \$" in the subject, but includes **any unsolicited communication** - or even uninteresting ones.

And so, this principally means three things:

- **Ask yourself some questions.** Better still, many questions. Is the content of your email really relevant? Try subscribing to some of your competitors' newsletters, and spend a few days simply sifting through your inbox, waiting for new ones to arrive. How many of the commercial emails that you receive are of any real interest? Carefully analyze the appearance and the substance of what you receive. Do you feel the **urge to unsubscribe from any of the mailing lists**? If the answer is yes, take a note of what factors triggered such a reaction. Now you've got a nice **list of pit falls to avoid**.

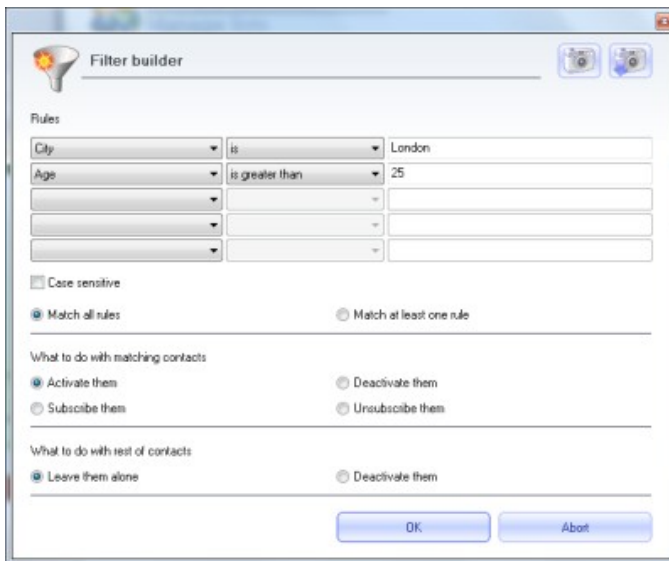
- **Evaluate the results** with your whole team. What seems obvious to you mightn't be so for someone else. Listening to others' opinions - especially in a field where there are no incontrovertible truths - is a great way to reach a balanced well-working solution.
- **Pay particular attention to first impressions:** like the subject, sender, and information architecture. But do not stop there: as we've already said, the **entire contents** of the email must be relevant and well crafted.

And finally: If it's too much hard work putting yourself in the recipient's shoes, why not find someone who'll do it for you? For example, **your own users**. Don't be afraid to accept their advice, and of course criticisms, or directly asking them for their opinions - perhaps placing it in the footer of your newsletter.



Behind every email address there is a person who differs from others in terms of interests, habits, behaviors. That's why it's essential to send customized messages to your target audience.

With **SendBlaster** you can manage this important aspect of email marketing through a tool called **Filter Builder**.



The screenshot shows the 'Filter builder' dialog box in SendBlaster. It features a 'Rules' section with a table for defining conditions. The first rule is 'City is London' and the second is 'Age is greater than 25'. Below the rules, there are options for 'Match all rules' (selected) and 'Match at least one rule'. There are also options for 'What to do with matching contacts' (Activate them, Deactivate them, Subscribe them, Unsubscribe them) and 'What to do with rest of contacts' (Leave them alone, Deactivate them). The dialog has 'OK' and 'Abort' buttons at the bottom.

| Field | Operator | Value |
|-------|-----------------|--------|
| City | is | London |
| Age | is greater than | 25 |
| | | |
| | | |

Case sensitive

Match all rules Match at least one rule

What to do with matching contacts

Activate them Deactivate them

Subscribe them Unsubscribe them

What to do with rest of contacts

Leave them alone Deactivate them

OK Abort

This is a very powerful feature that can filter your contacts' data according to one or more rules, up to a maximum of five. In the example above, we set two rules to create a subset of contacts who live in London and who are 25 years or older.