

## Optimizing your e-mail to deal with image blocking

BY ANTHONY GREEN

Recipients view e-mails through many different programs and screen sizes, from desktops to mobile devices. Readers also generally view e-mails through preview panes while images often need to be “right-clicked” so they can be downloaded.

What does this mean for marketers? We need to test our audiences’ preferences and make sure we include a good ratio of text to imagery. Since recipients expect e-mail to be interactive, we can drive them to the Web where a more flexible environment exists. Video can play, for example and recipients can submit forms. With the Internet standardized from desktop to desktop, it’s easy to test campaigns on different Web browsers (Explorer, Mozilla, Firefox) with the confidence that most people will have the same interactive experience.

**Design for the inbox** Do not re-use an offline piece or Web page and dump it into an e-mail. Optimize what you send to the inbox – the brand should remain consistent across channels.

**Use text before imagery, including your name/company name** Even with image blocking on, the recipient can still read an introduction and know the sender before having to right-click.

**Host images online** Avoid embedding images in your e-mail. Most firewalls strip these out and people won’t be able to right-click to see them.

**Use headlines** Recipients scan e-mails when they receive them; make sure your headlines allow for an understanding of the e-mail’s content.



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**Do not use images for headings** Make sure your text contains relevant content. Recipients should understand the gist of your message without having to right-click to download designer titles.

**Repeat your calls to action** People are more likely to click on text than images so write your actions out and repeat them within your e-mail.

**Keep the design simple** Do not have too many colors or competing pieces of content. Your recipients will skip your e-mail rather than try to distinguish its important elements.

**Make sure brand consistency exists from e-mail to Web** Create landing pages, if necessary, but make sure the recipients feel they are on the same message journey when they click on a Web link.

**Subject line and From address** Recipients will first see these pieces of information upon receiving your e-mail. Make them intriguing, otherwise the time spent on your creative and content will be wasted and the e-mail might never be read.

**Be a safer sender** Request that the recipient add you to a safe sender list. Your images will be downloaded automatically in the future.

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## Responsible e-mail should be marketers’ next main focus

BY ASHLEY JOHNSTON

With “relevance” now everyday vocabulary, our focus should shift to the tactical elements of relevant marketing – *i.e.*, responsible e-mail.

Forrester Research data shows consumers trust e-mail more and use it more often than any online channel. We must reward this trust with responsible communication strategies to improve our position among everyday consumers.

But, there are pitfalls surrounding our industry. Forrester analyst Julie Katz notes, e-mail is “like the crack cocaine of marketing – cheap, addictive and potentially dangerous.” While the channel’s appeal can’t be ignored, it must be approached with caution and responsibility. This is where some brands fall short.



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To put responsible e-mail marketing into action, create straightforward, robust preference centers. Make it easy for customers to tell you what they want, while keeping in mind that their stated preferences are not static and susceptible to change. Responsible marketers should provide customers with an easy method of updating and changing their profiles, avoiding complicated logins and multiple usernames/accounts. By relinquishing control over the uniformity of marketing content and the method of contact, marketers can make positive impressions with customers.

Our customers expect us to treat them as individuals. Nowhere is this more evident than with social networking, which has taught marketers that “unofficial” customer opinions are sometimes more powerful than official ones. Consumers want to feel important and increasingly require the brands they use to know who they are, acknowledge them, respect them and value them.

During a given week, a customer stands to receive multiple relevant e-mails from an organization, yet most marketers do not prioritize the value of each message. These include a shipping notification, a birthday message, a standard promotional e-mail or a reminder e-mail, but are often sent without regard to frequency or importance. This is not only counterproductive and wasteful, but can result in a weakened relationship, or worse, unsubscriptions. Prioritizing and setting time limits on relevant messages should be part of the campaign process if you have numerous automated trigger campaigns or many business units.

Soon, our success in preserving the efficacy of the e-mail channel will come down to incorporating responsibility and relevance into every customer interaction. Engaging customers in a more honest, meaningful way is essential to building and maintaining healthy, profitable and long-term relationships.

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