

Email Marketing

How to build customer relations with emails in 2024?

A comprehensive guide from marketers to marketers.



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Before we start...



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In the world of digital marketing, where trends evolve and algorithms dictate success, I've encountered a question that frequently arises both in my interactions with clients and within the community: "Is email marketing still relevant?"

With over six years of experience in email marketing across a variety of organizations my answer is simple - "Yes!" As we dive into 2023-2024, it's imperative to recognize that email marketing isn't just alive and kicking; it's thriving.

What's even more remarkable is how it evolved during the pandemic. Remember the days when sales reps tirelessly sought potential clients, only to hear, "It's COVID, the person you're reaching works from home; why don't you drop an email." A similar situation unfolded in marketing departments connecting with media partners and stakeholders.

The truth is, email marketing has not only survived the test of time and pandemic, but it has also emerged as a true digital marketing powerhouse. It remains as pivotal today as it has ever been, driving engagement, nurturing customer loyalty, and securing sales.

In this guide, we'll explore how this timeless strategy continues to be a game-changer for businesses in the digital age.

Why email marketing

So, what makes email marketing such an effective tool for customer engagement?

You are the algorithm

In social media, not only do algorithms control who sees your content and when, but also how much. In email, you are in control.

If you do it right, your subscribers are more likely to engage with the content you communicate because it's tailored to their interests and meets their needs. It's a direct connection.

Email is decentralised

Social media platforms are owned by a single corporation. Meta now owns Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. This poses issues when corporations make arbitrary decisions about these platforms. (Case in point: Elon Musk and Twitter.)

Email, however, is a fully distributed and decentralised communication channel. Corporations like Microsoft (Outlook) and Google (Gmail) keep introducing updates. But they can't change the basic functionality of email.

It brings revenue

Even in the era of paid advertising, companies continue to struggle with AI, the engine that powers social media. On the other hand, email marketing is going strong.

Statista reports that in 2023, [email marketing revenue](#) has been estimated at over USD 10 billion. In B2B, email marketing has become one of the main streams of revenue.

Why it works

Well, here's the proof - people actually respond to it. In a [survey](#) from late 2022, one out of four respondents said they'd likely buy something after reading an email newsletter. That's a good conversion rate.

Customers opt in for your company's emails, indicating a consistent interest in your business. And while unsubscribes do happen, the direct, personalised nature of email communication helps you stay relevant to your customers.

In this age of information overload, customers appreciate getting emails that make sense and mean something to them.



Remember, it's not just about sending emails; it's about sending the right emails. Keep your content relevant, personalized, and engaging. That's the secret sauce to make email marketing work like a charm for your business.



Getting started with email marketing

5-steps process to follow

To do email marketing right, you need to keep the following key considerations in mind:

01 Know your audience

Who is your customer? Gather information on your customers just as you would for a marketing campaign. This will allow you to create highly personalised campaigns, making it likely that your customers will act upon your emails.

Build a list of recipients to send your emails to. When a customer visits your website, offer them ways to opt into your email list. Be sure to add these in a way that clearly demonstrates value. Initially, you won't have a long list. But if you offer each subscriber excellent content, you will see organic growth.

02 Know your goals

Do some research to find out what are the average email statistics for your specific manufacturing sector. This is because the numbers are quite different across sectors. Knowing the right numbers will help you set realistic goals for your team.

Here are a few examples from Mailchimp:

Average email marketing campaign stats of Mailchimp customers by industry

Industry	Average Open Rate	Unsubscribe Rate
Manufacturing	19.82%	0.31%
Marketing and Advertising	17.38%	0.27%
Media and Publishing	22.15%	0.12%
Medical, Dental, and Healthcare	21.72%	0.28%



03 Know your email campaign type

There's a wide variety of email campaigns out there: a weekly newsletter, product announcements, informational blog posts, seasonal discounts, automated scenarios... The choice will depend on your product and customer persona. Companies usually have a mix of different types of campaigns running throughout the year.

04 Know when to email

It's important to decide how often you plan to email your subscribers. Consider the time of day when they usually open emails or visit your website; an analytics-driven approach is key to success here. Let them know this right when they sign up to receive your newsletter.

Finding the right balance in the quantity is also essential. If you send too many emails, they may annoy your customers and elicit opt-outs or spam redirects. If you send too few, they may have moved on to other brands.

Regardless of what you decide, remember to be consistent. This will build trust in your audience and ensure your brand's stickiness.

05 Know what's working – and what's not

It's important to stay updated on the progress of your email marketing. You can do this by constantly measuring key KPIs. Measuring these metrics will give you the insight you need to make small changes, which can yield big results:

- Deliverability: Ensure emails reach inboxes.
- Open rate: Track email open percentages.
- Clickthrough rate: Measure CTA clicks.
- Unsubscribes: Keep tabs on opt-outs.

In addition, keep some space for experimentation and giving new approaches a try. Every now and then, conduct A/B testing to get a better understanding of how consumers behave.



Refining your email marketing strategy

A/B Testing

Your email marketing needs to work for your customers. Some may work best when the call-to-action is bright and catchy. Others may prefer a more subtle approach.

So how do you know what kind of email newsletter will work with a customer?

By doing A/B testing.

Considering its importance, it's surprising that 44% marketers rarely put their email marketing strategy through A/B testing.

On the flip side, by regularly testing your email marketing strategy you will stay ahead in the game.

In an A/B test, you are testing to see which email template works best with your audience. How does email A, with a discreetly placed CTA fare when compared to email B, which displays the CTA in a pop of colours?

Because you can test for each variable at a time, this is excellent for companies using email templates.

A/B testing at a glance:

1

Choose a variable

Choose a variable to test (for example: images, content type, subject line).



2

Draft an email

Create one version of an email template with this variable, and one without.



3

Send the email

Send the emails simultaneously for a fixed period of time.



4

Analyse results

Analyse the results to understand which version has better results.



5

Repeat the process

Repeat the process for another variable.



Email service providers usually have A/B testing already integrated into their software. This will allow you to run it like a feature and see the results faster. It is important to make sure that you are testing the right sample size.

Otherwise, you may be taken off-track with irrelevant results. Use a calculator (there are many available online) to calculate the ideal sample size, so that your A/B testing arrives at reliable statistical probabilities.

Crafting the perfect newsletter

If it has been a long time since you sent a thoughtful email, you're not alone. Roughly 72% of ecommerce marketers say the biggest challenge they face with email is low open rates.

One way to win over your newly minted subscribers is to draft engaging content. There are a few things to keep in mind when developing a newsletter template:

Text

The body of your email should reflect your brand's voice. Remember to choose one topic per email.

Images

The graphics you use should be optimised for all devices. (IBM has reported that 49% of all emails are opened on mobile devices.) They should act as a relief from the text, but also be related to the content.

CTA

Possibly the most critical element of the email! Ensure it is easily visible and offers an immediate benefit.

Timing

A [study](#) based on the data of over 20 million emails concluded that the best time to send an email is 11 am on Tuesdays. (But research your [target group and their behaviour](#) - if it reveals a different timing suggestion – stick with that.)

Personalisation

74% of marketers say targeted personalisation increases customer engagement. There are many ways to do this, but starting your email with the customer's name makes a difference.

Subject Line

Use it to be direct, relevant, and personable. Here's an example: At Actum, we had drafted a newsletter about CRM and how it helps sales teams to boost internal communication. We did A/B testing on 2 possible subject lines: "How CRM helps to improve internal communication" and just "CRM".

The second option scored 30% higher on CTR!



Consider adding an emoji to the title and sticking to it for all subject lines. This way, recipients will easily recognise your email from the others.

Preheader

This is a short line of text displayed in a recipient's inbox right next to the subject line. A short but catchy preheader often helps a recipient decide whether to open a promotional email or not. If you leave it empty, the recipient will see the first line of your email instead. Use it to grab attention with discounts or personalization.

Ensuring deliverability



Email services use AI and machine learning to redirect unwanted emails into spam. As an email marketer, it's important to know that measuring deliverability isn't enough. You need to ensure your emails are being delivered to your subscriber's primary inbox.

We've all had the odd email being redirected wrongly into spam. Usually, we never find out that's the case, unless the sender calls you to check why you haven't responded. To ensure this doesn't happen to your emails, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

Request new subscribers for a double opt-in

When you get a new subscriber, request them to confirm their subscription in your first email to them. Taking this extra step reduces the chances of them marking you as spam later. It also gives you access to high-quality email addresses.

Nurture your IP reputation

Gradually increase email volume when using a new IP address. Email services trust you more based on sending behavior and response rates. A good reputation means emails land in primary inboxes.

Stay away from red flag words

Phrases like "earn extra cash", "boost sales now" can be picked up immediately by spam filters. Ensure your email body stays clear of these red flags. Remember to be relevant and meaningful. If your subscribers feel deceived after opening your email, they are more likely to mark it as spam themselves.

Craft engaging content

Spend some time planning what goes into each email you send. Email services are constantly measuring the engagement of recipients with promotional emails. The more engaging your content is, the more likely you will continue to have access to their primary inbox.

Skip the attachment

Attachments literally make an email heavy – they take more time to download. For the sake of safety, email services often redirect promotional emails with attachments directly to spam. If you need the customer to engage with something (for example, a survey), link to your website or a vetted external service.

Mind your text-to-image ratio

You may be tempted to create an email template which comprises of a single catchy image. But this is something spam filters keep an eye out for. Stick to a ratio of 70% text to 30% images.

Making the most of your email marketing



In summary, email marketing is more than just sending out emails; it requires a well-devised strategy. Remember, a lack of planning can lead to failure. Align all your channels with a comprehensive customer-focused approach.

Now that you have the information you need, put it into action. The most effective way to leverage a strong email marketing strategy is to incorporate it into a calendar.

This allows you the time to carefully consider your message and align it with significant events throughout the year to maintain relevance.

More importantly, planning your email marketing enables your team to maintain consistency. In terms of numbers, it's worth noting that over half of us check our email before doing anything else online.

Consistency in communication is key, and partnering with ACTUM Digital can make your email marketing experience seamless and rewarding.

For those struggling with the intricacies of email marketing due to limited expertise or resources, turning to an agency becomes an even more appealing solution. An agency offers the expertise and resources needed to navigate the complexities of email marketing, ensuring the success and optimal results of your campaigns.



Learning from experience: success stories

Strategic email marketing refresh

for a leading company in agricultural technologies

Let's delve into the story of our client, a top agritech company, working to improve farming practices. Despite their tech and agriculture expertise, their email marketing struggled to engage subscribers.

The company's email communications went unnoticed, with declining newsletter subscriptions and low subscriber interaction. Lack of consistent visuals and user data signaled the urgency of an email marketing strategy overhaul.

The marketers made small tweaks, like occasional content and visual changes, but it brought about no joy. Open rates, subscriber growth, and click-through rates stayed the same.

Here's where our team stepped in to streamline their email marketing. We identified two crucial aspects requiring careful attention and restructuring:

The email template

For the new email template, we focused on a user-friendly and visually appealing experience. We standardized the design for consistency and introduced a font change to align with the company's web identity. Key sections, such as events, were strategically highlighted for better visibility. We also maintained a 70/30 text-to-image ratio to balance attention without overwhelming the reader visually.

Subscriber welcome process

For the welcome process, we refined email frequency through research and A/B testing, aiming for subscriber engagement without overwhelming inboxes. We also improved the new subscriber onboarding experience to foster a sense of community.

Lastly, we moved the subscription form to a more prominent position on the website's homepage, making it easily accessible and encouraging more sign-ups. In just two months, our strategic changes delivered impressive outcomes:

+40% Subscriber growth

+10% Increase in open rates

+20% Increase in click-through rate

Our intervention revitalized subscriber engagement and improved overall digital communication performance.

Pro Tip: Start strong with user-friendly, brand-consistent emails, optimize content visibility, manage email frequency, and place an accessible sign-up form on your website. This sets the stage for an engaging email marketing journey from day one.

Enhancing a global investment firm

through strategic email marketing

A globally recognized investment firm, known for its dependable financial services, faced email marketing challenges despite a strong client base. Outdated templates caused declining click-through rates and increased unsubscribes.

The company revamped its approach with brand-aligned templates, dynamic fields, and a multi-lingual welcome journey, but efficiency remained a challenge.

Our intervention aimed to boost the company's email marketing by creating a resonant communication channel for all recipients. Here's how we did it:

Complete email rebranding

We revitalized the email templates with a design that is not just in harmony with the brand but also responsive across various email clients and devices. Dynamic fields were cleverly incorporated to make each email feel personal and directly relevant to the client.

Efficient event management

We automated the entire event communication process from creating landing pages, forms, confirmation mails, and reports to establishing an automation process that seamlessly managed invitations, reminders, and follow-ups, linking all data back to Salesforce for easy tracking and management.



Transition to a new email tool

We smoothly migrated to a powerful email tool that simplified use for local teams, requiring no technical expertise.

Now the company is not just sending emails, it is building stronger connections with its customers. We've highlighted how clear, simple communication can make a big difference and help the company do better with its digital marketing.

Improved client engagement

Enhanced usability

Cost and time efficiency



When it comes to email marketing, partnering with experts can make a significant difference in the success of your project.

ACTUM Digital, with over 26 years of experience serving international clients, is a leading agency specialising in email marketing, web analytics, content strategy, and SEO optimization.

www.actumdigital.com

We can transform your digital strategy, and our confidence comes from many success stories that we are delighted to share.

Are you ready to start your email marketing journey with the right expertise? Take the first step by getting personalized recommendations for your business.

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