THESE NUMBERS NEVER LIE:

10 KEY FIGURES EMAIL MARKETERS CAN’T AFFORD TO IGNORE

REACH MARKETING
Introduction: Email Marketing Performance

Marketing is both an art and a science, this is profoundly true with email marketing—results are immediate, the campaigns are frequent and the numbers behind the emails are what tell the story. The story can be about success or failure, but the numbers behind each campaign will crystallize the path to your desired conclusion. The sheer volume of numbers can be overwhelming, though, and not all are meaningful. The following ten metrics present the most accurate picture or have the greatest influence on email marketing performance. Therefore, they are truly numbers that don’t lie and can’t be ignored.

1. Send Dates

Historically, mid-week mailing dates have received higher open rates. That bit of knowledge has become obvious in the email marketing industry, so many marketers aim for a Tuesday through Thursday send date. Because so many mailers believe these are the ideal days to land a high open rate, any mail sent on these days faces heightened competition for readers’ attention.

One reason for the trend toward high open rates during the middle of the week is because Monday is traditionally a settling in day. But with the advent of smartphones and other mobile devices, more and more professionals are getting an early jump on the week. So, Mondays aren’t as cluttered. Therefore, late Mondays, early Fridays and weekends that used to be off limits for email marketers are becoming prime territory for offers that have little competition.

2. Send Times

The vast majority of marketers are cognizant of which day of the week works best, but they typically ignore the time. Here are two examples of how attention to this number resulted in double digit % increases:

A financial marketer was getting below average results and tested sending out their offers at 4:01 after the stock market closed.

This minor adjustment resulted in nearly 100% lift in results.

The second was a time zone change. We analyzed one of our clients’ lackluster email results, and noticed that the majority of their customers live on the West Coast. We then tagged their database by time zone and split the client’s deployments by region so everyone received an email message at 2

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Greg Grdodian brings 18 years of management experience, technical and creative conceptualization and inventive direct marketing strategies to Reach Marketing.

Greg devoted the first 16 years of his career to Infogroup/Edith Roman where he developed industry-leading, multichannel products. He then joined Crain Communications where he was credited with securing triple digit audience growth by optimizing the firm’s digital products and services. Greg’s latest move to Reach Marketing in 2012 has propelled the company’s stellar growth as the industry’s leading integrated marketing company.

Because Greg’s experience covers a broad spectrum of technological knowledge and marketing expertise, he embodies the Reach philosophy of integrated marketing. His clients get the combined benefit of outstanding customer service and innovative concepts.
at the same time of day regardless of time zone. This lifted our response rates by double digit %’s. So, establish your optimal times not just days and continue to monitor as those may change.

Reaching that ideal time of day during which prospects are most likely to check their email is in part a matter of understanding the demographic to which the mail was sent. Morning open rates are statistically higher than afternoon open rates, but because people generally get a spate of emails in the morning, click-through rates and other metrics of engagement are often lower. Every morning email has plenty of competitors; an afternoon email may therefore be the better option.

3. Hard Bounce Rate

In email marketing your reputation is everything and deploying to hard bounces can quickly ruin yours. Hard bounces, email returns from non-existent or invalid addresses, are inevitable. The number and frequency of hard bounces is a key figure for more than just deliverability. Significantly high hard bounce rates have a direct impact on future emails and how ISPs perceive them. An Internet Service Provider that spots high hard bounce rates from a given IP address will devalue that IP and could even lead to a temporary or permanent block.

Quality email services providers can create removal logic that pulls and eliminates hard bounces after two or three consecutive attempts. A well-designed bounce algorithm can also differentiate between bounces to ensure that a soft bounce – a temporary failure due to Internet outages, network return or filled mailboxes – is not recorded as a potentially reputation-damaging hard bounce.

So work hard to maintain an extremely low hard bounce rate. Typical hard bounce rates should be under 1%.

4. Open Rate

The most basic interaction a customer can have with a message is opening it, so open rate is an essential statistic. Without a strong open rate, other vital statistics never even come into play. As it reflects the initial interest and acceptance of a brand’s offer, the open rate is the key to defining your recipient’s interest. While a number of factors affect open rates, including send date and time, three elements have the greatest impact.

1. The “from” line assures customers that they are receiving wanted mail from a trusted source. It is critical that the “from” line doesn’t look suspicious.

2. The subject line is the initial marketing point of contact between the message and the recipient. If the subject line is not compelling, the email goes unread. Email marketing experts have weighed in on the most effective email subject lines, but no formula is a substitute for testing. A/B split testing or other forms of multivariate testing refine each successive campaign to arrive at the best subject lines for a given demographic.

3. Pre-headers have taken on far greater importance with the advent of mobile devices, smartphones and image blockers. The pre-header is the text that precedes your HTML. This bit of text gives readers a glimpse of the email’s offer; and its effectiveness is even greater when viewed on mobile devices.

The average open rate on retention – 20-25%; on third party – 7-12%.

5. Click Rate

Along with the open rate, the click rate is a prime statistic for email marketers. Each click is a vote for the marketing campaign’s success as it initiates the engagement between your offer and the recipient. Usually expressed as a percentage of the total number of emails delivered, average click rates vary tremendously based on industry, brand familiarity, market share, list type and offer. The most critical component to generate maximum click rates is a strong call to action (CTA).

No matter how engaging the offer contained in an email may be, it can fall short to produce any positive results without a direct call to action. The CTA is the “buy now!” portion of the email, the tag that tells the reader what is expected next. A useful mnemonic for building a strong call to action is the IOU principle:

- Interest – generate interest
- Offer – provide a strong offer
- Urgency – deliver a sense of urgency

The subject line and email copy must build interest, provide a strong offer and deliver a sense urgency to spur action. These three fundamentals have continuously proven to increase click rates substantially over campaigns that lack this structure.

The average click rate on retention - 2-5%; on third party – .5-1%.
6. Click-to-Open Rate

This is often the most overlooked yet readily available statistic. The click to open rate is a key figure that expresses the recipient’s acceptance of your offer after they opened your email. It indicates whether your offer is what the recipient expected based on your subject line and pre-header. To derive the click-to-open rate, divide clicks by total opens.

When your click-to-open rate is low, that means the people who open your mail aren’t actually clicking anything in it. They may look, but they don’t interact. Sometimes a low C2O rate happens because the offer in the email differed from the offer the reader expected so don’t be deceptive. A weak CTA will also produce a low click-to-open rate. Keep a close watch on this statistic; it will give you a great indication of your entire campaign’s cohesiveness. This percentage is also called the “effective rate” because it so succinctly shows how well a campaign has achieved its goal.

The average click-to-open rates on retention 15-20% - on third party 7-10%.

7. Unsubscribe Rate

It is often easy to misinterpret the unsubscribe rate as a metric of little importance, but it is a crucial measure of a list’s health. A certain small number of unsubscribe requests are inevitable as customers move away from a profession, lose interest in a product or otherwise leave a given market. List attrition is a given, which is why list maintenance is vital to email marketing success; unsubscribe requests must be overcome by the addition of new email records into your customer base. However, a spike in unsubscribe rates indicates a potential problem that must be addressed immediately to avoid further losses.

Common reasons for a sudden rise in unsubscribe requests include:

- Vague or inaccurate targeting of an offer
- Too-frequent emails
- Unprofessional tactics in subject lines and content
- Slow load times on email messages

A spike in your unsubscribe rate indicates a need to take quick action. Possible ways to reduce unsubscribe rates include, establishing stable email frequencies and send times, and improving list segmentation.

A typical unsubscribe rate ranges from 0.1% - 0.25%.

8. Number of Customers with Email Addresses

The proliferation of email marketing possibilities makes conventional mailing lists and third party databases incredibly valuable opportunities. Companies that have customer lists with a low quantity of emails are missing out on the most cost-effective communication method available. Increasing the number of email addresses by performing an email append guarantees more successful campaigns. It may not be possible to achieve a 100% gather rate on email addresses, but offering incentives to customers who accept emails, making email addresses mandatory on website forms and running semi-annual email appends are three excellent ways to build a larger email database.

9. Site Penetration

Site penetration measures how deeply your marketing efforts drilled into an organization. As corporate accounts become more common, site penetration will become increasingly important to targeted marketing efforts. Companies that typically have multiple customers per site should flag existing sites for a search of unique contacts. Companies that typically produce only one customer per site should flag the site and omit it from their prospecting efforts. Understanding your site penetration could represent a valuable opportunity to expand.

10. Conversion Rate

If open rates represent the first tentative interest a reader has in an email offer, and click rates initiate engagement, the conversion rate is the happy marriage between that customer and a new purchase. The key to success lies in increasing your conversion rate, and increasing this rate takes careful attention to all the many things that go into it, including cost, copy, layout and CTA.

It should be no surprise that free offers have higher conversion rates; everyone appreciates a free offer. However, high price is not necessarily an impediment to high conversion rate if the quality of the email copy justifies it. This is where a strong subject line, body copy, landing page and call to action are especially important. Email marketing cannot alter price points or overhead costs, but effective email and web solutions can present these options to customers in an irresistibly appealing way.
Drive conversion rates higher with the following tactics.

- **Create a unified look across all aspects of a landing page for more effective online branding.** Emails should match landing pages, blogs and printed materials.
- **Streamline messages;** instead of trying to fit half a dozen concepts into a single email or landing page, focus on the essentials and turn the remainder of the content into ancillary articles or sub-pages.
- **Choose a single offer for each email.** Customers become confused when each page consists of multiple offers. Choice paralysis is a common phenomenon, and it usually results in no decision at all.
- **Remove clutter and distracting visuals on landing pages.** Professional-looking sites have a clear advantage over amateur efforts. The page should be a straightforward delivery system for necessary product or service information and a single-click conversion opportunity.

**Typical conversion rates range from 10-20%.

**Conclusion**

Companies that leverage a clear and thorough understanding of these ten fundamental figures can realize a dramatic increase in open rates, click rates and conversion rates while minimizing hard bounces and unsubscribe requests. Working with these ten principles of email marketing can also expand markets while refining your target and strategies.

The vast amount of data – the science underlying the art of marketing – can seem overwhelming, but with a focus on the numbers that matter, more successful campaigns can be in any company’s future.

**About Reach Marketing**

Reach Marketing provides integrated solutions that fuse traditional marketing methods with leading-edge technological advances. This confluence of innovation and tradition gives clients unparalleled access to the data they need to shape more effective campaigns. Reach’s inter-disciplinary team brings together marketing specialists, software developers, IT experts, database marketers, analysts and SEO/SMO specialists in one powerful multi-channel marketing force.

The dedicated professionals on the Reach team have positioned the firm at the industry’s forefront and continue to look toward the future of marketing as it continues to evolve.