**Email Marketing**

Email marketing is a great tool to bind your audience to your website. It’s relatively easy to set up an email newsletter and send it to your audience. In this post, I’ll explain the basics of email marketing. Why is email marketing an important element of your growth and marketing strategy? Moreover, I’ll also give practical tips on how to set up an awesome newsletter.

## **The benefits of email marketing**

People who sign up for a newsletter expect and want to receive your information. So this part of your audience is very committed. That’s the reason email marketing pays off. The people you’re sending your newsletters to actually want to read your stuff! As the costs of email marketing are very low, email marketing has a relatively high return-on-investment.

Email is a great way to increase your customers’ retention. What this means is that it will increase the amount of customers that purchase repeatedly, instead of just once. So this would help turn your clients into return customers. By emailing your customers on a regular basis, your brand will stay top of mind and they’ll return more quickly to buy something again. Of course, your emails would have to be interesting, enticing and engaging for this to really work.

A newsletter is relatively easy to set up through a service like [MailChimp](http://mailchimp.com/" \t "_top) or [TinyLetter](https://www.tinyletter.com/). It’s also easy to target specific subgroups within your entire audience with a newsletter. It’s a great way to inform your readers that you have written new blogs and that they should come and visit your blog.

## **Pitfalls of email marketing**

Creating content for a newsletter can be a lot of work. Work on top of writing those posts for your blog. And if you want to send out a newsletter on a regular basis, you’ll have to fill it with content that’s useful to your audience. That can be a challenge.

People won’t open your email or will unsubscribe from your newsletter if they don’t like your content. It’s important not to annoy people with content they don’t want, or have already seen.

## **How to set up a newsletter?**

### **1 Start with something important**

Most people won’t read your entire newsletter. That’s why it’s crucial to start with the thing you really want people to know about. You could also choose something that people would like to read, something that will draw their attention and make them read the rest of your newsletter.

### **2 Make sure to choose a good subject line**

Whether people actually open your newsletter depends on the subject of your newsletter. MailChimp makes it really easy to test open rates of newsletters with different subject lines and it really pays off to think about and test which subject lines work for your audience.

### **3 Clarity and focus**

Make sure the layout of your newsletter is good and looks appealing, and that people are able to read your newsletter on mobile devices. Make sure you have clear calls-to-action, things you want people to do after they’ve read (part of) your newsletter. Give them enough opportunities to click through to your website (and buy your stuff or read your posts).

### **4 Tone of voice**

The people who have signed up to receive your newsletter like your products, your blog or your company. So your tone of voice should be friendly and enthusiastic, not too aggressive or salesy. Your newsletter should make your audience even more fond of you and your products. You’re telling them something other people won’t hear. Make them feel special.

### **5 Make it visual**

If a newsletter is just a wall of text it could become a bit boring. Illustrations and pictures can make the newsletter look much more attractive and pleasant to read.

## **Tips on making your newsletter that much more awesome!**

### **1 MailChimp**

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There are a number of helpful tools that make sending out emails that much easier. At Yoast, we love [MailChimp](http://www.mailchimp.com/" \t "_top). MailChimp allows you to send out emails to 2,000 subscribers for free and has a great interface to write content and manage your subscriptions.

### **2 Test!**

You should test which topics convert best into sales or new readers.  To do this you have to make sure that when people sign up for your newsletter, the thank-you page is hosted on your own site and has your Google Analytics code. Otherwise tracking the sign up is going to be hard. You should also look into the time and day of the week you’re sending your newsletter. For some blogs, the weekend could be a time to draw people to your site while for other (more company related or professional blogs) a weekday and an office hour would be most profitable.

### **3 Getting people to subscribe**

In order to send people your newsletter, you have to convince them to subscribe to this newsletter first. Make sure you offer a subscribe field beneath your posts and on other visible places on your website. You can also use a pop-up to invite people to subscribe. At Yoast, we used to use [OptinMonster](http://optinmonster.com/" \t "_top) for this.

### **4 Make sure your newsletter is mobile friendly**

Many people check their email on their phone. You should really make sure your newsletter is as mobile-friendly as possible. A lot of the mailing services offer default templates that are mobile friendly and will scale down nicely. If you don’t want to spend too much time or money on your newsletter, this is a good option.

Another thing to consider for mobile is your subject line. Since mobile screens are obviously not as wide as desktop screens, your subject lines might not fit the screen. Perhaps this won’t be a problem at all, but it’s a good one to keep in mind, or even test.

## **Conclusion about email marketing**

Email marketing is a great way to reach your audience. You can communicate with those clients that really want to be informed about your products, your website or your company. It’s relatively cheap and contributes to keep your audience coming back to your site. So get those subscriptions and make sure you create a newsletter with interesting content and an appealing design that works on mobile as well!

# **A/B testing your newsletters**

**In the whole cycle of optimizing your marketing strategies, your newsletter mustn’t be forgotten. Make sure your newsletter is of**[**added value to your audience and is of high quality**](https://yoast.com/the-basics-of-email-marketing/)**. Of course, there’s always something to improve. You can make improvements based on your intuition but why not test that intuition first by A/B testing your newsletters?**

In this post, I’ll dive into newsletter A/B tests, by explaining what you can test. I won’t discuss testing examples, but I will tell you what aspects you should pay attention to when testing.

## **Subject line**

With most email campaign tools, you’ll have the possibility to A/B test the subject line. That means you’ll be able to give your newsletter a number of different subject lines. If you test 2 different subject lines, ordinarily 50% of the subscribers receive the first variation, and the other 50% gets the other variation.

A/B testing your subject lines is only relevant for testing your open rate and not your click rate. The open rate is the percentage of how many successfully delivered newsletters were opened by your subscribers. The click rate percentage, on the other hand, gives insight into how many successfully delivered newsletters registered at least one click. The subject line won’t make a difference for your click rate, since it doesn’t affect anything within the body of the email you’re sending. That being said, testing your subject lines is still very important, as you want as many people as possible to read what you have to say. So you want your subscribers to open your newsletter, right?

Set of rules

* **Curiosity**: try to pique the readers’ interest by asking them a question.
* **Urgency**: create urgency by having limited time offers or offering things that need to be done now.
* **Relevance**: Make sure you’re putting the content that’s most relevant to your audience in your subject line.
* **Value**: Convey the value of the newsletter by offering something exclusive (this can be an exclusive product offer, but also exclusive content).
* **Emotion**: Use punctuation, such as exclamation marks, to elicit emotional responses from your readers.

## **From name**

Another thing you can almost always test is your from name. This is exactly what it sounds like: the name that shows from whom the emails are coming:

This is, again, something that will only affect your open rate. However, this is an aspect that people tend to forget about, because it’s such a small thing to change. However, the from name can be pretty important. It’s the first thing people see when your email arrives, so it had better be good. Testing this will make sure it is.

## **Send time**

I’m not sure whether all email campaign tools offer this A/B testing option, but MailChimp does. You can test what send time (MailChimp calls this “delivery time”) works best for your audience. You need to do some work here beforehand, though, because you’ll have to decide at what time the variations go out yourself.

So, try to find out when most of your emails are opened or at least when the majority of your audience is awake. Especially if your emails go to an international group of people, like ours, this might be a good thing to test. Sending your emails at the right time can result in more people seeing your newsletter and getting invested.

## **Content**

Content is the big one. This is where you can go all-out and test anything you like. Everything within the content section of your email can be tested, and that’s a lot. You have to think about what you want to test and treat these A/B tests as you would any other. We’ve written a post that will explain this: [Hypothesize first, then test](https://yoast.com/conversion-rate-optimization-hypothesise-test/). In any case, it’s crucial that you test only one aspect at the time. Otherwise you can’t tell which part of your A/B test caused a higher click rate.

I always prefer to begin with this one, because it’s furthest into the subscribers’ process of receiving, opening and reading a newsletter. I test content first, because I don’t want to optimize a part of my email (say, the subject), while what the readers see next (like the email’s content) could undo all the optimization I did before.

Just a few ideas of what you could think about when you want to test your email’s content:

* Your email’s header;
* An index summarizing your email;
* More (or less) images;
* Different tone of voice;
* More buttons instead of text links;
* [More ideas on Jordie’s blog](http://www.emailmonday.com/150-ab-email-split-test-ideas-examples).

## **Before testing**

When you start testing, most email campaign tools will offer you two options:

* send your variations to your complete list, or
* send your variations to a percentage of that list, declare a winner and then send the winner to the remaining people who haven’t received a newsletter yet.

I’d strongly urge you to use the first option. Let me tell you why. First of all, sending multiple variations to just a sample of your list means that you’re cutting down on ‘respondents’. You’ll have more data when you send it to the complete list. And that means your results will be more reliable.

However, if your list is big enough, this probably won’t matter much. The reason I’d still choose the first option is that, using the second option, the winning variation gets sent out hours (or even days) later. Especially for newsletters, this can be problematic, because, well, at this point it’s not really “news” anymore. Using the second option also means you can’t determine the exact time the email will be sent. And, as I’ve already said: send time can be quite important.

If timing is less important to the emails you’re sending out, and you have a large list of subscribers, you could go for the second option. In that case, the remaining people in your list will always get the winner, which could be beneficial.

## **Results**

So you’ve thought up some brilliant variations of your newsletter’s content, its subject, from name or send time. Time to send out that newsletter! Once you’ve sent it, there’s nothing more you can do. You just have to wait until the first results come trickling (or flooding) in. Make sure you take notice of the differences in results. Which version got the highest open rate? Which version had the best click rate?

When comparing results, click rate always has my priority. After all, a high click rate means your readers will probably end up on your site, where you have a lot more opportunities for selling, for example. However, we also always [use custom campaigns](https://yoast.com/use-custom-campaigns/) on all the links in our newsletter. And since we’ve set up eCommerce tracking in Google Analytics, we can see which version of our newsletter generated the most revenue. If you have a business to run, that’s probably the metric that you want to see increasing.

Unless you’ve set up some kind of eCommerce tracking within your email campaign tool, this metric won’t be available in their results. So don’t value the results of these tools too much. Make sure you focus on what’s important for your business and check those metrics.

Also: don’t be too quick to judge. I usually wait for a few days, up to a week before I draw my conclusions because a lot of people will still be opening and engaging with your email after a few days.