

HTML Email development

08

**Fall**

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BEST PRACTICES and

Standards Guide

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# Document Control

# Document location

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| 2.0 | 6/12/15 | Andrew Vitacek | Moved over to new template and updated content |
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# Overview

## Introduction

Recipients of HTML emails are frequently inundated with marketing communications and can be easily turned away by small functional flaws, unintelligent layouts, and of course failing to render on their device all together. Therefore, it is important to ensure a high quality experience for HTML email recipients to maximize marketing spend through consistent high-quality development via FCB standards and best practices.

This document outlines FCB’s standards, industry best practices, considerations and limitations when developing HTML emails. FCB’s goal is to have a 99% of the recipients of these emails to have an optimized and flawless experience across modern devices, platforms and browsers.

## Purpose

This document’s primary purpose is ensure FCB delivers the highest quality HTML emails for our clients, and is a leader in HTML development within the industry. Following these standards will enable better user experiences, higher response rates and stable builds. Therefore, this document establishes guidelines for both developers internal to FCB and development partners working in conjunction/on behalf of FCB. Additionally, it serves as an informational reference to other internal teams and FCB’s clients’.

## Responsibility

This document is maintained by FCB’s development team.

# Email Marketing

## Introduction

Emails and email marketing have become a staple in digital communication and a day-to-day task in most peoples’ lives. Many recipients view them while commuting, waiting and/or unwinding and will check one or more email accounts. When doing so, mobile devices are popular way of receiving and reading mails. In fact, of emails opened today, between 40% and 65% of an estimated 196 billion emails are opened on mobile devices.

FCB development has a strong position on building our HTML emails responsively to optimize viewing across devices and platforms. This approach allows an email layout to fit legibly within the user’s screen width, where traditionally programmed emails are cropped. It’s been shown that email recipients opening emails that have not been built responsively have a more negative sentiment towards the email itself. In fact, studies have shown that responsive emails opened increases not only sentiment, but also increases click-through rates of emails opened by 10% to 25% as outlined in this study: <http://www.exacttarget.com/blog/careerbuilder-case-study-responsive-email-design-results/>

FCB’s QA team tests HTML emails as well for rendering, layout, functionality as well to ensure all specified devices, browsers and platforms render the display correctly, and that each recipient opening an email has the best experience possible with today’s technology.

Once an email is opened by a recipient, we must also know when the emails has been viewed and clicked. Proper development enabling the capture of this information is critical to knowing the email campaign effectiveness for reporting purposes.

With all this in mind, FCB’s has outlined a stringent, industry leading standard to ensure the best-in-class builds of HTML emails on behalf of our clients.

## HTML EMAIL – Development standards

### coding

* FCB standard is to follow the fundamental HTML rules outlined by [w3schools](http://www.w3schools.com/), keeping in mind some items below may include exceptions to allow proper rendering in email clients
  + Sample basic HTML rules to follow:
    - [Be sure each HTML element tag is closed by and end tag containing “/”](http://www.w3schools.com/html/html_intro.asp)
    - [Be sure each id element is unique within a single in HTML email](http://www.w3.org/TR/html401/struct/global.html#h-7.5.2)
* Use table elements for layout structure. Avoid div elements altogether.
* Links with more about development and email best practices in general. <https://litmus.com/blog/tag/best-practices>
* Do not use JavaScript as it will not work in most email clients.
* Do not embed video, as video playback will not work in most email clients
* Optimize content to not exceed 22 inches or outlook and yahoo will truncate the message
* Add “alt” tags to all images if users preferences have the images turn off on emails

#### Responsive layout

* All emails built by FCB are to be designed and programmed responsively, so that the layout adjusts to the most readable, viewable and user friendly format for consumption and interaction.
* Responsive Article Reference: <https://litmus.com/blog/defining-and-understanding-mobile-email-approaches>
* Default responsive break point specifications
  + 600px Desktop (many email clients will not allow more then 600px for the email view window on desktop/tablet)
  + 480 px default landscape view on mobile devices
  + 320 px default portrait view on mobile devices.

#### Css

* CSS properties are best to adhere to the basics and no custom css or font should be used considering most clients do not accept advanced css properties.
  + CSS in emails [support guide](https://www.campaignmonitor.com/css/).
* CSS should be inserted inline to the tables and cells (some clients do not accept styling in the head or classes).
* Cellpadding and cellspacing should not be used on major tables and cells or structural elements in the email to stop it from breaking the fluid sizing of the email for multiple device size variations.
* Instead of CSS margins or padding user spacer GIFs to create spacing between elements.
* Use default fonts only: Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif , Times, Times New Roman, Georgia, Courier, serif. Custom Fonts should never be used.
* CSS media queries are to be utilized for responsive designs in coordination with standardized breakpoints

#### Images

* Do not use background images or gradients as they will not work in most email clients
* Specify image width and height attribute values in the img tag element
* Slice and Optimize image to reduce file size and avoid 100k limits in some clients that will auto spam filter the email message.
* Animated GIF’s do not play in some E-mail platforms; insert an image backup for clients that cannot display them

## HTML EMAIL – Testing standards

* All email projects should have an associated JIRA project.
* All defects should be entered and routed through JIRA
* To find defects, utilize tools like [litmus](https://litmus.com), [emailonacid](http://www.emailonacid.com/) and [mailchimp](http://mailchimp.com/) to test the code in multiple devices and native email accounts
* Follow FCB quality control standards outlined in [Quality Assurance Process Docs](file:///\\Chidrffls04\qa\Quality%20Assurance%20Process%20Docs)
  + Samples:
    - All defects should be reviewed by 2 team members prior to closing (typically QA and PM)
    - Defects should only closed by the PM or original issuer of the defect.
* After testing in with the tools outlined above, be sure to conduct blast tests using the actual blast vendor, as some will alter the HTML code that could cause rendering errors.

## Delivery Standards

* Every Email will be separately zipped/Compressed and named accordingly to the campaign, version, and specific identifying number if included in a bundle of emails associated with the same campaign.
* All zip files will contain 1 html file and 1 img/images folder will all the images used in the email referenced in the email relative to the html file path. The third-party company associated with the campaign management and delivery will host the images and change the path to the images associated with each according html file to an absolute path of the hosting url for the images.
* The files we hand off will be QA certified from FCB QA department.

# Trends and Statistics

## Email Schedule Standards

* Tuesday has the best open rates.
* Friday has the worst open rates.
* The most successful open rates occur between 8 AM and 12 PM.
* Some E-mail Service Providers (ESP) allow E-mails to be sent at a precise time based on the recipients’ location.

## Anti Spam Optimization

* E-mails cannot contain misleading “From” or “To” information. Domain names, E-mail addresses, and routing information need to be correct.
* Avoiding [SPAM trigger words](http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/30684/The-Ultimate-List-of-Email-SPAM-Trigger-Words.aspx) for subject lines.
* All emails FCB develops follow the CAN-SPAM Compliance. To learn more [CAN-SPAM Complaince](https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/can-spam-act-compliance-guide-business)

## Current Trends

### Most popular email clients used.

Calculated from 1.24 billion opens tracked by [litmus email analytics](http://litmus.com/email-analytics) in May 2015

* #1 Apple iPhone 28% +0.55
* #2 Gmail 18% +1.28
* #3 Apple iPad 11% -0.21
* #4 Apple Mail 8% -0.29
* #5 Google Android 8% +0.16
* #6 Outlook 8% -0.86
* #7 Outlook.com 5% +0.41
* #8 Yahoo! Mail 4% -0.28
* #9 Windows Live Mail 2% -0.09
* #10 AOL Mail 1% -0.11

Mobile email was barely a blip on our radars in 2011, and made up just 8% of email opens. In 2014, nearly half of emails are opened on smartphones and tablets—a 500% increase in four years.

Desktop usage:

As of October 16th 2014, Apple Mail opens picked up the pace after the launch, increasing from 32% of desktop opens in October 16th 2014. Apple Mail opens picked up the pace after the launch, increasing from 32% of desktop opens in September to 38% of opens by the end of the year.

Outlook, on the other hand, didn’t fare so well. Opens decreased from 13 to 8.7% of total opens over the course of the year. While Outlook 2013 saw a steadily increasing open rate (mostly at the expense of Outlook 2010), all versions took a hit.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Email Client** | Popularity |
| **iOS Devices** | 35.60% |
| **iPhone** | 25.05% |
| **iPad** | 9.74% |
| **iPod Touch** | 0.81% |
| **Microsoft Outlook** | 20.14% |
| **Outlook 2000, 2003, Express** | 7.68% |
| **Outlook 2007** | 6.51% |
| **Outlook 2010** | 5.96% |
| **Outlook.com** | 13.57% |
| **Apple Mail** | 11% |
| **Apple Mail 5** | 4.31% |
| **Apple Mail 4** | 3.75% |
| **Apple Mail 6** | 1.70% |
| **Apple Mail 3** | 1.04% |
| **Yahoo! Mail** | 9.85% |
| **Gmail** | 8.43% |
| **Android** | 4.74% |
| **Windows Live Desktop** | 2.34% |
| **Thunderbird** | 1.03% |
| **AOL** | 0.91% |
| **Unable to detect email client** | 10.25% |

### Facts and Email Statistics

* 17% of Americans create a new email address every 6 months
* 8.30% of subscribers change email addresses annually
* If marketers optimized their emails for image blocking, ROI would increase 9+%
* 84% of people 18-34 use an email preview pane
* People who buy products marketed through email spend 138% more than people that do not receive email offers
* 44% of email recipients made at least one purchase last year based on a promotional email
* Subscribers below age 25 prefer SMS to email
* 35% of business professionals check email on a mobile device
* 35% of email recipients open email based on the subject line alone
* 44% of email recipients made at least one purchase last year based on a promotional email. (Convinceandconvert.com)
* 33% of email recipients open email based on subject line alone. (Convinceandconvert.com)
* Roughly half of an email list will be active – either opening or clicking on emails. (Epsilon)
* Subject lines fewer than 10 characters long had an open rate of 58%. (Adestra July 2012 Report)
* Personalized subject lines are 22.2% more likely to be opened. (Adestra July 2012 Report)
* For B2B companies, subject lines that contained “money,” “revenue,” and “profit” performed the best. (Adestra July 2012 Report)
* 64% of people say they open an email because of the subject line. (Chadwick Martin Bailey)
* 7 in 10 people say they made use of a coupon or discount from a marketing email in the prior week. (2012 Blue Kangaroo Study)
* 39% of marketers have no strategy for mobile email. (eConsultancy  2012 Email Marketing industry Census)
* 72% of B2B buyers are most likely to share useful content via email. (Earnest Agency)
* 56% of businesses say they plan to increase their use of email marketing in 2013. (The Small and Midsize Business Email Marketing Survey 2013)
* Monday emails had the highest revenue per email. (Experian 2012 Q4 Email Benchmark Report)
* 27% of consumers were more likely to say their favorite companies should invest in more email. (ExactTarget)
* 1 in 2 marketers use animated gifs in their email campaigns. (Experian Email Market Study)
* This year, about 84% of all email traffic will be spam. (The Radicati Group)
* Email ad revenue reached $156 million in 2012. (Interactive Advertising Bureau)
* Emails that include social sharing buttons have a 158% higher click-through rate. (GetResponse)
* Women click 10% more often than men on mobile emails. (Tailored Mail 2012 Email Marketing Trends)
* Email marketing spend grows 10% year over year. (Forrester 2011)
* 40% of B2B marketers rated the leads generated by email marketing as high quality. (Software Advice Survey)
* For every $1 spent, $44.25 is the average return on email marketing investment. (Experian)
* 82% of consumers open emails from companies. (Litmus)
* 64% of decision-makers read their email via mobile devices. (TopRankBlog)
* There are 3.6 billion email accounts in 2013. (The Radicati Group, Email Statistics Report, 2012-2016)
* By 2016, the number will reach 4.3 billion. (The Radicati Group, Email Statistics Report, 2012-2016).

### EMAIL BENCHMARK PER INDUSTRY

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Industry | Open | Click | S/Bounce | H/Bounce | Abuse | Unsub |
| Agriculture and Food Services | 25.77% | 3.49% | 0.68% | 0.51% | 0.03% | 0.28% |
| Architecture and Construction | 25.19% | 3.16% | 1.66% | 1.18% | 0.04% | 0.37% |
| Arts and Artists | 27.93% | 2.99% | 0.78% | 0.56% | 0.03% | 0.27% |
| Beauty and Personal Care | 19.50% | 2.27% | 0.52% | 0.50% | 0.05% | 0.33% |
| Business and Finance | 21.59% | 2.93% | 0.81% | 0.65% | 0.03% | 0.24% |
| Computers and Electronics | 21.68% | 2.62% | 1.13% | 0.79% | 0.03% | 0.30% |
| Construction | 22.28% | 2.09% | 1.73% | 1.34% | 0.06% | 0.44% |
| Consulting | 19.95% | 2.58% | 1.06% | 0.80% | 0.03% | 0.29% |
| Creative Services/Agency | 23.26% | 3.01% | 1.22% | 0.95% | 0.04% | 0.36% |
| Daily Deals/E-Coupons | 13.89% | 1.96% | 0.14% | 0.09% | 0.01% | 0.09% |
| eCommerce | 16.89% | 2.62% | 0.43% | 0.27% | 0.03% | 0.21% |
| Education and Training | 22.70% | 3.01% | 0.64% | 0.55% | 0.03% | 0.20% |
| Entertainment and Events | 21.53% | 2.45% | 0.58% | 0.47% | 0.03% | 0.27% |
| Gambling | 17.66% | 2.70% | 0.50% | 0.57% | 0.04% | 0.17% |
| Games | 22.14% | 3.54% | 0.56% | 0.60% | 0.04% | 0.23% |
| Government | 26.88% | 3.71% | 0.59% | 0.48% | 0.02% | 0.13% |
| Health and Fitness | 23.36% | 3.11% | 0.53% | 0.52% | 0.04% | 0.37% |
| Hobbies | 29.42% | 5.66% | 0.39% | 0.31% | 0.03% | 0.23% |
| Home and Garden | 25.77% | 4.17% | 0.73% | 0.51% | 0.05% | 0.38% |
| Insurance | 19.82% | 2.16% | 0.77% | 0.81% | 0.04% | 0.22% |
| Legal | 22.50% | 3.04% | 0.80% | 0.66% | 0.03% | 0.21% |
| Manufacturing | 23.41% | 2.67% | 1.61% | 1.09% | 0.04% | 0.37% |
| Marketing and Advertising | 18.58% | 2.19% | 0.88% | 0.70% | 0.03% | 0.28% |
| Media and Publishing | 22.76% | 4.75% | 0.34% | 0.22% | 0.01% | 0.12% |
| Medical, Dental, and Healthcare | 23.08% | 2.73% | 0.83% | 0.83% | 0.05% | 0.29% |
| Mobile | 22.09% | 2.70% | 0.80% | 0.74% | 0.04% | 0.40% |
| Music and Musicians | 22.99% | 2.89% | 0.70% | 0.52% | 0.04% | 0.30% |
| Non-Profit | 25.66% | 2.98% | 0.56% | 0.47% | 0.03% | 0.19% |
| Other | 23.39% | 3.11% | 0.90% | 0.69% | 0.04% | 0.28% |
| Pharmaceuticals | 19.29% | 2.71% | 0.77% | 0.68% | 0.03% | 0.21% |
| Photo and Video | 27.06% | 4.24% | 0.81% | 0.68% | 0.04% | 0.39% |
| Politics | 22.83% | 2.28% | 0.51% | 0.48% | 0.04% | 0.22% |
| Professional Services | 21.25% | 2.75% | 1.04% | 0.81% | 0.03% | 0.31% |
| Public Relations | 20.52% | 1.86% | 0.90% | 0.69% | 0.02% | 0.24% |
| Real Estate | 22.08% | 2.22% | 0.78% | 0.65% | 0.05% | 0.33% |
| Recruitment and Staffing | 20.88% | 2.53% | 0.68% | 0.69% | 0.04% | 0.32% |
| Religion | 26.59% | 3.28% | 0.22% | 0.20% | 0.02% | 0.12% |
| Restaurant | 23.95% | 1.58% | 0.36% | 0.30% | 0.03% | 0.30% |
| Restaurant and Venue | 22.71% | 1.47% | 0.67% | 0.57% | 0.04% | 0.39% |
| Retail | 22.13% | 2.85% | 0.45% | 0.37% | 0.03% | 0.28% |
| Social Networks and Online Communities | 22.24% | 3.75% | 0.43% | 0.36% | 0.03% | 0.23% |
| Software and Web App | 22.47% | 2.69% | 1.12% | 0.89% | 0.03% | 0.39% |
| Sports | 26.15% | 3.60% | 0.59% | 0.51% | 0.03% | 0.27% |
| Telecommunications | 20.54% | 2.27% | 1.20% | 0.96% | 0.03% | 0.26% |
| Travel and Transportation | 20.66% | 2.46% | 0.76% | 0.53% | 0.03% | 0.24% |
| Vitamin Supplements | 17.12% | 2.11% | 0.40% | 0.33% | 0.05% | 0.25% |

# Conclusion

This document provides a starting point on ways to think when developing emails using html. There are constant improvement’s and new discoveries that occur in the ever evolving process of email development with the invention of new devices and clients used to view the emails it is a never ending learning procedure. Please refer back to this document’s location for updates periodically.