

25 GREAT

**EMAIL
MARKETING**

IDEAS





In August 2010 we published an article from a new contributor, the email marketing manager for a large arts and crafts retailer.

Carolyn Nye's article, "Email Marketing: The Three Part Plan," was the first of 125 monthly installments to date, all addressing tactics for improving ecommerce email campaigns.

You name it, and Carolyn has described it. She's offered strategies for improving opens, clicks, and conversions. She's explained how to grow a list and then pare it down. She's covered text, images, devices, automation, privacy, metrics, segmentation, spam, deliverability, and much more.

She's a global authority, in other words.

Most ecommerce businesses rely on email marketing. It's among the top sales drivers for the least cost. And its importance is increasing given the necessity of a direct audience amid the demise of third-party cookies.

Carolyn's articles contain hundreds of helpful email marketing ideas. For this ebook, we've handpicked 25 of them, all relevant to today's ecommerce sellers.

It's "25 Great Email Marketing Ideas," compliments of Carolyn Nye.

KERRY MURDOCK
EDITOR, PUBLISHER

OCTOBER 2022

1. Place Sign-up Boxes on Every Page

Traffic comes to your site from multiple sources. Convert those visitors into email subscribers by placing a sign-up box on every page. Consider pop-ups, and provide value in exchange for an email address, such as a shopping discount or informative content.

2. Integrate SMS

Text messaging — SMS — can be an effective marketing channel, offering near-instant communication. The rise of smartwatches means text-message recipients no longer have to be near their phones. The immediacy and intimacy of SMS translate into a powerful way to connect with consumers.

3. Analyze Unsubscribes

Understanding why recipients unsubscribe is a key metric to preserving a list. To analyze, gather info about the person and the circumstances surrounding the unsubscribe. Observe the source of the subscription, the number of emails received, opens and clicks, and the last email before unsubscribing.

4. Optimize Subject Lines

The best subject lines represent the body content and are not misleading. Keep them short — less than 60 characters — as most email opens occur on smartphones. Do not use offensive or excessive words or symbols that could trigger an email going to the spam folder. Never use all capital letters, such as “DON’T MISS THIS!”

5. Optimize Pre-headers

An email pre-header appears just below the subject line on a smartphone. Pre-headers are powerful when used as the subject line’s extension without repeating words. Spam filtering rules for subject lines do not typically apply to pre-headers. Thus, you can likely use more aggressive words and symbols.

6. Use a Cart Starter

A “cart starter” automatically inserts a coupon code and other info into checkout fields when an email recipient clicks on an offer. It’s a proven way to drive sales. Begin a cart-starter email with an enticing subject line — such as “Here’s \$10 to Start Your Holiday Shopping!” — that is both a money-saver and a reminder. Never force a recipient to type promo codes from an email.

7. Improve Deliverability

Getting an email into a recipient’s inbox is the first step in a successful campaign. To improve deliverability, avoid significant changes in email frequency; monitor open, clicks, and unsubscribes; check your Sender Score and leading blacklists; and keep your list healthy by removing dormant subscribers.

8. Optimize for Smartphones

Smartphone optimization tactics include a call-to-action button large enough to click with a finger (at least 44 x 44 pixels with 16-pixel font) and as close to the top as practical. Use single-column formatting and line spacing 1.5 times larger than the font size.

9. Segment Recipients

Segmenting email recipients facilitates relevant offers and dramatically improves opens, clicks, and on-site conversions. A tailored offer based on recipients' geography, life stage, marital or parental status, or income is sure to outperform an attempt to appeal to all subscribers.

10. Alter Your Message for Each Segment

Segmenting a list is pointless without tailoring the message. Retirement-age recipients, for example, may prefer product discounts while Millennials respond to quick offers. Florida-based recipients are likely uninterested in snow gear. Aligning the message with the segment is essential for conversions.

11. Treat New Customers Differently

A key retention method is to send new customers different messages, cadence, and offers than repeat buyers. First, isolate purchasers that are new in the previous three months. Create a separate segment for these consumers. Review the types of products they purchased and the referral source. This could provide insights into why they converted, which could help with email messaging and cadence. In most instances, emails to newly acquired customers should be more frequent initially and then taper off.

12. Use Responsive Layouts

Responsive email templates automatically adjust based on the recipient's device. Nonresponsive layouts can make an email unreadable. Many free, open-source responsive template-design tools are available. Email service providers typically provide responsive templates to customers.

13. Write a Strong Call-to-action

A call-to-action button is what recipients click to respond to an offer. Minor tweaks in the CTA text can have a big impact on response. Keep the text short and use action words, such as "Get the Discount." Avoid words that require a commitment, such as "register." Use buttons large enough to tap with a finger on a phone and keep near the top. A/B test calls-to-action for the most clicks.

14. Reactivate Obsolete Email Addresses

Email lists naturally shrink due to addresses that change, bounce, or become undeliverable. Those consumers could still be interested in your emails, however, provided you could update their address. An email reactivation program can help. It consists of sending undeliverable emails to a service such as AtData or BriteVerify that provide new, updated addresses or confirm the current one is now active. The match rates are typically low — 10 to 15%. Still, it can provide immense value.

15. Remove Unengaged Subscribers

Internet service providers track email engagement at the point of delivery in determining the Sender Score. Removing unresponsive addresses will increase overall open and click rates — i.e., engagement. It's safe to cut a subscriber who has never opened an email. Lapsed subscribers with a purchase history are more complicated. For those, evaluate the types of purchases. A subscriber who is still opening and clicking your emails is worth keeping.

16. Don't Rely on Images

All buttons should be large enough for a finger on a smartphone and not too close. Many designers utilize a “bulletproof button.” It is not an image. It's text on top of a background, such as a solid color, enabling recipients to read the call-to-action if images are turned off or slow to download.

17. Find the Source of Current Subscribers

Create a conversion goal in Google Analytics (Conversions > Goals) for your email sign-up or confirmation page. Check the sources of the most subscribers and most purchasers — they may be different. Look at the path the visitors took to sign-up. Knowing those behaviors can help focus your optimization efforts. Typical sources of new subscribers include social media posts, articles and other free content, organic search traffic, paid search traffic, display ads, affiliate sites, and contests or promotions. Target the sources that produce the most subscribers.

18. Provide an Incentive to Sign Up

Email subscribers are valuable. One way to convert visitors to subscribers is by offering strong incentives, such as contests or giveaways, a gift or cart starter, exclusive subscriber-only content, discounts, free shipping, or a rewards program.

19. Personalize the Subject Line

Adding the recipient's first name to the subject line can increase open rates. With any personalization and dynamic content, however, there's a risk of error if the database is incorrect. If you make a mistake, correct it with another email, perhaps saying “Oops” in the subject line of the subsequent email.

20. Give Shoppers a Reason to Retain Your Email

An email that helps recipients save can drive traffic and revenue for weeks. Effective tactics are a reward or cash-back incentive with an extended redemption period, including critical account or password information, listing important upcoming dates such as an order deadline, and providing extended expiration dates on coupon offers.

21. Implement Retargeting

Most recipients initially open emails on their smartphones, but many cannot purchase at that time. This makes retargeting more vital than ever. Retargeting methods include social media ads, triggered emails, and Google display ads. Retargeting campaigns typically have high conversion rates.

22. Launch a Win-back Campaign

Lapsed subscribers are candidates for a win-back campaign — a short, three-part email automation series consisting of an offer, values and features, and a goodbye if necessary. The email content — subject line, body copy, call to action — for each part will vary depending on the subscriber. And each part could consist of a single email message or several.

23. Take Advantage of Every Transaction

Almost every visitor interaction on your site can be an excuse to send an email. In recent years even brick-and-mortar retailers are offering receipts via email at a physical checkout. Emailing receipts helps both parties because it reduces waste, encourages consumers to provide their correct email at checkout, and provides the retailer with upselling and cross-selling opportunities.

24. Combine Email and Physical Mail

Using direct physical mail to reinforce email (and vice-versa) is an excellent way to boost response rates. The results are a consistent revenue lift of at least 20% from shoppers who receive both an email and direct mail versus those that receive only one or the other. Emails should arrive before and after a direct mail piece.

25. Trigger Emails for Abandoned Carts and Browsers

Create triggered emails to target visitors who abandon shopping carts or, for repeat buyers, abandoned browses. Abandoned cart emails remain a powerful converter. For the best performance, deploy the emails closely after the abandonment and then a few additional reminders in the hours and days afterward.

About the Author

Carolyn Nye is an email marketing authority and senior manager for Acxiom, a consulting and data provider. She has written for Practical Ecommerce since 2010 and has been in the email marketing industry since 2006, advising companies on successful campaigns.

Carolyn holds a B.S. from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and an M.B.A. from the University of New Haven. See [Carolyn's profile](#).

