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What Makes an Email Template Design Successful? by [Sophia Myles](#)

When it comes to anÂ email template design, the first thing that you'll need to ask yourself is, "What makes an email template design successful?" Of course, at the end of the day, your email program and template design will be successful if they inspire your users to action, generate revenue, or increase customer loyalty and awareness. That's certainly the bottom line. But on the way there, you'll need to consider many other metrics and elements that determine if your email is successful. Here are the most important ways to determine if your email is successful before you evaluate its ability to generate activity for your site.

Are Your Subscribers Opening Your Email?

Your email template design can only be successful if your subscribers are actually opening the email. Most email marketing and newsletter providers such as Comm100 includeÂ email open rateÂ tracking as part of the standard metrics package for your email program.Â Open rate numbers are typically not one hundred percent accurate due to the image pixel method of tracking email opens (not all email service providers load images automatically, so not all opens are automatically tracked). However, at the most basic level, you need people to open your email in order for it to be successful.Â If your email is not being opened at an open rate that you feel is adequate (we'll discuss what a good open rate is when we talk about metrics in detail later in this book), then you should examine the following elements of your email template design:

Spam Content and Coding: Is your email template andÂ email sending solutionÂ designed to get into your subscribers' inboxes, or are you going to the spam or junk folder? While some spam issues will be due to the content contained in your email and the quality of your email database, html coding in your email template can also impact your deliverability rates. Before you assume that users don't want to open your email, be sure that they are actually receiving your email.

Value of Your Content to Your Subscribers: At the heart of user engagement with your email program will be the value of the content that you're providing to your subscribers. Make sure that your content is both well written and is the content that your subscribers actually want, not what you think they want!

Quality of Your Database List: The quality of the names and addresses in your email database may also be an issue. Make sure that your list is up-to-date, fully opted-in, and optimally pruned and cleaned regularly.

Time and Date of Email Sends: The day of week and the time that you send your email can also impact how many subscribers open it. Knowing how to choose theÂ best day to send email can easily turn your email campaign from good to great.

Open rate is one of the most, if not the single most, important metric related to yourÂ email marketing or newsletter campaign. When dealing with your email template design, you'll want to keep the first two elements â€" the content and coding of your template, in mind as they relate to spam, deliverability, and open-rate.

Are Your Subscribers Staying Subscribed?

Your email template design, and your email program, are successful if your subscribers neither unsubscribe from nor mark as spam your email messages.Â While it may seem as though the

number of users who unsubscribe or file spam complaints is entirely related to the content that you choose to include in your email, there are other elements that you'll want to consider as well.

Placement of Content in Your Emails: When your subscribers open their emails from you, do they see content that will immediately engage them? You may be taking up too much room at the top of your email or high visibility areas of your email with hard sells, images, or meaningless introductory copy. Making sure that your subscribers see the content that interest them will keep them active and engaged with your emails and your brand for longer.

Visibility of All Content in Your Emails: Much like the most important content should be immediately visible, the remaining content in your email should be easy to find. Is there an easy-to-see table of contents or listing of what's in the email near the top? Are you using too many images and people can't see the value of the email content? If you're losing users from your subscriber base, make sure that the content of your email is easy to see and find.

Quality of the Content in Your Emails: Of course, at the end of the day, what it all comes down to is the quality of your content. They say that "Content is King" for a reason. If your email is too sales-driven for your users, is full of grammar and spelling errors, uses boring, "content-farm" style content, or just isn't interesting, users will eventually unsubscribe. Worse, they may mark you as spam. You need to deliver a product that your users will want in their crowded inboxes.

Frequency of Emails: The frequencies with which you send emails can also negatively impact your database by encouraging unsubscribe requests or spam complaints. Make sure that subscribers know how often they'll be receiving email from you. Also, be sure to test sending less email if you see an increase in unsubscribe requests and spam complaints.

Losing names from your email database is one of the worst things that can happen to your business. Not only does it mean that you have fewer users to market to, but it also reduces the value of your list as an asset to your company's bottom line. When dealing with your email template design, keep the first two points in this section in mind in order to optimize email success.

Are Your Subscribers Forwarding Your Email and Content?

You may not personally care if your users forward and share the content of your email, but if they do they will ultimately increase your brand awareness and potentially the revenue-generating business for you. People take brand and product recommendations more seriously when they come from known connections, so if your users are forwarding your email newsletters or marketing offers, then your business is expanding with no additional cost to you. Consider the following:

Ease of Forwarding: Will it be easy for users or subscribers to forward or share your email? Is there an html link to the email in addition to the email itself? Are there prominent links to post to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or other social networks? Is it easy to join your email list from within the email? Are all of these elements accounted for in your email template design?

Quality of Content: We can't say it too often! The quality of the content or offers in your email will ultimately determine if subscribers want to share it with others. As we've said before, make sure that you are delivering an appealing email product.

Especially in the era of social networking, the potential to get a great viral impact from a forwarded and shared email promotion is significant. When dealing with your email template design, consider the ease with which subscribers can accomplish that goal.

Are Subscribers Clicking from the Email to Your Landing Pages?

Similar to the idea that your email is only successful if subscribers actually open it, your email template design is ultimately only successful if users then click from the email to your landing page or web destination (or, alternatively take another action such as calling your company or taking a

coupon to an actual physical brick-and-mortar location). Â If your email is getting opened but nobody is taking action from it, consider the following:

Are Links to Your Site Clear and Easy to Find? Â You might be surprised how many times people aren't clicking through to your website simply because they don't' see or recognize your links. While a slick design is nice, links that people recognize because they are blue and underlined can often be more effective. Similarly, if too many of your Â links in email Â are in the form of image-based buttons, users may never see them if their email service provider does not load email images.

Are There Enough Places in Your Email to Click? Â You may also simply not have enough places for a user to click from your email to your site. You don't want too many links in your email because it may make you appear to be spam to email service providers. However, you also don't want your subscribers to have to work or look too hard to find a link. You want them to be able to click through to your site as quickly as possible when they are inspired to.

Is Contact Information Clear? Â In case there is a problem with your site, you want to make sure that your company contact information is clear in your email. Some users may even prefer to call or visit a brick-and-mortar location. Make sure that you don't lose any business by not making those options clear and visible in your email template.

Does Content Encourage Clicks? Â Finally, not only does the quality of your content matter, but so does its ability to use strong Â email call-to-action Â to encourage and incite users to click through to your website or business.

An email has a great deal of value simply as a branding, user-engagement, and customer loyalty tool. However, ultimately to drive actions directly from your email program, you'll need to be sure that users are clicking through to your website. When dealing with your email template design, consider all of the points above to optimize click-through activity.

Are Your Subscribers Taking Advantage of the Offers You Promote?

Finally, if your bottom line is revenue or sign-ups, then what really matters the most to you is whether or not users are taking advantage of products or offers that you promote. Â If your response to offers or product promotions is not what you had hoped that it would be, consider the following:

Are Offer and Promotions Easy to Find? Â Similar to the note above regarding how to make sure that your most engaging content is noticed by users, the same can be said for your offers and promotions. Are your offers and promotions above the fold or in an easy-to-see location in your email? Do you reference them in the subject line? Is your entire offer or promotion trapped in an image that many subscribers may not see? Make sure that subscribers know where to look for and can easily find the offers and promotions in your emails.

Is It Clear How to Take Advantage of an Offer or Promotion? Â Also similar to the note above regarding the ease of finding, seeing, and using links, the same is true of offers. Have you presented a great offer, but then the way to click to the landing page or to contact your company is hard to find? Be sure that subscribers can not only find your offers; they can also easily understand how to take advantage of them.

Is the Offer or Promotion the Right Offer or Promotion for Your Audience? Â Of course, in the end, your offer will be most successful if it's an offer that your audience wants. Is it the right merchandise for your users? Is the offer a good enough incentive? Is it a competitive offer? Is it time sensitive? You'll most likely need to do some extensive testing to find the right offer mix for different segments of your list. However, it will be time well spent!

If revenue or sign-ups are your end goal, whether or not your subscribers respond to your offers is mission critical. When developing your email template design, keep the points above in mind in order to optimize your email performance.

While an email template design and email program is ultimately only successful if it increases customer loyalty, retention, activity, and typically revenue, you'll need to master success in all of the areas above in order to reach the full potential of your email program.