# OVERCOMING THE 5 BIGGEST EMAIL MARKETING CHALLENGES

An In-Depth Analysis of Open Rates, Conversions and Email Marketing ROI

**blu**leadz,

# Foreword

It could be argued that email marketing is 50% best practices, 50% trial-and-error. Some companies strike gold with simple lead nurturing campaigns, while others struggle to reach new blog subscribers at a reasonable pace.

We've all heard that email is dead; that it doesn't work or doesn't have a place in modern online marketing. That's just not the case. Not yet, at least.

In fact, 89% of marketers say that email is their primary channel for lead generation (Mailigen), and, of those that opt in to email messages from a brand, 95% find these messages somewhat or very useful (SalesForce).

Email marketing campaigns are essential to inbound marketing, and yet they present major challenges that businesses are forced to confront on a regular basis.

- ✔   Why is no one opening my email?

- ✔   How do I keep people from unsubscribing?

- ✔   What's the actual ROI from all of my email efforts?

There's no shortage of blog articles, studies and resources that tackle the leading challenges marketers have when creating powerful email marketing campaigns. However, not many of them offer clear next steps.

To truly overcome these challenges, you need to know not just where they are and why they're occurring; you need to know the fundamentals behind these problems, and how you can use that information to turn your next email campaign into a lead generation powerhouse.
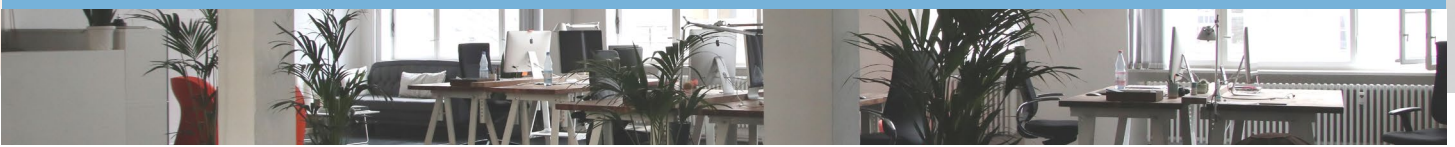
# 1 Low Open Rates

## The Problem

Open rate is probably the first metric you'll look up after launching a new email campaign. Everyone wants excellent open rates. However, your marketing emails have had historically below average open rates. *Why is that, and what can you do to resolve the issue?*

15% is considered to be the average open rate for most email marketing campaigns. That's not the end-all, be-all benchmark and it can fluctuate based on industry, but if your open rate has been falling below 15%, it's time for a change.

## The Solution

Low open rates are typically linked to two factors: your message isn't clear and your email lists need some serious updating.

You can expect to lose a quarter to half of most email lists over the course of a year, **and that's okay**. That's normal churn. People will resolve their issues and move on, or no longer be interested in your updates and offerings. In many cases, users won't take the extra steps to unsubscribe from your emails. They just won't open them, or will route them to a seldom checked folder.

One way overcome this problem is to make routine adjustments to your lists. Identify which subscribers or leads are inactive and move them from your regular marketing email list to a less frequent, *reconnect* email list.

Instead of sending them your weekly business news or updates, put them in a list of contacts you catch-up with every few months—a "Hey [name], it's been a while! Here's what we've been up to" list. HubSpot has released a useful **Graymail** tool that segments email list contacts with low engagement and prompts you to opt out of emailing those contacts.

As for messaging, you just have to set expectations. Don't bait-and-switch blog subscribers by sending them sales materials three times a week. They'll come to you when they're ready to talk. As long as value and expectations are clearly established, you'll see more opens from invested readers.
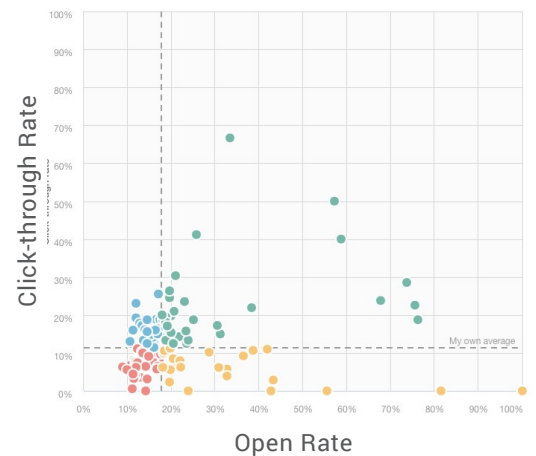
### Keep this in mind

For every dollar spent on email marketing, **companies generate almost $41 in sales.** This is higher than mobile ($10.51 per dollar spent), display advertising ($19.82) social media ($12.71) and search engine marketing ($22.24).

# 2 Emails Don't Seem to Drive Site Traffic

## The Problem

You've been sending out marketing emails fairly consistently and are actually getting positive open rates, but readers just aren't clicking through. Even with careful targeting, it doesn't seem like readers are convinced to take the next steps and hit that "Learn More" button and convert.

## The Solution

If you're seeing poor click-through rates from your email campaigns, you are likely not providing proper or sufficient messaging in your Calls to Action (CTAs), or your emails are poorly formatted.

The "Image = Good, Large Text Body = Bad" mentality that applies to blogs and other content offers isn't always the case with email marketing. In fact, in HubSpot's Science of Email report, it was found that a surprising 64% of reader prefer rich text emails their image-laden counterparts.

Of course, this can change depending on your target readers, but it's something to keep in mind when formatting your next email campaign.

As for providing enough value, pay attention to both the placement and design of your CTAs. CTA messaging should reflect the content featured in their respective sections and provide logical next steps for readers. Don't place a "Request a Demo" CTA in a section about industry news.

We know: getting sales leads from your email campaign is Priority #1. However, don't put that focus above a great reader experience.

### Keep this in mind

"As the number of images in an email increases, the clickthrough rate of the email tends to decrease."

HubSpot

# 3 Getting—and Keeping—New Email Subscribers

## The Problem

This is one of the most common and tricky email marketing challenges businesses face. What makes this challenge so difficult is that a lot of it comes down to messaging and targeting.

There's no switch you can flip to make subscription more enticing for website visitors, and there's certainly nothing you can do to stop readers from unsubscribing if your email's content doesn't match up with their expectations or needs.

## The Solution

If you're having trouble building your subscriber base or keeping them on board, there's probably one of two things happening: you're either not providing clear upfront value or your email campaigns are not targeting your actual audience.

Similar to solutions for low open rates, don't set-and-forget a subscription form on your blog or website.

Instead, use that space to let visitors know what they're actually going to receive by subscribing, be it weekly tips and advice, industry news, product updates, newsletters or special offers.

The value you provide should be directly linked to the biggest questions or concerns your ideal buyers have.

Additionally, segment email campaigns based on information you've already learned about your readers. The ultimate goal is to create long-term value with targeted messaging.

Lists should evolve as readers travel through your sales funnel, and reflect their interests/pain points.
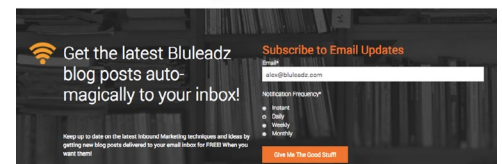
### Keep this in mind

The first step in segmenting email lists is establishing thorough Buyer Persona identities. Consider the job role, age, business size, location, preferred websites/social media, sales cycles and problems of your unique buyers.

The easiest way to do this is by including smart fields in your subscriber forms (and other forms) so users can self-identify as a certain type of lead (field for business size, dropdown menu of job roles, etc.).

# 4 Measuring Email Marketing ROI

## The Problem

At the end of the day, even the most finely crafted, targeted and timed email campaigns will flop if you're not making data-based decisions. You have metrics from past email campaigns, but don't know how to use that data or discover how each campaign benefits your sales team.

This may be part of a larger disconnect between Marketing and Sales, and in this case, you're set up for disappointment. High open rates don't necessarily mean more sales.

## The Solution

To see the true ROI from your email campaigns, you first have to make sure Sales and Marketing have shared, explicit definitions of Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs) and Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs).

There has to be common ground on what actions (click-throughs, form submissions, etc.) define email subscribers as marketing-ready or sales-ready.

In addition, you need to be focusing on the right metrics for the goal of each email campaign. **Not all data is created equal.**

A majority of marketers put Open Rate above all else, but if the goal of your campaign is to push leads to request a demo or reach out, email Open Rate isn't as important as conversion rate on the associated landing page. HubSpot has a great overview on the metrics you should read here.

Things to look out for when reviewing email metrics:

- ✔  Bounce Rate
- ✔  Click-through Rate
- ✔  Unsubscribe Rate
- ✔  Share Rate`
- ✔  Delivery Rate

**99.4% Delivered** (85,401)
-0.26% Compared to the previous three months

0%
0.6%
99.4%

- Delivered
- Not delivered (Bounced)
- Pending
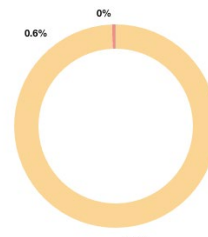
Based on Sent (85,914)

**0.6% Not delivered (Bounced)** (512)
+0.26% Compared to the previous three months

Hard bounces    Soft bounces    Pending
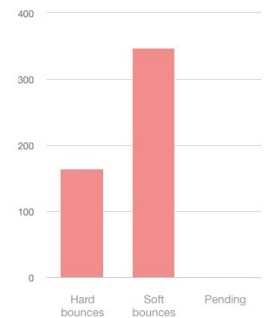
Based on Sent (85,914)

### Keep this in mind

If you're able, make sure to integrate your email delivery systems with other marketing software you're currently using (HubSpot, MailChimp, etc.).

This will make it easy for members of your team to analyze how users travel from email recipient to sales lead through bottom of the funnel landing pages (Request a Quote/Contact Us).

Additionally, take time to regularly identify what links are generating click-throughs and what can be removed or placed in a different location in your emails.

# 5 Creating Content That Differentiates & Converts

## The Problem

After much trial and error, you've refined your email marketing plan and consistently send information to carefully segmented lists. However, click-through rates are still low and open rates are worse. Ultimately, you've identified that the problem might not be your email strategy, but the email content itself.

Maybe it's your subject lines, or CTAs that don't resonate with readers and their respective next steps. Whatever the source of the problem, your current email content just isn't getting the message across.

## The Solution

While the world isn't entirely composed of master class copywriters, just knowing what to say and when to say it is a large part of the email content struggle; something that most marketers can address immediately to increase campaign open rates and click-throughs.

The key is to create campaigns with a specific stage in the Buyer's Journey in mind. A lead nurturing campaign for readers with their fingers on the purchasing trigger requires unique content tailored to their situation.

Across the board, however, smart content and personalization tags go a long way in connecting with readers at various points in the sales process.

The biggest obstacle with writing email campaign content is that content has to be both **compelling** and **concise.** For that reason, using action words in your subject lines, initial copy and CTAs is essential to create a mixed sense of relevance and urgency.

### Keep this in mind

"People get hundreds of emails a week and when they read them they do so with an expectation that was set up by the subject line. When writing your subject lines, start by making sure it has a strong connection to the email itself.

If after you've tested a number of variations and you still get low open and click through rates it's not the fault of the subject line – it's probably your offer. Writing bait and switch subject lines won't change the eventual results either; they will just make people leery about reading your next email."

HubSpot
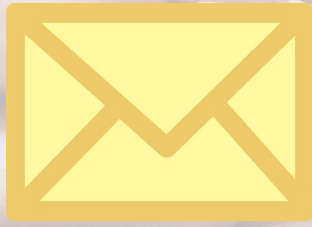
# Content 101

Here are some extra content tips for creating compelling email content:

- Write a majority of email marketing content in second person; that is, using "you," "your" and "you're." You may have noticed that this entire analysis is written in second person. That's because second person puts focus directly on the readers. It's not about selling a product or brand, but rather about helping readers reach solutions.

- Keep the intent of your emails in mind when creating copy that's both brief and dense. What action are readers ultimately supposed to take after reading your email? Write with those actions in mind and don't dance around the idea by overloading your email copy.

- In subject lines, avoid ambiguity. "20 Free Design Tools for Creating Awesome CTAs" provides much more immediate value than "Learn How to Improve Your Business's Website Design," in addition to setting exact expectations.

## Want more direction on creating a powerful email marketing campaign?

You're in the right place!

Check out our Introduction to Email Marketing guide to get the gist on list segmentation, personalization and awesome content creation.

**DOWNLOAD NOW**