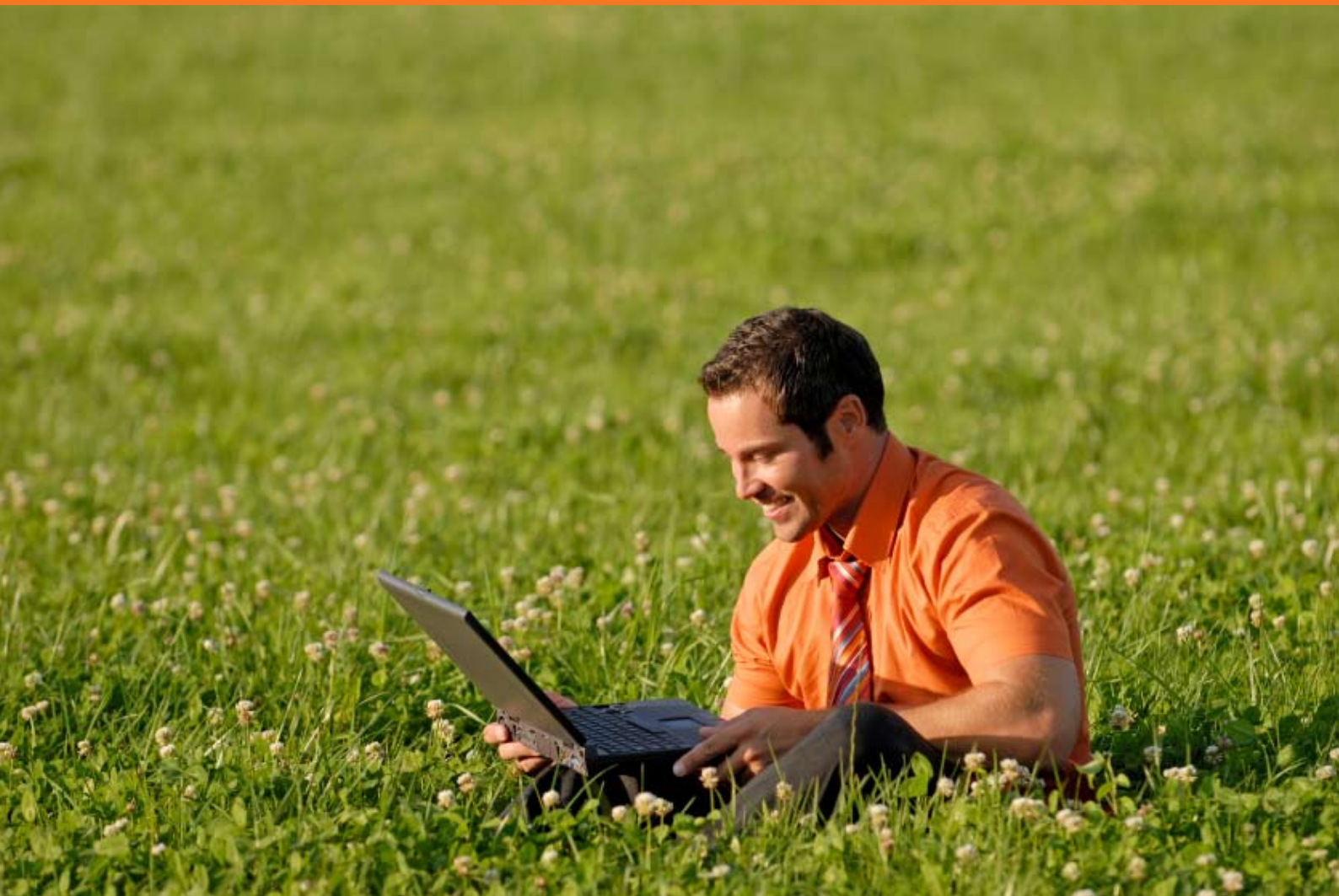


Effective Email Marketing Guide



Effective Email Marketing Guide

We have collated the guidelines below to help ensure your email marketing campaigns are as effective as possible - to avoid those nasty spam filters, increase click through rates, keep your event brand at the forefront of the industry and to keep the relationship with your stakeholders dynamic.

This guide is for first time email marketers as well as the more experienced, so apologies if some of the advice sounds obvious, some of it is but still gets overlooked!

If you have any tips you think would be useful then email marketing@aspevents.net and we'll look at updating the information.

Before you start

Trying planning out when emails will be sent throughout the event marketing campaign and what the intended message will be. These may well change over time but should help structure the content of the emails.

There may be little to say at the beginning of the campaign and almost too much to say at the peak of the marketing, so having messages in mind will keep you focused.

Data

- Are you confident that your **data is correct and up-to-date?** With spam filters, the Email Preference Service and blacklisting so prevalent you can't afford to take any risks by mass emailing everyone your company has ever come in contact with.
- **Segment your data** and tailor the marketing message accordingly – if the relevance isn't immediately apparent it will be deleted.
- With the revised Data Protection Act in force, it is essential that any emails are

sent to contacts that have been 'opted in' and, ideally, **refer to the source** list to reinforce confidence in the email i.e. previous attendee, a new magazine subscriber, member of an association etc.

- If possible include a forced seed which means any email that you send will also be sent automatically to everyone on your test list.
- Check your email service provider i.e. ASP, has **whitelisted status** with the main Internet Service Providers (ISPs) which means your emails are far less likely to be marked as spam.
- In addition to this, think about adding a message in your emails asking the recipient to '**add this email address**' to their contacts list.

Senders email address

Always put a name in the 'sent from' name field – using an info@ or sales@ address is impersonal and more likely to be perceived as spam.

Subject lines

- A great opportunity to attract attention and encourage opening.
- Avoid having subject lines longer than 45 characters long.
- Avoid overused, heavily spammed words, sexual terms and special characters (e.g. !/ */ ?) even the overuse of capital letters can trigger some spam filters.
- Try to be specific and / or factual – announce the seminar programme launch, newly confirmed exhibitors, approaching deadlines etc.
- Try testing different subject lines to see what works best for your audience.

Design

Most email broadcast systems allow you to send **HTML or text** versions, or both but you can choose whether to force one or the other. The recipient also may have specified a preference when subscribing for information and updates from you.

HTML

- An HTML email obviously gives more visual scope for layout, branding, images, sponsor logo's etc but think about the audience - an email which takes a long time to download and blocks someone's system is not going to endear you to potential visitors.
- If you are sending an HTML version then include **ALT tags** for all the images. Then, if images haven't loaded properly, well written alt tags at least provide the recipient with a sense of what isn't seen. However include key messages, calls to action etc as text as well as images to ensure the point isn't missed.
- Emails do not work in the same way as standard web pages, so please bear this in mind and consider linking to forms/flash/audio rather than including them in the email (as this may flag your email as spam). It's best to keep things simple

Text

- Text versions won't contain any images or graphics so the message must make sense without these visual aids. Text versions are also useful for Blackberry or other PDAs that have a limited display area.
- Present the text version in a clear and readable way. Add dividing lines and extra spaces between paragraphs to help break up the content into digestible chunks.

To give the recipient all options add a **view Web version** link. Host a version of the email on your website and provide a text link to it at the very top of the email. Regardless of image or personal settings, the recipient can always click through and view the message as a web page.

Content – do's and don'ts

Do pay attention to the layout - Readers will be naturally drawn to things that are pleasing to the visual senses - a good layout makes it easier to read.

Do keep your email as clean as possible - Offer ample space around images, to help improve readability. Remember that dark text on a white background offers the best visibility of your content, on any screen and any resolution.

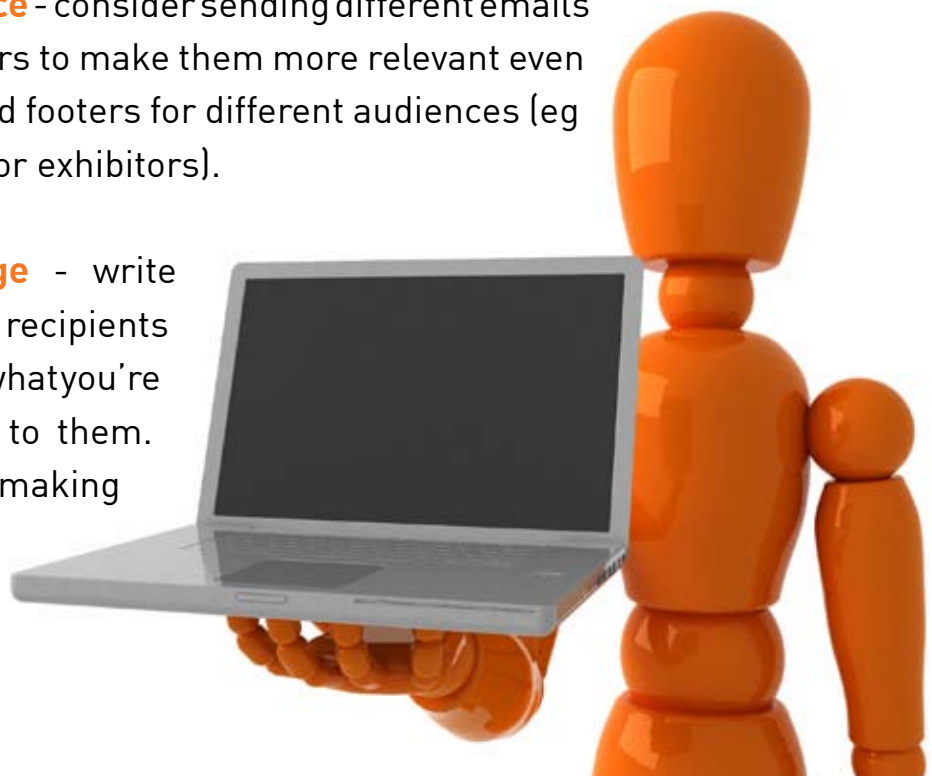
Do get straight to the point - don't waste people's time with long introductions - get them interested and encourage them to click on the links to find out more. Use short, concise sentences.

Do keep it relevant - use it to tell people about things they'll be interested in. For example, if your event is at a new venue that's only interesting to you, but if it means there will be more exhibitors, better facilities and more feature areas then that's interesting to the reader.

Do try to keep all important information at the top (message overview, key call-to-actions etc) - Outlook's preview pane can influence whether readers skip your email message, view it or make that crucial click-through).

Do tailor it to your audience - consider sending different emails to different kinds of visitors to make them more relevant even with different banners and footers for different audiences (eg one for visitors and one for exhibitors).

Do use simple language - write simply and clearly so recipients immediately understand what you're offering and the benefit to them. Ask questions instead of making statements to get the recipients thinking. Check spelling and grammar.



Do include calls to action – space them out throughout the email text to increase the opportunity to be clicked on. Image CTA's are good but don't use them exclusively. Repeat a call to action or key message in a PS at the end of the email.

Do highlight full action in links – highlight 'click here to register' rather than 'click here' so those quickly skimming the email will immediately see key actions, or those who are partially sighted and using the tab button will have the full description hyperlinked.

Do include your company details on the email – the company name, registered address, and registration number are required by EU law.

Do decrease the chance that your emails will be marked as spam by adding a message in your emails asking the recipient to '**add this email address**' to their contacts list.

Do not repeat the same phrase again and again and again, as this is a key identifier for spam detection.

Do not use WORDS ALL IN CAPITALS IN A SENTENCE.

Do not include any sexual innuendo. Key words and phrases may be picked up as spam and blocked, or seen as such by the recipient and deleted. It doesn't need to be obvious innuendo either – an innocent combination of the words 'adult', 'club', '18', 'live entertainment', etc can cause a spam filter to block the email.

Don't just say 'unsubscribe' – these are often read as spam. Try 'want to be taken off our mailing list?' or similar with options to specify whether its just this event or all communications from your company.

Before you hit 'send'

- **Check message appearance in the preview pane.** The preview pane in your email client (eg. Outlook) is like a newspaper's "above the fold" area and is where many recipients read or scan their messages. Can recipients make a quick "open" decision based on content showing in the preview pane? If not, consider reformatting the message or adding teaser text at the top that highlights what's below
- **Have you identified yourself clearly?** It is now a legal requirement to include your company name, registered address and registration number
- If you're including **video or audio** do you know how many contacts on your mailing list can open it? Ensure you include links to download the relevant media player?
- Are your customers able to **opt out or unsubscribe** quickly and easily?
- **Test, test, test** – if you have created and written the email it's easy to start missing errors. Get someone else to check a test just to be sure there are no glaring mistakes.
- **And test again in free email systems** i.e. Hotmail, Yahoo, Gmail as they sometimes behave differently



Finished!

Hurray – another item crossed off your ‘to do’ list! But resist the urge to obsessively watch the opening rate. It’s a good indicator of a campaign’s success, and a way to establish if an external list was worthwhile, but the link click-throughs will give a better idea of how well your email worked.

- Have registrations increased?
- More seminars booked?
- Increased press enquiries?
- New exhibitors booked?

However, if opening rates are particularly low it may indicate a technical issue with the email. It may also be worth checking the data itself to see if there are any common email domains that aren’t receiving or opening emails.

Call to actions

Click-through rates can increase dramatically when an intelligent design and functionality are applied to an email. Strategically placing relevant and clickable links, buttons and a clear layout of content can contribute to improved campaign results.

Research

Keep an eye on other email campaigns - subscribe to competitors’ newsletters and decide what it is you like and don’t like in their campaigns.

Identifying the elements that make an email look great to you is crucial in helping develop your own campaign.

Checklist

Data

- Is the data clean and relevant?
- Does external data come from a reputable source?
- Has it been deduped?
- Has the data been segmented?

Design

- Does the design reflect the event brand?
- Is the overall layout clear and uncluttered?
- Are the images alt tagged appropriately?
- Are the right sponsor logos included?

Content

- Is the subject line spam filter friendly, attention grabbing and to the point?
- Is the message strong and relevant?
- Is the call to action clear?
- Are all the links all working?
- Have you included an unsubscribe facility – is it working? This is a legal requirement
- Are your company details on the email – the company name, registered address, and registration number are required by law
- Does the text version make sense without the images, graphics, hyperlinks etc?
- Have you included a 'view web version' link at the top of the email?