3 Tricks for Getting More Email Clicks

Many marketers will tell you their engagement rates need to improve. Here's how to not be one of them.

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The way people interact with your emails tells you everything about your marketing strategy. Are you sending valuable content? You'll see the feedback reflected in your open and click rates. Is your email list accurate? Your bounce rates, spam complaints and other metrics will show you. If those numbers aren't making you happy, it's in your power to improve them.

To see where you stand, let's take a look at industry benchmarks. These vary depending on the source, so it's difficult to establish what the most precise data is. Dave Chaffey of Smart Insights published an in-depth study on the topic, gathering information from several email-service providers. Here's what he found after analyzing hundreds of millions of sends:

- The average open rate, across all industries, varies from 14.79 percent (Constant Contact) to 21.33 percent (MailChimp).
- The average click-through rate ranges between 2.98 percent (Get Response) to 6.99 percent (Constant Contact).

There's a significant difference between these numbers, but they should give you some perspective on how your own emails

are performing. What can you do if your metrics are below these benchmarks, or if you want your email marketing to be even more effective? The below tactics will help you do just that.

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1. Scrub your email lists.

Having had the chance to see firsthand how much list-cleaning helps, I can tell you that it’s a great place to start boosting your email engagement. We’ve had customers come to us with a 20 percent bounce rate, and after they validated their list, that rate went down to less than 1 percent.

Nick Dimitriou, the head of growth at email-marketing service Moosend, confirms how important email hygiene is. “While content and volume greatly influence your email deliverability,” Dimitriou told me, “the quality of your mailing list also has an impact. To increase engagement, verify whether your contacts are valid and deliverable, and do it regularly.”

So how exactly do you go about checking the quality of your list? “Using a good email validation system helps you remove bad contacts from your list and boosts your overall performance,” Dimitriou added. “This way, you avoid the risk of being filtered out by mailbox providers, and you have peace of mind knowing you communicate with real people.”

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2. Test your content for what works best.

Once you know your list is in good shape, it’s time to take a

closer look at your content. Start by analyzing your metrics from the past six months. What type of emails got the highest engagement?

A few aspects to focus on:

- What responses did you get on transactional emails versus marketing offers versus newsletters?
- Out of your offers and newsletters, which emails tended to have the highest open and click rates?
- Does your audience prefer short messages, or is it more inclined to read longer emails?
- Which worked better: plain-text or HTML?

It’s essential to compare your emails against each other before you start tweaking for better results. Everything can be adjusted, but first, pay attention to what your subscribers like so you can give them more of that.

When it comes to writing, there are plenty of tactics that boost engagement. In a recent interview with Zero Bounce, copywriter Laura Belgray advised: “Write conversationally, as if you’re writing to one friend – not formally, to a group. Put effort into the subject line, making it intriguing and also informal, as it’s from a friend.”

According to research from Business2Community, 47 percent of people decide whether to open an email just by scanning the subject line. Try Belgray’s suggestions next time you write yours.

3. Score your contacts to identify the ones most likely to engage.

List hygiene and content play an essential role in your inbox placement and engagement rates, but what if you’ve validated your list and improved your content, and you still can’t seem to get better responses? You could take things a step further

and try an email-scoring service. The process is similar to cleaning your list, but you get more in-depth data.

An email-scoring system examines every email address in your database and assigns a score to each. Based on the activity levels it detects, the system predicts how likely a certain email user is to engage with your messages. A low score indicates the address is inactive and thus unlikely to react. The higher the score, the more you can focus on those contacts and re-engage them with targeted campaigns.

Email scoring helps you learn more about your subscribers's behavior before you even email them. By allowing you to make every email count, it can save time and resources.

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Here are a few final, bonus pointers to help boost open and click-through rates:

- Test everything – your design, content, subject lines, placement of call-to-action buttons – but test only one thing at a time so you can make accurate observations.
- Use all the data you've gathered in your email address collection process to split your email lists and send targeted campaigns.
- Write content that's helpful and generous. People will like and remember you if you help to improve their businesses and lives.
- Look at email marketing as a fun task. The more fun you have, the more you're going to enjoy writing them. When your subscribers sense that, they're more likely to respond.

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