

## Increasing the Effectiveness of Email Marketing

by Allison Flett

Email marketing is the category most likely to see an increase in spending among financial services marketers.

Source: Aite Group, Q4 2008 StrongMail survey of 79 financial services firms

Perhaps it is true that our email inboxes are getting flooded. But there is also truth in data that shows that email may offer the best return on investment. It is difficult to argue the quick speed, targeting ability and affordability of email marketing, and in today's economy, those benefits can't be ignored. However, like most communication tactics, you must have a strategy and be willing to test and refine that strategy. Below are key areas to resolve before getting started.

### Objectives and Strategy

The first place to start is by determining what it is you want the emails to accomplish and who the target audience is. Is it to create and build awareness with prospects or to cross-sell existing clients? Do you need to generate more leads or share valuable information with clients? Perhaps you want to transition from a print newsletter format to a more environmentally friendly Enewsletter. Whatever your goals, you should clearly define them and then monitor overall performance against those goals.

### Content and Design

Once you've outlined a good strategy, you must create the content and appearance of the email campaign. From a content perspective, are you giving readers useful information or are you presenting them with a valuable offer? To best do this, you need to know your subscribers and understand what they want from you. This can lead to a need for targeting and segmentation to be discussed in the next section.

Good email design is also critical to the success of your campaigns. Considerations such as designing for the majority of email clients (i.e. Outlook, Lotus), ISP's and screen sizes can make a big difference in how your email is viewed. Also, make sure your brand is visible in the preview pane. As a last general rule, do not forget a compelling subject line as that can determine whether or not your email gets placed in the Junk folder.

The Trinity logo consists of the word "trinity" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a solid orange square.

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### Targeting and Database Management

A true segmentation strategy ensures the right message is sent to the right person at the right time. Before distributing a mass email campaign, ask yourself if the content is relevant to all the names in your database. More often than not, it won't be and you run the risk of increasing the number of opt-outs. In some cases, you may wish to purchase a list to acquire the names of those your content is best suited for.

### Personalization

Depending on your distribution capabilities, personalizing emails with a custom greeting or specialized offer can also have increased impact.

### Measurement

The final step in properly managing your email marketing campaigns involves measuring their performance. Open rates and click-through rates tend to be the most common and an open rate of 20-25% is considered good. You can also add buttons and forms to your email, inviting people to give feedback, forward onto a friend or subscribe to other features. The more information you track and gather, the better equipped you are for proper follow-up.

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**“The US uses approximately 68 million trees each year to produce 17 billion catalogues and 65 billion pieces of direct mail.”\***

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\*Source: American Forest and Paper Association.