



dotMailer accountable email marketing Tips for designing your email

The golden rule: A well-written email with the correct balance of graphics, text and carefully placed links is most likely to reach the intended recipient and deliver your message effectively. Here are some tips to achieve this:

➤ BE SHORT AND TO THE POINT

People reading emails have a short attention span. Don't waffle, and include clear links to the calls to action. Statistics show that the most popular link clicked is usually the one in your opening paragraph... use this wisely.

➤ DON'T USE STYLESHEETS

Many email applications such as Hotmail, Yahoo, Outlook and Gmail render stylesheets (CSS) poorly or not at all. Any advice you're given that using stylesheets is 'better' applies only to the design of web pages - not HTML emails. So make sure your designers use traditional HTML, making use of <table> and tags instead.

➤ OPTIMISE YOUR IMAGES FOR WEB USE

This means the file size and image resolution - not necessarily the physical size of your image. Big file sizes mean users waiting a long time for images to appear. Images can be optimised using most graphics packages.

➤ DON'T USE EXCESSIVE IMAGES

...or worse still, one large image. Spam filters rate content against various criteria, and one of these is an over-reliance on images (common in the 'adult' industry). Ensure your email is built with a complimentary mix of images and web-based text.

➔ INCLUDE ALT TAGS

This is a textual description of each image. Email clients such as Outlook turn images off by default, so users need a way of telling at a glance what images represent. Labelling your images with useful descriptions means a user is more likely to enable the images and read your email.

Using a combination of images and web text will help with this issue. You can use HTML colour backgrounds to give your email 'life' even with images turned off.

➔ HOST YOUR IMAGES ON OUR SERVERS

It'll be quicker, and will definitely cost you less! If you're uploading a template, ensure images are saved in the same directory as the HTML (the image path will be). This allows you to select them all and upload in one go.

➔ DON'T USE 'DANGEROUS' WORDS

'Free!!!', 'Special Offer!!!' etc - all are used extensively in spam. Filters therefore don't look kindly on emails that contain phrases like this.

➔ DON'T USE 'DANGEROUS' DESIGNS

Overuse of bold, enormous font sizes, many different fonts, millions of links - again, widely used by spammers. Don't get filtered out by following suit.

➔ OUTLOOK 2007

Please be aware that there are a number of limitations sending to Outlook 2007, these include for example no support for background images. We recommend you test send to ensure the email renders as intended.

➔ STRUCTURE FOR IMPORTING TEMPLATE INTO DOTMAILER

Images must be saved locally in the same folder as your HTML file (so do not use an 'images' folder) - this allows the system to reference them correctly upon upload.

➔ DOTMAILER EDITOR

When designing for dotMailer you should be aware that the editor uses the HTML font size tag. Therefore you should design with this in mind, as users who edit the template only have an option to set sizes between 1 and 7.

CONTACT US

For more details, to set up a free trial account or to see if we can price-match any existing product you're using.

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4 STEPS to avoid spam



Avoid overuse of graphics and make sure the core message of your communication is in readable text.



Don't use lots of different colours for text and links.



Avoid suspicious subjects. Aside from the obvious, words such as 'free', 'special offer' etc should be avoided as much as possible, as should lots of exclamation marks - they're beloved of spammers.



Don't include an excessive number of links relative to the number of words in your email.



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➤ ADDITIONAL FILES OR FUNCTIONS

You cannot attach any additional files to an email in dotMailer nor can you add flash or forms within an email.

➤ CHECK, CHECK AND CHECK AGAIN

Get someone else to proof-read and check against brand guidelines, check all links are working and go to the correct destination, ensure you've included contact details and an unsubscribe function.

Carry out test sends - especially to web based emails such as Hotmail, Yahoo and Gmail - do they arrive in the inbox or junk folder, and do they appear as they should? Use dotMailer's spam tool to advise you on content. Then proof-read it again!

➤ MONITOR YOUR RESPONSE RATES

They're not just interesting numbers - use them to make small adjustments to the copy, the timing of the mailing and the imagery to see how this affects your open and click through rates.

➤ PLAN AHEAD WITH YOUR DESIGN

Have a template designed that can be re-used. Build brand recognition by keeping certain sections similar - a special promotion or feature, for example. Use the discipline of a well thought-out template to keep your emails short and to the point - and with that, we're back to the first tip again.

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