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Guide to Effective Email Marketing

What Can You Find Inside?

Introduction

Our email inboxes are flooded with information every day, whether it is a promotional campaign, a special offer, an informative guide, or our work emails. For this reason, brands need to be clever about the way they approach email marketing. Opening an email means that something about it caught our attention and made us want to take action.

In this Guide to Effective Email Marketing, we look at the basics that help to answer some of the questions digital marketers face, such as:

What's the secret to increasing open and click-through rates?

How do I build brand loyalty and engagement with my customers?

How do I create personalised and relevant content?

Whether you are new to email marketing, or a returning specialist brushing up on your knowledge, this guide is for you.

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What is Email Marketing and Why Do We Need It?

Email marketing is defined as the act of sending messages to potential or current customers to inform, promote, or upsell a product or service. Much like being a door-to-door salesman, but less intrusive.

Over the years email has become much more than just a channel to market. Brands use email to build relationships with their subscribers, to nurture prospects through the buyers' cycle, and to eventually retain those customers.

Email marketing performs best when sending the right message to the right person at the right time.

Research continues to show that email is one of the most effective forms of communication if used correctly, and therefore it needs to be an integral part of your larger marketing strategy.

There is also massive local potential for email marketing, with over 21 Million South Africans accessing the internet every day and 84 percent of them saying that they read their emails either first or second when going online in the morning.

Email Marketing Trends

It is important to keep up to date with the latest trends, as these will help guide you on your path to successful email marketing.

Here are some of the recent trends that we feel will make a difference to your brand:

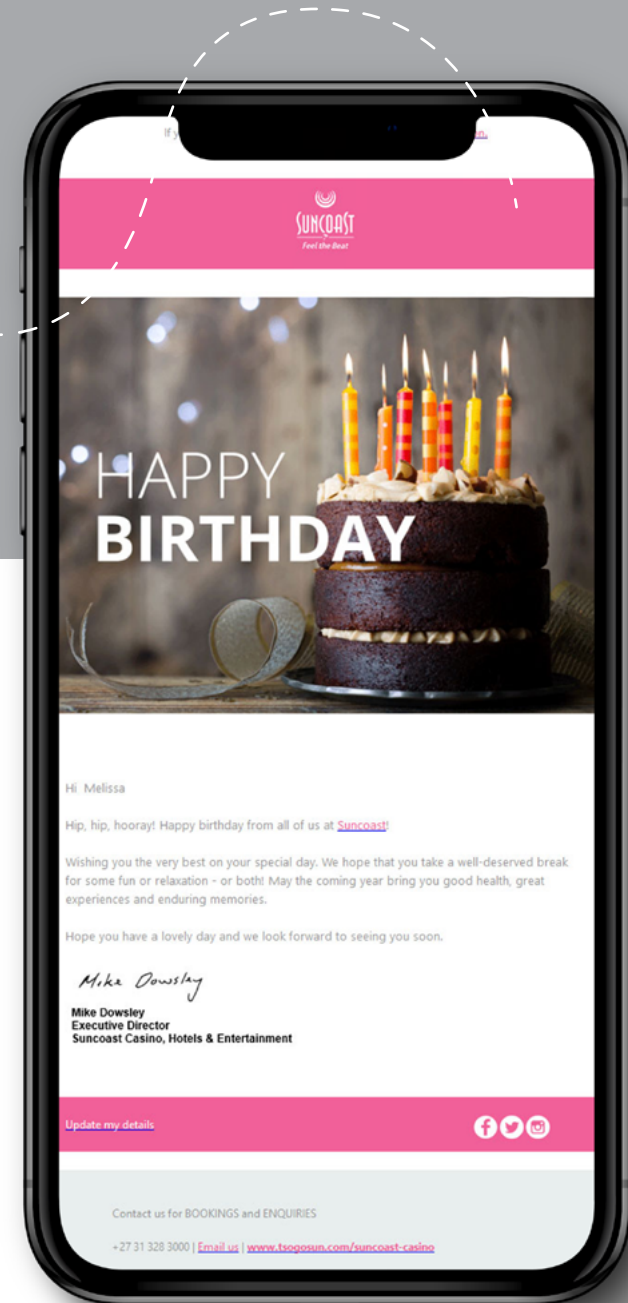## Hyper-Personalisation and Dynamic Content

Hyper-personalisation is the newest trend employed by corporate giants such as Amazon, Starbucks, McDonalds, and Netflix. They use search and purchase history, recent views and likes, as well as other behavioural information to build a profile of each consumer's interests. This information lets them send personalised and highly-relevant emails based on their customers interests. This tactic has boosted email open-rates and conversion rates. Who doesn't like a good recommendation appealing to your interests, right?

"More than 35% of Amazon's conversions are driven by its hyper-personalised recommendation engine." - www.themediaonline.co.za

"Econsultancy's Realities of Online Personalisation Report found that 74 percent of marketers say targeted personalisation increases customer engagement. According to Statista, the open rate for e-mails with a personalised message was 5.7 percent higher than those without any personalisation in 2016."
- www.econsultancy.com

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Hyper-Personalisation and Dynamic Content (cont.)

You may be familiar with personalisation based on variables within data, such as first name, last name, etc. Dynamic content takes this a step further and allows you to personalise email content within your email HTML based on rules and conditions around the recipients' data, preferences, or behaviour. This includes different images, calls-to-action, downloads, and attachments.

Marketers can track subscribers' online behaviour from their website to understand what they're interested in, and trigger targeted communications based on this information.

Post-purchase dynamic content can include messages thanking your customer for their purchase while at the same time-sharing information about related products which could complement their purchase.

Mobile Friendly / Responsive Emails

Responsive emails have become more important than ever before, with people reading emails on an ever-expanding variety of devices. Using Everlytic templates to build your email ensures mobile responsiveness across devices. However, if you are using another email system you may need to get your designers and developers involved to create responsive emails.

If a user needs to scroll to the left or the right to read your content they will most likely close the email, delete it, or unsubscribe.

61% of emails are opened on mobile devices.

- www.everlytic.co.za

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Automation

Building targeted, personalised, and engaging email campaigns can be an overwhelming and time-consuming exercise.

Marketing automation provides a simple and efficient way to implement your email marketing strategy. You can set up workflows, automated triggers, or automatic replies which guide your contacts on a specific journey based on their interactions with your website or email content.

"A study by Gleanster reports that 90% of respondents report regular and periodic use of marketing automation for large-volume email campaigns."

- www.huffingtonpost.com

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Business-to-Consumer vs Business-to-Business

Since the launch of the internet there has been a major shift in how marketers communicate with their customers before selling their products or services. The internet gives customers greater control of the decision-making process as they can perform all of their research online before even making contact with a company.

It is this decision-making process that fundamentally guides our content production when it comes to Business-to-Consumer (B2C) and Business-to-Business (B2B) marketing.

B2C

Consumer-facing marketing targeted at individuals. They make the decisions themselves which shortens the buying cycle and involves personal purchases addressing their needs.

"B2C marketers rated that email (91%), Facebook (68%) and print (62%) are the top three most important channels to their organization's content marketing success."

- www.marketinginsidergroup.com

B2B

Business-facing marketing where organisations and companies are the target market. The decision-making process is longer, as there are more people involved. This increases the buying cycle, from weeks to months, as the organisation wants to make sure that the product / service / solution is worth their while.

"47% of B2B buyers viewed 3-5 pieces of content before engaging with a sales rep."

- *Demand Generation*

With all that said it is also important to realise that, whether we are targeting the B2B or B2C environments, we are still dealing with human beings. *B2H (Business-to-Human)** is a more modern approach to marketing and at the core of this new philosophy is the understanding that we are marketing to people.

We need to make sure that we have a deep understanding of our target market in order to understand and be empathetic to their individual needs. The better our understanding, the more thoughtful and personalised our approach to marketing can be.

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Email Marketing Benchmarks

Email metrics are important to determine the success of each newsletter and campaign. How do you know if your current statistics are any good? You compare them with others in your industry. Email Marketing benchmarks provide an assessment of industry averages, which allows you to compare your data with others in the same industry.
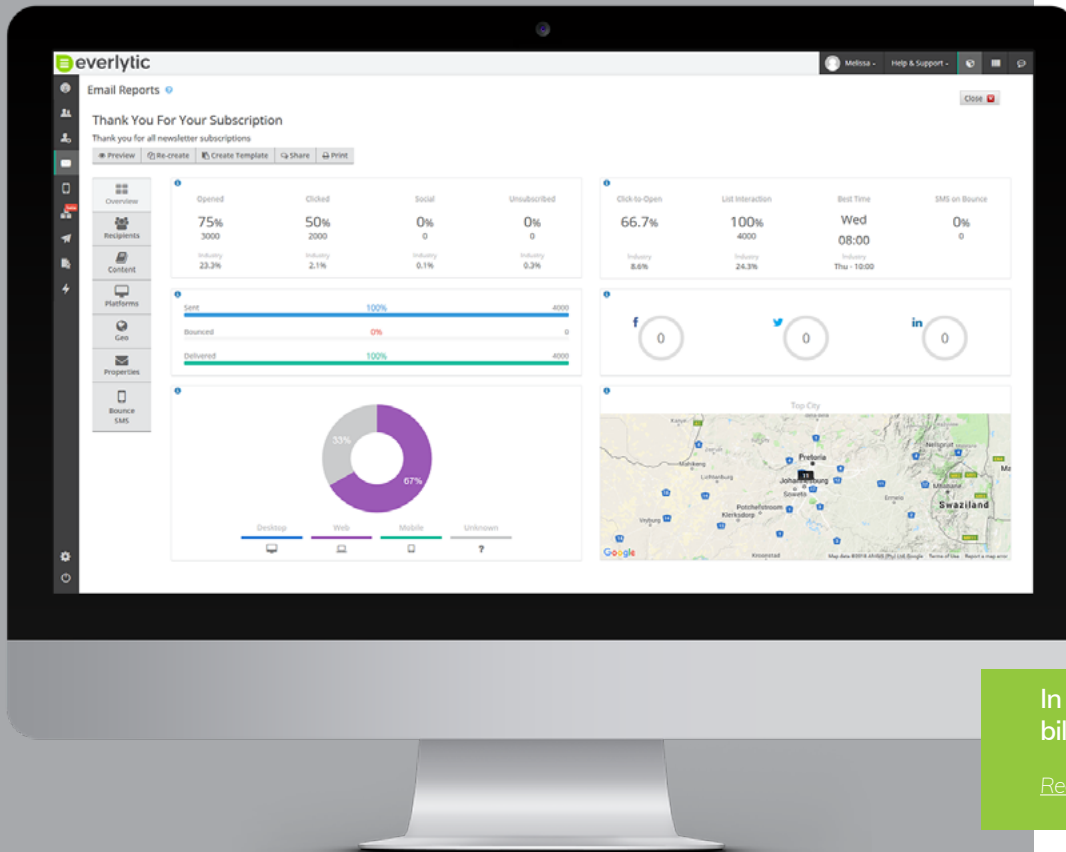
Most marketers focus on the below metrics:

Open Rates

The open rate describes what percentage of recipients opened your email.

Unique Open Rate

Unique opens are counted once per contact who opens the message.

Click-Through Rates

The click-through rate is the percentage of recipients that click on a link inside your email, counting the first clicks per unique contact.

Unique Contact Click-to-Open Rates

This ratio counts the number of unique link clicks within your email, divided by the number of unique opens of that email which shows the effectiveness of your email content.

Complaint Rates

The complaint rate is the percentage of complaints your emails receive – this generally happens if you've sent unsolicited email.

Unsubscribe Rates

The unsubscribe rate describes the percentage by which your subscriber list decreases each time you send a campaign.

Platform Rates

The platform rate shows which desktop email clients (e.g. Outlook, Lotus Notes), webmail clients (e.g. Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail), and mobile browsers (e.g. Safari, Blackberry, Android) subscribers use to open your emails.

In our 2018 Email Marketing Benchmarks Report, we analysed nearly 4 billion South African emails.

Read the Email Marketing Benchmarks Report

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Your Target Market, Their Expectations, and Buying Cycle

When putting together a marketing strategy, a lot of research needs to go into understanding your target market as that is the key to successful campaigns. Unfortunately, audience research is often neglected in favour of implementing ideas that we may think are great, but don't necessarily resonate with our customers.

Understanding your target market will help you to create content that moves your potential customers through the buyers' cycle.

The various phases of the buyers' cycle are as follows:

Stages | Content Types | Why?

*Awareness
Aware of a need that your product/service will help fulfil

- Educational, like whitepapers
- eBooks
- How-to-guides
- Infographics

Helps the prospect understand the benefits of partnering with you.

Consideration
Investigates different options before making a choice

- Deals
- Relevant packages
- Case studies
- Testimonials

To showcase your business/product as a good choice and explain what sets you a part form your competitors.

Purchase
Takes decision to purchase product/solution

- *"Thank you"* email
- Links to further relevant information/products
- Newsletter signup for further communication

Give the customer a reason to continue to engage with you.

Retention
Ensuring that your customer is happy with the product/services received

- Surveys
- Knowledge pieces
- Guides
- How-to-information
- Cross-sell related products/services

To have ongoing touch points with your customers, showing them that you understand their business and needs.

By understanding where your prospects are in the buyer's cycle you will be able to target them with very specific content that sends them on a journey relevant to their needs.

* Email Marketing is not effective in the awareness stage, only once they have shown interest in your brand.

How To Build Your Database

When building your email database, it's important that you follow the compliancy acts in place to avoid any legal implications. In South Africa we are governed by the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI), but if you're sending to people overseas you need to be aware of the laws in the countries where they will receive your messages.

Here are some ideas on how to legally build your database:

Subscription Forms

Create a subscription form and add it to various digital channels, from social media accounts, to blogs and landing pages. Gather key information but make sure that you don't create a lengthy form, as users might find it intimidating or time consuming and not bother to complete it.

Gather general information like their name so that you can deliver an email that greets them personally. Offer an incentive for people who join your mailing list, like a discount coupon.

Competitions

Competitions are a great way to grow your database, as long as you have an opt-in and they know you'll be emailing them. To avoid people only signing up for the prize, try and keep it related to your product/service.

CRM Systems

You can use your CRM and ERP systems to create a mailing list from customer data you already have. If you do this, you must make sure you have permission to send marketing emails to your existing customers. If you don't already have permission, you can send an email inviting them to sign up to your marketing list.

Social Media

Use your businesses social media accounts to run a campaign, encouraging people to sign up to your marketing communications.

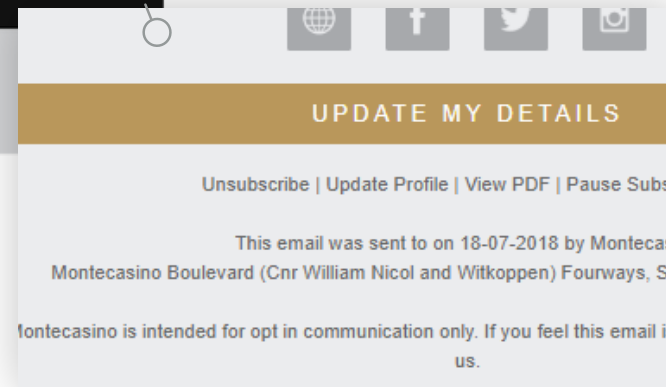Visit us at www.everlytic.co.za or *click here* to request a demo.

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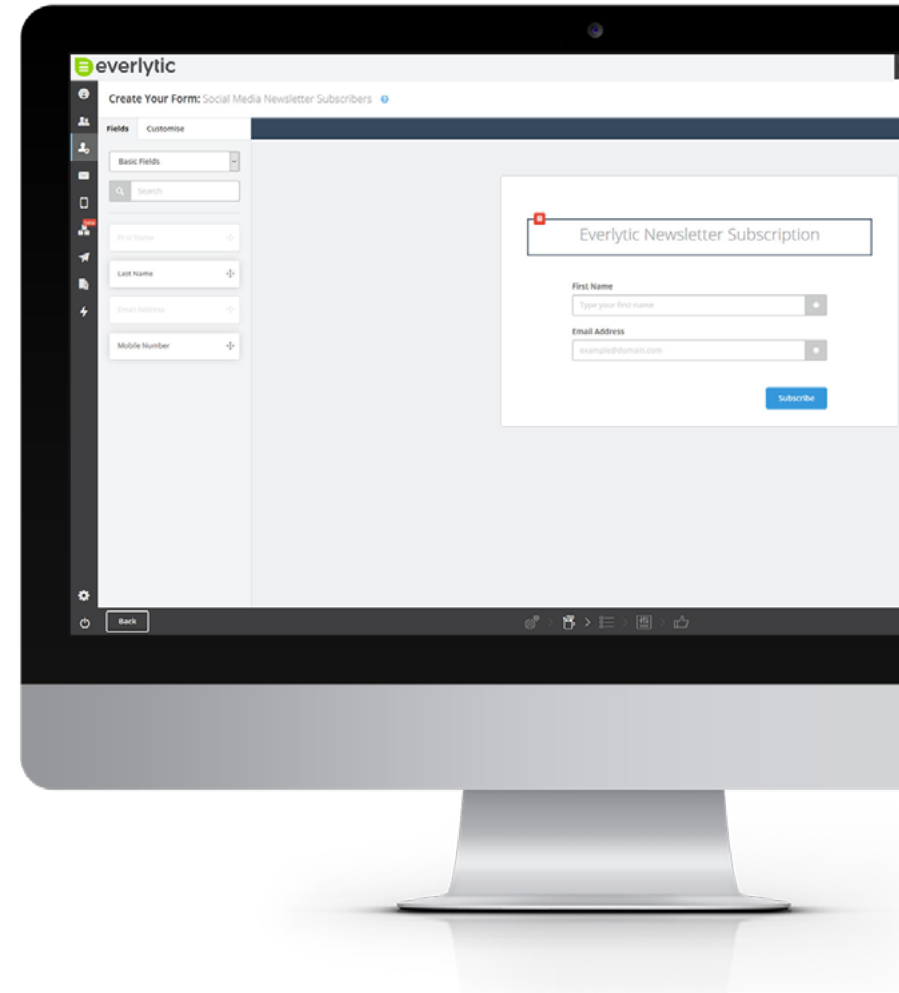
Compliancy
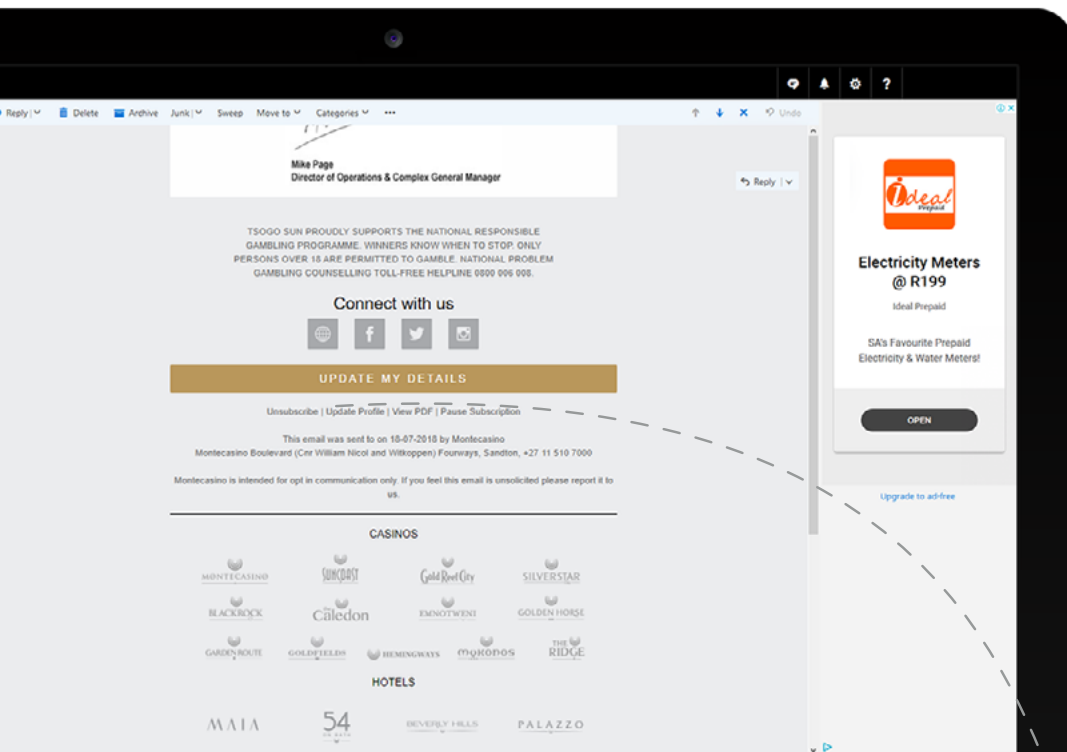
The laws governing email marketing have become much stricter, specifically regarding privacy and unsolicited communication. The Consumer Protection Act (CPA) and the **Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI)*** continues to protect consumers from receiving SPAM.

The most important thing you need to remember about legally building an email database is that every single subscriber has to consent to every type of communication you send. Having a preference centre, where subscribers can choose which communications to receive and how often, can help you stay up to date with your subscribers' wishes.

You will need consent if you are going to host data overseas, and you must easily be able to show which data you have. Companies can be asked to delete all historical data for a subscriber.

It is also essential that you give subscribers an easy way to remove themselves from your mailing list. Not only is it a legal requirement, it's also a good way to avoid being marked as a spammer.

* www.everlytic.co.za

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Email Marketing Guidelines

Email Marketing Guidelines (cont.)

Opens and Reads

There are many factors that positively affect the open and read rates of email marketing campaigns. The most important factors are relevant and engaging content which addresses a specific need. Whether it's selling a product or providing a service, there should be something of value for the recipient.

Having a From Address that corresponds to your brand can increase reads, as your contacts will know exactly where the email comes from. If your contacts don't recognise your sending domain, they might assume your email is spam and delete it unread. Don't use a no-reply address when sending emails, as this discourages communication and increases distrust of your brand.

Sending Frequency

One of the reasons an email sender may be marked as spam is for sending irrelevant emails with similar content in a short amount of time. It becomes annoying to the recipient and gives them a negative feeling about the company.

To avoid this, you could give your subscribers a choice on how often they would like to receive communications and allow them to update their preferences whenever they change.

Each industry has some form of metric determining the best days and times to send emails. Do some research and test various dates and times to see what works best for you. Inconsistency may lead to lower open rates and that is why it is important to plan your content ahead of time.

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Email Marketing Guidelines (cont.)

The Importance of Managing Lists

It is important that you manage your subscriber lists to make sure that you are focusing your communications on your active audience. Re-engagement strategies targeted at stagnant contacts can improve open rates. It is also important that you remove those uninterested contacts from your database. If you don't practice proper list hygiene it could negatively affect your deliverability.

Read the Guide to Email List Hygiene

Segmenting Your Database

Database segmentation helps you to personalise your interactions with your subscribers. Give your contacts the option to choose the type of information they would like to receive from you. People want to be in control of the communications they receive.

Create segmented lists based on their answers and include geographic information, interests, and location where possible. Using an API integration will allow you to analyse website behaviours and further refine your personalisation.

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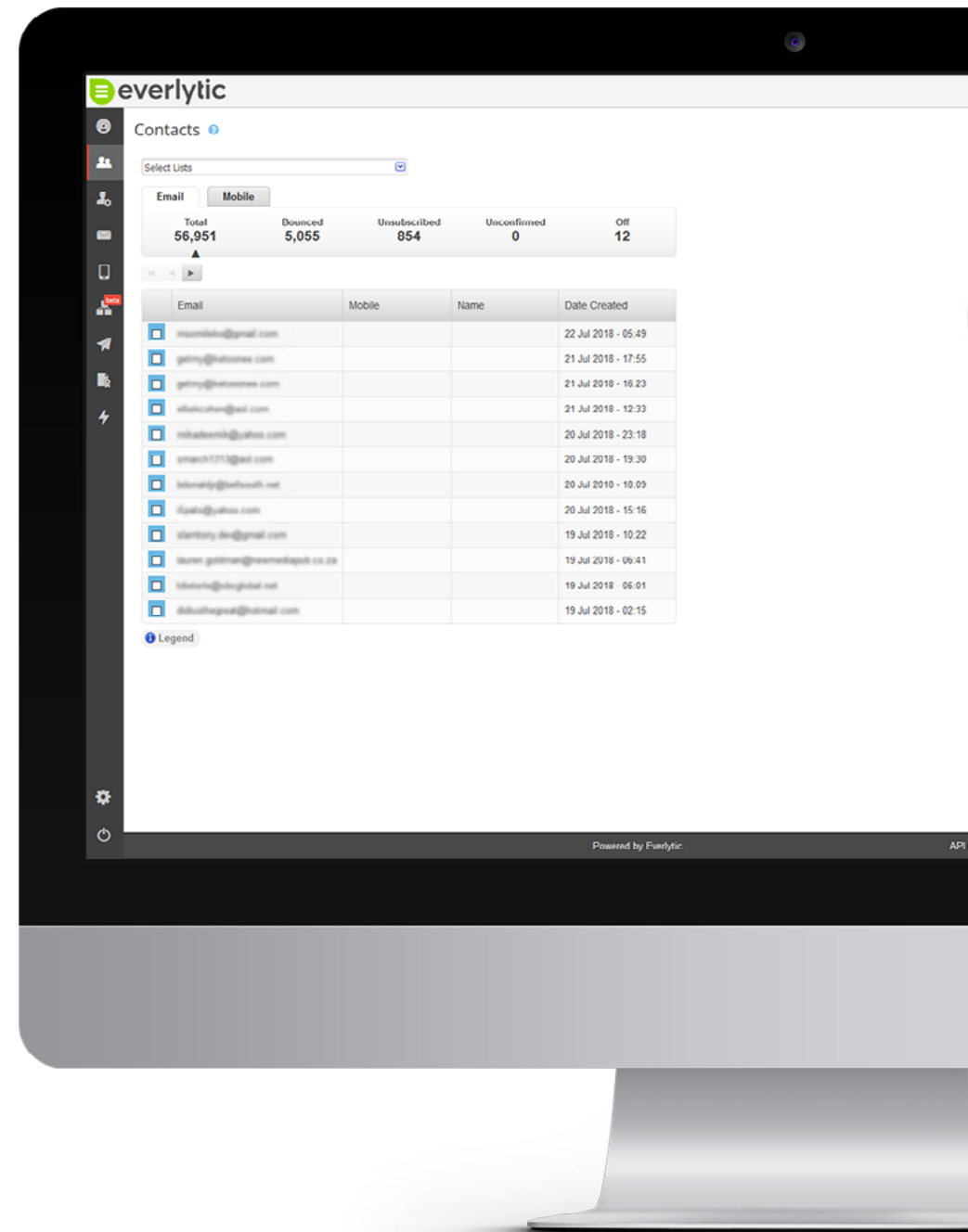
Creating Powerful Content

There is no doubt that content creation is one of the most important parts of a marketing plan. Your content should help your target audience solve a need, educate them, or add value in some way. This will help you to build stronger relationships with your customers and create loyalty towards your brand. We therefore summarize the top three rules of creating content that drives results as follows:

Provide valuable resources

Address a need

Make it personal

Remember that no two customers are the same, and they are most likely in different stages of the sales cycle. Use automation to move them through the various stages efficiently.

Videos, blog pieces, and infographics are very popular types of content as they are easy to consume.

Whitepapers, case studies, and testimonials are also great content pieces to help build the credibility of your brand. See what type of content works best for your audience and add those into your content plan.

It's important that you are not too stringent with your plan and that you are willing to adapt it as you go. Planning a year in advance is great but without flexibility you could miss out on catchy and relevant content that may be trending at that time.

We recently released a Guide to Inbound Marketing that talks about how to adjust your Email campaigns to a more inbound approach. Your content needs to attract people to your brand as opposed to broadcasting irrelevant content to a mass audience.

Read the Guide to Inbound Marketing

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Guide to Inbound Marketing Infographic
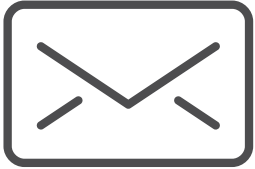
Behaviours that bother consumers the most (Global Averages*):

60%
Receiving too many direct marketing and sales calls

50%
Receiving too many direct marketing and sales emails

46%
Irrelevant content push

Channels and Tactics:

- Blogging
- Web Pages
- Social
- SEO
- Calls-To-Action
- Email
- Landing Page
- Analytics
- CRM

Moving to an inbound email marketing approach:

Marketing Automation → Workflows, Autoresponders, Triggers

Marketing Automation
Set up workflows, autoresponders, and triggers based on a user's interaction with your brand.

Hyper-personalisation
Personalising content based on user's interests, demographics, and online behaviour.

Share helpful content
Allow users to download whitepapers or view guides and blog posts which help solve a need.

Nurture customers
Nurture your customers through the buyer's cycle with targeted messaging.

What is inbound marketing?
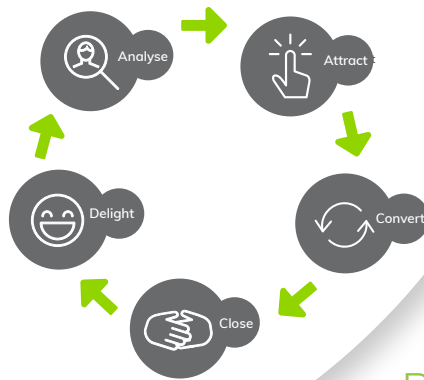
Traditional
- Spam / generic email
- Cold-calling
- Interruptive ads
- Marketer-focused
- One-way

Inbound
- Targeted & personalised email / content
- Surveys
- SEO
- Social media & blogs
- Customer-focused
- Two-way

The inbound marketing lifecycle:

- Analyse
- Attract
- Convert
- Close
- Delight

Benefits:

- Keeps brand top of mind
- Generates a buzz on social
- Helps SEO efforts
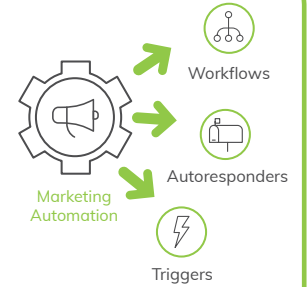- Increases trust & credibility
- Improves customer experience
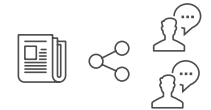- Generates better leads at a lower cost

Email Marketing is still one of the most reliable and lucrative channels of marketing and is even more powerful when adjusted to more of an inbound marketing approach.

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Email Marketing Guidelines (cont.)

Spam

Did you know that an email goes through a series of checks from the minute you send it out until it is delivered? Email service providers have spam filters that examine authentication, reputation, and content before deciding whether the email should be delivered to a person's inbox or not.

If your email is suspicious but not obvious spam, it might get filtered to the junk or trash folders. If the email service provider decides that your email is too much like spam, it could be denied entirely.

Sending out image-heavy emails can also raise a red flag for spam filters as spammers often hide their content in images.

Over the years, technology has improved and can identify word patterns and word frequency which are red flags for suspected spam.

How to Avoid Being Marked as SPAM

The best thing you can do to avoid having your emails marked as spam, is to not send unsolicited emails.

- If someone gives you an e-mail address at your web site, when you use it, mention where and when and from what host or address you got it.

- Validate your data as thoroughly as possible; especially e-mail addresses that you receive through anonymous media like the web.

- Do not buy lists of email addresses.

Different email clients (Yahoo, Gmail, Outlook, etc.) try to filter spam out of their user's in-boxes by searching incoming emails for common spam red-flags. Some of these may include:

- Content normally associated with spam, such as online pharmacies and pyramid schemes.

- Messages that are designed to look like "bounced message" responses.

- Messages sent from IP addresses that are known spam originators.

- Spam reports from other users.

- Content similar to spam messages (subject matter, formatting, attachments).

- Key words and phrases often associated with spam.

Read our comprehensive spam guide to learn more.

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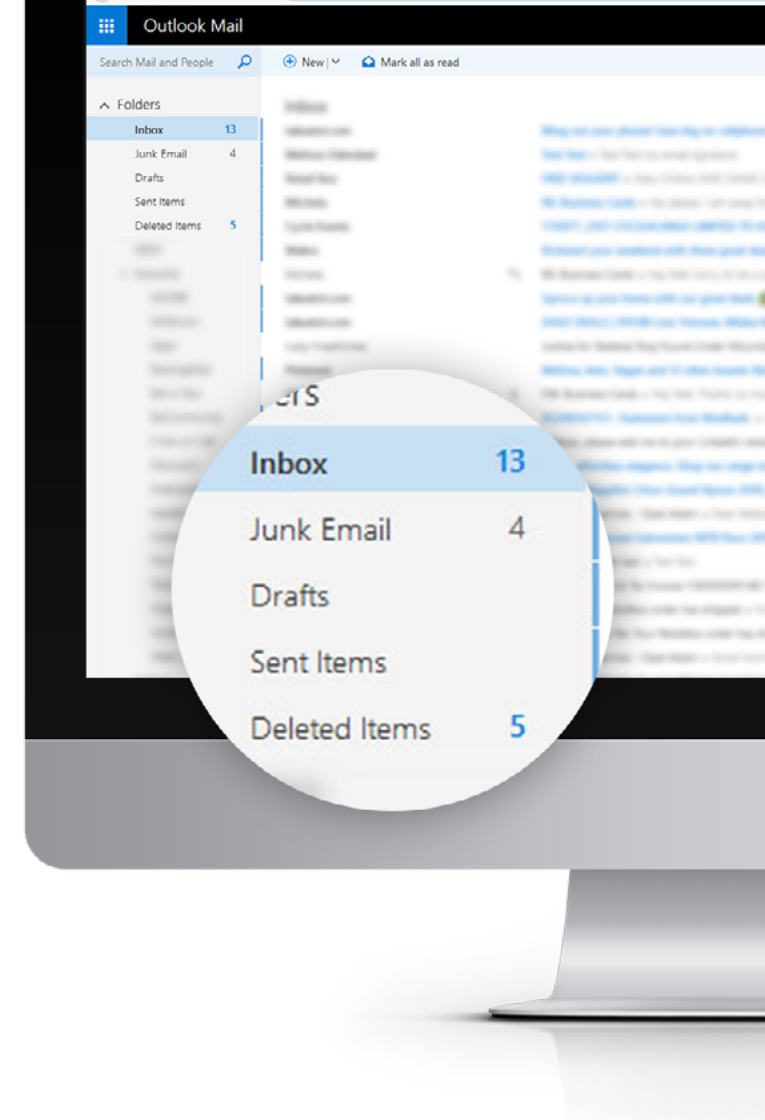
Email Marketing Guidelines (cont.)

Design Considerations

Email design doesn't only refer to the look and feel of the email, but also to the structural design. Here are some guidelines to consider when planning your email's structure:

✓ **Call-To-Action (CTA) Buttons:**

Make sure that you use catchy and relevant button copy to encourage your recipients to take action. It needs to be clear enough for the reader to know exactly what to expect when clicking the button.

Talk about the value and create a sense of urgency: 'Download Your Free Guide Today' or 'Claim Double Points Now'

✓ **Minimize Image Usage and Balance Image-to-Text Ratio:**

Most email clients may require your subscribers to download the images first. This means the first thing that they will see is a blank page if you have all your copy on your image.

The body copy gives the recipient an idea of what type of content is in the email without relying on images.

✗ **Background Images**

Background images can make your email stand out, but be careful when using them as they won't show until the recipient has chosen to download images. If it is a large image it may take longer to load and end up getting your email deleted.

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Email Marketing Guidelines (cont.)

Design Considerations (cont.)

✖ **Don't Embed Images:**

We advise that best practice is not embedding images in your emails. Embedding images will most likely send your message into the spam folder, as one of the things that spam filters look for are large, embedded images. It also increases the size of your email which is not ideal.

Most email service providers (such as Outlook, Hotmail, Yahoo! and Gmail) set the default status of emails to block images.

✓ **Email-Safe Fonts**

Fancy fonts on an email can make your content stand out. However, not every device can handle the different types of font-styles and they can end up displaying incorrectly on the recipients' screen. Make sure that you use email-safe fonts which will look the same on any device.

✓ **Personalised From Address**

Using a personalised From address gives your brand a human face (who doesn't know Gian from Afrihost?). It also makes it easier for subscribers to identify the sender when the email lands in their inbox.

✓ **Tailor Content to Mobile**

The majority of emails are now being opened on mobile devices. As a result, it is essential that you take the space restrictions into consideration when designing your emails. Make sure your images scale well, use responsive designs, and have simpler, shorter content overall.

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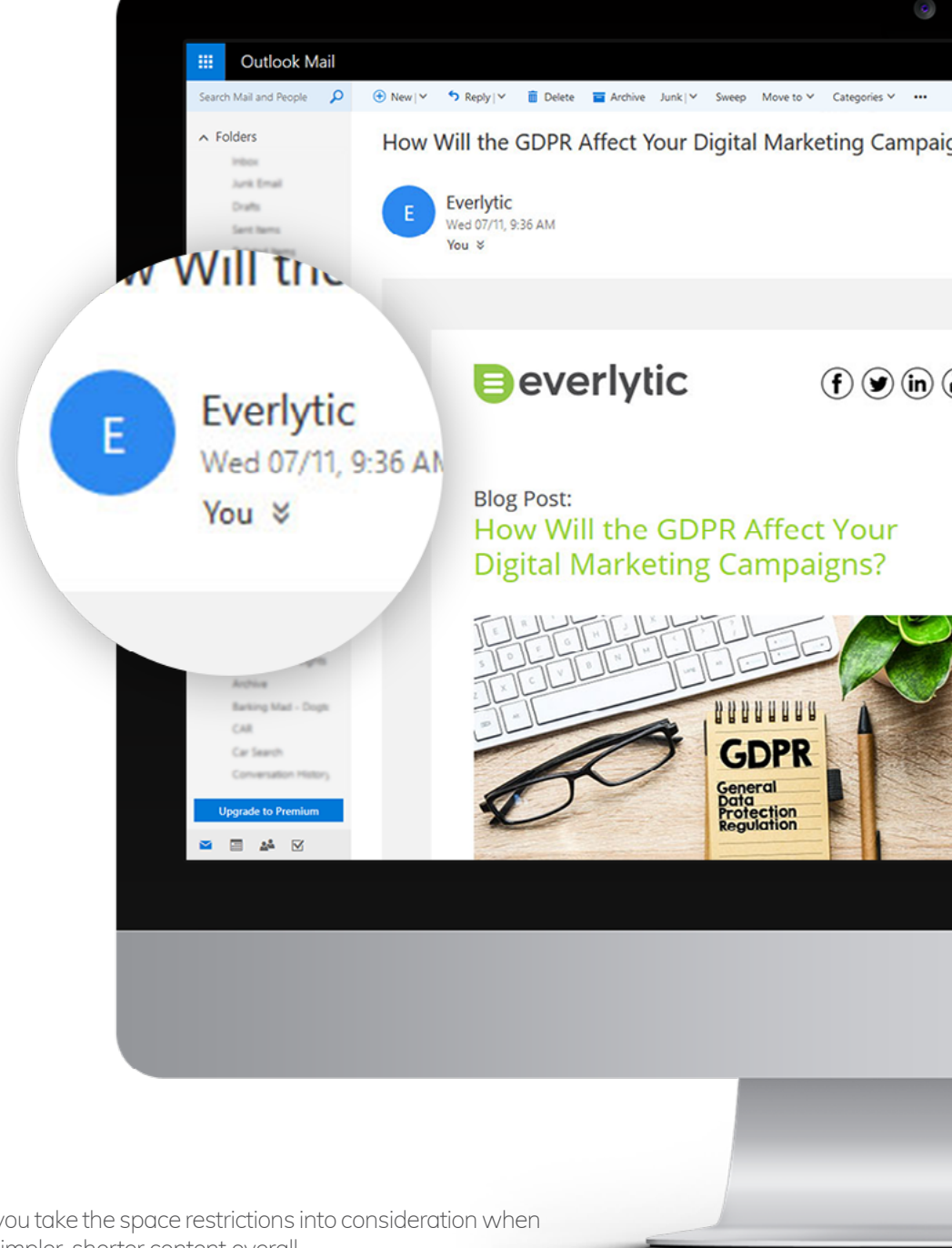
Email Marketing Guidelines (cont.)

Collecting Data for Personalisation

We discussed personalisation being an email marketing trend, and how information can be used to build communications that speak to each person and their interests individually. But how do you start to collect this data?

Here are a few ways that you can start collecting data:

✓ **CRM System**

Integrate your CRM system with your email marketing platform to pull customer data and send targeted communication based on where they are in the sales cycle.

✓ **Use Short Forms**

Use forms to collect small amounts of data to grow your knowledge about your customer's interests and needs. Don't intimidate them by creating a long form, rather run campaigns or competitions to collect information in small increments.

✓ **Customer Interaction**

See how your customers engage with the content on your site and in your emails. This is another way to find out what their current interests are, and help you to build a more precise profile of them. API integration can allow you to pull in information from your site about online and purchasing behaviours.

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Email Marketing Guidelines (cont.)

Subject Lines

Subject lines are one of the first things the reader sees when receiving an email, and helps them to decide whether they should open or delete your email.

> **"35% of email recipients open email based on the subject line alone."**
>
> - www.convinceandconvert.com

Here are tips on creating good subject lines:

✓ Personalise Subject Lines and Content

Use the subject line and email content to identify the contact or business. Using "Hi, Sarah" as opposed to "Dear Subscriber" makes the message more personal.

Just be careful that your database is 100% correct as errors in personalisation will not only send your email into a spam folder but will also create a bad impression of your brand.

> **"Personalized subject lines are 22.2% more likely to be opened."**
>
> - www.hubspot.com

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✓ Set Goals & Know your Audience

Before you start, you need to set goals for your email campaign, understand exactly who your audience is, and what type of action you would like them to take. Are you offering some sort of promotion, or introducing a new product? The goal and audience will define your subject line and the value it offers.
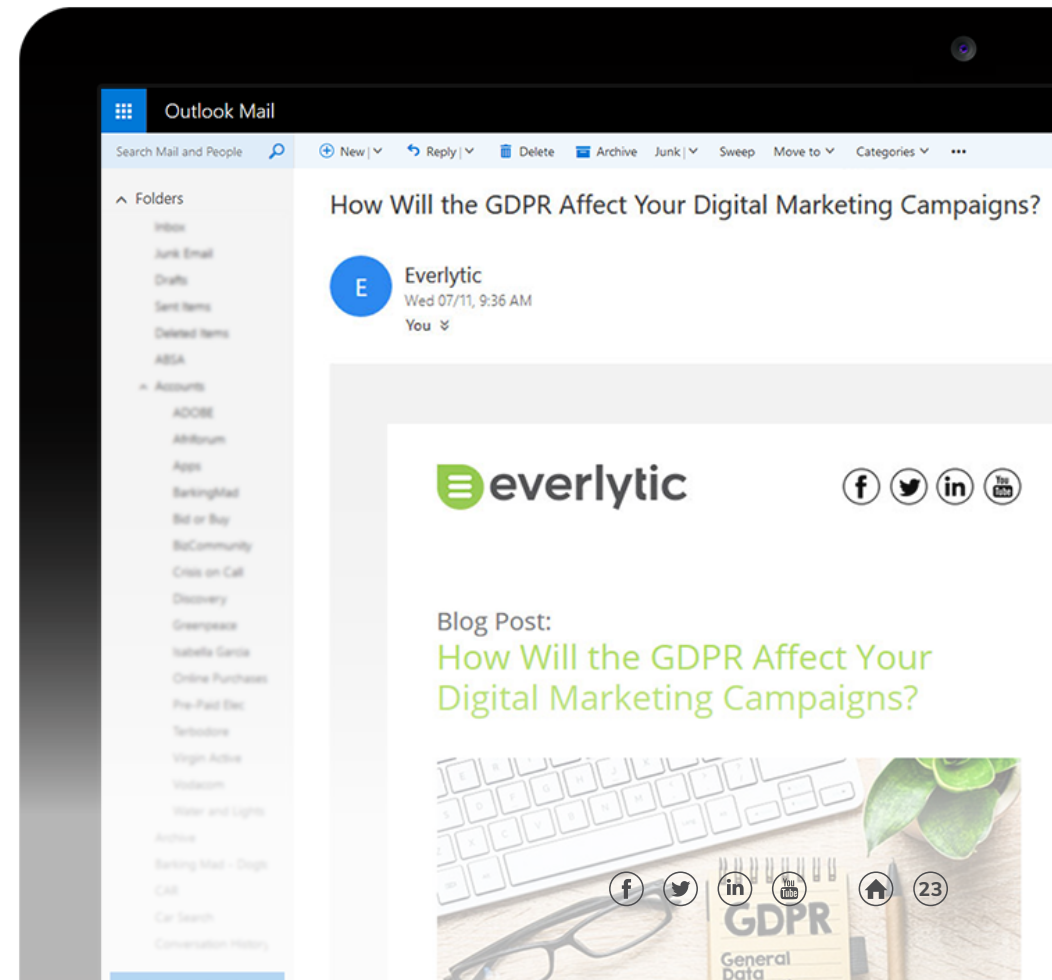
Email Marketing Guidelines (cont.)

Subject Lines (cont.)

✓ **Keep it Short & Enticing**

While there are statistics on the optimal subject line length, remember to say as much as possible in as few words as possible. A quick glance at the subject line will give the reader an indication of wha't in the email.

Make sure it's catchy and entices them to open the email, while at the same time is relevant to the email content. Offer deals for loyal customers, or subscribers who have engaged with your content the most.

✓ **Create a Sense of Urgency**

Phrases such as "24 hours left" encourage subscribers to act immediately or risk losing out on a deal. Urgency continues to prove to be an effective sales tactic. Just beware that using phrases like this could land you in the junk folder.

✓ **Offer Something of Value**

Let your subscribers know that there is something valuable inside the mail. The subject line then becomes the teaser encouraging them to open it and find out how this offering will help them.

✓ **Emoji**

Emoji have been around for years now, although their introduction into emails is a fairly new trend. Adding an emoji shortens your subject line length while expressing those words as an image. Make sure that you only use emoji that compliment your brand.

❤️ Save 20% This Valentine's Day

2-for-1 on all Pizzas 🍕 this Friday

Thanks for subscribing! Here's that gift 🎁 I mentioned...

Win a trip to ✈️ Maldives!

⭐ Congratulations, you're a winner...

Save Money on Soccer ⚽ Gear This Winter

Congratulations! Here Is Your 20% Off 🧨 Voucher

"...subject lines containing emojis actually saw a higher read rate than comparable text-only subject lines in some cases."

- www.returnpath.com

Visit us at www.everlytic.co.za or click here to request a demo.

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Email Marketing Guidelines (cont.)

A/B Testing

An A/B split test is a method of comparing two similar emails, to collect statistics on how each one performs. This allows you to test minor changes to your subject line, call-to-action text and placement, or body copy to see which version of your email is more effective.

There are a few things to consider when doing an A/B Split Test:

Subject Lines

Test the length and word choice of your subject lines to see which produces a more positive response. Once you find the correct combination, apply it to future messages.
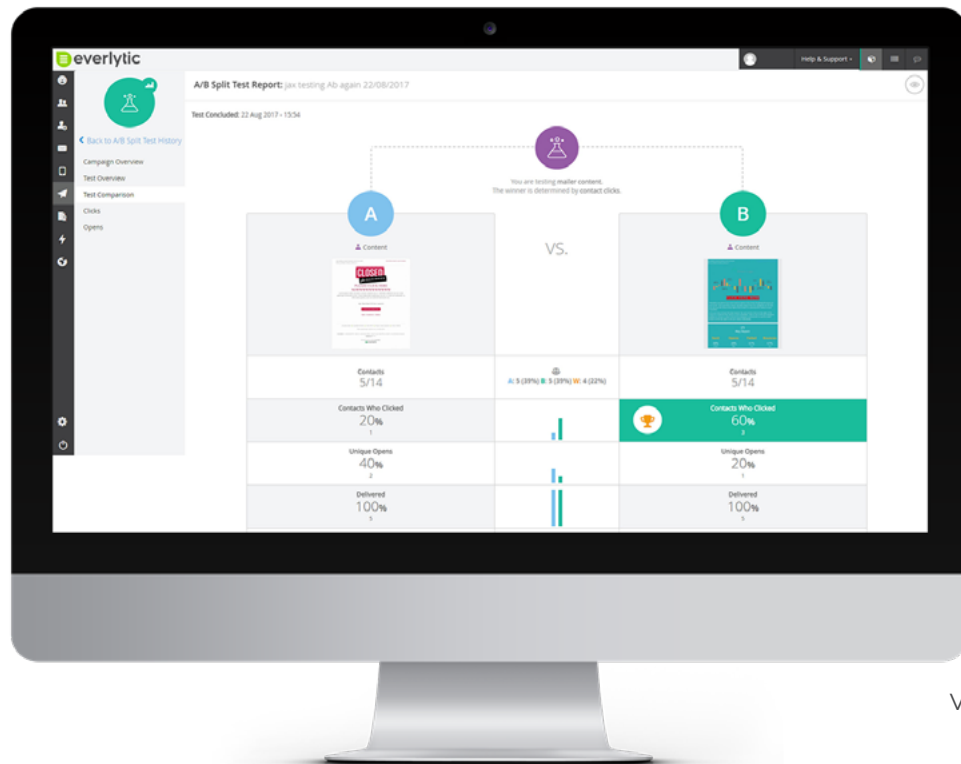
Email Body

Try writing your email in different styles to see which best suits your readers. You can try to evoke emotion through storytelling, or provide interesting facts and statistics to share with your readers. You can also add various types of special offers to see what your audience responds to more positively.

Design

A/B Split testing lets you change minor design elements such as placement of text, links, and images. Test different colour CTA buttons, position, or text as this could influence the click-through-rate.

It's always good to experiment with the layout of your emails. Just remember to test one element at a time to see what effect the change has.

"Changing the button text from second person ("get your free template") to the first person ("get my free template") resulted in a 90% increase in clicks."

- www.wealthywebwriter.com
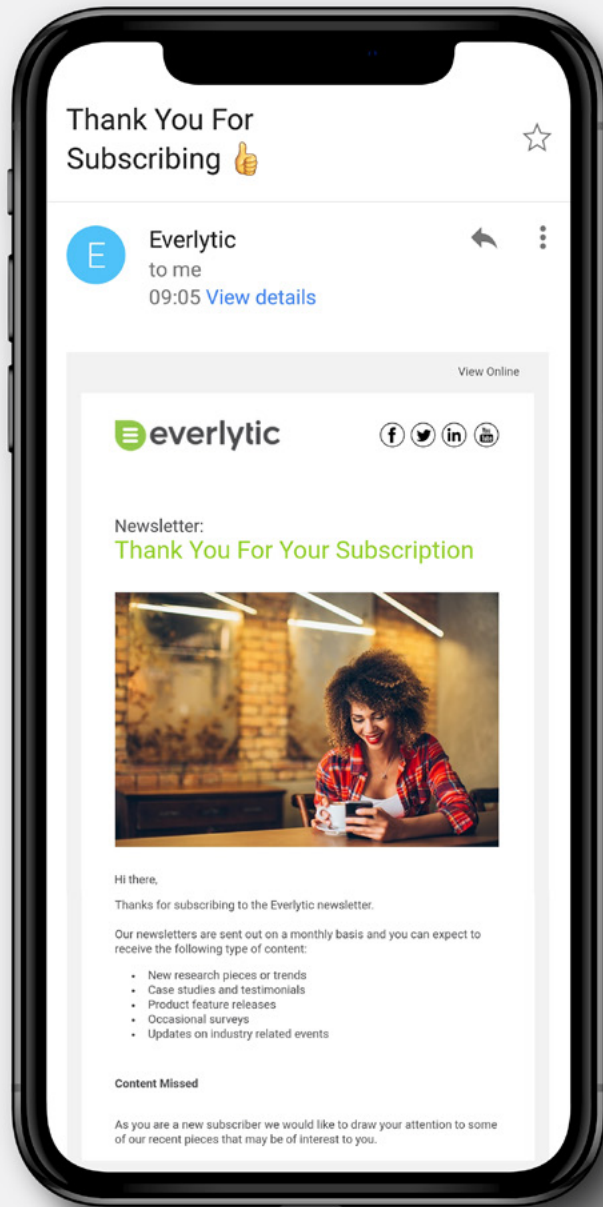
Email Marketing Guidelines (cont.)

Triggers and Automated Responses

Have you ever clicked the submit button on a website and received an automated email response? This is called a Trigger and they can be used in various ways, allowing specific emails or campaigns to start sending whenever a specific action occurs.

Here are some ways to use triggers:

Double Opt-In Message

It is best practice to confirm a subscription to your newsletter as soon as someone has signed up. You can create a custom confirmation message highlighting the benefits of confirming their opt-in.

Personal Welcome Email

This is the most common automated email, triggered when you sign up to a newsletter, or join a mailing list.

If you have collected the subscriber's name in the subscription form, use it to send a more personalised welcome email with short informative paragraphs.

Unique Read / Clicked Trigger

Some systems allow you to send an email message with each subscriber's unique read or click. There are various ways that you can use this to your advantage. For example, after a subscriber has read or clicked on a specific article, you could send them a follow-up message with similar items of interest.

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Reporting

Without a strong reporting system, you won't have insights into how your emails are preforming, and might be wasting valuable time and effort with your campaigns.

It's important that you're aware of industry averages and are striving to meet them. At the same time, you should refine your messages to try and improve your engagement rates.

Here are a few metrics that you can look at:
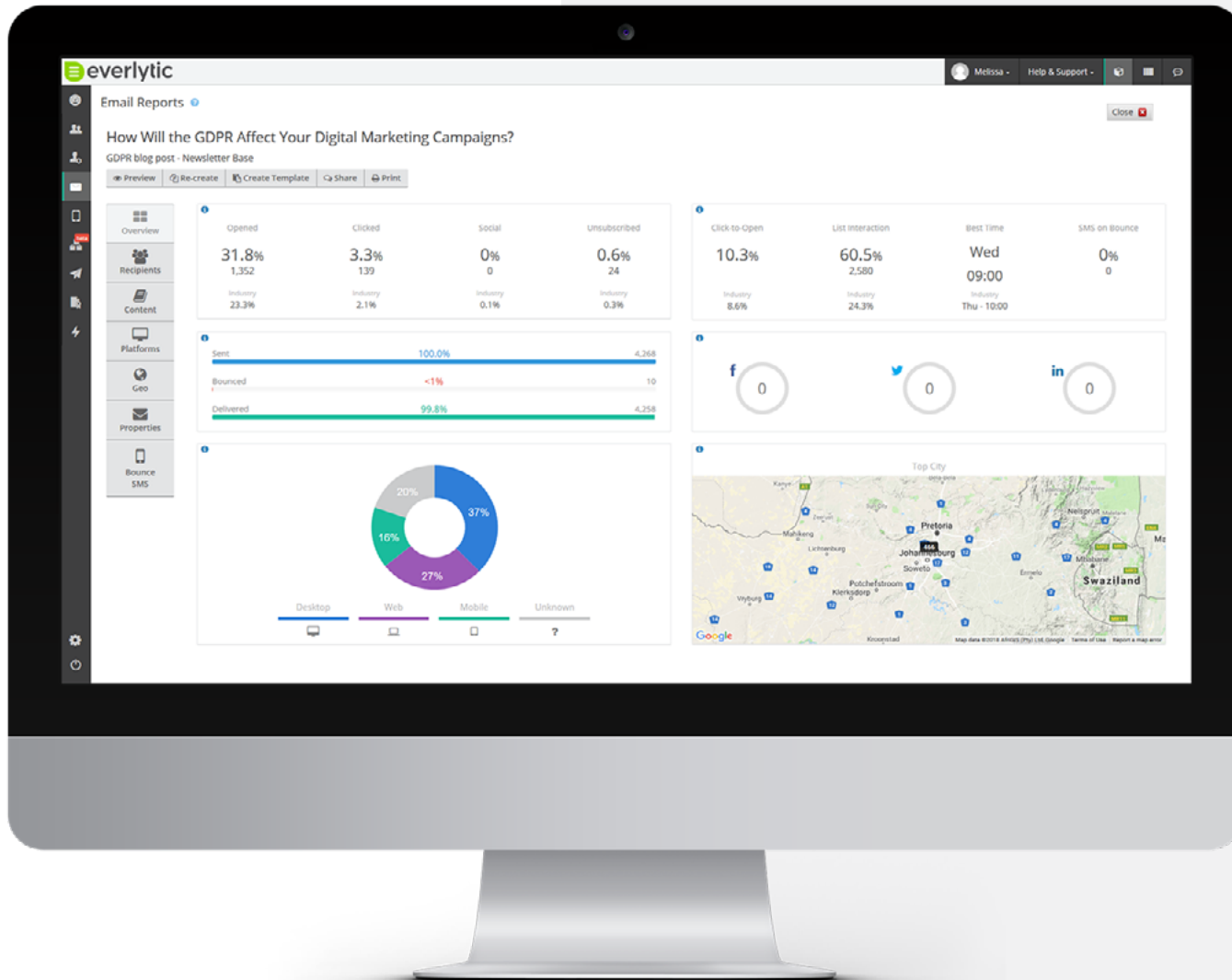
Subscriber Behaviour

use open rates, click-through rates and, content heat maps to get a better understanding of how your subscribers engage with your content.

Use A/B Split testing to test variations of content. The insights gained from the results may show you what works well for your audience. From there on you can adapt your email strategy for better results.

Contact reports and the contact rating track your subscribers behaviour to give you a consolidated picture of how engaged with your content each contact is.

Devices

Find out what devices and email clients your subscribers use to open your emails, and tailor your messages based on the most popular devices. This is especially important when considering responsive email design.

Geo Location

Use this report to find out where your customers are located as you may find new opportunities for your business in those locations.

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Reporting (cont.)

Improving Open Rates

While a lot of factors contribute to why someone will open your email, there are some key elements that play a big role. We've already covered points such as good subject lines and quality content in this document. Let's look at some other factors that go into improving open rates.

> **"Most top-quartile performers are achieving open rates between 24% and 30%."**
>
> *Read the Email Marketing Benchmarks Report*

24.65%

Email Authentication

This is done largely by the sending and receiving email servers. It involves certifying that every email coming into an inbox was sent by the domain it appears to have come from. There are various technical steps involved in this process, and Everlytic has an in-depth discussion of these processes in our Email Deliverability guide.

Reputation

Email service providers, like Google, also check the reputation of senders when receiving emails from them. A sender's reputation is made up of their blacklisting history, the volume of messages they send, and their bounce management policies.

Content Filtering

Finally, as we have already touched upon in this guide, every email's content is scanned for possible red flags. Images, copy, subject, and links are checked to ensure they meet guidelines for legitimate email.

Registered Domains

While your company has its own reputation, so does the domain your emails are sent from.

The domain is the @example.com part of your email address. Email servers check to make sure every email comes from the domain it claims to come from by checking the domain key in the email. Registered domains are classified by age and industry, and these factors also influence the domain's reputation.

Preview Panes

Some email clients have a built-in preview pane which allows readers to see what the content of the email is before deciding to open the email. Design your email with attention-grabbing content in the top of the email, so that readers using a preview pane will know why they should read it.

Reporting (cont.)

Click-Through Rates

Once a subscriber opens your mail, the next step in their journey may be to click on a link within the email. Whether this takes them to a landing page with more information, or leads them to an online store, there are certain things you can do to improve your CTR.

42%
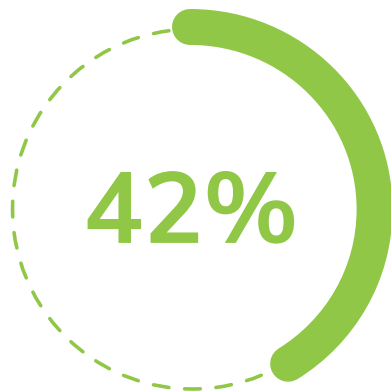
Buttons Vs Links

From a visual perspective, buttons stand out more than links. Links can be used as a secondary call to action should a recipient not download images.

Layout

Presentation is everything and a well-planned email layout can help readers digest all the information in your message. Remove distractions and make sure you only present relevant content.

You can also use layout to move the reader's eyes on a journey towards the CTA. Research by LookTracker revealed that this works best for drawing attention to a particular area in an email. The design places a wide eye-catching headline, draws attention down to smaller but informative text in the middle, and finally towards a CTA at the bottom. This creates an upside-down pyramid with your content.

Text

Long paragraphs of text can get boring and might lead to the subscriber deleting the email before they reach the CTA.

If you need more text, place your best copy first, then break the paragraph with a CTA. If the reader wants to continue reading, they will have that option while still being able to scroll back up to the button.

Images Are a Factor

Images say a lot about a brand or organisation. Too many images may distract from the email, so ensure the images you use are both appealing and not too overbearing.

You should always use Alt Text with your images. Alt Text is a description of the image or what the image represents which is displayed as placeholder text if the image doesn't load. This way the subscriber can still see what the image was about.

Vero analysed over 5000 campaigns. They found that campaigns with images had a 42% higher CTR than campaigns without images.

- www.neilpatel.com

Reporting (cont.)

Unsubscribe Rates

Every email marketer fears the dreaded unsubscribe, as one less subscriber means one less person to nurture. However, providing an easy and visible way for the audience to unsubscribe not only keeps your brand integrity high, but also lets you focus on subscribers who are genuinely interested in your brand.

If you start getting unsubscribes after every message and in large quantities, then you should examine your campaigns. You may have to re-establish yourself and your offers, check your sending frequency, segment your list, or perhaps tweak your content strategy to align more with the type of content your subscribers want to receive.

Feedback is Important

When faced with an unsubscribe, you have the opportunity to learn why the contact wants to leave your mailing list. Ask for feedback through a simple form or a comment box. Don't make it a requirement but provide the opportunity.

Offer an Alternative

When a contact unsubscribes, it doesn't mean they are not interested in your content. It may be what you're currently sending them isn't what they want. If you have a preference centre, your subscribers can adjust their subscriptions without unsubscribing completely.

It may also be a sending frequency issue. Perhaps they feel bombarded by daily emails. Give them the option of choosing how often they want to receive your emails. Try to get a better understanding of the type of content they wish to receive and adjust accordingly.

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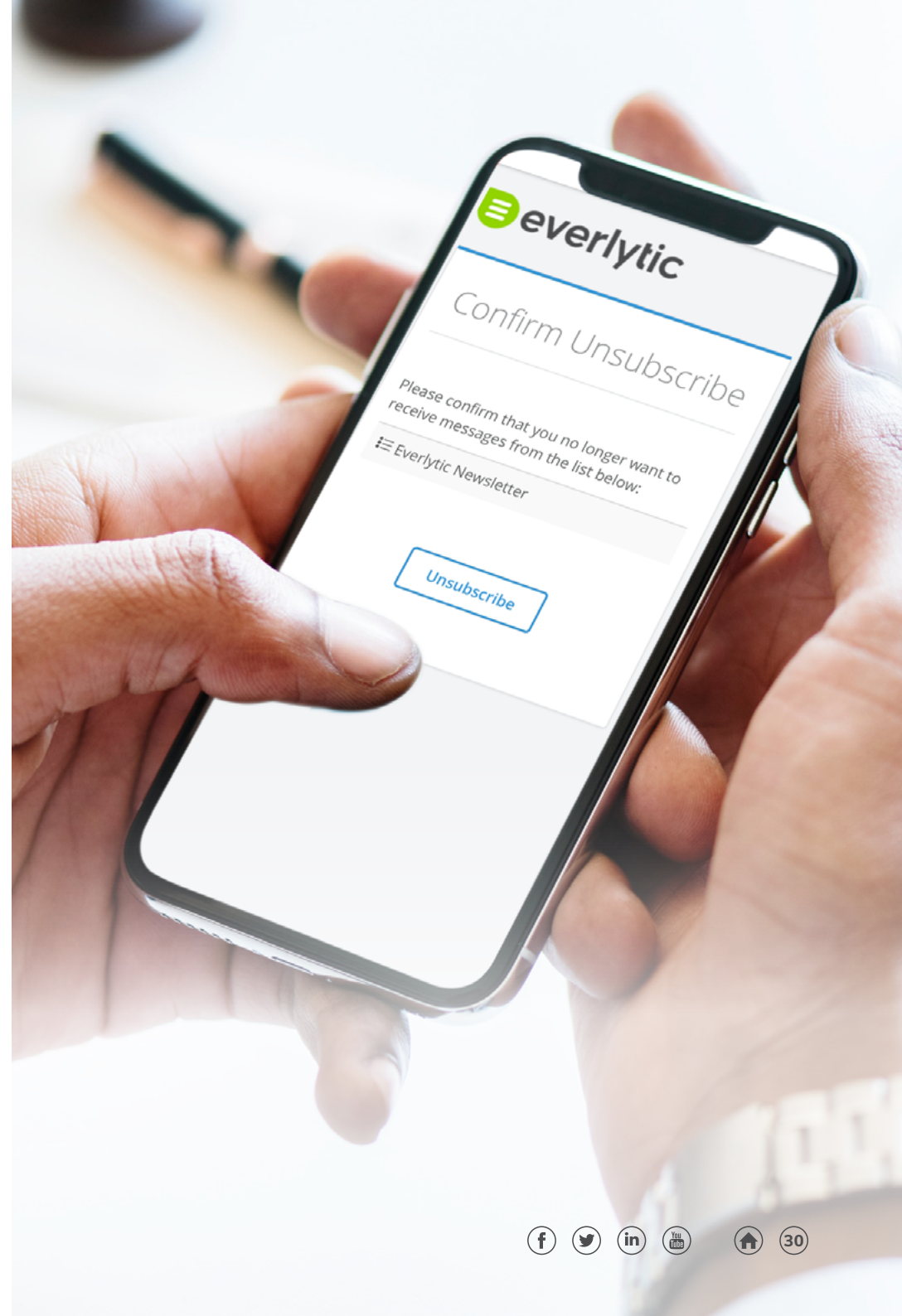
Reporting (cont.)

Bounces

A bounced email is an undelivered message sent to a recipient and returned by the email server. There are two types of bounces that occur; a soft bounce and a hard bounce. The best way to lower your bounces is by making sure the email addresses you have are valid, that you maintain a clean list, and you use double opt-in for new subscribers.

Soft Bounce

A soft bounce is a temporary error which occurs when an email is accepted by the recipient's mail server but isn't delivered to their specific mail box. Once the mail server receives the message, it checks that the email address exists on the system, and whether that mailbox is allowed to receive mails.

Reasons for a Soft Bounce

If your email has bounced, you'll receive an email notification with a reason for the bounce. Since the bounce is temporary, you don't need to be too concerned. Here are some reasons for a soft bounce:

- The recipient's mailbox is full. If your contact has too many emails in their inbox, your email will not be delivered.

- The server is temporarily unavailable.

- Your message is too large, or you may have attached images that exceed the recipient's mail server limits. Some servers have email size policies and mails will not be allowed through if they exceed this size.

Most ESPs will keep trying to deliver the email until a pre-defined cut-off is reached. This cut-off can be specified per server.

Hard Bounce

A hard bounce is when the message is not delivered at all due to a permanent error. The email is returned without being accepted by the recipient's mail server.

Reasons for a Hard Bounce:

Hard bounces are usually a reason for some concern and should be investigated. For most hard-bounced emails, it is better to remove the subscriber from your list.

Here are reasons why a hard bounce occurs:

- The recipient's email address does not exist.

- The recipient's domain does not exist.

Most ESPs will switch off an email address that returns a hard bounce, as bounces can negatively impact your reputation if you don't respond to them appropriately.

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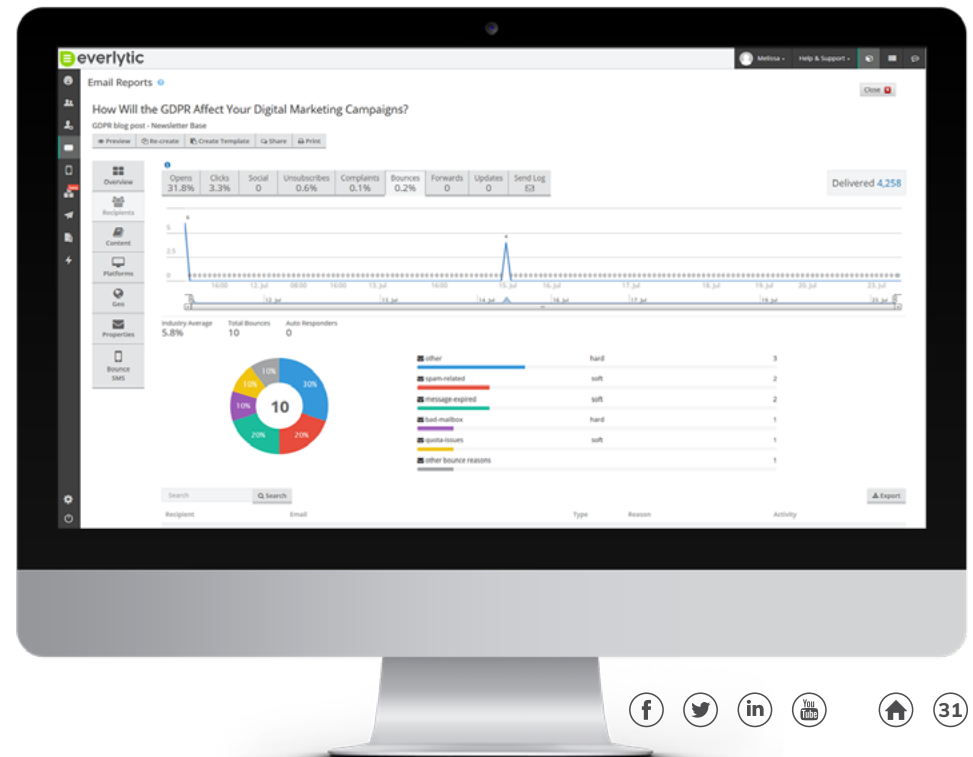
Email Marketing Checklist

We've covered a lot of ground in this guide, with lots of key points to consider. Here's an email-marketing checklist you can refer to during your email creation.

Planning

- Email marketing goals and objectives defined
- Target audience determined
- Database / List segmentation completed
- Single email or ongoing campaign decided
- Content and CTA planned

Subject Line

- Entices reader to open email
- Is in between 61-70 characters long
- Creates a sense of urgency
- Showcases the value of the email
- Includes an Emoji (only if relevant and in line with your brand / market)

Email Creation

- Is mobile responsive
- Content is valuable and addresses a need
- Personalisation added
- Image-to-text ratio considered
- Image alt-text added
- Spelling and grammar checked
- Spam words avoided
- Unsubscribe link added
- Call-to-action clear and punchy
- Hyperlinked buttons and images
- NO images have been embedded
- Font is an email safe font
- SMS-to-email copy set up
- A/B testing set up: (Remember to test one thing at a time)
    - Subject line
    - Design
    - Email body

Post Design

- Email compatibility checked across browsers and devices
- Email spam tests completed
- Database is correct and any necessary filters have been applied
- Scheduled date and time set up
- All links tested
- Test sent
- Email sent/scheduled

Reporting

- Reports have been run to assess email / campaign performance:
    - Open rate
    - Click-through rate
    - Devices used
    - Unsubscribe rate
    - Social shares
    - SMS on bounce
    - Heatmaps
    - Geo location

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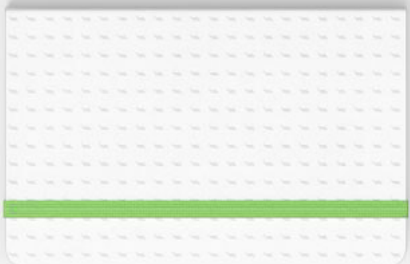
Conclusion

There are many aspects to consider when planning your email marketing strategy. We have taken you through some of the basics, as well as some of the trends, and tips on what to consider when creating content.

Using a system like Everlytic gives you the tools to be more strategic with your communications, allowing you to produce emails that form stronger bonds with your customers, nurture your prospects through the buyers' cycle, and target specific individuals based on their interests and needs.

The recipe for success is in sending the right message to the right person at the right time.