

IS EMAIL MARKETING DEAD OR STILL KICKING?

Brandi Musgrave

Technologies have a way of quickly gaining popularity then dwindling as the novelty wears off; however, exceptional technologies will ultimately stabilize and continue for the long term.

Email is one such technology.

When the first mass email was sent to 400 recipients in 1978¹, no one could have predicted how this form of communication would eventually change the face of marketing. The birth of the commercial Internet in 1991 and of Hotmail in 1996² truly transformed how companies could communicate efficiently and cost-effectively via this new form of direct marketing. Email was a hot commodity, but it got put in the hot seat during the 2000s when “spam” emails began diluting the legitimate messages. At this time many marketers believed that the email marketing trend had run its course.

However, anti-spam laws and the power to send segmented, targeted, and behavioral-triggered emails have kept this medium not just an indulgence but rather a necessity if you want to grow your practice.

HOOKED ON EMAIL

What is one of the first things you do when you log on to your computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone? Chances are you check your email. Here are some powerful stats to show that email is still alive and kicking:

- 247 billion emails are sent every day.³
- There are more than 3.2 billion email accounts.⁴
- Subscribers receive, on average, 416 commercial messages each month.⁵
- 95% of online consumers use email.⁶
- 91% of consumers reported checking their email at least once a day.⁷
- 77% of consumers prefer to receive permission-based marketing communications through email.⁸
- There will be an estimated 236.8 million United States email users by 2017.⁹

ROI OF 4,300%

Experts say that email marketing brings an ROI of 4,300%.¹⁰

However, not all email marketing is designed—or written—equally well. If your messages fall flat, you will get buried in inboxes and your ROI will suffer. While not every email campaign will produce such outstanding ROI results, email marketing can be highly effective for your practice if you observe these tips:

- **Make your emails mobile-friendly;** 48% of emails are opened on smart phones.¹¹ If the recipient has to scroll around and resize to read your message, your email will quickly move into the “deleted” file.
- **Use strong, short subject lines** to make your email stand out

from the barrage of emails people receive every day. Hit your patients’ “hot” buttons when writing subject lines.

- **Put the most important information first:** in the headline or in the first few sentences of the email.
- **Include a call-to-action,** such as a free online self-evaluation or a monetary savings off one of your services. Give your recipients a reason to take another step with your practice (not just “call now”). Make sure that the buttons or links you provide in the email direct the recipient to a specific landing page with your offer, rather than the home page of your website. You will have a much greater response rate if it is easy to “collect” the offer.
- **Test delivery days and times.** There is no “perfect” time to send email messages. For some target audiences early weekday mornings might be best; for others it might be weekend evenings.
- **Provide something valuable.** This can range from educational information to a free offer... and everything in-between. Know your audience to know what will trigger their response.
- **Provide an opt-out option.** Including an easy way to unsubscribe from your future emails is the law. Respect the wishes of your email recipients.

- **Keep the content short.** The purpose of an email is to pique interest in your services and encourage patients to contact your office...not to act as an extension of your website.
- **Proofread emails carefully,** including the subject line. Emails with grammatical or spelling errors reflect poorly on your practice.
- **Target your audience.** Whether you send emails to your internal database or purchase an outside list, make sure the message you are sending will “speak” to the recipients.
- **Track and edit.** Gauge the effectiveness of every email by tracking the open rate and the click-through rate. Aim for 18–20% open rates and 8–10% click-through rates. If you are getting less than positive results, change your tactics. Know when to cut the cord on your own favorite messages or email designs.

MORE THAN EMAIL: ONLINE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGER

When it comes to elective surgery, time is on your patients’ side. It can take some people up to two years to proceed with an elective surgery. This is the opportunity to use “drip” email marketing to keep your practice top of mind by providing educational emails for prospects in every step of their decision-making process. You want to establish your practice as a trustworthy source of information so you become the logical choice when it comes to elective surgery.

A series of automated emails can be designed to communicate with prospects who have

- Expressed interest in your services
- Scheduled a consultation

- Had successful surgery
- And more

GO SOCIAL WITH EMAILS

Email sharing is extremely important to any digital marketing campaign. Include social sharing buttons at the top of your messages so your emails can have a greater reach at no extra cost to you. When the recipient clicks the share button, have the social post populated with interesting copy and a shortened link.

BRAND YOUR PRACTICE ON THE GO

Mobile devices now allow you to reach potential patients when they are on the go. They will use any form of downtime they can muster to read your enticing messages and take action. When used correctly, email marketing is still extremely effective in establishing your brand among prospective patients and strengthening your brand with existing patients.

The bottom line is that email marketing can still have a positive impact on your practice’s bottom line. **AE**



Brandi Musgrave (brandi@fast-trackmarketing.com; 303-447-9192) is the business development director at Fast Track Marketing in Broomfield, Colo.

NOTES

^{1,2}Lee, G. (2013, May 24). The evolution of email marketing [infographic]. *Smart Insights*. <http://www.smartinsights.com/email-marketing/email-communications-strategy/email-marketing-evolution/>.

^{3,5,6,7,9}Lacy, K. (2013, Aug. 14). 50 email marketing tips and stats for 2014. SalesForce. <http://www.exacttarget.com/blog/50-email-marketing-tips-and-stats-for-2014/>.

⁴Malamut, C. (2014, May 20). 15 Statistics that prove email marketing is (still) not

dead in 2014. *Email Marketing Software*. <http://blog.capterra.com/statistics-email-marketing-not-dead/>

⁸Beard, N. (N.d.) How to use email marketing to engage and convert customers. *Top Rank Online Marketing*. <http://www.toprankblog.com/2013/09/how-to-use-email-marketing-to-engage-convert-customers/>.

¹⁰Corrigan, J. (2014, April 10). An increased ROI of 4,300%? It’s true and possible with email marketing. Direct Marketing Association. <http://www.searchenginejournal.com/increased-roi-4300-true-possible-email-marketing/96537/>. Aug. 2013.

¹¹Movable Ink. (2014, Nov. 18). U.S. consumer device preference report: Q3 2014: Different verticals, different story. *Movable Ink*. <http://blog.movableink.com/q3-2014-us-consumer-device-preference-report/>.

IN A BLINK

- 77% of consumers prefer to receive permission-based marketing communications through email.
- Make your emails mobile-friendly: 48% of emails are opened on smartphones.
- Use “drip” email marketing to keep your practice top of mind.



When used correctly, email marketing is still extremely effective in establishing your brand among prospective patients and strengthening your brand with existing patients.