



Email Marketing, Step 2: Success-Focused Content

An ADBASE White Paper for professional photographers and illustrators.

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Abstract

This is the second of a series of three whitepapers exploring every aspect of planning, creating and testing an email marketing campaign.

As we pointed out in the first of the series, email is a highly effective, cost-efficient way for creative professionals to maintain and grow their client base.

Since this technique is now very popular among artists worldwide, your email will come in accompanied by many competitor emails and will struggle to rise above the crowd! Strong visual and written content is now more crucial to success than ever before. Don't miss an opportunity to reach your audience, and incite readers to respond in ways that will benefit your business.

Part 1: The Look

Wring the Max from Each Design Decision

Your images have to work overtime for you in your promotional email. Since you work in a visual profession, your images are *the* key invitation for a reader to click through to your website, and then perform the all-important task of filing your email or bookmarking your website for future reference. It bears emphasizing here, that 'click-throughs' are the first stage of success for any email campaign. Get one, and you've got a real connection to your recipient, filled with potential.

Here are the ground-rules for choosing and formatting visuals:

- ❖ To market you effectively, your visuals should represent the kind of work you do best, or (if you are re-branding' or trying to switch your focus) the kind of work you would like to be hired to do, by your recipient.
- ❖ Pick quality over quantity; give the image the space it needs to work really hard for you.
- ❖ HTML-based email provides strong visual impact – but you will miss opportunities if you do not provide an alternate, plain-text version for readers who can't (or won't) receive HTML emails. *ADBASE Emailer*, and other ESPs (Email Service Providers) often provide the functionality to automatically send plain-text emails when HTML versions are undeliverable. Make sure this is available from whichever platform you use to send your email. That way, you can be sure the buyers you have targeted are going to have the easiest possible access to your promotion.
- ❖ Increasingly, email programs are removing the ability to see images within HTML emails. Because your emails undoubtedly contain photos or graphics, you'll want to adapt your design accordingly. A general point about the layout of your email: keep it 'above the fold'. The 'fold' is what the recipient can see in their preview pane

without having to scroll down at all. A 2008 study cited by research firm *MarketingSherpa* says that a whopping 80% of at-work email users are looking at Outlook, which has a preview pane. Clearly *the pane is your prime real estate!* Put all your key links, calls to action, and images in this area for maximum response. After all, you might be catching your reader with a coffee in hand, or on the phone, or scrolling through 10 other messages they've already designated 'non essential'!

- ❖ The overall file should be small enough to open instantly. For this reason, ADBASE Emailerv2 limits total size of all images to 500kb to ensure that there are no delays with the email opening.
- ❖ Buyers seem to have no preference for a template email design vs. a custom-designed email (probably because if the template is high quality, it's hard to tell the difference!). ADBASE Emailer provides templates as well as the ability to upload your own raw HTML so you can use either according to your comfort level.
- ❖ There is no fixed rule about the number of images you should use. Make your choice dependent on the services you're selling and who you're selling to. An ad agency might prefer to see one powerful, engaging image but a stock company may prefer a range. Don't underestimate the galvanizing '*click me!*' power of one, strong image: but if you stick to one, make sure it's relevant (don't send a food image to a fashion buyer!). If you show multiple images, pick by impact and don't be tempted to throw in a smorgasbord of all your styles. ADBASE Emailer allows for 1-6 featured images and multiple layouts.
- ❖ It is a mistake to recycle the same design more than a couple of times. People will become used to seeing it and it'll start to feel like old news. Change your email design every quarter or so to keep your audience interested and engaged. Your open rates will reflect this extra effort.

Part 2: The Words

Make your Subject Line Count BIG

Your subject line is the key to achieving the best open rate: the better your copy, the higher your open rates will be.

Hard truth: a great subject line is no picnic to write! Copywriters and marketing managers generally advocate tailoring subject line length to the intent of the email, while keeping things as concise as possible. Here are some key elements to a hard-working, results-getting subject line:

- ❖ It should be brief, yet interesting and memorable. Communicate the benefit of opening the email: what is inside that your prospect will want to see? Have you just starting shooting digital? Finished a new campaign? Been published in a magazine? By including a benefit, you will induce more people to open your email.

- ❖ If it's a quick response you're looking for, keep the line under 35 characters and centre it on your call to action (read on for info about CTA's!)
- ❖ If you also intend to convey complicated content or foster long-term loyalty, you can afford to write a slightly longer subject line. (Interesting finding: at the recent MediaPost Email Insider's Summit, presenter Alchemy Worx floated their theory that 50 and 80-character subject lines produce good open rates, but an in-between length of 60 or 70 characters...*not so good!*)
- ❖ Bear in mind that your reader's email system might truncate your subject line to 45 characters. Although it's mostly non-pro email packages like Hotmail that do this, it might be a consideration (and under 45 characters is good discipline anyway!).
- ❖ If your readership is likely to be opening your email on a mobile phone or PDA, keep the subject line as short as possible; these devices usually truncate subject lines.
- ❖ Always include your company name. Every time. This will allow you to build recognition with your recipients, making them more likely to open your email – and helps buyers file and retrieve your emails easily, for that all-important second look, down the road.

A very common subject line format is: "New Work from John Smith Illustration". While it is positive that the company name is included, John is not really telling his potential client what they can expect to see should they open his email. Take it further: try "New Puma Campaign from John Smith Photography" or "Color Explosion from Jane Doe Illustrations".

Note: Check out the next and final whitepaper in this series, for important insight into testing your email. Testing different lengths of subject line is an excellent idea, since the jury's still out on optimal word length and it's likely that you are best off trying a few lengths and going with what works for YOU

Once they've opened...get them Acting!

Next to the subject line, the 'call to action' (CTA copywriter-speak!) is the most important piece of copy you will craft for your emails. A CTA is creative that stimulates the behavior you desire from your potential customer. This optimal response could be a click-through to learn more about a product, hiring you, or taking a survey. A dynamic CTA will have a powerful effect on your sales, so you should take the time to craft the words that inspire buyers to view your portfolio or to call you for a job...or any other desired response. Not only that, but you should also consider *where* to place the call and whether you should go with text or a graphic.

Images or Plain Copy?

A picture is worth a thousand words. But sometimes words are all you have, because HTML is going to block your email. Copy that works in your HTML version isn't necessarily going to be as effective when it comes to simple plain-text, as you won't have embedded images to pique your recipient's interest or give context. Your challenge in this case is to introduce yourself to your prospective clients, without any help from your images. For HTML-free emails, use different copy. Keep it short, snappy and memorable; be sure to include your company name and a brief description of what you specialize in. Because you want buyers to check out the work on your website or online portfolio, make sure you have that link clearly in the body of your plain-text, and include an imaginative call to action to really 'up' your click-through rate.

The All-Important 'From' Line

The 'From' line is the sender's name and it appears in any email. It is essential that you be consistent with this name, so those on your email list will recognize and trust email from you. It is recommended that you include your brand in your 'From' name, and that once you have decided on one, you stick with it.

Part 3: Comply with the Rules and Regulations

Most ESPs, including *ADBASE Mailer*, are designed to include all the components necessary to make your emails compliant with CAN-SPAM regulations - the laws governing email marketing in the United States. For those of you who are creating and sending your own emails, make sure you include the following items:

- ❖ A visible and functioning opt-out clause
- ❖ An accurate 'From' line
- ❖ A relevant subject line that accurately describes the contents of the email
- ❖ A legitimate physical address - PO boxes are not acceptable.

Afterword

75% of all art and photography buyers report that they save information from promotional emails they like. Whether it's bookmarking your site, printing and filing your email or archiving it in a 'new talent' folder on their email client, achieving this archiving of your details is the underlying goal of any promotional email. By following the protocols described in this whitepaper and its predecessor *Email Marketing: Find and Speak to The Right Audience*

(http://www.adbase.com/pdf/whitepaper_em1.pdf) you will ensure the best results for your email marketing efforts.

About ADBASE Inc

Now celebrating their 11th anniversary, ADBASE is based upon an ever-expanding and constantly updated database of thousands of creative service buyers. Providing services to thousands of creative professionals worldwide, ADBASE subscribers rely on the accuracy of ADBASE data for the foundation of their self-promotion. As a photographer or illustrator looking to promote your business, ADBASE is your complete solution. They maintain the industry's largest North American database of creative buyers, with contact details for over 45,000 art buyers, art directors, photo editors and more. Further streamline your marketing efforts with the brand-new ADBASE Emailer v2, the industry's most sophisticated email engine.

If you would like more information on this whitepaper, or any of our products and services, please feel free to call or email us.

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Related Materials

Whitepaper:

Email Marketing: Find and Speak to The Right Audience
http://www.adbase.com/pdf/whitepaper_em1.pdf

Webcast:

Email Marketing: What Buyers Really Want
<http://www.brainshark.com/adbase/emailmarketing>

Articles:

Email Testing: Your Guide to Better Response Rates
http://www.adbase.com/Insight/insight0408_responserates?utm_source=Insight_Whitepaper_PDFs&utm_medium=whitepaper&utm_content=feature_article_0408&utm_campaign=Insight_Whitepaper_PDFs

Email Best Practices: What Artists Need To Know
http://www.adbase.com/Insight/insight0208_emailpractices?utm_source=Insight_Whitepaper_PDFs&utm_medium=whitepaper&utm_content=feature_article_0208&utm_campaign=Insight_Whitepaper_PDFs

Email Marketing: Standing Out From The Crowd
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