

TotalRetail

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TOP 10

EMAIL BEST PRACTICES FOR RETAILERS

TOTAL RETAIL'S | **TOP 10 SERIES**
10 tips in less than 10 minutes

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EMAIL BEST PRACTICES FOR RETAILERS

EMAIL MARKETING IS A WORKHORSE FOR RETAIL ORGANIZATIONS, WHICH REGULARLY USE THE CHANNEL TO CREATE A MORE UNIFIED BRAND EXPERIENCE, BETTER UNDERSTAND THE BROWSING AND BUYING BEHAVIORS OF THEIR CUSTOMERS, ACQUIRE NEW CUSTOMERS AND INTERACT WITH EXISTING ONES ON AN ONGOING BASIS. HERE'S A LOOK AT 10 EMAIL MARKETING BEST PRACTICES CULLED FROM THE PAGES — AND WEB PAGES — OF *TOTAL RETAIL* AND *TOTAL RETAIL REPORT*. KEEP THESE TIPS IN MIND WHEN CRAFTING AN EMAIL MARKETING STRATEGY FOR YOUR RETAIL BUSINESS.

1. Employ segmentation regularly to be more relevant. Some emails should reach your entire audience, while others will perform better when targeted to specific subgroups of your subscribers. The top attributes used by B-to-C marketers for segmentation are demographic, geographic and behavioral data. Behavioral data identifies product categories and offers that recipients click on regularly from your emails.

2. Create a welcome program. Offer new subscribers more than just a hello. For example, provide a discount on their next purchase or use what you know about them via interests reported at sign-up and/or items purchased if the opt-in was part of the checkout process to personalize your email with images or product offerings.

3. Test subject lines at least twice a month. You know subject lines drive open rates. Your primary mission is to get more subscribers to open your message. If they don't open, they can't engage. Some email service providers (ESPs) have a feature that allows you to set up a subject line test. You can define the test cells, whether opens or clicks are your success metrics, and the number of hours to run the test. The ESP can then automatically send the winning subject line to the balance of your list after the initial time frame. If your ESP doesn't offer this feature, it's relatively easy to set up test cells and make your own determination of the winner. Commit to doing this regularly.

4. Use a marketing "snippet" in the pre-header. A snippet plays off the subject line and presents readers with additional appealing details. Why should you do this? Almost half your audience reading your emails on a desktop computer may use the preview feature, thus only seeing part of the email. A snippet may convince them to open and act on your email. For recipients reading your email on a mobile device, if your subject line is relatively short, they'll also be able to see additional copy from the top of the email.

5. Include a call to action in every email. Always give subscribers an option to buy. Even though you can make some assumptions about how close a prospect is to making a buying decision based on how they learned about your business, people can surprise you. Include a strong call to action in every email so you never leave an opportunity on the table.

6. **Use browse retargeting.** Smart retailers are identifying shoppers that don't put items in their cart, using triggered emails to reach out to them as soon as they leave your site. These emails feature product offerings related to what they were browsing. Automate this process and you get high conversion rates at a low ongoing cost.

7. **Use order confirmations to drive future sales.** You know what the email subscriber bought, so use this information to recommend other products they might like right in the order confirmation email. Once the rules are in place and the automation set up, it's an ongoing tool for driving additional sales and revenue.

8. **Use authentication.** By identifying you are who you say you are, authentication essentially increases the odds that your email is delivered to a primary inbox and not to a bulk folder. Internet service providers (ISPs) use authentication to determine whether a sender is legitimate. There are four

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authentication systems currently in place: Sender Policy Framework (SPF), Sender ID, Domain Keys, and DomainKeys Identified Mail (DKIM). Different ISPs will recognize some or all systems, so ask your ESP what authentication systems it supports.

9. **Establish an A/B email testing program.** For an A/B email testing program to be efficient, it's critical to create an optimal campaign as the benchmark control message; otherwise, testing without comparisons is a waste of time. Establish a set time frame to measure the success of the control message, and use that time frame for all additional minor changes.

In addition, before starting an A/B testing program, split customer lists into random sets to effectively test campaigns to all audiences, rather than a specific type of customer. Once split, test lists should remain as such to continue effective testing on different aspects of email communications.

10. **Create email campaigns with mobile users in mind.** More than half of all email opens now occur on mobile devices. This means it's imperative to create your email campaigns with mobile users in mind. Two key design elements to keep in mind include embedding calls to action that are simple to follow as well as using responsive design to allow consumers to easily interact with email content — and thereby increase engagement.