WHAT'S WORKING IN EMAIL MARKETING?

ORGANIZATIONS RELY ON CLICKS & PERSONALIZATION TO DRIVE CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

SPONSORED BY

validity | **vidyard®**

Introduction

Marketers can never go wrong with the classics — with an **average ROI rate of 38:1**, email marketing remains a staple for B2B organizations. When coupled with the influx of various software and solutions that automate the more mundane aspects of the strategy, modern email marketers are shifting their focus to harnessing intent data and utilizing new measurement metrics to nurture leads.

As customization, personalization and relevance move to the forefront of email campaigns, many companies are focusing on reaching smaller audiences with highly targeted sends.

"'Spray-and-pray' initiatives don't work anymore; yet, people still play that numbers game today," said Majda Anwar, Director of Marketing for revenue marketing agency **The Pedowitz Group**. "You can only do so much at scale without insights into your target audience, so it's valuable when your email is to a micro-targeted audience. Email marketing also doesn't have to be so formal — formal emails are just part of the white noise. Being a little informal with GIFs and videos in the body copy or emojis in your headlines captures attention."

Although **46% of recipients** prefer interactive/video content, email marketing is not just about creativity; it's also about strategy. Let's not forget about Apple's Mail Privacy Protection (MPP), the tech giant's new measure that automatically downloads and opens all emails via a proxy server. As the inaccuracy of open rates continues to grow, Anwar explained that modern marketers are relying on click-through rates (CTR) to measure the success of their email campaigns — something **45% of marketers** are already leveraging.

However, CTR measurement only works if messaging is engaging and highly relevant. Throughout this report, we'll examine the key components of email campaigns that make B2B buyers "click" and discuss the strategies that go into accurate personalization and ensure databases remain up to date.

Specific topics of discussion include:

- An in-depth look at the new measurement landscape for email marketing;
- The content strategies successful B2B companies are leveraging to create stand-out campaigns that promote further brand interaction;
- How to refine databases and keep target lists accurate; and
- Tips and tricks into creating compelling content.

"Open rates haven't been reliable for some time now, so it's all about that click-through and getting recipients to your site, downloading content and engaging with it."

MAJDA ANWAR, THE PEDOWITZ GROUP

Grappling With Changing Privacy Restrictions To Refine Targeting

Although email marketing will emerge relatively unscathed from the phase-out of third-party cookies, a just-as-frightening contender entered the ring: Apple's MPP. Released as part of Apple's iOS 15 update on Sept. 20, MPP is designed to promote cyber security by downloading and opening all emails on a proxy server. Ultimately, MPP's goal is to hide the recipient's IP address to prevent activity tracking.

While it's only impacting users who open their emails through Apple Mail, the experts predicted that Google and Microsoft will likely follow suit — rendering open rate measurement more obsolete than it was before.

"While MPP is new, these types of 'spam catchers' that automatically open and read emails aren't — they've been used by larger enterprises for years," said Anwar. "Open rates haven't been reliable for some time now, so it's all about that click-through and getting recipients to your site, downloading content and engaging with it. Once they're on your site, you can create that first-party cookie, which is where the metric and measurement should be focused."

That first-party cookie data is a powerhouse collection method, as it informs everything from content consumed (and how many times someone returned to it) to helping identify other assets that would resonate with the target — something Bret Smith, Founder and President of marketing agency **HIPB2B**, refers to as "in-house intent data."

However, Smith explained that in-house intent databases are somewhat unreliable considering how quickly and suddenly information decays, especially in the midst of the "Great Resignation." An organization might have the deliverable email address for Person A who works at Company A, but they might not realize that the same individual recently joined the Company B team and received all new contact information.

Smith explained that while most organizations will go out and buy new data to compensate for the decay, HIPB2B "follows" contacts to keep track of them throughout their professional careers. While the formula for following success is a "trade secret," Smith did provide some insight into the components of HIPB2B's martech stack.

HIPB2B's "following" method features a combination of a CRM (such as HubSpot or Marketo), email service provider (such as MailChimp) and an in-house, cloud-based marketing automation system.

"You need a standardized taxonomy and a way to bring data in from other channels," said Smith. "You have to unify data from LinkedIn, display ads and social media, and then combine all that information into a unified contact record with lead engagement details."

> "You have to unify data from LinkedIn, display ads and social media, and then combine all that information into a unified contact record with lead engagement details."

BRET SMITH, HIPB2B

How Hickory Farms Achieved A Sender's Score Of 99

Hickory Farms is a gourmet meat and cheese company on a mission to bring people together through effortless gifting. Today, the company's gourmet gift baskets can be found online and in a variety of pop-up stores and kiosks across the U.S.

As a seasonal business, Hickory Farms needed a way to maintain high email engagement and deliverability year-round.

The Challenge: Struggling To Maintain Deliverability In A Largely Seasonal Business

Email is among the top revenue-driving channels at Hickory Farms, especially during the busy holiday season. The company earns a significant portion of its annual revenue during the last six weeks of the year.

But dwindling engagement during the off-season caused deliverability issues during the critical selling period. Despite their loyal customer base, Hickory Farms also faced competition for attention in crowded subscriber inboxes, since most retailers increased their email marketing activity during Covid-19.

The launch of MPP in September only amplified the company's normal seasonal challenges. The timing of the rollout made it difficult to determine whether increased engagement was driven by the new feature or the return of seasonal traffic.

As the holidays approached, Hickory Farms needed a solution that would help them execute better email campaigns and maintain year-round engagement with less administrative effort.

validity

The Solution: Validity's Everest Email Success Platform, Sender Certification & Expert Support

Hickory Farms chose Validity's Everest email success platform and started the onboarding process just as its peak sales season hit. With support from its dedicated customer success manager, they saw results almost immediately.

Partnering with Validity meant Hickory Farms could leverage key platform features, including:

- Everest's easy-to-use dashboard;

- Custom alerts that provided immediate notification of deliverability issues;

- Validity's exclusive Sender Certification program, which gave Hickory Farms priority status with leading mailbox providers and spam filtering vendors worldwide;

- Everest's direct integration with Salesforce Marketing Cloud;

- Design testing that ensured every message rendered exactly as expected across every device and top mailbox provider;

- Everest List Validation, which identified invalid or questionable email addresses so the company could send from a clean list every time;

- Everest Engagement Analytics, which allowed for easy segmentation of Apple Mail users so Hickory Farms could track changes in performance metrics caused by MPP;

- Validity's BIMI Certificates offering, which Hickory Farms leveraged to implement Brand Indicators for Message Identification (BIMI) and capture the attention of their brand loyalists in the inbox; and

- Everest View Time Optimization by Yahoo, which delivered Hickory Farms' emails to top inbox positions the moment mailbox users are active.

Using the Everest platform, Hickory Farms built out new campaigns throughout the year, including on Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Halloween. These campaigns improved audience engagement and overall deliverability, even beyond the peak holiday season.

With help from Validity, Hickory Farms also implemented a deliberate segmentation strategy to avoid deliverability issues. In addition to boosting send volume as the holidays approach, they now send to active subscribers first and schedule sends to less-engaged segments later.

validity

The Results: A Successful Holiday Season

After migrating to the Everest platform, Hickory Farms experienced one of their most profitable holiday seasons yet — and email played a key role in that success.

By participating in Validity's Sender Certification program, the company achieved a Sender Score of 99 and reached inbox placement rates of near 100% (up to 35% points higher than similar, non-certified senders). Hickory Farms drove significant revenue growth via email and have continued to drive impactful YoY revenue growth for its direct business.

Hickory Farms achieved a Sender Score of 99 and reached inbox placement rates of near 100% (up to 35% points higher than similar, non-certified senders).

validity

Personalization's Role In Strengthening Email Content & Generating Clicks

To capitalize on those clicks, marketing teams are ensuring the content they're putting in email campaigns encourages further action with their brand. Due to the hyper-personalization customers receive in their personal lives, **32% prefer content** that's personalized/tailored to their needs on the professional side. As such, they're savvier to emails that feature minimal to no personalization efforts.

"It's very obvious who's still using 'spray-and-pray, batch-and-blast' methods," said Anwar. "You must have a strong content strategy and established leadership to provide valuable information to targets. Everyone says content is king, and it truly is — if you're not giving folks something valuable, then it's just going to be trashed."

With that in mind, customization and personalization go hand-in-hand. Email marketers are striking a balance between compelling content, eye-catching headlines and concise copy that quickly conveys a relevant message to the target to match the **44% of marketers** that prefer content packed with shareable stats and quick-hitting insights.

"We are seeing personalization using loads of illustrations and colorful, bright imagery and GIFs really move the needle in email marketing," said Ashley Johnson, Manager, Demand Generation at partnership automation solution **impact.com**. "As always, enticing and relatable subject lines always resonate with recipients. The days of long email copy are over — short, tight and concise emails are the way to go."

> "We are seeing personalization using loads of illustrations and colorful, bright imagery and GIFs really move the needle in email marketing."

ASHLEY JOHNSON, IMPACT.COM

To help their emails stand out from the crowd, some strategies currently in play include:

- Adding testimonials to spotlight first-hand experiences with the company/product;
- Testing email campaigns in dark mode;
- Adopting a "Gen Z texting-type approach," according to Anwar;
- Automating content curation strategies to deliver similar assets to engaged audiences;
- Utilizing chatbots to further engage targets when they click through to a website;
- Display advertising; and
- E-gifting, whether it's to incentivize further action or re-target cold leads.

However, while it's becoming more commonplace to step out of the box creatively, marketers still need to understand their audience. While demand generation teams can create an email template with a cute emoji and whimsical messaging, they should understand it's probably best suited for a Millennial-focused start-up, not a highly respected wealth management firm.

Back on the personalization side, Johnson explained that impact.com recently implemented a sending strategy that ensures the email sender is coming from one of its sales reps, as "there's plenty of research that shows people are more inclined to engage with an email sent from a person, not a brand."

The silver lining is that not too much technology is needed when it comes to generating the content for email campaigns. Howard Sewell, President of marketing agency **Spear Marketing Group**, explained some manual steps that make a big difference in campaign success, including:

- Assigning copywriting duties to a professional, whether it's in-house or an agency partner;
- Aggressively testing basic variables, such as subject line, offer and message;
- Understanding the audience in a way that defines key personas, their pain points and motivators; and
- Promoting CTAs that offer genuine information of value and are appropriate for specific stages in the buying cycle.

Top 4 Tips For Crafting A Compelling Marketing Email

BY ALANNA GURR, VIDYARD

I'll be the first to admit that sometimes I don't even read an email before deleting it. If the subject line isn't interesting enough to catch my attention, the sender is someone I don't know or the preview line doesn't give me enough information… delete!

And writing marketing emails is something I do daily. I know firsthand how much work goes into crafting an email; yet even I do this. But maybe that's why my expectations are so high — because I know how easy it can be to craft a successful marketing email.

With so many emails hitting our inboxes every day, how can you make sure you stand out from the masses? One sure-fire way to do that is to use video in your email marketing campaigns.

Video is proven to increase open rates and catch your audience's attention. More than 70% of sellers who use custom recorded videos in emails say that **video emails produce higher open rates, clicks and responses than text emails**.

By adding video to an email, you can also **reduce inbox fatigue** and help recipients retain more of the message when compared to text-based emails.

To help you make the most of your email marketing campaigns, here are my top-four ways to craft a compelling marketing email and dominate the inbox results with video.

vidyard®

1. Embrace Video As Part Of Your Email Strategy

Video is the gift that keeps on giving. You can use video in almost any part of a marketing campaign or sales cadence by placing it into nurture emails, newsletters and even in **your team's email signatures**. You can also create videos to promote events, new products, educate customers or offer tutorials. Videos belong in any email where you want to **increase opens and conversions**.

Not convinced yet? Science has proven why video is crucial to email marketing. According to one study that looked at the way email affects your brain, an **inbox provokes a negative emotional experience from your audience**. So when you send an email, the person on the other end is already in a negative frame of mind.

Luckily, the experience of watching a video email among many text emails helps the recipient transition from a negative emotional state to a more neutral state. And a happier person is a more receptive person.

2. Put The Word 'Video' In The Subject Line

It's simple: Adding the word "video" to your subject line can **increase opens by 6%**. People are creatures of habit; they ignore the normal. But when someone receives an email with the word "video" in the subject line, it's hard for them to ignore it. Put the word "video" in brackets at the beginning or end of the subject to make it even more apparent.

Like this: [Video] How To Get Comfortable On Video

3. Use an Eye-Catching Thumbnail

An eye-catching **video thumbnail** is the key to getting a recipient to click on your video's play button. In one glance, they should be able to tell what your video is about and why they should watch it — all in one frame.

A video thumbnail can **improve subscriber engagement** by almost 41% when it's included in an email. So, it's worth getting your design team to create a custom eye-catching thumbnail or grabbing a compelling screenshot right from your video.

vidyard®

4. Send Personalized Videos

Personalized video is a perfect way to scale your marketing efforts. Instead of creating separate videos for each recipient, you can use a video platform to send one video with personalized elements inserted into it at various points.

Personalized video uses customization to insert details like the viewer's name, organization or logo directly into the video. In one study, personalized videos in email earned **16X more click-to-opens** and 4.5X more click-throughs.

This is a popular tactic used in **account-based marketing**, where the priority is on sending the right marketing materials to the right people at targeted accounts.

For example, Vidyard makes **an annual holiday video** that uses personalization to insert the recipient's name onto objects within the video, like a holiday card or coffee cup. The results: The open rates were 35% higher than the industry average, and our click-through rates were **157% higher**. As you can see, the more personalized your videos, the better.

Crushing Those Inbox Open Rates

Remember, it takes time to build a successful email marketing campaign, so don't rush it. Be thoughtful in what type of emails you're crafting. Think of who your audience is and what they need from you. People are **13% more likely to remember** details from video emails over text emails, so if you're looking to make sure you catch the attention of your audience and keep it — then try it with video.

Leveraging AI & Automation To Enable Multichannel Content Delivery

When it comes to nurturing leads, many organizations are relying on their automation solutions to create nurture campaigns. With **40% of marketers** creating weekly cadences, they're taking the steps to customize their outreach and assets to ensure they meet recipients' needs and guide them through their buying journey.

"Based on the content an individual shows interest in, we'll continue to serve similar themed content via follow-up emails," said impact.com's Johnson. "When someone downloads our content, we've added personalization tokens that say, for example, 'Ashley, your content is ready to download.' We carry that through to our Drift chatbot, which creates conversations that are personalized based on the content that individual is reading and then offers them an option to speak with one of our sales reps."

Johnson continued that one of the company's most successful email campaigns is its influencer email nurture stream, "which is activated by actions on social networks." She explained that each stream is made of about four to five emails and utilize the following flow:

- When a target interacts with paid social content, they are automatically added to the influencer nurture stream;
- The first email they receive features awareness content, then all following emails focus on the marketing funnel from consideration and intent to evaluation; and
- The final email offers a strategy session.

With nurture streams in mind, The Pedowitz Group's Anwar advised marketing teams to ensure they're leveraging their automation software to its fullest potential. Any reputable marketing automation platform (MAP) has various features that enable organizations to create custom journeys and create seamless flows.

"A lot of people underuse the logic availability within their MAP," said Anwar. "It has the ability to examine the behavior of who clicked and how many times and can accelerate their nurture by setting up automatic flows that trigger the next step according to product interest or buying statements. There's a lot of availability to make "if, then" pathways that are extremely valuable."

Conclusion

As CTR emerges as the most accurate email measurement metric, open rates are quickly becoming outdated as new privacy restrictions take effect. With marketing teams automating the more mundane tasks and turning their attention instead to personalization and customization aspects, email marketing is quickly becoming a creativity-focused marketing medium. It's easy to fall into a monotonous routine with email campaigns, but companies who see the most success carefully curate nurture tracks that guide prospects through the funnel.

"There's this seductive quality about email," said Anwar. "It's super cheap and easy to track and trace, but it's easily ineffectual if not orchestrated correctly. You must establish yourself as a voice in your industry and make sure you have content that people actually want to consume."

validity

Businesses run better and grow faster with accurate data that enables them to increase email engagement and sales productivity. Data that lets you target, engage and convert customers, and do so more effectively than before. Validity is the most trusted name in customer data quality. Tens of thousands of organizations rely on Validity solutions – including Everest, DemandTools, GridBuddy Cloud, and BriteVerify – to improve customer engagement and manage their customer data. With Validity, these organizations make better decisions that drive more leads, close more deals and confidently plan for continued growth.

SALES@VALIDITY.COM

vidyard®

Vidyard is the video platform that helps businesses drive revenue through the strategic use of online video. Going beyond video hosting and management, we help businesses connect with more viewers through interactive and personalized video experiences, learn powerful insights on their viewing audience, turn insights into action with enterprise integrations, and prove the impact of their video programs.

INFO@VIDYARD.COM

Resources

What's Working In Content
Marketing in 2021?

2021 State Of
Integrated Marketing

Demand Generation
Benchmark Survey Report

Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

INFO@DEMANDGENREPORT.COM

KELLY LINDENAU   in 🐦

is an editor and writer who loves covering the latest B2B marketing trends, research and industry insights. She's a New Jersey native, runner and reader who always has a GIF from *The Office* at the ready.