

SMARTTOUCH[®]

INTERACTIVE

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E-Mail Marketing

Creative Best Practices & Techniques

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Recommendation Summary

Technical Recommendations:

- Inboxes will accept email up to 100K
- Email creative should be no wider than 600 pixels
- Max width for Header images should not exceed 690 pixels
- Only inline style sheets, or regular HTML should be used to format text
- Do not use JavaScript since most email clients will not accept it
- Forms cannot be included within an email, but can be used on a Landing Page
- Use a stacked table structure as it is more stable across all email clients
- Recommend not to use Flash within emails as most email clients do not accept or use it – Only Outlook can except Flash
- SmartTouch® does not support Image Mapping within email campaigns. It is best to either program the text to be linked either as HTML text with a hyperlink, or as a spliced JPG with hyperlinks.
- You cannot program a campaign with HTML text on top of background images. Only HTML text can be programmed on a solid colored background. If your campaign has text on top of an image and you want to keep the image behind it, you must splice up that aspect as a full image.
- It is good protocol to program a campaign with either a combination of HTML text and images, or one full image with HTML body text typed below the jpg in case the end user has imaging turned off in their email client.
- The best file types to create email campaigns in include Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. It is best to always include the original creative file (.psd, .ai, .indd, .idml) along with fonts utilized, images incorporated within the campaign, and a saved printout in PDF or JPG of the full campaign.

Creative Recommendations:

- Featured content should appear “Above the Fold” when using a web-based email client like Gmail and Yahoo!. The average measurement for this area is 420 pixels in height.
- All campaigns should contain a **Call to Action** driving an action from the end prospect. Typically, these are in a button graphic or visual element that makes the line of copy stand out above all other aspects in the creative.
- Make sure that the featured content in your email exists in HTML text, not only images. With Gmail and other email clients that don’t display images by default, the user will not be able to initially see any content that is in an image unless they opt to turn the images on. If your campaign has text on top of images, it is best to program with the JPG and HTML text typed below it to ensure the message gets to the end user regardless of images being turned on or off.

Introduction

Email marketing can have a big impact on your brand. The visual elements you incorporate and the messaging behind it are all key pieces that tie it all together. Integrating your website creative, print collateral creative elements, and any other additional brand elements you utilize is always best to include within your email marketing. It will ensure your brand stays consistent across all media platforms.

The message intent of your email marketing is as equally important as your visual elements. It is important to remember to include headlines, important event dates and RSVP details, and strong Call-to-Action elements into your campaigns. The combination of the right message with creative branding elements will ensure your success with your email marketing.

Not only are the technical aspects and creative elements good protocol for your email marketing, but thorough testing of your campaign is vital to success. It is always good practice to test your campaigns across multiple email platforms to ensure your email marketing comes through crisp, clean, and that every link works properly. Through testing, you will know that your campaign will have the best possible success for click-through and conversion rates.

Following these practices will not guarantee higher open rates, click-through rates, or conversion rates, however, it will ensure your creative is compliant for ISP/email client delivery and browser rendering.

Formatting Recommendations

Technical:

JavaScript:

Not all email clients support JavaScript, even though all web browsers do. It is good practice to not use JavaScript in your email marketing to ensure that your email is universally accepted.

Forms:

Forms for data capture cannot be utilized within the body of email campaigns. Form data capture can only be used on landing pages or website pages hosted on your web server.

SmartTouch® does allow another form of data capture within your email marketing campaign. This is what we call the **Re-engagement Campaign**. These campaigns utilize links within the campaign to update form field data, segment records based on intelligence, as well as notify team members upon clicks. These are best utilized as majority HTML text with some images. You typically want to direct your end user to an exit page, landing page, or website page based on the interest they click on within your campaign. Once you create your campaign, you can create a Marketing Automation Workflow to connect the link clicks with fields, groups, and notifications.

Background Tags and Colors:

If your creative contains an image behind HTML text, it is best to program the campaign as a full JPG and type out the HTML body text below in a table format. This ensures the jpg is sent but if the end user's images are turned off in their email client, they will still be able to view the message.

If you do not want to show duplicate messages through a jpg and html text below the image, it is best to put the HTML text on top of a solid background color by defining the body background color.

HTML Text:

Whether you are programming HTML text for a campaign, or simply typing in body copy into an E-Letterhead in SmartTouch®, it is best to make sure you have Font Size and Format styling. If you do not know HTML to apply the proper source code, you also have the option to select the copy you have inserted and select a font size and font style through the campaign editor.

Note: Even though your fonts may look the same within the campaign editor in SmartTouch®, your email client can render it differently. This is where thorough testing will come into play. Ensure your copy, when selected, has a font size and type assigned to it.

Links:

URL links to website pages and landing pages can be utilized within your campaigns. You can add links to both HTML text and images. You can also apply an email link to HTML text and images within your campaign. Currently, SmartTouch® does not allow # tags within URL links, so if you are inserting a link that includes a # tag to direct the end user to a specific part of the page, the URL will work, but it will take the user to the beginning of the page, not the section the # tag is assigned to.

Testing:

It is always recommended to thoroughly troubleshoot your email marketing campaign. Different email platforms render HTML code and images differently. It is best to test your email campaign within your own inbox to ensure several things:

1. The campaign is aligned according to creative styles
2. All links within the campaign work properly
3. All images display as needed
4. No grammatical or spelling errors are made within HTML text
5. Ensure all copy displays with proper font styling and sizes

Copy/Paste Should Be Avoided:

Content created in a rich-text editor like Microsoft® Word or Google Docs often includes underlying HTML formatting code. If rich text is pasted into a campaign or body of an email inside the application, this hidden code can cause formatting changes that may affect the way your email displays in SmartTouch® and email programs. We recommend the following ways to strip any coding that could interfere with how your text content displays. Once the previous formatting is removed, apply any text styles through the content editor itself.

Three Ways to Strip Formatting When You Copy/Paste Text

1. The simplest solution is to type directly into the Editor itself. Ta da!
2. Paste any text you want to strip of formatting into Notepad (or Text Edit if you're a Mac user), then copy it again. Once you grab this version, you'll have only the text and won't have to worry about any colors or alternative fonts sticking around. You can pin either of these to your Windows taskbar or Mac dock to make it easily accessible whenever you need to paste something.
3. Use an online Word to Clean HTML converter like <http://word2cleanhtml.com>. Again, you can add this as a Bookmark or Favorite to get to it whenever you need it.

Creative:

Calls to Action (CTA):

It is always good email marketing protocol to include a Call-to-Action within your email campaign. Calls to Action are phrases like 'Click here', 'Read more', 'Download Brochure', 'Schedule Tour', and so forth. Typically, your CTA's will drive link clicks and direct your user to an end page with a form capture.

A good rule of thumb regarding CTA's is to make sure they stand out compared to the other copy within your campaign. You can add a heavier font weight, size or even a different color. You can also put it within a visual graphic to make it stand out like a button graphic. Creating visuals for your CTA's will help them stand out and drive the action.

File Size & Dimensions:

The best dimensions to keep your email campaigns are within are 600 pixels wide. Keeping the width at no larger than this helps the end user to not scroll left and right horizontally to view your whole message. You can always go smaller than 600 pixels, but it is best to not exceed this in width. By default, the campaign editor in SmartTouch® provides layouts and templates that already adhere to these dimensions.

The file size of your email should be no more than 100K which allows quicker download speeds of your campaign. The larger the images, the longer it will take for your image to display to the end user.

Stylesheets:

It is best to use inline stylesheets or regular HTML in your email marketing campaigns. You can use the SmartTouch® campaign editor to modify it on the front end, but if you know basic HTML, you can also use the Source button in the editor to put in your inline stylesheets. An example is below.

```
<font style="font-family:verdana,arial,Helvetica;font-color=#000000;font-size=12pt">
```

Images:

Whenever you utilize images within your email campaigns, it is best to avoid having important content within those images for several reasons. First, your end user may have restrictions on viewing images or does not allow images to come through. If this is the case, your end user will never receive your message, as they would not be able to view your images. Secondly, if your images fail to load or are too large and take too long to load, the end user will not receive your message.

Text to Image Ratio:

HTML Emails have a minimum of 30% Text to Image Ratio. Certain spam filters will identify the weight in ratios and determine if they are going to filter that piece of mail. Try to avoid sending campaigns that are all imagery and no text. We also recommend to have at least the disclosures of your email in text and preferably some in the content image.

Deliverability & Infrastructure:

- Keep your emails within 600 pixels wide and 100K in file size for optimal visibility.
- Flash only works in Outlook with the 'Active X' featured turned on. It is always best to avoid using flash within the body of your emails.
- JavaScript should not be used within the body of your email.
- Inline stylesheets work across all major email providers. You can also use basic HTML code or the SmartTouch® campaign editor tool.
- Ensure you have a good Text to Image Ratio to ensure better inbox coverage.

Subject Lines & Send Times:

The best days to send email blasts are during the week on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday due to most individuals having cleared their inboxes from the weekend. Best send times are between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. or 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Sending on these days between these timeframes will give you optimal chances for higher open rates.

Subject lines are the most critical to getting an open email. They can also trigger your email to go into Spam. Avoid using exclamation points, special characters, and spam words in your subject line to give you the best chances of hitting the inbox and having higher open rates. Finally, make sure your subject line is relevant to the content within your email blast. Otherwise, your email is sure to hit the spam box.

Can Spam Act Details:

There are various items you must ensure all your email marketing has in place per the **Can Spam Act**. Below is a short list of items to follow and avoid:

- Bulk mail must have a working 'opt out' link also known as an Unsubscribe feature.

- SmartTouch® Email Marketing Platform includes this feature for you by default.
- Include a physical mailing address in the footer of your campaigns so that your database of prospects can mail a direct letter to get themselves Unsubscribed.
 - SmartTouch® includes this in your account setup.
- Opt Out those individuals who have requested to unsubscribe within 10- days of solicitation.
- Subject lines must be relevant to the content of the blast.
- Generating email lists by screen scraping is against the Can Spam Act. The definition of screen scraping is harvesting emails on the internet.
- Avoid sending to a lot of alias emails such as 'info@'. These can lower your Sender Reputation and trigger you to be Blacklisted.

Email Sending Infrastructure:

If you're working with an email service provider (ESP), any mail coming from their IP network will allow for it to come in without having 'infrastructure'. This consists of reverse DNS, SPF Records, Yahoo! Domain keys and DKIM. Those components let ISP's know that mail coming from that particular server has been authorized to utilize that domain as the sender domain.

There are a handful of ESP's that have those types of relationships. Most other ESP's, including CRM and marketing automation solutions, send from your own domain and require for this infrastructure to be created. Without this infrastructure, you risk getting your mail filtered.

SmartTouch® utilizes designated IP addresses and VMTA's on a per-client basis, which comes with automatic infrastructure. The ability to send from SmartTouch® from your direct domain requires an established infrastructure of the items listed, which SmartTouch® can handle on your behalf.

Infrastructure Setup Items:

- SPF Record
- Domain Keys
- DKIM
- Reverse DNS
- PMTA Adjustments
- Testing Through Return Path

Spam Filtering & How it Works:

Several ISP's (Mail Servers) have filtering systems that treat certified IP addresses differently

than non-certified IP addresses. Sometimes it will allow that IP address through spam filtering systems, or sometimes the rate of what can pass through greatly loosens. For some ISP's it is just one of the many factors that determine what is placed in your inbox. Also, many corporate email servers have spam filters on top of their email filters.

Spam filters may also block emails from coming into your junk folder and look at the component of the email itself. If there is an embedded .JPG image and the Text to Image Ratio is not around 30/70, (30% Text and 70% Image), that can also trigger spam.

To monitor IP reputation and ISP monitoring, you can use a 3rd party company like Return Path to determine the mailer's acceptance. Learn more about **Return Path Certification** below.

Return Path Certification

Curious how to have higher Inbox coverage and improve your deliverability? Return Path Certification provides premium access to over 2 billion email inboxes worldwide. Through Certification Whitelisting, you will reach more inboxes, can monitor your IP sender score and reputation, and ultimately have higher open rates.

Return Path Certification tests your email practices (checks to ensure you are doing everything by the book). After they pass you, your dedicated IP Address, which we at SmartTouch® provide you, will be added to the certified IP Address List.

Pricing Components

- **Application Fee** – Your application submission and fee are handled by your SmartTouch® Interactive team and billed to you accordingly.
- **Annual License Fee** – This is determined on the amount of bulk emailing you plan to do on a monthly volume basis and will be billed to you accordingly.

Do You Have Questions?

We at SmartTouch® Interactive always do our best to ensure our clients are well informed of the latest email marketing technologies, as well as how to improve your email marketing for optimal open rates. If you have any questions or comments, please contact your account manager or email us at helpdesk@smarttouchinteractive.com.