



S T O N E   W A R D

## Are You Doing Email Right?

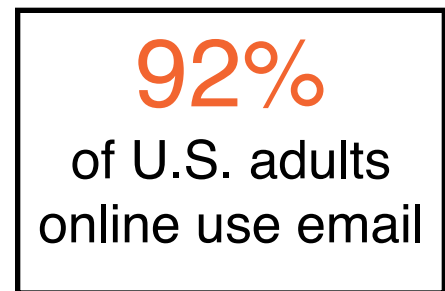
by Emily Reeves / 11.2012

### Overview

If all US mobile Internet time was condensed into one hour, 25 minutes of that hour would be spent on email. There is a tendency to think of digital marketing as websites and social media. But email is a vital part to any marketing campaign and leads to your digital properties. In fact, email can bind all the disparate elements of a marketing program and bridge the gap between online and offline. This digital whitepaper will provide the rationale for incorporating email into communications campaign and provide tips for doing it successfully.

### Why is email an important communications channel to marketers?

- Email is still one of the most popular online activities: 92% of U.S. adults online use email.
- 86% of people 18 and over share content via email.
- Email is the preferred method of commercial communication by 74% of all online adults.
- 58% of people in the U.S. start their online day by reading their email.
- U.S. internet users engage with an average of 11.8 brands via email, compared to 9.4 brands via Facebook and 7.9 brands via Twitter.



### What do people really want from email communications from marketers?

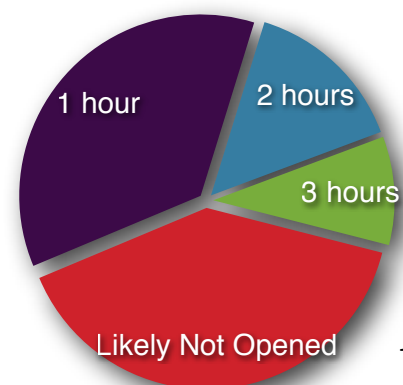
Email is by far the most popular channel among U.S. online consumers for receiving permission-based promotional messages, but why? The main reasons consumers sign up for emails are for:



### What kind of response can you expect from email campaigns?

When done well, email campaigns can produce average open rates of approximately 20% and click-through rates of 8-12%. Keep in mind that most of those opens occur early: 77% of all opens occur within 24 hours of sending out a campaign. But interestingly, later opens and clicks are likely to be higher quality. There are fewer of them, but many brands find they lead to higher conversion rates.

Open Rates by Hour



Because when it is opened can make a difference in its effectiveness, it is important to time delivery well. Be sure to schedule emails to land in the inbox no later than one hour before the top open times so they get maximum attention and results. Since almost 40% of all messages are sent between 6 AM and noon, this is when inboxes are the most cluttered and your message has the highest likelihood of getting lost.

Messages sent in the early morning and early afternoon have a better chance of being noticed and consequently achieve better results. Here are the top click hours:

- 8 AM
- 9 AM
- 3 PM
- 8 PM

## One of the benefits of email is the opportunity to segment messages to your different audiences.

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But only 67% of companies carry out basic segmentation. Segmentation is a method used to categorize customers into groups that have similar traits. Segments can be based on almost anything like age, gender, email behavior, spending habits, etc. Using segmentation allows for a greater level of targeting and consequently more relevant marketing for customers, improving the customer's experience with a brand or company. How do you go about segmenting?

- Segment your data by active and inactive customers to understand who the engaged customers are and whose attention you need to recapture in order to target your campaigns effectively.
- Segment your data by interests and information that they have opted-in to receive. This will streamline your message points and make sure you are hitting the right mark with the right customers.

*Don't forget about your mobile users when using email campaigns.*

Users tend to open emails more than once, which indicates that they are scanning emails on mobile before looking at the useful ones in more details on desktop. A recent study showed that 27% of email is now opened on a mobile device. And 63% of Americans would either close or delete an email not optimized for mobile.

Remember your mobile audience when it comes to design:

- Buttons should be touchable and at least 44x44 pixels for your campaign to be mobile friendly and fat finger-proof.
- Reserve the top for calls-to-action and important content by putting mastheads and logos elsewhere.
- Go easy on images and don't use them for critical links/content as they can fail to load.
- Alt-texts are vital because they prevent confusion and support disabled users. However, not all email clients display alt-texts, so refer to the rule above about going easy on the images.
- Social media links do no harm. Just keep them out of the way for more important calls-to-action.

*Here are a few additional ways to optimize your emails, regardless of location or device.*

- Make sure to include a plain text version. This is crucial for old mobile phones and makes life easier for disabled users.
- Summarize the contents in the subject line. Use this space to give recipients the gist of your message. Make the subject interesting to sidestep the click-to-archive reflex. Intrigue, entertain, surprise.
- The copy has it. Putting key messages and links in the top of the email has never been more important. Make sure the writing is sharp and concise. Simple and quick tweaks, such as editing a few lines of the content, can make a difference.
- Don't crowd your links. Give the user space to tap.

*What should we be measuring in email campaigns?*

- **Messages Sent:** The number of outbound emails sent.
- **Messages Delivered:** The number of sent emails actually delivered to recipients' inboxes.
- **Open Rate:** The number of delivered emails that are opened by the recipients.
- **Click-Through Rate:** The number links within the opened emails that recipients click on for more information.
- **Unsubscribes:** The number of individuals who unsubscribe from your list in response to each mailing sent.

*How should you approach planning an email campaign?*

Email is just another marketing channel. Before deciding on a channel for communication and engagement, we must first have an understanding of what we are trying to achieve. We want to think first and foremost about:

1. Who the target audience is and
2. What they want and need, then
3. What we want to achieve and
4. If we can give them what they want and/or need
5. Then figure out if a channel, email, is a channel that will help meet the objectives of both our brand and our target audience.

If email is the solution, then proceed with providing useful information, the kind that they want, at a frequency that matches their needs and continue to do so.

*Interested in learning more?*

Contact Emily Reeves at [ereeves@stoneward.com](mailto:ereeves@stoneward.com) for help planning your brand's digital engagements.

*About Stone Ward*


[Stone Ward](#) is a full-service ad agency. Established in 1984 by Larry Stone and Millie Ward, today the agency employs 52, with capitalized billings exceeding \$40 million. The agency's offices are in Chicago and Little Rock.

### About Emily Reeves, Director of Digital Strategy & Planning

As the agency's digital champion, Emily Reeves proves that Stone Ward has the offerings, expertise and alliances to bring sound, measurable digital innovation to our clients' marketing efforts. A seasoned communications strategist with a passion for all things digital, Emily has distinguished herself as an avid blogger, social media speaker, industry observer and moderator. In her role as digital thought leader for Stone Ward, Emily collaborates with our team of agency leaders in creative, brand management, public relations, media, digital technology and video production to create relevant ways to tell our clients' stories in the digital space and to provide meaningful measurement and analytics as a tool for calculating our efforts. Emily's focus on measurement extends to her duties as the agency's research leader, where she works with Stone Ward clients to develop and execute research plans that inform integrated client marketing efforts.


### Sources

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- [Email: The Forgotten Social Network](#)
- [How is Email Used on Mobile Devices](#)
- [Mobile as a Primary Device for Checking Email](#)
- [Online Consumers Vastly Prefer Email for Direct Marketing Messages](#)
- [The Dos and Don'ts of Email Segmentation](#)
- [Three Secrets of Experienced Email Marketers](#)
- [What Do People Really Do When They Get a Marketing Email?](#)
- [What is the Best Time to Send an Email Campaign?](#)
- [What to Measure and How to Make Sense of the Data](#)




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A Q&A with Tom Lillig, our resident expert on the topic. [Read more](#)



**Leveraging Online Video**  
A Stone Ward Digital Whitepaper. [Read more](#)

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