

'Tis the season for email marketing. We can help.



- Fundraising
- Social Networking
- Web Site 101
- Email 101
- Donor Databases
- Nonprofit Marketing
- Training



About Network for Good

Network for Good provides easy and affordable online fundraising services. [Visit our website](#) to learn more.

Improve Your Fundraising

Subscribe to our weekly Online Fundraising & Nonprofit Marketing Tips Newsletter.

Email:

First Name:

Last Name:

SIGN UP

Beat the Downturn with Stylish Emails: 10 Trends for Emails that Pop

By Emma: Oct 15, 2008

[Print this Article](#)

Average:

Your rating:

A well designed email is a great place to show off your brand, and a campaign that's easy on the eyes - and a pleasure to read - builds trust and loyalty with your readers. So if creating great looking campaigns is one of your style goals (along with other fashion mantras of "less spandex" and "maybe not so much on the fringe there, tiger"), then we're happy to share what's on the horizon for email design. Here are ten trends to get you started, and yeah, good call on the fringe. **(ps- you can download a PDF version of this tip sheet below).**

1. **Getting serious about the subject line.** It's the most important sentence of your entire email campaign, and yet too many otherwise creative people are content with the most banal of subject lines, like "February Newsletter." February may indeed be an exciting month for your organization, but busy readers with two seconds to decide whether to stop and open your email need a little more enticement. Keep your monthly label, but add some color, like "Initech's February Newsletter: How Good is Your HR team? Take Our Quiz and Find Out..." Now, we're intrigued. Nice work, Initech.
2. **Striking the right balance between images and text.** Emails with images in them perform better than their graphic-less counterparts. But how many images are too many? The general rule of thumb is to avoid sending one big honkin' (it's a technical term) image and strive for a healthy balance of graphics and text. Not only does that create a pleasant viewing experience, but it also avoids serious trouble in cases where an email server doesn't accept large files, or the recipient's email program doesn't immediately display your graphics, or your reader is on a slow Internet connection and, well, decides to run out for a sandwich before your large image files have time to load. It is lunch time, after all.
3. **Branding more than just the from name.** By now, most marketers know to brand the two from pieces: the address (newsletters@julies-hats.com) and the name (Julie's Hat Emporium). In addition to those two obvious branding slots, make sure you're including your logo or graphic branding prominently in the campaign, and consider branding another inviting slot: the subject line. By starting your subject with consistent branding (think "News from Julie's Hats: This Week Only, Sombreros Half Off!"), you'll make it even easier for recipients to identify your emails amidst a lattered inbox.
4. **Focusing above the fold.** We assume that most people use a preview pane when perusing their inbox, and recent studies by MarketingSherpa confirm that fact (their research indicates that more than half of email recipients use a horizontal preview window of varying height). So it's important when laying out your email's content to put a lot of attention on the top four inches and use that prime real estate to the best of your, well, realty abilities. Make sure your logo is there. Make sure you've introduced your email's topic or theme. And make sure you start the conversation early - that way, folks are more likely to feel inclined to read on and let you finish the thought. Is there an important link or action item in the body of your email? Don't bury the lead; instead, put it near the top in case a quick preview is all someone needs to inquire, donate, sign up or learn more.

5. **Designing for three display possibilities.** You're probably aware of the two primary ways an email shows up in inboxes - as html or as plaintext. And you probably know to fine-tune the latter just a bit, keeping in mind that without graphics or columns to work with, a plaintext email typically requires a bit of repositioning or rephrasing. But there's a third display possibility to consider, and it's the Images Not Displaying scenario. Many email programs let recipients decide whether to view an email's images, which means many of those lovely html masterpieces you send at least start out minus the graphics. To design for that possibility, make sure your campaign still makes sense - and makes its point - even if the graphics are, ahem, out of the picture. Sure, the hope is that everyone views your art the way you intended it to be seen, but even if they don't your email can still do its job.
6. **Personalizing beyond "Dear Bob."** In EmailNow, it's easy to add personalization to your campaigns so that your recipients see their first name at the top of your campaign. And we know that, as much as recipients aren't tricked into thinking you somehow took the time to create this grand newsletter just for them, a bit of personalization really does boost response rates. But don't stop at a personal greeting. Think about other personal details you might be able to drop into your email. Try segmenting your list by gender, geography or anything else you know about your recipients, so you can personalize the content based on the people to whom you're sending. And then make sure the email feels personal (more on that in #7). After all, showing that you know someone's first name is great; showing them you really know, respect and care about them is even better.
7. **Writing in a warm, personal voice.** With inbox clutter on the rise, it's never been more important to make a personal connection with your subscribers and recipients. Email provides a rare chance to have one-on-one conversations quickly and on a grand scale, and it's downright essential to think of your campaigns that way - as lots of personal conversations with people you know and like - rather than an indiscriminate blast (ick) to a database of email addresses (ugh). How does your brand speak to your audience? Give your next campaign a quick human-or-machine test (does it sound like a person wrote this, or does it sound like a machine spit it out?) and look for ways to up the human element. No offense, machines.
8. **Sending timely, targeted follow-ups.** In addition to personalizing the greeting, content and feel of your emails, you can also personalize the timing with which your emails are sent. For instance, EmailNow's trigger emails are an easy way to send campaigns that go out on your recipients' schedules, not yours. Why not have a welcome email queued up to send the moment someone new joins your list? Nothing feels more personal than a note Bob gets - just to Bob - welcoming Bob, thanking Bob, offering Bob something, and basically giving Bob even more reason to like your organization and brand. And with our trigger feature taking care of the delivery for you, you can stay in touch with Bob even when you're actually doing something completely unrelated to Bob like, say, napping.
9. **Making the most of landing pages.** Remember that your email is a front door to other things - a website, a signup screen, a landing page with video content, a confirmation email and more. These landing pages are great opportunities not only to reinforce your branding, but also to take advantage of the moment of undivided attention you have once someone takes the trouble of clicking one of your links. Make sure your branding - and your brand's voice - carry over to those supporting screens, and use the opportunity to present your readers with even more content, or product links, or anything else that's relevant and useful. While you're thinking about landing pages, take a moment to revisit (or visit) your signup screen. What kind of information are you asking your readers when they subscribe? Make sure you're asking enough to learn about the people joining your list, but keep in mind that too many fields might discourage a would-be subscriber from, well, subscribing.

10. **Above all, experiment. But not with actual chemicals.** The great thing about email is that so much of what happens can be tracked. People tell you how interested they are in your emails, how interested they are in specific stories, products or other links, and they occasionally tell you they were so excited that they forwarded your email to 10 friends. Use that tracking to learn what your audience likes - and doesn't - and mix it up from time to time to see how small tweaks affect those response numbers. Try two different subject lines; try flipping stories one and two in the body copy; try sending to half of your list on Tuesday morning and the other half on Thursday. In the end, the only way to really find out which subject lines work best, or whether longer or shorter content is the right approach, or which day really is the best for sending is, well, to try it all for yourself. Email marketing is like your very own laboratory, just without all those pesky chemistry classes or unflattering lab coats.



Related Documents

[Download a PDF version of this article.](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Email Us](#) | [About](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Staff](#) | [Sitemap](#) |
7920 Norfolk Avenue, Suite 520, Bethesda, MD 20814, United States, 1-888-284-7978
© 2008 Network for Good. All Rights Reserved

Powered by
 Network for Good.

Network for Good is proud to be sponsored by its founding partners:   