

10 Holiday Email Marketing Tips

No matter what your holiday email goals are: to increase sales, drive donations, promote an event, or simply share a festive greeting with your customers; these ten tips will help you develop a thoughtful email marketing strategy.

1. Set up your holiday campaign plan.

A little planning really does go a long way. So, ask the big questions first. What do you want your holiday emails to accomplish? What are the main messages or offers your customers will connect with over the next few months? How can email help drive the holiday initiatives you're planning offline?

2. Consider your sending frequency and volume.

Think about your email frequency carefully – every fatigued subscriber who opts out in December is someone who won't see your emails at all next year. Send an email now that gives your subscribers the option to manage how frequently they hear from you, or start slowly ramping up your frequency now (and keep a close eye on the opt-out rate).

3. Look for trends in recent response data.

As you're crafting your holiday sending strategy, spend some time looking at the response data that'll tell you what's been the most and least effective over the last few months. For example, if you notice that click-through rates are higher in your more graphic-rich emails, design your holiday campaigns accordingly.

4. Do a little list maintenance.

Before your holiday emails begin in earnest, plan a fall campaign to re-engage the less active members of your subscribers. Find people who haven't opened or clicked in a few months and consider sending them a special note, or possibly removing them from your list altogether. And if your holiday plans include sending to unique segments – such as women who've purchased in the last year– make sure that information is up to date in your audience list.

5. Keep your emails social.

People stay busy during the holidays, but not too busy to keep up with their social networking. So make sure your subscribers have an easy way to share your emails with their friends and followers. Consider adding easy-to-spot links to your organization's social networking sites too.

6. Consider special holiday creative.

Since your subscribers get more and more emails in their inboxes during the holiday season, fresh and festive design can focus even the most frazzled attention spans. Rework your standard stationery with a few holiday touches, or put together a memorably designed holiday card or greeting.

7. Plan targeted follow-up campaigns.

Consider sending smaller follow-up campaigns to special segments of your audience. Targeting the right message to the right group can create that little nudge some folks need to take action. For example, send more product information to people who click a certain product in an email but don't eventually buy it.

8. Give folks a reason to join your list.

Are you planning on sending exclusive offers and content to your email subscribers during the holidays? Update the language on your web site's email sign-up form accordingly. That way, your casual site visitors will spot that juicy incentive and become loyal email subscribers.

9. Welcome new subscribers right away.

When someone signs up for your email list, you can bet they're interested in hearing from you. So build a strong relationship with new subscribers right away with an automatic welcome note. Set a great foundation now, and you'll have more loyal subscribers through the holiday season and beyond. If you're already sending a welcome note, great! Consider taking a fresh look to see if it could use a little holiday-specific tweaking.

10. Plan for next year.

As you set up your campaign schedule, pencil in ideas for A/B split tests to help you learn what's more effective during the holidays. For example, try a long and short subject line for your Black Friday campaign. Or test a holiday-themed image against a more generic one. If you plan for your tests now, you'll be more likely to implement them. And the results will make for smarter send-offs next year.