

Improve Your Sales Cycle: Take Email Performance Personally

By [Nancy Pekala](#)

If you're a B2B marketer who uses email in your marketing campaigns, you understand that the only thing easier than sending an unsolicited email is deleting one. Making email campaigns more personal and relevant to today's customers is critical to effective email marketing performance.

In the recent research report, [Email Marketing: Customers Take it Personally](#), conducted by [AberdeenGroup](#), an [AMA Content Partner](#), report author [Chris Houpis](#), Senior Research Analyst, Marketing Strategy and Effectiveness, noted that "Given the turbulent fits and starts of the global economy over the past 2 years, companies are intensely focused on marketing channels that effectively reach customers, in order to speed the sales cycle and positively impact top-line revenue. Aberdeen's *Sales and Marketing Alignment: Collaboration + Cooperation = Peak Performance* research found that 78% of respondents are targeting email campaigns to drive lead development in 2011. Companies are turning to email marketing for its ability to rapidly reach the right individual prospect to improve sales engagements and drive business growth."



Indeed, 60% of all companies responding to the Aberdeen research plan to increase their spending on email marketing 10% or more in the coming year. The complexity of marketing channels available today has marketers focused on email tools that can be used to create personalized communication with customers and prospects. Aberdeen's findings verify that 83% of all companies surveyed indicate they will leverage email as a core tool in the marketing mix and at a rate 54% more than social media despite that channel's growth and popularity.

The research demonstrates that email marketing's ability to provide a high quantity of leads combined with direct revenue gains are exactly why marketers place such importance on the tool (45% and 38% respectively).

According to the research, on average, Best-in-Class companies achieved the following e-mail performance:

- 25% of the sales-forecasted pipeline was generated by marketing, as compared to a 4% contribution from Laggard organizations
- 21% average Year-Over-Year (YOY) improvement in revenue generated from email campaigns, compared to a 2% increase among Laggard organizations.

- 11% average YOY improvement in click-through rates from mass email campaigns, compared to a 1% increase among Laggard organizations

Houpis suggested that in order to achieve Best-in-Class email performance, companies should strive to deliver marketing assets by measuring email marketing effectiveness on a monthly basis and removing hard and soft bounce recipients from the database through email authentication. Other action steps companies can take to make critical performance improvements in their email marketing include:

1. Clean marketing databases for optimal email performance.

Failing to clean contact databases on a monthly basis is a key factor in ineffective email marketing.

2. Adjust email marketing content regularly and frequently.

Changing content once or twice a month is insufficient to gain the response rate needed to drive performance. It's important that content be refreshed regularly and be made more interesting and relevant to the target audience.

3. Adhere to compliance and industry standards.

It is absolutely essential that your organization follow regulatory standards set out for email practices. Not only will it produce more meaningful results when implemented, but also failure to engage in these practices may result in more stringent email regulations to force adherence.

4. Deploy testing of subject lines.

To improve deliverability and drive greater response rates, companies should readily deploy multi-variable testing of its subject lines.

5. Remove hard and soft bounce backs.

Eliminating inaccurate prospects and customers from future email campaigns has far-reaching impact. This enables organizations to be more efficient when executing campaigns while simultaneously delivering campaign results that accurately reflect the current receiving audience.

6. Deploy segmentation and targeting solutions.

The ability to reach the right person with the best message is significantly impacted when personalized email campaigns are not utilized.

7. Deliver the best offers to your top customers.

Marketing's ability to deliver specialized offers to high-value customers clearly drives optimal performance results as seen in this research. Identify your best customers based on the criteria that matters most to your business and develop offers that speak directly to them to achieve greater performance on both personalized and mass email campaigns.

8. Utilize email to nurture existing leads.

When marketers personalize their campaigns in conjunction with empowering prospects and customers to select their preferences, a stronger connection can be made during the marketing and sales cycles can be improved.

9. Increase multivariate testing.

The most effective marketers test not only their subject lines but also the marketing and promotional content within the email.

To learn more about AberdeenGroup Research, visit the AMA's [Content Partner](#) section on www.marketingpower.com. Download the complete report, [Email Marketing: Customers Take it Personally](#) at www.aberdeen.com. [Nancy Pekala](#) is the AMA's Director of Online Content and Editor of [B2B Marketing](#). Send your feedback about this article or suggestions for any of the AMA's e-newsletters to npekala@ama.org. Be sure to follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/marketing_power