SmartMessenger

Email Marketing Guide

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Introduction

Email marketing is a powerful and cost-effective way to connect with your target audience and drive business. According to the DMA's <u>Marketer Email Tracker 2020</u> report, the return on investment in email marketing is strong, at over £35 for every £1 spent.

Good email marketing is about offering real value to your recipients and a series of well-constructed email campaigns can help you build trust with your audience. It's not about spamming the contacts in your marketing database with offers or bland updates.

Your email content depends on your campaign goals and you need to start with a clear idea of <u>what to write about in your emails</u>. Some emails are welcome messages, thank yous, or to inform of an upcoming event or renewal date. Others may be about relevant offers, customer case studies, or news related to your brand or industry.

In email marketing, getting the messaging and timing of your email right is crucial and it's important to be clear about the desired outcome of your campaign. Defining your objectives and creating a campaign to get the results you want can feel daunting. This Guide provides tips to help you get started, from advice on list building to creating engaging content and maximising deliverability.

New to email marketing?

It can be useful to get advice from specialist email marketing experts like the Smart Messenger team at 101 if you're new to email marketing. We provide all the training, unlimited phone support and guidance you need to get the most from your campaigns. Call us on 01603 858250 for no-obligation advice to help you get started.

How can email marketing help my business?

Email marketing is an efficient, cost-effective and convenient way to reach your target audience. The right approach can also help you build more trust in your brand or organisation. Get it wrong, though, and your email campaign could be damaging to your reputation. Always take the time to plan your campaigns carefully and ensure your emails are relevant, informative and timely to be most effective. With the tips below and practical help from our Smart Messenger experts, you can be up and running with effective email campaigns, in no time at all.

Email campaign dos and don'ts:

1. **Do get your timing right** and send your campaign at a time when your audience is most receptive to opening it.

2. **Do give your email an engaging subject line and preheader**. These will increase the likelihood of people opening your emails.

3. **Don't spam your contacts**. Your emails should be carefully targeted so they are relevant and useful.

4. **Don't use spammy words or phrases.** Using words like 'hurry', 'limited time offer' and other spammy phrases means your email is more likely to be marked as spam.

How do I build an email marketing list?

You're ready to get started with email marketing, but how do you get an email list together?

It's more effective to build your marketing database organically than buy from list brokers or scour the internet and LinkedIn for cold contacts.

When someone has actively asked or agreed to be added to your mailing list they will be happy to receive your email and more likely to engage with the content. They will already know you or your organisation so they will be more receptive to your campaigns.

Here are some examples of ways to collect data to grow your marketing database:

- Website sign-up forms

- Event sign-ups

- Social media sign-up options on your company's profile page

- Competitions

- Encourage recipients to share your email by forwarding it to others or sharing via social media

Always be mindful of data protection obligations when inviting people to sign up to your email list and ensure you are compliant with the regulations. The data protection experts in our Smart Messenger team will be happy to guide you on this.

We strongly advise against purchasing data. You won't have an existing connection with the people contained in these lists and, because their details are available to purchase, they are likely to receive a lot of unsolicited emails. It is unlikely they will engage with your campaigns and they may mark your emails as spam. This is damaging to your brand's reputation and also impacts your reputation as a sender.

If too many people report your emails as spam, email providers will consign your campaigns to the digital bin!

How can I create a great email campaign?

A well-constructed campaign can help you increase client retention, improve repeat business and boost sales. With a powerful email marketing tool like Smart Messenger from 101 and personalised advice on how to get the most from your campaigns, your emails can become an effective tool for improving engagement.

Successful email campaigns usually have some key factors in common. Here are some ideas to help get your email campaigns off to a flying start:

- **Have a clear 'call to action'** – keep it simple, with easy-to-see links and concise content that encourages your recipient to take the desired action.

- **Make it relevant** – segment your audience into logical groupings based on their interests, industry sector etc and create separate campaigns for each segment to ensure your email content is relevant to them.

- **Be professional but personal** – send your emails from a named person in your team and, when appropriate, include other names and photos in your content. Your contacts will feel happier knowing they're dealing with real people and not a faceless organisation.

- **Use links effectively** – as well as using prominent calls to action, don't forget to include links to your social channels so your contacts have other ways to interact with you.

- **Test before you send** – to avoid making silly mistakes in your emails, send several test emails before you launch your campaign, ideally to different devices and email clients. Testing your campaign is easy with a professional email marketing platform like Smart Messenger from 101.

- **Keep your database current** – if your campaigns get a lot of bounces or unsubscribes, your rating with email providers like Gmail will go down and your emails may be marked as spam.

- **Time it right** – try to time your campaign to arrive when it's most likely to be opened and read. The reporting feature in platforms like Smart Messenger will help you to understand the best times to send your campaigns.

- **Talk to us** – we'd love to hear about your business and what you want to achieve. We are happy to give free advice, whether you are just starting with email marketing or looking to boost your future campaigns. Call us on 01603 858250.

What should I write about in my emails?

If you're wondering what sort of content to create for your email campaigns, bear in mind that good emails are informative, engaging and helpful.

Here are some pointers to get you started:

- **Find out what your audience wants to know and provide the answers**
  Build up a bank of content that answers the questions you're most commonly asked by customers and prospects. Use this content as the basis for individual campaigns that give recipients information they will find useful.

- **Share your expertise**
  Use your company's expertise and industry knowledge to build trust by providing tips, advice and insights that will be of interest to your target market.

- **Demonstrate how your business solves problems for people like them**
  Share case studies and customer testimonials to provide social proof that you provide excellent solutions for businesses or consumers and explain what the benefits have been.

- **Keep it simple**
  Remember to keep your email copy clear and concise. Include links to relevant content on your website when you want to give your recipients more detailed information about a topic.

- **Evaluate your campaign**
  Use the reporting tools in your email marketing platform to evaluate which emails have been most successful, including the most-clicked links to identify particularly engaging topics. Use this knowledge to inform future campaign themes.

Our Smart Messenger team at 101 in Norwich has helped hundreds of clients to get the most from their email campaigns and we are always happy to provide free advice on content development and reporting.

How can I encourage more people to open my emails?

The more people who open your email, the more successful your campaign is likely to be. You can take a few simple steps to improve your email open rate:

- **Sender Name:** The first thing you see when an email arrives is the sender's name. Choosing a friendly sender name is essential and could mean the difference between someone opening your email or deleting it. Ideally, choose the name of a person in your team who the recipient will recognise when the email arrives. Or, if your brand is trusted and well-known, you could use your company name as your 'friendly sender' name.

- **Subject Line:** Your email's subject line needs to be simple, relevant and interesting. Avoid overusing words, terms or symbols that are likely to trigger spam filters to reject your mail such as '100% free', 'hurry', 'last chance', 'bargain', 'urgent' or using too many asterisks, pound or dollar signs. It's worth noting that emojis in subject lines don't always appear as you might expect, so check how your email looks on different platforms by sending test emails before you publish your campaign.

- **Preheader:** The preheader is the snippet of text that appears below the subject line in your recipient's inbox. Make sure it complements the subject line, rather than repeating it. Keep it short, sweet and relevant, remembering to avoid spammy words and phrases.

- **Preview Pane:** The preview pane reveals the first part of your email, including images and links. Try to outline all the key content of your email within this space. With a highly visible and compelling call to action in this area, your recipients may click and fast-track themselves to your website without ever opening your email fully!

How can I stop my emails from going to spam?

When you've invested time and money in growing your marketing database and crafting the perfect campaign, you'll want to do all you can to ensure your emails reach their recipients and do not get stopped by spam filters. Email providers use spam filters to protect users from malicious emails that capture personal data and cause harm. Before your campaign reaches your recipients' inboxes, your email will go through the spam filter of every recipient's provider. It's your job to do all you can to ensure it doesn't get caught up in any of those filters.

Here are some of the most common reasons why your emails may be marked as spam:

- Your campaign lacks proper authentication
- Your recipients have marked your emails as spam
- Your email is not compliant with data protection regulations
- You haven't followed best practice advice when including images or videos
- The wording of your Subject Line appears untrustworthy to spam filters
- Your email copy appears untrustworthy to spam filters
- You have included bad or questionable links in your campaign
- Your IP address is associated with previous spammy campaigns

When you have a good understanding of <u>what is classed as spam</u>, there is preventative action you can take. We offer free help and advice on how to prevent your emails from being stopped by spam filters. We also offer email marketing training courses for individuals or teams to help you get to grips with all aspects of this important topic.

Need help with email marketing? Call our friendly team on 01603 858250 or visit www.smartmessenger.co.uk.

What are my email marketing obligations under GDPR and the UK Data Protection Act?

Since Brexit, the Data Protection Act 2018 (not the GDPR) controls how personal information is used by organisations and businesses in the UK. It's important to familiarise yourself with your legal responsibilities with regard to data protection as your email marketing must be compliant with the regulations.

A key obligation for email marketers is to ensure that opting out of receiving emails from you should be as easy for recipients as it was for them to opt in. In practice, this means including an easy-to-find unsubscribe link in all your emails. The good news is, the Smart Messenger email marketing platform from 101 won't let you send an email without including an unsubscribe link.

At 101, we take data protection and security very seriously. Data is core to our services and our practices are in line with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Our trained and accredited in-house data protection staff can discuss any aspect of data protection with you to help you ensure your campaigns are compliant.

Email Marketing Checklist

You'll want to ensure your emails look polished, read well, and are completely error-free. To support you with this, we've compiled a comprehensive checklist to follow before sending out your campaigns.

1. **Proofread and edit -** Double-check your email content for grammar, spelling errors and formatting issues to ensure your message is clear and error-free. For a fresh pair of eyes on your campaign, send a test email to a colleague and ask them to look it over before you send the whole campaign. For extra peace of mind, at Smart Messenger our dedicated account managers are always happy to carry out a quick sanity check on clients' emails.

2. **Include a clear, concise subject line and preheader -** Create a compelling subject line that accurately represents your email's content and encourages recipients to open it. Always include a preheader that complements the subject line and provides additional context or value to entice recipients to open the email.

3. **Use personalisation and segmentation -** Whenever possible, send your emails from a named person in your organisation for a more personal touch. And use personalisation tags to address recipients by their names or include other relevant details, such as their company name or location. Segment your email list based on specific criteria for targeted messaging, such as their city, industry sector or special interest.

4. **Include Calls-To-Action (CTAs) -** Include clear and prominent CTAs within your email, making it easy for recipients to take the desired action. Ensure your CTA stands out visually and has a persuasive (but non-spammy) message.

5. **Make sure your content is relevant and engaging** - Provide valuable and relevant content that aligns with your audience's interests and needs. Use engaging visuals, videos, or interactive elements where appropriate. Tip: Double check you haven't used spammy phrases like 'act now', 'hurry', 'time limited offer', which are likely to be spotted by spam filters and may result in your email landing in the recipient's junk folder. Get more advice on avoiding spam filters.

6. **Check links and tracking** - Verify that all the hyperlinks in your email are in the right places and that they work correctly, leading to the intended landing pages or resources. Set up tracking for links and campaign performance measurement. Tip: Always check all the links in your emails when you do your test sends before launching the campaign. You'll be surprised what you pick up at this stage!

7. **Is your styling and design consistent?** - Ensure your email template reflects your brand's visual identity, including logo placement, colours, and fonts. Maintain consistency across all elements. Tip: Professional email marketing platforms like Smart Messenger include easy-to-use drag and drop template editors so you can add the elements you require and customise templates with your corporate styling. We also offer a template design service for clients who need a little extra help.

8. **Remove unwanted branding -** Make sure your email carries your own branding and not that of your email service provider! Tip: Use an email service provider that allows you to remove their branding from your templates and use your own domain for sending emails. This reinforces your brand identity and professionalism. Smart Messenger's logo never appears on clients' emails and

templates are fully customisable to reflect your branding. This makes us an ideal choice for those looking for <u>UK Mailchimp alternatives</u>.

9. **Include alt tags on images -** Use alt tags for all images in your email. These tags provide alternative text descriptions that appear if the images don't load properly. Tip: Alt tags help convey the meaning and purpose of the images, ensuring recipients understand the intended message even without the visual element.

10. **Test and preview your campaign -** Last, but not least, before sending your campaign, send test emails to different accounts to review the overall appearance, check links, and ensure everything functions as intended. Tip: Professional email marketing platforms like Smart Messenger enable you to send test messages to multiple contacts and will automatically optimise your design for mobiles.

How much does email marketing cost?

Choosing a professional platform like Smart Messenger provides a much more <u>cost-effective email marketing solution</u> than you might imagine. We offer three subscription options starting at just £10 per month, depending on the level of functionality you require and the volume of emails you want to send. You can use the <u>Pricing Comparison tool</u> on the Smart Messenger website to compare plans and work out how much to budget for your email marketing campaigns.

How do I choose an email marketing platform?

You need to find the right email marketing platform for your business, but which one should you choose? We believe Smart Messenger from 101 is the <u>best email marketing software</u> platform for small and medium-sized businesses in the UK. Here's why:

- Smart Messenger is a user-friendly yet powerful email marketing solution that includes free customisable templates, drag and drop editors, email automation plus simple landing page and web form builders.

- Testing, tracking and reporting tools are all included in the platform.

- It is a UK-based service and we are stringent about data protection.

- We offer a bespoke template design service for just £149. We can also manage whole campaigns from start to finish, including reporting.

- All clients receive free training and unlimited <u>'just call us' support</u> from our knowledgeable Smart Messenger team at 101 in Norwich, Norfolk. We'll ensure you never have to struggle with an email campaign on your own again!

How do I get started with Smart Messenger email marketing?

It's really easy to set up a Smart Messenger account. Simply get in touch via our <u>enquiry form</u> or call 01603 858250. It takes just a couple of days (sometimes even less) to get your account up and running, ready for use.

If you need us to create a bespoke template for your business, we'll ask for your logos, brand colours, images you wish to use and details of how you would like the template to be structured. We will create a bespoke email marketing template for you within two or three working days. With our help, you could have your first email campaign up and running in no time at all.

About Smart Messenger

Smart Messenger from 101 is a comprehensive, professional email marketing package for businesses of all sizes. Our platform is trusted by hundreds of UK organisations to help them drive business and achieve their goals. Our service is 100% UK-based and we take pride in the exceptional level of personalised support we provide to clients.

Our friendly team of experts is always just a phone call away, offering unlimited support and advice.

Need help with your email marketing? Feel free to contact us:

Tel: 01603 858250 | Email: <u>communicate@smartmessenger.co.uk</u>
<u>www.smartmessenger.co.uk</u>