

How A/B Testing Maximizes Email Marketing

Are your marketing campaigns performing as well as they could be? If a campaign isn't meeting expectations or providing satisfactory results, there's always the potential to improve it. The challenge is figuring out which tweaks will boost performance. The only way to know for sure is to test them. That's where A/B testing comes in.

What is A/B Testing in Email Marketing?

A/B testing, also called split testing, is an effective and easy way to improve the performance of your email marketing campaigns. A/B testing is a marketing experiment where you send two versions of the same email to a small percentage of your total recipients to determine which variation performs better. Performance is best measured by the open rate and click-through rate, meaning the reader has clicked over to your website.

Do's and Don'ts of A/B Testing

- **Pick one variable to test at a time:** While you may want to test several messages, it's important to test only one thing at a time to get accurate results.
- **Identify your goal:** Start by formulating a hypothesis – define what you want to improve and why you think the changes will contribute positively to your desired outcome. If your goal is to increase visibility of your brand, optimize for open rate. If you'd like more visitors to your website, test for the number of clicks.
- **Create a "control" and a "challenger":** Set up an unaltered version of your email as your control scenario, then build a challenger – the altered email. A challenger could have a different subject line or sender name, for instance.
- **Split your sample groups equally and randomly:** You'll need to test with two or more audiences that are equal and random, and are a subset of your entire list. Luckily, most e-marketing platforms have tools that can automatically split traffic equally to your variations so each variation gets a random sampling of visitors.
- **Analyze your results:** Although you probably will look at a variety of metrics, stay focused on the primary goal you established at the beginning. For example, if you are trying to determine which image garners the most clicks, don't worry so much about open rates for that campaign.

Options for Email Split Testing

You can test a variety of variables, and each one is worth focusing on to ensure you are getting the most bang for your buck from your email marketing efforts. Here are a few things you can analyze with A/B testing to improve your campaign's overall performance.



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'From' Name

As we all know, any email with a suspicious or unfamiliar "From" name is most likely to get tossed right in the trash, so your sender or From name is important. Are your subscribers more likely to open an email that is from your law firm or from an individual in the firm? This is a simple but extremely useful A/B test to conduct, because if recipients are scared away by the From name, you've lost all chances of your content being seen.

Email Subject Line

Subject lines can make or break your email campaigns and are often the reason people decide to open your email – or delete it. If the Subject line is lackluster or uninteresting, the email will probably go to the recipient's trash bin without any further thought. A/B testing subject lines can increase your chances of getting people to open your email and ultimately click to your website. Does a Subject line with an incentive or teaser work best? Does one topic resonate better than another? Does a Subject line in the form of a question have more success? Does personalizing the Subject line increase engagement? Testing different styles and tactics can help you figure out what works well for your audience.

Content

Once you've gotten your recipient to open your email, you want to be sure your design and layout are inviting. Do recipients prefer a campaign that contains a GIF or one with static images? Are they more likely to click on a linked image or linked text? Does one text color elicit a click better than another? There are many elements that you can test in the body of the email, including section titles, content order, article length, topics, call-to-action buttons, images and color schemes.

Send Time

Email send times can have a substantial impact on open and click rates. Is it better to send your campaign at 3 p.m. on Tuesday or 8 a.m. Thursday? Through A/B testing, you can determine what day and time elicits the most opens from your audience.

A/B testing is a great tool to **keep your email campaigns from getting stale**. A/B testing allows you to find new pockets of opportunity, one variable at a time. Try a flashy Subject line tomorrow against your usual formula, and you may be surprised by the results.

Need help setting up your email marketing program? Contact me, **Jennifer Faivre**, at jfaivre@jaffepr.com.