

## Back to Basics: Top 10 Email Greatest Hits

The summer season is a perfect time to step back and take a look at email marketing basics. Whether you're new to email marketing, or a veteran marketer who may have forgotten a few things over the years, it's important that you master these essential elements so you can power through summer and enter the busy fall season strong.

With that in mind, the experts at Constant Contact have compiled their 10 greatest hits for excellent emails.

- 1. Build a quality list** — You must get explicit permission from your subscribers if you want to add them to your email list. You've heard this before, but there's a reason we keep repeating it. This is the golden rule of email marketing. Without permission, you're sending spam, which isn't good for your reputation or your business. Beyond permission, though, it's important to maintain a clean subscriber list free of outdated or inactive email addresses. Your list is a dynamic document, so look to keep [building your email list](#), especially on-site when patrons are already engaged with your business. At the same time, take a look at your open statistics and find out who on your list seems to have lost interest and no longer opens your emails. You can send those people a reminder email asking if they're still interested in receiving your newsletter.
- 2. Segment your list** — A great email list will only take you so far. Every list is made up of unique individuals with specific needs and interests. By taking the time to identify some of these unique differences and segment your list into groups, you can more easily share content that is relevant to each group. Segmenting your list will greatly increase your open and click-through rates. For example, perhaps you operate a neighborhood pizzeria and you've created segments of your list for certain locations, family subscribers, and sports fans. You can send an email with a lunch special for subscribers who work in a specific area, another email to families that promotes a free kids' pizza, and another to sports fans that contains a special game-night offer.
- 3. Create compelling content** — You can segment your list a dozen different ways, but if your content is dull or irrelevant, your segmentation just won't matter. Your content needs to engage, compel, and entice your readers to read more and take some type of action. Not only must it be relevant to the subscribers, it must be interesting. No one has time to sit around reading boring articles or purely promotional advertisements. Write about what you know and what your readers care about, and try to keep it fun.
- 4. Devise a great subject line** — The subject line may seem like a last-minute detail, but it should be considered with as much thought as the rest of your email content. In fact, the subject line is critical to getting your email opened. The best subject lines are brief (roughly five-to-eight words), informative, and personal. A vague, boring subject line like "Big Al's Barbeque Newsletter" is far less compelling than "Big Al's 5 Best BBQ Secrets, Plus a Special Offer." Review your content and pull out the one or two most interesting elements to include in your subject line.
- 5. Tell them to act** — Another important basic is the call to action. This is where you tell your readers what you want them to do, when to do it, and how to do it. For example, if your restaurant is



hosting a wine dinner, your email call to action might be “Click here or call to reserve your table now.” This call to action is specific, conveys urgency, and clearly directs recipients on how to accomplish it.

**6. Consider design** — The way your email looks can greatly impact readers’ enjoyment of the content. If it’s too busy, with multiple colors and fonts, you risk turning your readers off. Consider the design choices you’ve made and whether there’s room for improvement. Limit your fonts to one or two styles and use color judiciously. Include just enough copy to get your point across, then include links where the reader can go for more. Use white space — it serves as a “resting place” for the eye and helps keep your content organized. Keep your design consistent in all your email communications to help reinforce your brand — and to set expectations for readers about where they can find certain information in each issue.

**7. Remember your brand** — With the right awareness and reputation, your brand can influence perception and attract new customers. In order to reinforce your brand, your emails should be consistent and professional both visually and in the tone of your content. Some tips to remember: Include your logo in the same place in every email; use the same fonts, colors, and verbiage you use on your website, in your social media marketing efforts, and in your printed collateral; and include the name of your restaurant in the “From” line of every email.

**8. Integrate social media** — Social media has become a very effective method for communicating with your network of customers, prospects, and peers. As you develop your email marketing campaigns, consider how best to integrate social media. You can do this in several ways, but the easiest is to share your email newsletters, event invitations, or surveys with your networks on Twitter or Facebook. Constant Contact offers the ability to automatically shorten your archived

emails or event URLs and post them to Twitter. For other simple ways to integrate social media, check out the [Constant Contact Social Media Resource Center](#).

**9. Deliver what you promised** — Even the most compelling newsletter can falter if the promised consistency, frequency, or content changes. Consistency and frequency are important. Communicate too infrequently and subscribers will forget about your business. Reach out too often and they will get annoyed. Emails sent at random intervals are ineffective and a waste of time. If your subscribers sign up to receive a monthly newsletter about culinary traditions and recipes, but what they get is one newsletter every three or four months — or worse, an email every week heavy on promotional content — they likely won’t be subscribers for long.

**10. Engage your subscribers** — Don’t forget there are real people reading your emails. Those people have interesting stories, valuable feedback, and strong opinions to share. Invite readers to submit their stories about their favorite culinary experience or best family recipe. Then feature one story each month with the subscriber’s name and photo. Or, include short polls in each newsletter asking for subscribers’ opinions on topics of interest to them. Share the results in the next issue along with a new question. By inviting your subscribers to participate, you’re not only collecting great new and highly relevant content, you’re starting a dialogue with customers that builds loyal, lasting relationships.

These basics are the foundation of your email marketing strategy. Without them, your efforts won’t amount to much. If you think about it, it’s like cooking a fantastic meal. You start with basic quality ingredients. Then add a little spice, a little texture, some color, and top-quality service. And the end result is a mouth-watering dish and a fabulous dining experience that compels your customers to come back for more.

For more email marketing tips, please visit the Sysco–Constant Contact website:

<http://sysco.constantcontact.com>