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# **NC STATE EMAIL MARKETING BEST PRACTICES**

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# Email Marketing Terminology

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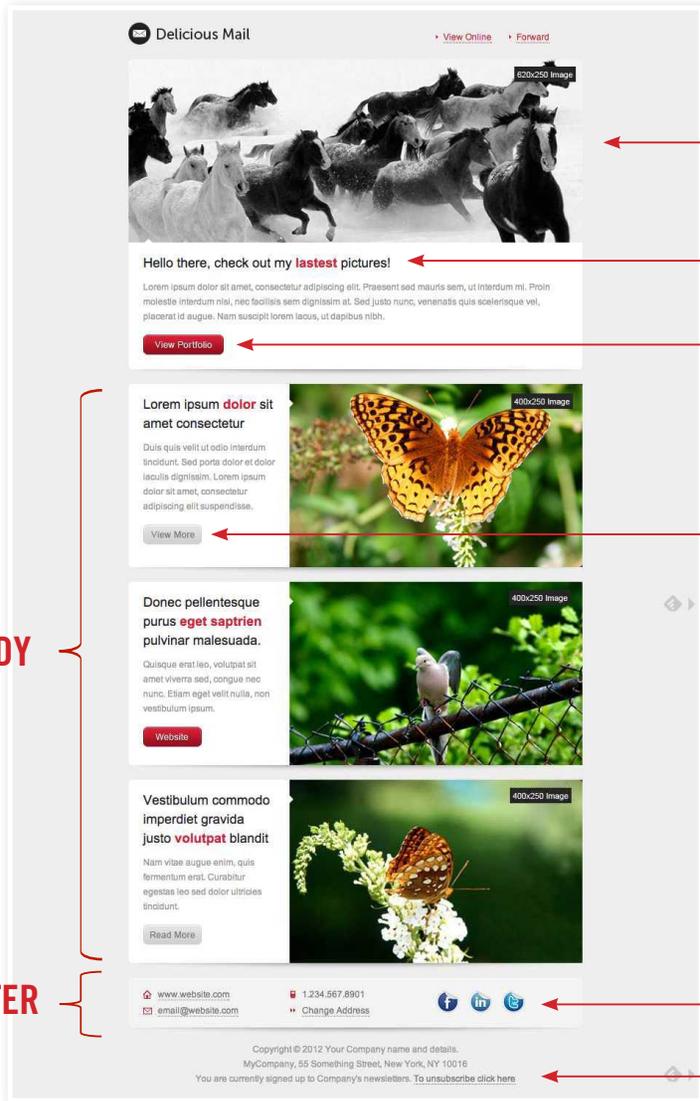
- ◆ **SENT EMAILS** This is the number of emails you sent. It is necessary to know this number in order to calculate other subsequent performance metrics.
- ◆ **DELIVERY RATE** The percentage of messages that were delivered to contacts' inboxes.
- ◆ **OPEN RATE** This is the percentage of the total number of list subscribers who opened the e-mail message. The desired open rate metric is 20% and above. Have direct subject lines that demand action from the target audience.
- ◆ **CLICK-THROUGH RATE** This is the percentage of recipients that click on a link included in the email.
- ◆ **CONVERSION RATE** A conversion rate is the percentage of potential visitors performing the desired action on your website, whether the action is buying a product, filling out a form, or some other goal of the web page.

# Email Marketing Terminology

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Lorem ipsum...

PREVIEW TEXT



HEADER IMAGE

HEADLINE

CALL-TO-ACTION (CTA)

SECONDARY CTA

BODY

FOOTER

SHARE WITH YOUR NETWORK LINKS

UNSUBSCRIBE LINK

# Building an Email List

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## ◆ USE EMBEDDED SIGN UP FORMS ON YOUR WEBSITE

▷ A best practice is to make the sign-up form global, i.e., in the same place on every page.

## ◆ UTILIZE SOCIAL MEDIA

▷ Add email subscription forms to your Facebook page.

▷ Add social share buttons to email messages. Most email service providers have a Share With Your Network (“SWYN”) functionality that makes this very easy.

## ◆ TARGETED COLLECTION

▷ Collect email addresses whenever you offer valuable content for download on your website.

» This could be a white paper, e-book, or other valuable information.

## ◆ NETWORKING

▷ Visit trade shows, seminars, and events to collect email addresses. This can be done via a hard copy sign-up list or via business cards collected by offering an incentive (entry to win a prize, etc.).

# Email List Health

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## ◆ WHAT IS “EMAIL LIST HEALTH?”

- ▷ Email list health is defined by the portion of engaged contacts (users opening, and hopefully clicking on, your emails) vs. unengaged contacts.
  - » A healthy list has many more engaged users than unengaged users.

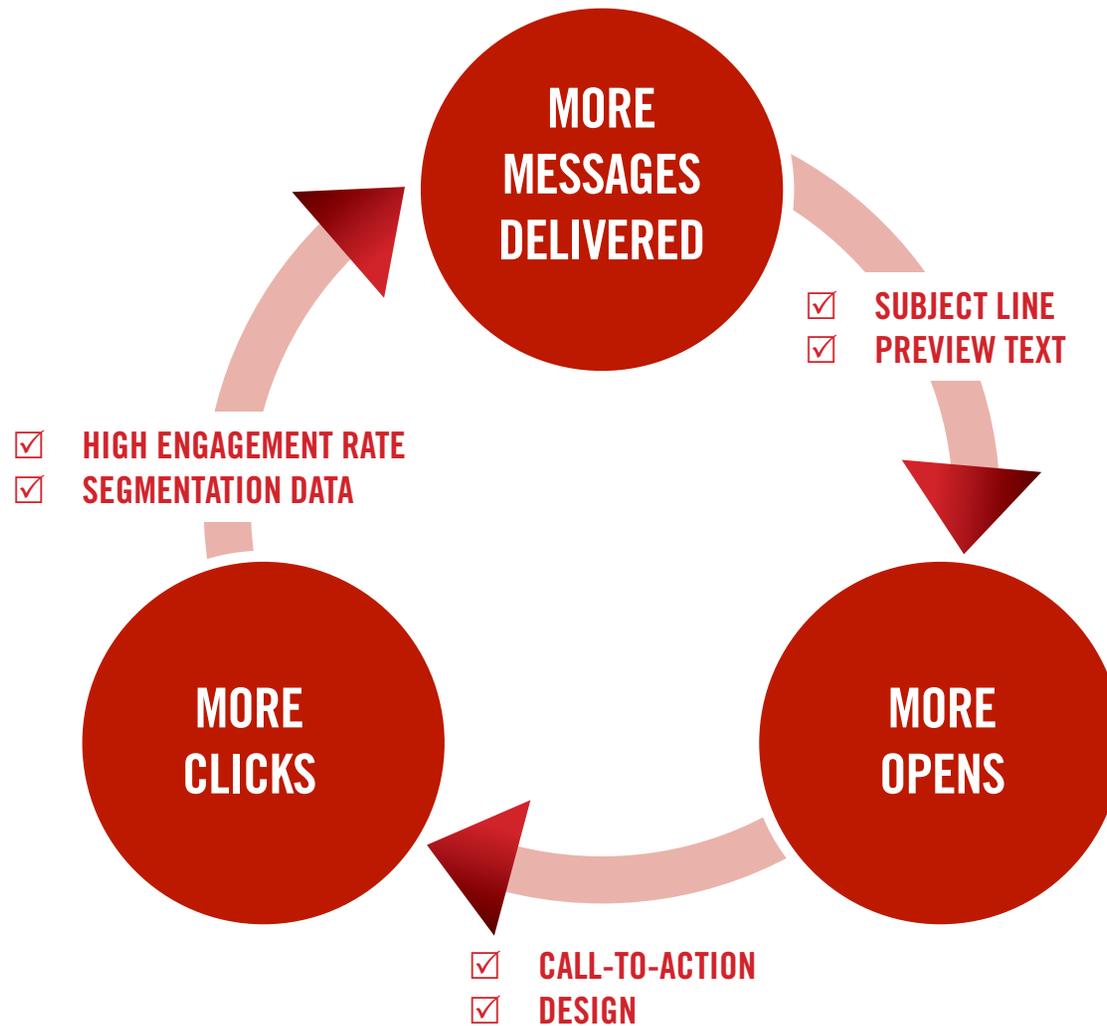
## ◆ WHY IS LIST HEALTH IMPORTANT?

- ▷ Because engagement rate is a significant factor influencing deliverability (the number of emails making it to your contacts' inboxes).
  - » Engagement rate is comprised of open rate and click-through rate (CTR), with CTR being more heavily weighted.

# Email List Health

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*This graphic explains how deliverability and engagement are intertwined.*



# Keeping Your List Healthy

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*TO KEEP YOUR LIST HEALTHY, ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:*

## ◆ DO YOU HAVE AN UNSUBSCRIBE LINK IN ALL OF YOUR EMAILS?

- ▷ Having unsubscribe links in all emails is the law.
- ▷ It's also a best practice to make this link easily accessible. If it isn't, this could make it hard for unengaged contacts to remove themselves from your list, bringing down your engagement rates.

## ◆ DID EVERYBODY ON THIS LIST HAVE A PRIOR RELATIONSHIP WITH NC STATE OR OPT-IN TO RECEIVE THESE EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS?

- ▷ If the answer is no, the list should be removed and not sent any emails. Doing so could negatively affect your ability to send emails or even result in a suspension of your account.

## ◆ HAVE YOU “SCRUBBED” YOUR LIST LATELY?

- ▷ Many email service providers do this automatically, but you might have to do it manually. Scrubbing is the process of separating contacts who have not opened or clicked on your messages in a long time (6 mos. is a good standard). This is the most immediate way to increase your deliverability rate.
- ▷ To do this, you can send an email to these contacts asking if they want to remain on your list by clicking a link in the email (you'll need a corresponding Thank You page on your site). Those who don't click are then removed from your list.

# Keeping Your List Healthy

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## ◆ DID YOU PURCHASE OR RENT THE LIST FROM A THIRD PARTY?

- ▷ In general, it is NOT a best practice to purchase or rent email lists.
- ▷ If you do purchase or rent a list, confirm that the contacts were subscribed via the “double opt-in” method. This method involves sending an additional email to the contact asking them to click a link to confirm their subscription.

## ◆ HAVE YOU EMAILED THESE CONTACTS WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

- ▷ If you haven't, there is likely to be a much higher rate of emails being marked as spam, or being sent there by a contact's email program. This can negatively affect delivery rates.

# Building an Email Message: The DO's and DON'Ts

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## ◆ FOCUS ON THE CALL-TO-ACTION (CTA).

- ▷ This is what you want contacts to do and is the purpose of your email. Clicking through to read more on your website, sign-up for an event, or make a donation, are all examples of common CTAs.
- ▷ If you don't have a strong call-to-action you might not need to send an email in the first place.
- ▷ A strong CTA will result in high engagement and deliverability rates for your campaign.
- ▷ Make the CTA very visible and easily clickable.
  - » Including an image-based CTA (a button for example) and one text hyperlink CTA will ensure that contacts with and without images enabled have the highest likelihood of clicking through.

## ◆ USE A MIXTURE OF IMAGES AND TEXT IN YOUR DESIGN.

- ▷ This will ensure your emails are visually engaging as well as delivering your key message.
- ▷ Email programs (Outlook, Mac Mail, Gmail, Yahoo, etc.) are less likely to consider messages of this type to be spam.
- ▷ User your space wisely.
  - » Consider making your headline text, as opposed to part of an image, if possible.
  - » Images don't have to be the full width of the email. Placing images beside important text can help readers locate key info more easily.
  - » Keeping header images less than 300 pixels tall will result in the content being visible to users who have message previews enabled.

# Building an Email Message: The DO's and DON'Ts (con't)

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## ◆ **USE A STRONG AND SUCCINCT SUBJECT LINE WITHOUT SPAM KEYWORDS OR CAPS.**

- ▷ Your subject line should relate, but not be identical, to your CTA.
- ▷ Make the content of the email clear to your contacts in the subject line.
- ▷ Common spam keywords are: free, best offer, final, or act now.

## ◆ **USE ALT TEXT BEHIND IMAGES IN YOUR EMAIL.**

- ▷ Choose the text wisely as this will be what is seen by subscribers who do not enable images.
- ▷ For stock templates offered by your email marketing software, alt text is usually applied automatically, deriving from the image file name. If you are building a custom template yourself, you'll need to add alt text manually.

## ◆ **LEAVE SPACE AT THE VERY TOP OF THE TEMPLATE FOR PREVIEW TEXT (AKA PRE-HEADER).**

- ▷ This should also closely relate to the CTA. It is the text that will display to contacts who have their email programs set to show a short preview of messages (Gmail does this by default).

## ◆ **KEEP THE WIDTH OF EMAILS UNDER 650 PIXELS.**

- ▷ This ensures maximum readability across devices (mobile phones, tablets, various monitor sizes).

# Building an Email Message: The DO's and DON'Ts (con't)

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- ◆ **CREATE AN ACCOMPANYING PLAIN EMAIL TEMPLATE.**

- ▷ This will help keep spam rates low by ensuring contacts who have their email programs set to only receive text-based emails receive your messages.

- ◆ **INCLUDE AN UNSUBSCRIBE LINK, PHYSICAL BUSINESS ADDRESS, AND COMPANY NAME AT THE BOTTOM OF *ALL* EMAILS.**

- ▷ Most email marketing platforms require this.
- ▷ The transparency of this information creates trust with your contacts.

# Evaluating Performance

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- ◆ Email marketing metrics help you determine if your campaigns are effective.
- ◆ Most Email Marketing Providers' (EMP) dashboards track the following metrics:

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1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
Sent	Delivery Rate	Open Rate	Click Rate	Conversion Rate	Total Revenue
<b>1,287</b>	<b>93.1%</b>	<b>26.0%</b>	<b>30.4%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
	1,198	312	95	0	

 [View Full Message Report](#)

## Associated Delivery Groups

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# Evaluating Performance

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*BELOW ARE SOME BENCHMARK PERFORMANCE METRICS GOALS TO SHOOT FOR:*

◆ **DELIVERY RATE: 75% AND ABOVE**

◆ **OPEN RATE: 20% AND ABOVE**

◆ **CLICK-THROUGH RATE (CTR): 20% AND ABOVE**

◆ **CONVERSION RATE** Since conversions can be different things and also because they take place on your website, they are influenced by many other factors and a universal benchmark is difficult to define. However, it is important to track conversion rates for email marketing vs. other marketing channels (display advertising, organic & paid search, etc.), so you can see what's working and what isn't in order to allocate your resources effectively.

# Advanced Email Marketing Strategies

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- ◆ **A/B SPLIT TESTING** is the process of varying one element in an email (subj. line, call-to-action, image) and determining which version of the message resulted in more conversions so that future messages are most optimized.

## A few common A/B split tests are:

- ▷ Trying different times of day or days of the week.
  - ▷ Experimenting with different calls-to-action. “Sign-Up Now” or “Learn More,” for example.
  - ▷ Trying different subject line styles. To the point, fewer words; or more descriptive, more words?
- ◆ **SEGMENTATION** is simply organizing or dividing the mailing list contact profile attributes for the goal of targeting tailored email campaigns to the audience that will respond and engage with the email content.
    - ▷ **Some traditional segments:** new subscribers, openers, non-openers, clickers.
    - ▷ **More detailed segments:** interest level, education level, email type (Gmail, Yahoo), gender, age, and geographical location.