

4 Reasons Why Your Emails Aren't Opened (And how to fix it.)

Imagine this: You sent an email to your entire list and you later check to see the performance of it. You discover your open rate was abysmal. Open rates are that ugly metric that no marketer wants to see drop, but often it does and they face the truth that no one opens their emails. I will explain four reasons why your open rates suck and how you can fix it.

Let's start with a quick explanation about how an email open rate is actually measured.

Within every email message sent, a super small image is included and is unique to the recipient of a specific broadcast. Whenever this image is loaded, a very quick, behind-the-scenes transaction takes place recording whether that message was loaded to the server. In essence, when someone opens your message, this permits the images to load, and it is documented that the recipient opened your email.

Blame it on the spammers (interesting spam trends on that link) for ruining a good thing; not all email clients load the tiny, virtually invisible image. Not to mention, some people can feel a bit freaked out when their email software alerts them to privacy risks in allowing images. Because of this, a majority of people are not accurately measured when a marketer reviews their email open rates. Typically, **you should expect between 15-35% open rate** depending on the content, list engagement and the relevance to the subscribers.

A common question we receive from users is about **how to improve their email open rate**. Assuming you send messages in HTML, your list isn't aged like fine wine and you adhere to suggested sending practices — you may not even have an open rate problem at all. It never hurts to improve, though.

Here are four reasons why your emails are not being opened:

1. You send them junk.

Would you be happy sending the stuff you send to your list of friends and family? If not, think about a different way to touch base with your contacts and provide something of relevance. Not sure if you send junk? If your email message is “useful,” it's resourceful and people *want* to save and archive it. If your message is “interesting” it's funny, relevant and usually good for forwarding to their contacts. If your message is *neither* interesting or useful ... it's junk.

2. Unoriginal, Boring Subject Lines.

People are tired of receiving the same emails with the same boring subject lines. *They get it.* Really, that's why they don't bother reading them. Be imaginative and creative and make people think when they read your subject line. Linkbaiting is one way to invoke a response out of people with subject lines and titles. Read up on how you can leverage Linkbait to get people to read your content (even if it's lame) from ProBlogger.

3. Still emailing customers from 1998?!

People get up and leave their email addresses often especially when anyone can obtain an aol.com, yahoo.com, gmail.com or live.com email in seconds free. You could be emailing their less than trusting email address instead of their primary email address. Email permission tends to expire in about 10 months – so the more opportunities to confirm and re-confirm their interest (beyond an opt-out link), the better. To fix this, consider using an alternative follow-up campaign (phone/direct mail) to have people update their contact information and re-opt-in to your marketing. Disciplined email marketing pays off when you have a truly engaged, interested and hungry list – and you can really cater to the people who matter.

4. You send just like the rest of 'em.

We all get our nighttime to morning email flood. I admit, sometimes I just use my Delete key more liberally during those hours and my reply button during the daytime. To fix this, try mixing up and allowing people to choose if they want your message in the morning, in the evening or mid-day. With Infusionsoft, you can selectively target and build conditions this way. It's okay to shift your email marketing patterns once in a while ... P90X capitalizes on this with muscle confusion.

There's also one important piece I missed. **Don't send emails to your entire list!** This is the whole point of email marketing 2.0, where you slice and dice your email list into relevant, targeted groups and send to those groups of users where the message is attractive, engaging and relevant.

Not everyone's open rates will always improve. It's fact. However, the more you pay close attention to the result of your emails and more importantly — your recipients' expectations and satisfaction – the **more your email open rates will rise** with your fine-tuning.