

Make Your Fundraising E-Mails Stand Out

E-mail marketing, on its own, isn't enough. You need marketing automation to make your donor data useful.

By John Oechsle

The average person checks e-mail about 15 times per day. It's safe to assume that your donors, prospects, and other customers are getting their fair share of e-mail communication. So, how can your e-mails stand out?

The information in your customer relationship management (CRM) system is incredibly valuable, and it's time to tap that value to enhance your e-mails. E-mail marketing can be as powerful a tool today as it's ever been, but it can't exist on an island anymore. Instead, consider the following ways to integrate your e-mails with marketing automation. Doing so will maximize your results.

The standard e-mail campaigns of yore

Back in the day, it was enough to simply have an e-mail campaign. You could reach out with a generic subject line and greeting such as "Dear Friend," and the message would get across.

Now that e-mail capabilities and our target audiences have matured, so must our e-mail marketing tactics. Targeted e-mail marketing with personalization that leverages automation and the data from your CRM will put you in the best place to secure click-throughs and grow supporters.

Actionable customer data & measurement

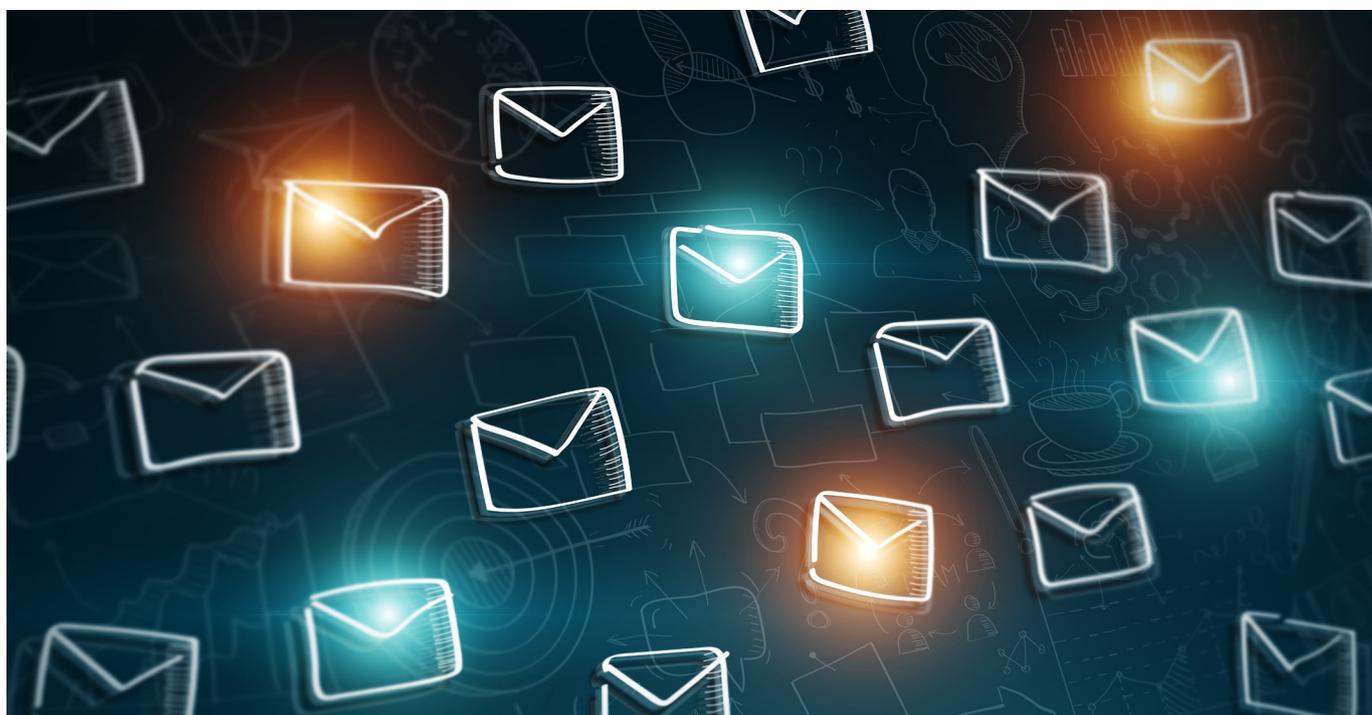
Your CRM is full of fantastic, juicy data just waiting to be analyzed and used to help you grow supporters. Below are a few types of information gathered through marketing automation and likely found in your CRM that could help you build stronger e-mail campaigns:

Open rate: This is the percentage of people who actually open the e-mail you send. Not only that, but your CRM will be able to identify *which* people are opening your e-mails for an even deeper dive into your base customer.

CTR: The click-through rate, or CTR, is how many people not just opened your e-mail but clicked on the link inside to navigate to your website or landing page. This number can show you how compelling your content and calls to action are.

Navigation: From the click-through to your website, you can now follow people's journey. You can track where they visited on your website and how they got to each page.

Length of visit: You'll know how long your customers spend on each page, as well as how long they spend in total on your website.



Outcome: You'll also be able to track the marketing funnel and determine the outcome of the visit, such as if the customer dropped out and left your website or made a donation.

All this indispensable information will be captured and stored. By pairing this captured information with marketing automation, you'll be able to take additional steps to catch people's attention and build the relationship.

Personalization

One way marketing automation helps you improve your e-mails is through personalization. Donors today expect a lot from the organizations they support. An effective lead-nurturing program can provide a completely tailored marketing experience to meet each person's needs.

In research from Statista (statista.com), e-mails without personalization showed an open rate of 13.1%, while personalized e-mails boasted an 18.8% open rate. Using marketing automation to personalize communication with your customers will pay off. Personalization can include anything from using the person's name and telling how you used a recent donation to making a new ask based on the person's search history and interest.

Segmentation & testing

With the information you collect from your CRM, you'll also be able to spot similarities between your supporters and prospects. This will allow for segmentation (or grouping) of people with similar traits including demographics, donation history, and open or CTR rates.

You can then develop separate campaigns for each segmented group, targeting specific actions or interests for each e-mail campaign. According to DMA's "National Client E-Mail Survey" (emailstatcenter.com), a segmented e-mail campaign can drive as much as a 760% increase in revenue compared to a one-size-fits-all campaign.

Blending segmentation with marketing automation lets you adapt to people's needs and test various approaches. You can release different subject lines for specific groups as an A/B test. You can address retention and engage customers who have stopped opening e-mails by testing a new and refreshed e-mail template. This will help you cultivate relationships and retain donors where previous marketing efforts may have fallen flat.

“Your CRM is full of fantastic, juicy data.”

“This number shows you how compelling your content is.”

Important Trends

All this information and automation can help you identify trends in your donor cycles. Perhaps e-mails that announce a special offer have the largest open rate and lead to the biggest boost in donations. Or maybe you'll discover that the CTR is the highest when an e-mail links to a blog post with interesting and useful information. Through use of marketing automation and your CRM, you can identify these trends and then use them to predict future performance of e-mail campaigns and to help set goals and expectations.

Open for business

E-mail marketing will continue to grow and thrive over the next several years. Just be sure your e-mails are accompanied by the right marketing-automation technology to help gather, analyze, and use data to create robust, targeted campaigns. 

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Get the Most from Your E-Mails

For more on improving your fundraising e-mails, see these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

Beyond the Single E-Mail Message: Running Effective E-Mail Campaigns (Vol. 23, No. 3)

Are You Making These Mistakes in Your Fundraising Letters? (Vol. 37, No. 4)

Rest Your Weary Fingers: Voice Activation Is Coming to a CRM Near You (Vol. 26, No. 1)

Using E-Mail & the Web to Acquire & Cultivate Donors (Vol. 21, No. 1)

How to Add an Emotional Hook to Your Fundraising Letters: What to Do and What Not to Do (Vol. 37, No. 1)

E-Mail Deliverability: Increase Your Chances of Getting Through (Vol. 23, No. 2)

How Can You Boost Donors' Trust in Your Organization? (Vol. 36, No. 4)