5 Tips for Email Marketing
Your Best College Student Prospects

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By Andrew Marino

Looking to send emails to college students to market your product or service? There are techniques and methods needed now, more than ever, when marketing to college students. There are also some tried-and-true methods that have withstood the test of time and remain applicable today. We're going to break down the strategies and provide you with 5 proven tactics to help your email campaign generate a higher response.

1. Target Your Best Email Prospects

The most powerful, convincing email message is only as good as the audience who receives it, which is all the more reason why you need to choose the right email list. If you have your own in-house file, be sure you're segmenting and targeting your audience appropriately. Flag your in-house file appropriately. Many email deployment platforms allow you to segment your list.

Pro tip: Be sure your in-house file is clean and up-to-date. Perform your data hygiene regimen on it regularly. Otherwise, you may think you're sending messages to your prospects and clients, only to learn that half of those folks have bounced email addresses that are no longer deliverable.

If you're hiring a third-party list owner to deploy your message on your behalf, be sure this provider can offer appropriate select fields for your offer. Ask your third-party list provider for sample campaigns, case studies, or other past performance as a way to determine their experience and ability to reach your targets.

Pro tip: Many third-party email deployment companies have robust email deployment platforms, and as part of their service, they may be able to help you send your own in-house file. This may be something you can discuss with them, especially if you have had difficulty sending your own campaigns through various platforms.

2. Pay Attention to Your Preview Text

When designing your email, the subject line arguably may be the most important element. We recommend using short, powerful declarations or questions,

pivoting on enticing verbs like "discover" or "explore."

But another, oft-overlooked element of email marketing is the preview text. This is usually a single sentence that appears in an inbox and allows the recipient to get a sense of the email content without having to open the email.

This is another important moment in the life of your email campaign, encouraging your audience to engage more with the message. Some sample tactics for good preview text design are:

    1) Build Urgency: Building a sense of immediacy is a powerful way to encourage opening your email message. A good way to do this might be to treat subject lines and preview text as part of the same message, not as separate entities. A simple statement in the subject like "Sale Starts Now" followed by "Hurry! Offer Ends in 24 hours" in the preview text shows how these messages can work in tandem to create a sense that "time is running out."

    2) Create a Sense of Exclusivity: Capitalize on your recipient's desire to be part of an exclusive club, with content solely for them and not the general public. This helps build loyalty and a sense of belonging in your audience. A subject line conveying that an offer is "just for you" can be nicely followed by preview text like "claim your reserved spot inside."

    3) Provide Information: We've found that a simple summary of the email message in a single sentence is often the best form of pre-header. This can sometimes work best of all options, depending on the product, offer, and target population.

3. Keep Your Messages Short and Sweet

The old saying goes "brevity is the essence of wit." But brevity is not only an excellent guide for witticism, it's essential in good email copy.

Today's audiences—especially the younger demographics—are bombarded with messages that they can easily tune out. Your message needs to land quickly, with

impact. Too many words or too much scrolling will encourage them to skip paying attention to whatever you're trying to tell them and move on.

(We've seen this issue arise when sending survey questions in a link, which is a topic for another time. But please understand this point: there is an inverse relationship between the time spent with your marketing material v. response. The more time you demand from your targets, the less likely they are to give you the response you want.)

Of course, you should include all relevant information, but we recommend adding large graphics and lots of space and keeping your message to a single screen (whether on a mobile device or a desktop). That said, please eliminate all unnecessary details, and, in fact, consider trimming your copy and offer to just the most relevant or 'eye-popping.' Everything else is an unnecessary tax on your recipients' time.

4. Make Sure Your Emails Are Mobile Friendly

More likely than not, your student audience will engage with your message on their phones.

This translates into the need to consider mobile when designing and writing your message. Some basic guidelines:

1. Use a single-column template.
2. Use a single Call to Action ("CTA").
3. Avoid tiny fonts.
4. Use only essential imagery.

5. Test and Optimize Your Messages

Finally, determining if an email marketing effort is successful depends entirely on benchmarks. How do you establish them? Simply, by testing, optimizing, and deploying often.

Pro Tip: Avoid a "one and done" email marketing strategy and set your expectations realistically.

We've worked with smaller clients who were under the impression that a single email campaign, consisting of a single deployment, would yield incredible results.

They cited the opens and clicks we discuss in our case studies as examples of what they expect from their own campaigns. This is a good self-image; it's ambitious and shows a healthy regard for their own products, services, and the marketing team that designed their creative.

Unfortunately, it's misguided. Those wonderful metrics from case studies are available to any marketer—as long as they are also marketers who have tested, refined, and tested again, and have done so consistently. We've worked with some of the largest marketers in the world, and even they don't get it right on the first try.

Getting it right depends on analyzing your metrics, often found in your tracking report. These are most often open rate and click-through rate. Consider how you may increase each of them in future deployments.

Testing can consist of any number of setups, from the standard A/B test (which is sending two different email creatives to a portion of the same target audience at the same time and determining which performs better) to sending one version of the same creative to two different target audiences at the same time. It can be spread over several weeks, several deployments, used in conjunction with additional channels, or alone. There are countless iterations available.

How you ultimately go about setting up your test will require clear-eyed consideration about your goals and what you're looking to learn. We recommend that strategy sessions on testing take at least as much effort as those that go into crafting your email message.

BONUS ROUND Tip #6: Supplement Your Email Marketing with SMS

It's no secret that today's college students spend way more time on their mobile devices than their counterparts from years past. One great way to test out multi-channel marketing for the mobile set is through SMS marketing. This is a simple text message with a small number of characters and a tiny URL that helps increase response by reaching your audience in several ways. If you've really embraced tip #4 above, you might find yourself in "trimming" mode and can distill your essential message to a single sentence. If so, you may have a great opportunity to reach your audience through SMS as well.

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Email marketing is still one of the best ways for marketers to reach their student target audience. But they must go about it in the right way. Now you have 5 email marketing best practices for college student prospects to assist you as you develop email campaigns—and a bonus tip on SMS marketing! And if you have any questions, please remember that we at Unik Adv, LLC stand ready to help you with any of your email and SMS needs. We're just an email or phone call away!

If you need assistance or deeper discussion on any of this, Unik Advertising's team of seasoned professionals is here to help. We can assist you is set up a best-performing mass email deployment that can help turn our database of prospects into your dedicated customers.

THANK YOU FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF YOUR TIME AND GOOD LUCK!

Please contact us with any questions.
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About the Author

Andrew Marino is President of Unik Advertising, a digital marketing agency specializing in mass email deployments utilizing its database of over 200 million email and postal records with more than150 selects available. In his role he provides strategic insight, account management and oversees a team of professionals providing digital media services to a variety of clients across a broad spectrum of categories.

Andrew is the author of dozens of business articles, white papers and guest blog posts on email- and digital marketing. He's also spoken at a number of marketing industry conferences.

His new book, 101 Rules for Digital Marketing Your Small Business, will be released later this year.